EACR 2010 FOREWORD

The European Association for Consumer Research Conference 2010 was hosted by the School of Management at Royal Holloway, University of London, from 30th June to 3rd July. The rich variety of international contributions we received is reflected in this volume. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all who took part and especially those who assisted in creating such a successful and enjoyable event.

We received some 450 submissions, of which around 200 were accepted for the conference, and we give a heartfelt thanks to our dedicated panel of reviewers for their help with the review process. We also offer grateful thanks to the many who organised various aspects of the conference. Avi Shankar and Markus Giesler ensured a stimulating doctoral colloquium took place prior to the conference and lined up a superb team of guest speakers to engage and stimulate the students. No ACR conference is now complete without a film festival and we were delighted that Russ Belk and Rob Kozinets provided some really stimulating and creative viewing.

We broke tradition slightly by not arranging a gala dinner at a city location and instead hosting a party in the beautiful grounds of our red brick Victorian campus. Music wafted through the Royal Holloway quadrangle far into the night during the conference BBQ thanks to our own EACR team of jazz musicians, Steve Oakes, Douglas Brownlie and Noel Dennis followed by a keyboard recital by Rungpaka Amy Tiwsakul whilst Jonathan Schroeder and Janet Borgerson hosted a Hawaiian party. To cap the night off, Giana Eckhardt delivered a legendary DJ set. We also wish to thank Siwarit Pongsakornrungrship for organising a mini-football tournament. Therefore the good spirits of the conference was maintained by a band of volunteers and to all of whom we are especially grateful.

In addition, thanks are due to the College and the School of Management for supporting this venture, especially Head of School Professor Chris Smith, the School administrative team, the College conference team and the postgraduate students of the school who volunteered their help.

Finally, we thank Rajiv Vaidyanathan, Executive Secretary of the ACR for all his support throughout the process to make the conference a successful event.

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SPECIAL TOPIC SESSIONS
Pauline Maclaran, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

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Guangzhi Zhao, University of Kansas, USA
Yikun Zhao, York University, Canada
Haithem Zourrig, HEC Montreal, Canada
Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada
Table of Contents

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

EACR Conference Committee and Reviewers .............................................................................. iv

EACR Conference Session Listing ................................................................................................. ix

Complete Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... xii

Author Index ...................................................................................................................................... 630

WEDNESDAY, 30 JUNE 2010
DOCTORAL COLLOQUIUM
9:00am-5:00pm

REGISTRATION & WELCOME RECEPTION
5.00pm-8.00pm

THURSDAY, 01 JULY 2010
WORKING PAPER POSTER SESSION 1
10:00am-6:00pm
(Posters displayed in Windsor Building foyer)

SESSION 1
9:00am-10:30pm

1.1 Special Session: Reducing Consumption: Contradictions and Challenges for the Future (0-02)
1.2 Special Session: Gekås Ullared - A Consumption Phenomenon in Sweden (0-03)
1.3 Competitive Paper: Consumption and Ethnicity (0-04)
1.4 Competitive Paper: Internet Consumption (0-05)
1.5 Special Session: The Social Negotiation of New Transitional Forms of Exchange: From Environmental Critique to Community Building (1-02)
1.6 Competitive Paper: Gender (1-03)
1.7 Roundtable: Marketing Practitioners and Consumer Research – Opportunities for Enhancing the Impact of Scholarly Work (1-04)

SESSION 2
11:00am-12:30pm

2.1 Roundtable: Inside Marketing: A New Odyssey (0-02)
2.2 Competitive Paper: Cognitive Information Processing (0-03)
2.3 Competitive Paper: Brands (0-04)
2.4 Competitive Paper: Consumption and Ethics (0-05)
2.5 Special Session: The Family that Eats Together…: Food Discourses that Shape the Consuming Family (1-02)
2.6 Special Session: Strategic Management of Heterogeneity in Consumer Collectives (1-03)
2.7 Special Session: The New Music Consumer (1-04)

LUNCH
12:30pm-2:00pm
SESSION 3
2:00pm-3:30pm

3.1 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Servicescape (0-02)
3.2 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Considering Method (0-04)
3.3 SPECIAL SESSION: Aesthetic Consumption and Consumer Ritual (0-05)
3.4 SPECIAL SESSION: Neoliberalism and/in Consumer Research (1-02)
3.5 SPECIAL SESSION: Exploring the Boundaries of Market-Mediated Social Mobility of the Marginalized (1-03)

SESSION 4
4:00pm-5:30pm

4.1 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Cognitive Information Processing 2 (0-02)
4.2 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Material Objects and Relationships (0-03)
4.3 COMPETITIVE PAPER: The Body (0-04)
4.4 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Self-Regulation and Excess (0-05)
4.5 SPECIAL SESSION: The Common and the Routine: Studying Mundane Consumption (1-02)
4.6 SPECIAL SESSION: Consuming the Commodified Body (1-03)

PIM’S RECEPTION & LAWN CROQUET
6:00pm-8:00pm

FRIDAY, 02 JULY 2010
WORKING PAPER POSTER SESSION 2
10:00am-6:00pm
(Posters displayed in Windsor Building foyer)

FILM FESTIVAL
8:30am-5:30pm
(Auditorium)

SESSION 5
9:00am-10:30am

5.1 SPECIAL SESSION: The Emperor Has No Clothes: Mythologies of Consumer Sovereignty in the Crisis Empire (0-02)
5.2 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Rethinking Theory (0-03)
5.3 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Animal Companions (0-04)
5.4 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Consumer Goals (0-05)
5.5 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Brands and Choice (1-03)
5.6 ROUNDTABLE: Marketplace Shaping of Spiritual Experiences: Current Theory and Prospects (1-04)

SESSION 6
11:00am-12:30pm

6.1 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Food Purchasing and Consumption (0-02)
6.2 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Satisfaction and Evaluation Influences (0-03)
6.3 COMPETITIVE PAPER: Social Issues (0-03)
6.4 SPECIAL SESSION: Beyond Acculturation: Understanding Nomadic Consumption (0-05)
6.5 SPECIAL SESSION: In A Manner of Speaking: Understanding the Role of Language and Discourse Analysis in Consumer Research (1-02)
6.6 SPECIAL SESSION: Sharing In and Sharing Out: Problematizing the Consumption of Public Space (1-03)
6.7 ROUNDTABLE: Sustainability in the 21st Century: Conquering Hurdles, Building Bridges, Spanning Disciplines (1-04)
6.8 SPECIAL SESSION: Exploring the Norms and Rituals of Household Food Consumption: ‘Doing Family’ at Dinner Time (1-05)
LUNCH
12:30pm-2:00pm

SESSION 7
2:00pm-3:30pm

7.1 Competitive Paper: Reflections (0-02)
7.2 Competitive Paper: Place (0-03)
7.3 Competitive Paper: Music (0-04)
7.4 Competitive Paper: Progressive Consumption (0-05)
7.5 Competitive Paper: Value (1-02)
7.6 Special Session: Novel Extensions of Extended Self (1-03)
7.7 Roundtable: Global Brand Culture (1-04)

SESSION 8
4:00pm-5:30pm

8.1 Competitive Paper: Masculinity (0-02)
8.2 Competitive Paper: Internet Consumption 2 (0-03)
8.3 Competitive Paper: Ethnicity & Age (0-04)
8.4 Competitive Paper: Victimisation and Inequality (0-05)
8.5 Special Session: Through the Looking Glass and What Academics Find There: Implications of Marketers’ Consumer Research Practices on Consumer Representation (1-02)
8.6 Roundtable: Bridging together Anti-consumption and Consumer Resistance: Concepts, Concerns, Conflicts, and Convergence (1-03)

CONFERENCE BBQ

SATURDAY, 03 JULY 2010

SESSION 9
9:00am-10:30am

9.1 Competitive Paper: Desire and Emotion (0-02)
9.2 Competitive Paper: Purchasing Evaluations (0-03)
9.3 Roundtable: Transformative Consumer Research: Postcards from Europe (0-04)
9.4 Special Session: The Many Sides of Compromise: Tradeoffs in Contemporary Family Consumption (0-05)
9.5 Special Session: The Mind and the Heart: Cognitive and Emotional Processes in Self-Control (1-02)
9.6 Special Session: Exploring Researcher Vulnerability: Investigating Sensitive Topics and Conducting Research in Challenging Contexts (1-03)
9.7 Competitive Paper: Age and Consumption (1-04)
9.8 Competitive Paper: Aesthetics (1-05)

SESSION 10
11:00am-12:30pm

10.1 Competitive Paper: Loyalty & Luxury (0-02)
10.2 Competitive Paper: Consumption Conflicts (0-04)
10.3 Special Session: ‘Aesthetics’ Live at RHUL! On the work of aesthetics in producing the listening community (Auditorium)
10.4 Special Session: A New Narrative Turn: Methodological Advances for Consumer Research (0-04)
10.5 Special Session: Motivational Consequences of Effort and Progress in Consumer Goal Pursuit (0-05)
10.6 Competitive Paper: Advertising (1-02)
10.7 Competitive Paper: Purchase Decision Making (1-03)
Table of Contents

Special Session Summaries

SPECIAL SESSION
Reducing Consumption: Contradictions and Challenges for the Future ................................................................................................................................. 1
Jan Brace-Govan, Monash University, Australia
Helene Cherrier, Griffith University, Australia

The Private Made Public—A Visual Analysis of Reducing Water Consumption
Marcus Phipps, University of Melbourne, Australia

Moving into the Woods: Finding Meanings through Sacrifice
Helene Cherrier, Griffith University, Australia

What Does “Not Possessing” Mean?
Itir Binay, Monash University, Australia

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle Practice Theory
Jan Brace-Govan, Monash University, Australia
Elizabeth Parsons, Keele University, UK

SPECIAL SESSION
Gekås Ullared—A Consumption Phenomenon in Sweden ........................................................................................................................................... 3
Karin M. Ekström, University of Borås, Sweden
Daniel Hjelmgren, University of Borås, Sweden

Creating Positive Experiences
Daniel Hjelmgren, University of Borås, Sweden

Family Consumption—tradition, Conformity and Distinction
Karin M. Ekström, University of Borås, Sweden

How Frontline Personnel Handle Customer Misbehavior
Nicklas Salomonson, University of Borås, Sweden

SPECIAL SESSION
The Social Negotiation of New Transitional Forms of Exchange: From Environmental Critique to Community Building ................................................................................................................................. 6
Lucie K. Ozanne, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Julie L. Ozanne, Virginia Tech, USA

Performing Local Community through Co-housing: A Discourse Analysis of the Value and Values of Sharing the Home
Shona M. M. Bettany, Bradford University, UK

Building the Strength of Local Community through Time bank Exchanges
Lucie K. Ozanne, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Julie L. Ozanne, Virginia Tech, USA

Local Acts, Global Impacts? Examining the Pro-Social, Non-Reciprocal Nature of Freecyclers
Zeynep Arsel, Concordia University, Canada
Susan Dobscha, Bentley University, USA
SPECIAL SESSION
The Family that Eats Together…: Food Discourses that Shape the Consuming Family
Teresa Davis, University of Sydney, Australia

Got milk? Then Get Rid of It! The Making of a Mythology of Family Health
Dorthe Brogård Kristensen, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Be(com)ing Consumers: Young Children’s Everyday Accounts of Snacking
David Marshall, University of Edinburgh, UK

Children, Food, Health and Marketplace Discourses in 50 Years of Magazine Advertising in Australia and the UK
Teresa Davis, University of Sydney, Australia
Tanja Schneider, Oxford University, UK
Margaret Hogg, Lancaster University, UK

SPECIAL SESSION
Strategic Management of Heterogeneity in Consumer Collectives
Linda L. Price, University of Arizona, USA
Hope Jensen Schau, University of Arizona, USA

Consensus Formation and Conflict Management in Self-Organized Online Communities
Johann Füller, Innsbruck University School of Management, Austria
Gregor Jawecki, Innsbruck University School of Management, Austria

The Consumption Implications of Contested Community
Tandy Chalmers Thomas, Queen’s University, Canada
Hope Jensen Schau, University of Arizona, USA
Linda L. Price, University of Arizona, USA

Controlling Communities and Destroying Heterogeneity Online
Ekant Veer, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

SPECIAL SESSION
The New Music Consumer
Gretchen Larsen, King’s College London, UK

Moving On: The Music Industry’s Struggle to Create Value for its Customers
Marc Berger, King’s College London, UK
Finola Kerrigan, King’s College London, UK
Gretchen Larsen, King’s College London, UK

Patterns and Motives of Digital Music Consumption
Nela Filimon, Universitat de Girona, Spain
Jordi López-Sintas, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
Konstantina Zerva, Universitat de Girona, Spain

Domination and Liberation Through Social Exchanges for Music Access
Ercilia García-Álvarez, Universitat Rovira I Virgili, Spain
Jordi López-Sintas, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
Konstantina Zerva, Universitat de Girona, Spain
SPECIAL SESSION
Aesthetic Consumption and Consumer Ritual ................................................................. 21
Katherine C. Sredl, University of Notre Dame, USA

The Aesthetic Consumption of Sunday Dinner
Katherine C. Sredl, University of Notre Dame, USA

Aesthetics as Ritual Practice: Fashion, Female Bodies and Luxury Brands
Annamma Joy, University of British Columbia, Canada
Alladi Venkatesh, University of California, Irvine, USA
John Sherry Jr., University of Notre Dame, USA
Jonathan Deschenes, HEC, Montreal, Canada

“The Impact of Aesthetics in Embedded Service Rituals”
Cele C. Otnes, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
Elizabeth Crosby, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
Mina Kwon, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
Sydney Chinchananchokchai, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

SPECIAL SESSION
Neoliberalism and/in Consumer Research ................................................................. 24
Sammy Bonsu, York University, Canada

The BoP Consumer in a Neo-Liberal World
Sammy Bonsu, York University, Canada

Consumption as a Practice of/in Self-Formation: The Neoliberal Politics of Consumption (and Consumer Research?)
Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada

The Neo-Liberal Consumer Subject
Alan Bradshaw, University of London, UK

SPECIAL SESSION
Exploring the Boundaries of Market-Mediated Social Mobility of the Marginalized ............................................ 29
Marius K. Luedicke, University of Innsbruck, Austria

How Servicescape Figurations Mediate Socio-cultural Differences Between Consumers and Rural Migrant Aesthetic Labourers
Tuba Üstüner, Colorado State University, USA
Craig J. Thompson, University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA

Migrant Women’s Identity Formation and the Marketplace: Between Constraint and Creativity
Zuzana Chytkova, University of Pisa, Italy
Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Limitations of Immigrants’ Market-mediated Social Mobility
Marius K. Luedicke, University of Innsbruck, Austria
Elisabeth A. Pichler, University of Innsbruck, Austria

SPECIAL SESSION
The Common and the Routine: Studying Mundane Consumption ........................................... 35
Olga Kravets, Bilkent University, Turkey

The Persistence of a “Traditional” Practice: Turkish Tea Encounters Glocal Changes
Olga Kravets, Bilkent University, Turkey
Güliz Ger, Bilkent University, Turkey
Ordinary Spaces and Sense of Place
Stefania Borghini, University of Bocconi, Italy
John F. Sherry, University of Notre Dame, USA
Annamma Joy, University of British Columbia, Canada

‘Coldfeet Café’: A Mundane Consumption Experience (While It Lasts?)
Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Per Østergaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

SPECIAL SESSION
Consuming the Commodified Body
Michael Saren, University of Leicester, UK

The Love Muscle: Commodification of the Heart as the Gift-of-Life
Ai-Ling Lai, University of Leicester, UK

The Body Worlds
Christina Goulding, University of Wolverhampton, UK
Michael Saren, University of Leicester, UK

Analyzing Bodies that Do Not Yet Exist
Norah Campbell, Trinity College, Ireland
Aidan O’Driscoll, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

SPECIAL SESSION
The Emperor Has No Clothes: Mythologies of Consumer Sovereignty in the Crisis Empire
Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA

Marketing and Consumers: Handmaidens of Finanzkapital
Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA

Markets and Marketing at a Crossroads
Fuat Fırat, University of Texas-Pan American, USA

Alladi Venkatesh, University of California, Irvine, USA

Open Sky Marketing
Pierre McDonagh, Dublin City University, Ireland

SPECIAL SESSION
Beyond Acculturation: Understanding Nomadic Consumption
Fleura Bardhi, Northeastern University
Giana Eckhardt, Suffolk University

Understanding the Changing Role of Possessions in Global Mobility
Fleura Bardhi, Northeastern University, USA
Giana M. Eckhardt, Suffolk University, USA
Eric J. Arnould, University of Wyoming, USA

Biosocial Ethnography: Catching the Drift of Nomadic Consumers
Robin Canniford, University of Melbourne, Australia

Consuming the City: How Global Structures Facilitate Resistance to Ethnic Co-optation
Ela Veresiu, York University, Canada
Markus Giesler, York University, Canada
SPECIAL SESSION

In a Manner of Speaking: Understanding the Role of Language and Discourse Analysis in Consumer Research .......... 50
Ai-Ling Lai, University of Leicester, UK

An Anxiety of Absence and Agency: The Legitimacy of Textual Analysis in Consumer Research
James Fitchett, University of Leicester, UK
Robert Caruana, University of Manchester, UK

Discourse, Identity and Marketplace Institutions
Elizabeth Parsons, Keele University, UK

A Hermeneutic Appreciation of the Performative Role of Language in Consumer Research
Ai-Ling Lai, University of Leicester, UK

The Performance of Linguistic Politeness in Consumer Accounts
Beverley Hill, University of Winchester, UK

SPECIAL SESSION

Sharing In and Sharing Out: Problematizing the Consumption of Public Space......................................................... 55
Luca M. Visconti, ESCP Europe, France

Speaking of Public Space: Cultures and Countercultures in the Confrontation about Street Art
Luca M. Visconti, ESCP Europe, France
Laurel Anderson, Arizona State University, USA
Stefania Borghini, Università Bocconi, Italy
John F. Sherry, Jr., University of Notre Dame, USA

Flying with Feathers on Bubbles: Reclaiming Public Space through the Sharing of Ludic Experiences
Yesim Ozalp, York University, Canada
Daiane Scaraboto, York University, Canada
Mei-Ling Wei, Saint Mary’s University, Canada

Consuming Invisible Cities: Desires, Imagination, and Utopia in Urban Transformation
Luca M. Visconti, ESCP Europe, France
Pauline Maclaran, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Yuko Minowa, Long Island University—Brooklyn Campus, USA

Heterotopia and the City: A Guerilla Garden in Athens
Andreas Chatzidakis, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Pauline Maclaran, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Alan Bradshaw, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Shona Bettany, University of Bradford, UK

SPECIAL SESSION

Exploring the Norms and Rituals of Household Food Consumption: ‘Doing Family’ at Dinner Time ....................... 60
Benedetta Cappellini, Worcester University, UK
Elizabeth Parsons, Keele University, UK

We Fast and Feast Together: The Devotional Household at Dinner Time
Benedetta Cappellini, Worcester University, UK
Elizabeth Parsons, Keele University, UK

Re-negotiating Family Rituals at Mealtimes: The Participatory Role of the Television
Pepukayi David Chitakunye, Royal Holloway University of London, UK

Inform(ality): Children’s Identity and Family Meals
David Marshall, University of Edinburgh, UK
SPECIAL SESSION

**Novel Extensions of Extended Self**

Paul M. Connell, Stony Brook University, USA
Phoebe Wong, Lancaster University, UK

*Consumer Identity Augmentation: The Symbiotic Relationship between Self-Extension and Self-Expansion*
Paul M. Connell, Stony Brook University, USA
Hope Jensen Schau, The University of Arizona, USA

*Exploring the Self-Possession Boundary through Hong Kong Chinese Consumers’ Narratives of Important Possessions*
Phoebe Wong, Lancaster University
Margaret K. Hogg, Lancaster University

*Exploring the Self-Expressive and the Self-Transformative Character of Cherished Possessions through Stories from Greek Female Consumers*
Katerina Karanika, Lancaster University
Margaret K. Hogg, Lancaster University

SPECIAL SESSION

**Through the Looking Glass and What Academics Find There: Implications of Marketers’ Consumer Research Practices on Consumer Representation**

Sarah J. S. Wilner, York University, Canada

*Fit for Marketing: On Respondents’ Performance as Consumers in Focus Groups*
Catherine Grandclément, EDF R&D, France
Gérald Gaglio, Université Technologique de Troyes, France

*The Way You See is What You Get: Market Research as Marketplace Enactment*
Sofie Møller Bjerrisgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

*It’s Not What You Know, It’s Who You Know: Acquiring Consumer Capital Through Consumer Research*
Sarah J. S. Wilner, York University, Canada

SPECIAL SESSION

**The Many Sides of Compromise: Tradeoffs in Contemporary Family Consumption**

Samantha N. N. Cross, Iowa State University, USA

*Remittances in Transnational Family Consumption: Compromises Here, There, and Beyond*
Lisa N. Peñaloza, École des Hautes Études Commerciales du Nord, France
Judith Cavazos Arroyo, Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla, Mexico

*Crossing the Cultural Divide: Consumption Compromises in Bi-national Homes*
Samantha N. N. Cross, Iowa State University, USA

*Family Interactions with Digital Technologies–Establishing Routines and Compromises*
Alladi Venkatesh, University of California, Irvine, USA

SPECIAL SESSION

**The Mind and the Heart: Cognitive and Emotional Processes in Self-Control**

Szu-Chi Huang, University of Texas at Austin, USA

*Counteractive Construal in Consumer Goal Pursuit*
Ying Zhang, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Szu-Chi Huang, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Susan M. Broniarczyk, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Emotivational Self-Regulation
Sabrina Bruyneel, K. U. Leuven, Belgium
Baba Shiv, Stanford University, USA

Clouds on a Sunny Day: The Downside of Positive Mood for Self-Control
Jordan Etkin, University of Maryland, USA
Francine Espinoza, ESMT, Germany
Anastasiya Pocheptsova, University of Maryland, USA

SPECIAL SESSION
Exploring Researcher Vulnerability: Investigating Sensitive Topics and Conducting Research in Challenging Contexts
Kathy Hamilton, University of Strathclyde, Scotland

Vulnerabilities of the Estranged Researcher and Researched
Aliakbar Jafari, University of Strathclyde, Scotland

Challenging Contexts and Vulnerable Voices: Exploring Consumer Exclusion
Kathy Hamilton, University of Strathclyde, Scotland
Hilary Downey, Queen’s University, Northern Ireland

Empathetic Sensibilities in the Practice of CCT-inspired Research
Susan Dunnett, University of Edinburgh, Scotland
Paul Hewer, University of Strathclyde, Scotland
Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling, Scotland

SPECIAL SESSION
‘Aesthetics’ Live at RHUL! On the Work of Aesthetics in Producing the Listening Community
Douglas Brownlie, School of Management, University of Stirling, UK
Steve Oakes, University of Liverpool Management School, UK
Noel Dennis, Teesside University Business School, UK

Music and Commercial Environment Aesthetics: Controlling the Uncontrollable
Steve Oakes, University of Liverpool Management School, UK

Miles Davis: Artist, Marketer, Consumer Researcher?
Noel Dennis, Teesside University Business School, UK

Consumption and Communities of Aesthetic Practice
Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling, UK

SPECIAL SESSION
A New Narrative Turn: Methodological Advances for Consumer Research
Amber M. Epp, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

Eliciting and Analyzing Collective Narratives for Theory Building in Consumer Research
Amber M. Epp, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA
Linda L. Price, University of Arizona, USA

From Silver Screen to Explaining Dreams: The Effect of Cultural Text on Personal Consumption Narratives
Ashlee Humphreys, Northwestern University, USA

Collaborative Brand Narratives: Interweaving Personal and Collective Ideals in the Practice of Collective Brand-oriented Storytelling
Hope Jensen Schau, University of Arizona, USA
Albert M. Muniz, Jr., DePaul University, USA
**SPECIAL SESSION**

Motivational Consequences of Effort and Progress in Consumer Goal Pursuit .............................................................. 90
Szu-Chi Huang, University of Texas at Austin, USA

‘Can You’ or ‘Will You’: How Progress-Based Inferences Impact Motivation in Consumer Goal Pursuit
Ying Zhang, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Szu-Chi Huang, University of Texas at Austin, USA

Does Effort Make Your Heart Fonder or Mind Wonder? An ‘Attainability-Efficacy’ Framework of Preference Construction
Sara Kim, University of Chicago, USA
Aparna A. Labroo, University of Chicago, USA

Practicing What You Preach
Sunaina Chugani, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Susan M. Broniarczyk, University of Texas at Austin, USA

Mere Accessibility Effect: Products May Be Effective Without Consumption
David Faro, London Business School, UK
Monika Heller, London Business School, UK
Caglar Irmak, University of South Carolina, USA

**Competitive Papers**

**FULL PAPERS**

A Review of Ethnicity in Consumer Research: Embodying the Subject........................................................................... 91
Elizabeth C. Hirschman, Rutgers University, USA
Stevie Watson, Rutgers University, USA

Cosmopolitans Talking The Global But Walking The Local-A Multisited Exploration Into Middle-Class Consumers’ Tastes In Home Aesthetics........................................................................................................................................ 101
Sofia Ulver-Sneistrup, Lund University, Sweden

The Country of Origin Effect and the Role of Moral Emotions ...................................................................................... 108
Silvia Grappi, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

Minority Religious Rituals in the Post-Colonial World: The Case of Ramadan in France ................................................. 116
Mourad Touzani, University of Tunis, Tunisia
Elizabeth Hirschman, Rutgers University, USA

The Little Red Book: Risk and Trust in Chinese Internet Banking, a Gendered Perspective ................................. 123
Anita Lifen Zhao, Swansea University, UK
Nicole Koenig-Lewis, Swansea University, UK
Philippa Ward, University of Gloucestershire, UK
Stuart Hamner-Lloyd, University of Gloucestershire, UK

The Best Things in Life Are Free: the Non-Economic Paradigm of Sharing in Cyberspace ........................................ 128
Shakeel Siddiqui, DBS, Ireland
Farida Rifai, HSE, Ireland
Brand Gender and Its Dimensions........................................................................................................................................................ 136
Isabelle Ulrich, Université Paris II / ESCP Europe, France
Elisabeth Tissier-Desbordes, ESCP Europe, France
Pierre-Louis Dubois, Université Panthéon-Assas Paris II / ESCP Europe, France

How Schema Incongruity Influences Consumer Responses: Exploring the Degree of Incongruity for
Different Sources of Discrepancy.......................................................................................................................................................... 144
Georgios Halkias, Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece
Flora Kokkinaki, Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece

Conceptualising and Measuring Online Switching Costs.................................................................................................................... 151
Ezlika Ghazali, Warwick Business School, UK
David Arnott, Warwick Business School, UK
Dilip Mutum, Warwick Business School, UK

Conversations of Ethics Between Consumers: A Hermeneutic Study................................................................................................. 158
Dave Bussiere, University of Windsor, Canada

Fashion Marketing and the Ethical Movement Versus Individualist Consumption: Analysing the Attitude Behaviour Gap.............. 163
Lynn Sudbury, Liverpool John Moores University, UK
Sebastian Böltner, Liverpool John Moores University, UK

A Longitudinal Study of Affect and Satisfaction in a High Emotion Service Context........................................................................ 169
Adrian Palmer, Swansea University, UK
Nicole Koenig-Lewis, Swansea University, UK

The Servicescape and the Social Role It Plays in Consumers’ Lives.................................................................................................... 176
Micael-Lee Johnstone, Victoria University, New Zealand
Sarah Todd, The University of Otago, New Zealand

Creating a Holistic Retailer Image: Institutional Theory, the Jakobsonian Framework and the Consumer View............................... 183
Ann-Marie Kennedy, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand
Margo Buchanan-Oliver, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Voices in Video ...................................................................................................................................................................................... 190
Robert Aitken, University of Otago, New Zealand
Adriana Campelo, Aberystwyth University, New Zealand

Re-gifting: The Gift You Can’t Wait to Re-give ................................................................................................................................. 196
Paul W. Ballantine, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Andrew G. Parsons, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

Implications of the new Darwinism for Consumer Theory and Research in Relation to the Human Face .............................................. 201
John Desmond, St. Andrews University, Scotland

Acculturation and Body Image: A Cross-Cultural, Inter-Generational, Qualitative Study of Filipino- and Indian-Australians .......... 207
Anurag Hingorani, University of Technology Sydney, Australia
Lynne Freeman, University of Technology Sydney, Australia
Michelle Agudera, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

The Wolf of Wall Street: Re-imagining Veblen for the 21st Century.................................................................................................... 214
Georgios Patsiaouras, University of Leicester, UK
James Fitchett, University of Leicester, UK

Cleansing, Contamination and Sacrifice: Three Processes of Purification........................................................................................ 219
Karen Fernandez, University of Auckland, New Zealand
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pet Ownership and Related Consumption Practices: The Role of Moralization</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morven McEachern, Lancaster University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona Cheetham, University of Salford, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy Goals versus Disclosure Goals: Towards an Understanding of the Privacy-Consumption Trade-off</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo En Yap, RMIT University, Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael B. Beverland, University of Bath, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liliana L. Bove, University of Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Consumers and Retailers Eat Off the Same Plate When it Comes to Premium House Brands? An Australian Perspective</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela Spanjaard, University of Western Sydney, Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynne Freeman, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Health Concerns and Adoption of Health-Related Products on Cognitive Age</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anil Mathur, Hofstra University, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roochita Jaju Mathur, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George P. Moschis, Georgia State University, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Emergent Paradigm in Measuring ‘Satisfaction’: Accessing the Fragmented Nature of Visitors’ Reality Via the Desired Benefit Dis/Confirmation Approach</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anastasia Mourikis, Swansea University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damian Gallagher, Aberystwyth University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian Palmer, Swansea University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring College Students’ Perceptions of Negative Consequences of Binge Drinking Through Consumer Collages</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dariusz Siemieniako, Bialystok Technical University, Poland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krzysztof Kubacki, Keele University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Drink, Therefore I Belong: Fear of Social Rejection and its Impact on Attitudes Towards Anti-Binge Drinking Advertising</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekant Veer, University of Canterbury, New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus Kilian, University of Bath, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing Cultures of Caring Consumption: An Exploratory Study of the Lived Experience of Embodiment Within an Elderly Care Environment</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Stone, Aberdeen University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Brownlie, Stirling University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Hewer, Strathclyde University, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advances in Lyrical Consumer Research: Collaborative Circles and Paradessential Poetics</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roel Wijland, University of Otago, New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jürgen Gnoth, University of Otago, New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter as Mother’s Extended Self</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mototaka Sakashita, Keio University, Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junko Kimura, Hosei University, Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“THE BOOK OF STARS”: Understanding a Consumer’s Fan Relationship with a Film Actress Through a Narrative Transportation Approach</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus Wohlfeil, Norwich Business School, University of East Anglia, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Whelan, Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-Imagining The City of Liverpool as a Capital of Consumption</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Patterson, University of Liverpool, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Hodgson, University of Liverpool, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Makes Somewhere the Best Place to Live?  
Pirjo Laaksonen, University of Vaasa, Finland  
Minna-Maarit Jaskari, University of Vaasa, Finland  
Hanna Leipämäa-Leskinen, University of Vaasa, Finland  
Martti Laaksonen, University of Vaasa, Finland

Walking the Talk, Talking the Walk: Embodied Health Activism in Developing Nations  
Ingeborg Astrid Kleppe, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Norway  
Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Australia  
Kabo Matlho, Millennium Institute for Medical Research, Australia

Crossed Glances on the Perception of Consumer Competencies within the Energy Sector: The Case of a French Energy Supplier  
Audrey Bonnemaizon, University Paris-Est, France  
Wided Batai, University of Lyon 2, France

Consumer Experience of Value Creation: A Phenomenological Perspective  
Carol Kelleher, Cranfield School of Management, UK and University College Cork, Ireland  
Joe Peppard, Cranfield School of Management, UK

Co-Creation through Fear, Faith and Desire  
Siwarit Pongsakornrungsilp, Walailak University, Thailand  
Theeranuch Pusaksrikit, The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand  
Jonathan Schroeder, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA

Social Comparison of Less Than Ideal Images in Television Advertising: An Exploratory Study of Masculine Gender Identity  
Neil Alperstein, Loyola University, USA

The Fantasized Masculinity: The Narrative to Construct the Masculine Ideal in Fantasy Sphere  
Nopporn Ruangwanit, Thammasat University, Thailand  
Kritsadarat Wattanasuwan, Thammasat University, Thailand

Perceived Online Interactivity of Blogs  
Dilip Mutum, University of Warwick, UK  
Ezlika Ghazali, University of Warwick, UK

The Impact of Italianate on UK Consumers’ Brand Perceptions of Luxury Brands  
Raffaella Paciolla, University of Westminster  
Li-Wei Mai, University of Westminster

Revisiting the Euroconsumer: Transnational History of European Coffee Consumption  
Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark  
Andrea Hemetsberger, University of Innsbruck, Austria  
Harri Luomala, University of Vaasa, Finland  
Dania Mastrangelo, IULM University, Italy  
Maria Pecoraro, University of Vaasa, Finland  
Jacob Ostberg, Stockholm University, Sweden  
Elisabeth A. Pichler, University of Innsbruck, Austria

“Have It Now!”: Ebay and the Acceleration of Consumer Desire  
Janice Denegri-Knott, Bournemouth University, UK

The “Give-the-Service-Customer-Special-Treatment-Approach.” What Happens when Other Customers are Present in the Service Encounter?  
Magnus Söderlund, Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden  
Peter Gabrielson, Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden
On the Borderline: Metaconsumption and the Liminal Tween ................................................................. 385
Kevina Cody, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland
Katrina Lawlor, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland
Pauline Maclaran, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

Identifying Adolescent Peer Group Structure in the Search of Social Network Methods ......................................................... 394
Elodie Gentina, Univ Lille Nord de France, France
Marie-Hélène Fosse-Gomez, Univ Lille Nord de France, France

Communitas Interruptus: The Limits of Loyalty ................................................................................................. 401
James McAlexander, Oregon State University, USA

Consumption as a Tool of Cultural Resistance Against Patriarchy: The Case of First Generation Nigerian Women Living in Britain ........................................................................................................... 406
Preye Worlu, Manchester Business School, UK
Andrew Lindridge, The Open University Business School, UK

Governing Consumers through Freedom: A Theoretical Discussion of the Co-creation Branding Paradigm................................. 412
Jon Bertilsson, Lund University, Sweden
Cecilia Cassinger, Lund University, Sweden

The Paralyzed Customer: An Empirical Investigation of Antecedents and Consequences of Decision Paralysis ...................... 417
Frank Huber Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany
Sören Köcher, TU Dortmund University, Germany
Frederik Meyer, Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany
Johannes Vogel, Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany

Extended Abstracts

Segmenting Internet Users Using Emotions ......................................................................................................................... 424
George Christodoulides, University of Birmingham, UK
Nina Michaelidou, University of Birmingham, UK
Nikoletta-Theofania Siamagka, University of London, UK

An Experimental Investigation of the Influence of Virtual Community Characteristics on Consumers’ Evaluations of an Online Store .................................................................................................................. 426
Peter Domma, Saarland University, Germany
Hanna Schramm-Klein, University of Siegen, Germany
Joachim Zentes, Saarland University, Germany

Conflicting Imperatives of Modesty and Vanity Among Young Women in the Arabian Gulf .............................................. 429
Rana Sobh, Qatar University, Qatar
Russell Belk, York University, Canada
Justin Gressel, University of Texas, Pan American, USA

A Theorization of Symbolic-substitution: Exploring Taboo and the Muslim Female Consumer ........................................... 430
Fajer Saleh Al-Mutawa, University of Bath, UK
Richard Rosenbaum-Elliott, University of Bath, UK
Peter Nuttall, University of Bath, UK

Age’s What You Make It. Negotiating the Life Course in Female Underwear Consumption ................................................. 432
Matthias Bode, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Per Østergaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
It’s the Mindset that Matters: The Role of Construal Level and Message Framing in Influencing Consumer Conservation Behaviors

Katherine White, University of Calgary, Canada
Rhiannon MacDonnell, University of Calgary, Canada
Darren Dahl, University of British Columbia, Canada

Product Information Presented as Ratios and the Role of Consumer Processing Mode: Can Analytical Processing Lead to More Biased Judgments for Certain Ratio Formats?

Dipayan Biswas, Bentley University, USA
Patricia Norberg, Quinnipiac University, USA
Donald Lehmann, Columbia University, USA

The Influence of Brand Concept and Styles of Thinking on Brand Extension Evaluation

Alokparna B. Monga, University of South Carolina, USA
Deborah R. John, University of Minnesota, USA

Self-Concept and Brand Relationship Dimensions on Teenage Consumption Representations

Ana Paula Cavallet, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil
Paulo Prado, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil

Sociocultural Branding Research (SBR): An Evolutionary Paradigm for Brand Management Theory

Aidan Kelly, University of East London, UK

Brand Meaning in the Age of the Critical Reflective Consumer: A Greimasian Semiotic Square Analysis

Per Østergaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Judy Hermansen, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Purchasing Motivations of Regular and Occasional Organic Food Consumers: The Incidence of Food Safety and Ethical Concerns

Gianluigi Guido, University of Salento, Italy
M. Irene Prete, University of Salento, Italy
Giovanni Pino, Scuola Superiore ISUFI, Italy
Alessandro M. Peluso, LUISS “Guido Carli” University, Italy

Antecedents and Outcomes of Consumer Uncertainty in Ethical Buying Decisions: A Conceptual Model

Gianfranco Walsh, University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany
Deirdre Shaw, University of Glasgow, Scotland
Edward Shiu, University of Strathclyde, Scotland
Louise Hassan, Heriot-Watt University, Scotland

Commercial Ethnography and the Production of Practice

Alex Thompson, University of Exeter; UK

‘I Actually Could See That:’ Narrative Imagination and the Consumption Experience at Storyscapes

Athinodoros Chronis, California State University, USA

Performativity and Belonging: Negotiating the Ethnographer and Her Field in Virtual Worlds

Ioanna Nikolaou, University of Bradford, UK
Shona Bettany, University of Bradford, UK

Are Guilt Appeals Good in Green Marketing? The Moderating Roles of Issue Proximity and Environmental Involvement

Chun-Tuan Chang, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan
Yu-Kang Lee, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan
Ting-Ting Chen, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan
Shan-Min Wu, National University of Kaohsiung, Taiwan
Product Series Judgment: Nonconscious Consumption of Parallel Extrinsic Cues ................................................................. 452
Lin Huang, University of Michigan, USA

Contrast and Assimilation in Response to Associative Priming: The Case of Cross-Category Brand Alliances ......................... 453
Laura Smarandescu, Iowa State University, USA
Randall L. Rose, University of South Carolina, USA
Douglas Wedell, University of South Carolina, USA

One Without the Other: The Effects of Priming Individual and Collective Mindsets on Consumer Choice and Valuation ........ 455
James Alvarez-Mourey, University of Michigan, USA
Daphna Oyserman, University of Michigan, USA
Carolyn Yoon, University of Michigan, USA

It's the Thought That Counts: Choosing Between a Gift Registry Gift and Free Choice ................................................................. 457
Morgan Ward, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Susan Broniarczyk, University of Texas at Austin, USA

Unwrapping the Contribution of Gift Wrapping to the Overall Value of a Gift ................................................................. 458
Elizabeth Porublev, Monash University, Australia
Jan Brace-Govan, Monash University, Australia
Stella Minahan, Deakin University, Australia
Chris Dubelaar, Bond University, Australia

Grief Goods: Material Possessions and Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement ................................................................. 459
Darach Turley, Dublin City University, Ireland
Stephanie O'Donohoe, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Exploring the Emotive Nature of Self-Fashioning Practice within Competitive Female Relations ................................................................. 460
Karen Rafferty, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

The Ironic Effects of Credit Card Balances and Credit Limits on Consumer Spending ................................................................. 461
Keith Wilcox, Babson College, USA
Lauren Block, Baruch College, USA

The Cost of Convenience: How Credit Cards Weaken Impulse Control and Increase Unhealthy Food Purchases ......................... 462
Manoj Thomas, Cornell University, USA
Kalpesh Kaushik Desai, SUNY Binghamton, USA
Satheeshkumar Seenivasan, SUNY Buffalo, USA

Affective Misforecasting and Consumption Behavior: The Influence of Restrained Eating and Emotional Intelligence ................. 464
Tatiana Levit, University of Regina, Canada
David Hardesty, University of Kentucky, USA
Blair Kidwell, University of Kentucky, USA
Terry Childers, Iowa State University, USA

Voluptas, Goddess of Sensual Pleasure: How Consumers Deal with Pros and Cons of Voluptuary Consumption ......................... 465
Stefano Pace, Bocconi University, Italy
Lia Zarantonello, Bocconi University, Italy
Daniele Dalli, University of Pisa, Italy

The Faces of the New Consumer (1990-2010)–A Governmental Process? ............................................................................. 467
Bernard Cova, Euromed Management Marseille, France
Veronique Cova, Université Paul Cezanne Aix-Marseille 3, France

Consumer Response to Anthropomorphic Animal Images Based on Their Similarity to Humans ................................................................. 468
Paul M Connell, Stony Brook University, USA
An Exploratory Analysis of the Links between Human-Pet Relationship and Consumer Behaviour ...................................................... 469
Kuang-peng, Hung, Ming Chuan University, Taiwan
Annie Hui-ling Chen, Ming Chuan University, Taiwan
Norman Peng, Middlesex University, UK

An Obligation to Work or an Opportunity to Have Fun? The Influence of Task Construal and Task Completion on Regulatory Behavior ............................................................................................................. 470
Juliano Laran, University of Miami, USA
Chris Janiszewski, University of Florida, USA

From Washington to New York to London: The Effect of Subgoal Accomplishment on Satisfaction .................................................... 471
Ozge Yucel, Baruch College, USA
Pragya Mathur, Baruch College, USA
Lauren Block, Baruch College, USA

An Empirical Analysis of the Antecedents and Consequences of Brand Rituals .................................................................................. 472
Katja-Maria Prexl, Zeppelin University, Germany
Peter Kenning, Zeppelin University, Germany

When Seeing Many Types of Wine Makes You More Sensitive to Technological Threats: Unrelated, Prior Categorizations and Reactions to Change ...................................................................................................................... 474
Amitav Chakravarti, New York University, USA
Christina Fang, New York University, USA
Zur Shapira, New York University, USA

Incidence of Bottom-Up and Top-Down Cognitive Processes on Brand Confusion. Approach from the Categorization Theory .......................................................................................................................................................................... 475
Benjamín Sierra-Díez, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
Manuel Froufe-Torres, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
Carlos Falces-Delgado, Universidad Miguel Hernández, Spain
Jenniffer Peralta-Montecinos, Universidad de Tarapacá, Chile

Why Prepare a Meal When Supermarkets Will Do It For Us? A Study of Meals as a Metaphor ........................................................ 477
Céline Del Bucchia, Edhec Business School, Lille, France

The Death of ‘Pester Power’. Intergenerational Food Shopping ........................................................................................................... 479
Malene Gram, Aalborg University, Denmark

Effects of Product Unit Image on Consumption of Snack Foods ........................................................................................................... 481
Adriana Madzharov, Baruch College
Lauren Block, Baruch College

The Influence of Subtle External Cues on Eating Behavior .................................................................................................................. 482
Thomas A. Brunner, ETH Zurich, Institute for Environmental Decisions, Consumer Behavior, Switzerland
Michael Siegrist, ETH Zurich, Institute for Environmental Decisions, Consumer Behavior, Switzerland

Purpose of Word-of-Mouth: A Conceptual Model .............................................................................................................................. 483
Aliosha Alexandrov, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, USA
Emin Babakus, University of Memphis, USA

Product Appearance as a Cue for Performance Quality: The Influence of Product Personality .......................................................... 485
Ruth Mugge, Delft University of Technology The Netherlands

The Ambiguous Effects of Advertisements Promoting Social Change ................................................................................................. 487
Natalina Zlatevska, Bond University, Australia
Methodological Nationalism: Pitfalls in Consumer Research and Their Remedies .................................................. 489
Bernardo Figueiredo, University of New South Wales, Australia

Tourism Promotion and Nation Branding: Insights from the Turkish Case ................................................................. 490
Ozlem Sandikci, Bilkent University, Turkey
Jan Dirk Kemming, University of Applied Science, Germany

Kiwiana: National Identity and Consumption .................................................................................................................. 491
Sean Sands, Monash University, Australia
Michael Beverland, University of Bath, UK

Branding of the Anti-Market Brands: ‘Imagine’ Lennon and ‘Pop’ Bono ............................................................... 492
E. Taçlı Yazıcıoğlu, Bogazici University, Turkey

Product Placement in Song Lyrics: Impact of Cognitive Load, Disclosure, Valence and Strength .................................. 495
Bruno Kocher, HEC Paris, France
Marco Lalos, HEC Lausanne, Switzerland
Stephen J. Gould, Baruch College, USA
Sandor Czellar, HEC Paris, France

In Defence of Authenticity, An Analysis of Consumers’ Responses to A Crisis of Authenticity ......................................... 496
Matteo Corciolani, Università di Pisa, Italy

Is Product-Cause Fit a Panacea in Cause-Related Marketing? Impacts of Type of Fit, Product Type, and Donation Magnitude .......................................................................................................................... 498
Chun-Tuan Chang, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan
Hsiu-Wen Liu, Soochow University, Taiwan
Ting-Ting Chen, National Sun Yat-sen University

Improving Attitude towards Compliance with Medication through a Public Health Campaign: A Field Study .................. 500
Andrea Groeppel-Klein, Saarland University, Germany
Christian Germelmann, Saarland University, Germany

Fostering Sustainable Consumption Practices through Consumer Empowerment ....................................................... 502
Cristina Cardigo, ISCTE, Portugal
Paulo Rita, ISCTE, Portugal

Customer Value in Consumption-Systems: The Case of Mobile Telecommunication .............................................. 504
Alexander Zauner, WU Vienna, Austria
Arne Floh, WU Vienna, Austria
Monika Koller, WU Vienna, Austria

Masculine Experience of Happiness in New Zealand: How Young Men Consume Happiness .................................... 506
Lorraine Friend, University of Waikato, New Zealand
Carolyn Costley, University of Waikato, New Zealand
Nikita Wilson, University of Waikato, New Zealand

And Now a Word from Our Sponsor: A Comparison of Online Streaming Video and Traditional Television in Terms of Advertising Perceptions and Attitudes .......................................................................................................................... 508
Kelty Logan, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA

Data Doppelgänger: Addressing the Darker Side of Digital Identity ............................................................................ 510
Reppel Alexander, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK
Szmigin ISabelle, Univesity of Birmingham, UK
Consumer Expectations Of Web Site Functionality According To Task Context
Kathryn Waite, School of Management and Languages, Heriot Watt University, UK
Tina Harrison, Business School, University of Edinburgh, UK

Segmenting the Silver Market Using Cognitive Age and the List of Values: Empirical Evidence from Japan
Florian Kohlbacher, German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ), Japan
Emmanuel J. Chéron, Sophia University, Japan

When Imagining Oneself as the Victim Is Not Always Beneficial: The Impact of Differences in Perspectives on Effectiveness of Charitable Advertisements
Iris W. Hung, National University of Singapore, Singapore
Robert S. Wyer, Jr. University of Illinois, USA

The Influence of Victim-Unitization on Charitable Giving
Katherine Burson, University of Michigan, USA
Robert Smith, University of Michigan, USA
David Faro, London Business School, UK

Leapfrogging Over the Joneses: When Equality Increases Conspicuous Consumption Among Bottom-Tier Consumers
Nailya Ordabayeva, Erasmus University, the Netherlands
Pierre Chandon, INSEAD, France

When Not Redeeming a Coupon Feels Like Missing More Than Its Value
Liad Weiss, Columbia University, USA
Ran Kivetz, Columbia University, USA

Transforming Consumers Through Emotional Calibration
Kidwell Blair, University of Kentucky, USA
Hardesty David, University of Kentucky, USA
Childers Terry, Iowa State University, USA
Hasford Jonathan, University of Kentucky, USA

The Role of Identity in Disposal: Lessons from Mothers’ Disposal of Children’s Products
Barbara Phillips, University of Saskatchewan, Canada
Trina Sego, Boise State University, USA

The Effect of Flat Shipping Fee and Free Shipping Threshold on Consumer Evaluations
Nevena T. Koukova, Lehigh University, USA
Joydeep Srivastava, University of Maryland, USA
Martina Steul-Fischer, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany

Heterogeneity of Deal Proneness: A Human Capital Approach
Yoo Jin Kwon, Korea National Open University, Republic of Korea
Kyoung-Nan Kwon, Ajou University, Republic of Korea

Long-Term Effects of Exposure to Advertisements in Early Childhood
Paul M Connell, Stony Brook University, USA
Merrie Brucks, University of Arizona, USA
Jesper H. Nielsen, University of Arizona, USA

Young Consumer’s Immersion in an Artistic Experience: The Case of the Annisettanta (The 1970s)
Antonella Carù, Bocconi University and SDA Bocconi School of Management Milan, Italy
Bernard Cova, Euromed Management Marseilles-France and Bocconi University Milan, Italy
A European Philosophical Psychology of Asian Media Marketing Consumption: From Audience Absorption to Appropriation/ Alienation .......................................................... 526

Tony Wilson, University Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia

Visual Typicality and Novelty as Joint Predictors of Aesthetic Preference: The Influence of Design Expertise and Product Category Interest .......................................................... 528

Marielle E.H. Creusen, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands
Dirk Snelders, Eindhoven University of Technology/Aalto University, The Netherlands

The Manner of Art: An Aesthetic Influence on Evaluation ........................................................................... 530

Henrik Hagtvedt, Boston College, USA
Vanessa Patrick, University of Houston, USA

Aesthetic Appraisal of Product Designs: Independent Effects of Processing Fluency and Arousal .................. 532

Janneke Blijlevens, Delft University of Technology, Industrial Design Engineering, The Netherlands
Claus-Christian Carbon, University of Bamberg, Department of Psychology, Germany
Ruth Mugge, Delft University of Technology, Industrial Design Engineering, The Netherlands
Jan P.L. Schoormans, Delft University of Technology, Industrial Design Engineering, The Netherlands

Customer Resistance to Joining Loyalty Programs: An Exploratory Approach ................................................ 534

Dominique Roux, Université de Paris Sud 11, France
Mariem El Euch Maalej, IRG-Université Paris-Est, France

Does Snobbish Service Generate Better Sales? The Case of Luxury Goods ...................................................... 536

Jyh-Shen Chiou, National Chengchi University, Taiwan
Chien-Yi Huang, National Taipei College of Nursing, Taiwan

Signalling Effects in Luxury Consumption .................................................................................................. 537

Minas Kastanakis, ESCP Europe, UK

Legalization of the Role of the Nation State in the Freedom to Consume the Internet: Consumers’ Understanding of and Reactions to Internet Censorship in Turkey .......................................................... 540

Cagri Yalkin, King’s College, UK
Finola Kerrigan, King’s College, UK
Dirk Vom Lehn, King’s College, UK

Reconstruction Theory: Towards an Understanding of How Media Scheduling Influences Memory for Advertising .......................................................... 541

Hayden Noel, University of Illinois, USA
Kathy LaTour, UNLV, USA

Broken Promises: Misleading Advertising, Disconfirmation and Generalized Distrust ..................................... 542

Peter Darke, Schulich School of Business, York University, Canada
Laurence Ashworth, School of Business, Queens University, Canada
Kelley Main, Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba, Canada

Portfolio Advertising as an Instrument to Strengthen the Corporate Brand in a Complex Brand Architecture ..................... 543

Franz-Rudolf Esch, Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen, Germany
Christian Boris Brunner, Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen, Germany

Mimicry and Postcolonial Advertising ........................................................................................................ 544

Rohit Varman, University of Reading, UK
Julien Cayla, University of New South Wales, Australia
Hari S, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, India

Testing Antecedents and Moderators in Product Evaluation: Towards a New Model of Consumer Satisfaction .......................................................... 545

Alessandro M. Peluso, LUISS University of Rome, Italy
Gianluigi Guido, University of Salento, Lecce, Italy
Mental Accounting of Time Versus Money ................................................................. 547
Robin L. Soster, University of South Carolina, USA
Ashwani Monga, University of South Carolina, USA
William O. Bearden, University of South Carolina, USA

Film Festival

The Japanese Tea Ceremony as Luxury ............................................................................ 549
Hiroshi Tanaka, Chuo University, Japan
Junko Kimura, Hosei University, Japan

Paradise Lost: The Making of Shangri-La ....................................................................... 549
Russell Belk, York University, Canada
Rosa Llamas, University of León, Spain

Portalxbox–A Videographic Study on a Brand Community ........................................... 549
Stefânia Almeida, FACE/PUCRS-Brazil, Brazil
João Fleck, PPGA/UFRGS-Brazil, Brazil
Jose Mazzon, USP Brazil, Brazil
Uptal Dholakia, Rice University, USA

Roundtable Summaries

ROUNDABIE
Marketing Practitioners and Consumer Research–Opportunities for Enhancing the Impact of Scholarly Work ....................... 550

Chairs:
Anders Bengtsson, Protobrand Sciences, USA

Participants:
Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Fleura Bardhi, Northeastern University, USA
Giana Eckhardt, Suffolk University, USA
Fuat Firat, University of Texas Pan-American, USA
Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Maura Troester Nunez, University of Colorado-Boulder, USA
Jacob Ostberg, Stockholm University, Sweden
Mark Ritson, The University of Melbourne, Australia

ROUNDABIE
Inside Marketing: A New Odyssey ................................................................................. 551

Chair:
Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada

Participants:
Julien Cayla, University of New South Wales, Australia
Kalman Applbaum, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA
Franck Cochoy, University of Toulouse, USA
Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Liz Moor, Goldsmiths College, UK
Lisa Peñaloza, EDHEC, France
Don Slater, London School of Economics, UK

**Roundtable**

*Marketplace Shaping of Spiritual Experiences: Current Theory and Prospects................................. 553*

**Chairs:**
Diego Rinallo, Bocconi University

**Participants:**
Gary Bamossy, Georgetown University, USA
Stefania Borghini, Bocconi University, Italy
Russell W. Belk, York University, Canada
Stephen J. Gould, Baruch College, USA
Robert V. Kozinets, York University, Canada
Pauline Maclaran, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK
Linda Scott, University of Oxford, UK
Hope Schau, University of Arizona, USA
Lorna Stevens, University of Ulster, UK
Darach Turley, City University of Dublin, Ireland

**Roundtable**

*Sustainability in the 21st Century: Conquering Hurdles, Building Bridges, Spanning Disciplines....................... 555*

**Chair:**
Susan Dobscha, Bentley University, USA
Jim Freund, University of Lancaster, UK

**Participants:**
Eric Arnould, University of Wyoming, USA
Stacey Baker, University of Wyoming, USA
Gary Bamossy, Georgetown University, USA
Bill Kilbourne, Clemson University, USA
Pierre McDonagh, Dublin City University, Ireland
Lucie Ozanne, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Andrea Prothero, University College Dublin, Ireland
Michel Strahilevitz, Golden Gate University, USA

**Roundtable**

*Global Brand Culture ............................................................................................................................................. 556*

**Chair:**
Jonathan E. Schroeder, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA

**Participants:**
Eric Arnould, University of Wyoming, USA
Søren Askegaard, Southern Denmark University, Denmark
Gary Bamossy, Georgetown University, USA
Janet Borgerson, University of Exeter, UK
Julien Cayla, University of South Wales, Australia
Bernard Cova, Euromed Marseilles, France
Teresa Davis, University of Sydney, Australia
Giana Eckhardt, Suffolk University, USA
Richard Elliott, University of Bath, UK
Markus Giesler, Schulich School of Business, Canada
Chair:
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Bernard Cova, Euromed Management Marseille, France
Mike Lee, University of Auckland Business School, New Zealand
Dominique Roux, Université Paris-Sud, France

Participants:
Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Russell Belk, York University, USA
Jan Brace-Govan, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling, Scotland, UK
Daniele Dalli, Università di Pisa, Italy
Markus Giesler, York University, USA
Margaret Hogg, University of Lancaster, UK
Rob Kozinets, York University, Canada
Nil Özçaglar-Toulouse, University Lille Nord de France, LSMRC, France
Sharyn Rundle-Thiele, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
Avi Shankar, University of Bath, UK
Lionel Sitz, EM Lyon, France

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Graham Austin, Montana State University, USA

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Participants:
Laurel Anderson, Arizona State University, USA
Graham Austin, Montana State University, USA
Stacey Baker, University of Wyoming, USA
Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Australia
Jan Brace-Govan (Monash University, Australia
Susan Dobscha, Bentley University, USA
Pierre McDonagh, Dublin City University, Republic of Ireland
Gergana Nenkov, Boston College, USA
Nailya Ordabayeva, INSEAD, France
Julie Ozanne, Virginia Tech, USA
Lucie Ozanne, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Nil Özçaglar-Toulouse, University of Lille, France
Michal Ann Strailestonez, Golden Gate University, USA
Ekant Veer, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Working Paper Abstracts

The Role of Techniques of Neutralization in Using Double Standards
Tine De Bock, Ghent University, Belgium
Patrick Van Kenhove, Ghent University, Belgium
Analyzing Consumer Culture Dynamics through Text Analysis of Media Discourse: A Sociological Approach
Takeshi Matsui, Hitotsubashi University, Japan

Approach Versus Avoidance Motivations in Food Selection
Michael D. Basil, University of Lethbridge, Canada

Medical Chic: The Consumption of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Urban China
Xin Zhao, University of Hawaii, USA
Jeff Wang, City University of Hong Kong, China

Exploring Consumers' Perceptions of Product Offerings' Authenticity within Contemporary Asian Markets
Martin Liu, Nottingham University Business School, UK
China Natalia Yannopoulou, Nottingham University Business School, UK
Richard Elliott, University of Bath, UK

The Effects of Pre-visit Attributes on Active Consumption of Museums Experience
Babak Taheri, University of Strathclyde, UK
Karen Thompson, University of Strathclyde, UK

Adult Consumers' Understanding and Use of Information on Food Labels: A Study Among Consumers Living in the Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp Region
Sunelle A. Jacobs, North-West University, South Africa
Hanli de Beer, North-West University, South Africa
Ment Larney, North-West University, South Africa

Investment of Self Into Products
Sukriye Sinem Atakan, University of Michigan, USA
Richard P. Bagozzi, University of Michigan, USA
Carolyn Yoon, University of Michigan, USA

Exploring Consumers' Perceptions of Brand Personality: A Qualitative Approach
Natalia Maehle, Norwegian Institute of Food, Fisheries and Aquaculture Research (Nofima), Norway
Cele Otnes, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
Magne Supphellen, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Norway

Factors Influence British Muslim Clothing Choice In The United Kingdom (UK)
Syadiyah Abdul Shukor, Cardiff University, UK

The Construal of Brand Extensions: The Effects of Abstract vs. Concrete Mindsets on Product Judgement and Evaluation
Leonie Reutner, Universität Basel, Switzerland
Michaela Wänke, Universität Basel, Switzerland

Children's Preferences of Package Design
Dan Zhang, Temple University, USA
James Hunt, Temple University, USA
Anthony Di Benedetto, Temple University, USA
Richard Lancioni, Temple University, USA

The Negotiation and Consumption of Mediated Masculinities in the Artistry of the Male Self
Deirdre Duffy, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

Ernest Dichter, Motivation Research and the Making of the Disembedded Consumer, 1939-1965
Stefan Schwarzkopf, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Spiritual Motivated Tourism of Older Adults
Gaëlle Ulvoas, ESC BRETAGNE Brest, France
Reducing Plastic Bag Consumption: A Community Approach to Social Marketing ................................................................. 580
Caroline Moraes, University of Birmingham, UK
Marylyn Carrigan, The Open University, UK
Sheena Leek, University of Birmingham, UK

Acculturated in Homeland: Consumer Culture in Morocco .......................................................................................... 581
Marie-Hélène Fosse-Gomez, University Lille Nord de France, France
Delphine Godefroit-Winkel, University Lille Nord de France, France
Nil Özçlgar-Toulouse, University Lille Nord de France, France

The Joint Effects of Choice Assortment and Regulatory Focus on Choice Behavior ........................................................... 582
Anirban Som, (Former Graduate Student) National University of Singapore, Singapore
Yih Hwai Lee, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Sex Role Conflict and Consumption Patterns at Work: A Study of Working Women in Non-Western Cultural Context .............. 584
Deniz Atik, Izmir University of Economics, Turkey
Dicle Yurdakul Sahin, Izmir University of Economics, Turkey

How Consumers Use a Product Meaningfully: A Classification of Consumers as Value-Creating Practitioners ......................... 584
Elina Närvinen (née Leppälä), University of Tampere, Finland

First Jointly, Then Separately: A New Approach to Address Complexity in Product Evaluations ................................................ 586
Martin Meißner, Bielefeld University, Germany
Sören W. Scholz, Bielefeld University, Germany
Reinhold Decker, Bielefeld University, Germany

“What I Really Detest as a Polish Immigrant is Other Poles”: Class and Consumption Among Eastern European Immigrants in London .................................................................................................................. 586
Marta Rabikowska, University of East London, UK

Coping with Brand Break-Ups: How Attachment Style Predicts Consumer Vengeance .............................................................. 588
Allison R. Johnson, University of Western Ontario, Canada
Matthew Thomson, University of Western Ontario, Canada
Jodie Whelan, University of Western Ontario, Canada

Haiyang Yang, INSEAD, France
Amitava Chattopadhyay, INSEAD, Singapore

Crossing into the New Year through the Chinese New Year Reunion Dinner: The Case of the Chinese Ethnic Consumers in Malaysia ......................................................................................................................... 588
Bee Chuan Sia, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia
Ahmad Jamal, Cardiff University, UK

An Exploratory Study of UK Teenage Behaviour in Online Social Network Environments ........................................................ 589
Leigh Doster, UK

Interactive Advertising Uses and Gratifications: A Comparative Analysis of Factors Motivating Media Use for Two New Product Types ........................................................................................................ 590
Dorothea Schaffner, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland

Cultural Age ........................................................................................................................................................................ 591
Maria Suokannas, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland

Postmodern Paradoxes in Thai Consumer Identity ................................................................................................................ 593
Amy Rungpaka Tiwsakul, University of Surrey, UK
Chris Hackley, Royal Holloway University of London, UK

xxxiv
Product Placed Versus Product Interacted: Does It Matter? .......................................................... 593
Bernadette Kamleitner, Queen Mary, University of London, UK
Abul Khair Jyote, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, Bangladesh

The Effect of Systems of Thought on Brand Scandal Spillover: Holistic versus Analytic Cognition Moderating Scandal Spillover and Denial Effects .......................................................... 593
Yun Lee, University of Iowa, USA
Nara Youn, University of Iowa, USA and Hongik University Korea

Fancy a Cuppa: Online Consumer Co-creation of the PG Tea Monkey Brand .................................. 595
Kimberly Sugden, University of Oxford, UK

Seeking Meaning outside the Consumer Culture ........................................................................ 596
Itir Binay, Monash University, Australia
Jan Brace-Govan, Monash University, Australia
Harmen Oppewal, Monash University, Australia

Implicit and Explicit Sexual Orientation, Attitudes toward Advertising, and Self-reported Physiological and Psychological Well-being .......................................................... 598
Patrick Vargas, University of Illinois, USA

Unpacking the Ethically-Minded Consumer: Understanding the Role of the ‘Personal Journey’ Life Project .......................................................... 599
Michal Carrington, University of Melbourne, Australia
Benjamin Neville, University of Melbourne, Australia
Gregory Whitwell, University of Melbourne, Australia

Predicting Contest Proneness and Participation .......................................................... 601
Mike Reid, RMIT University, Australia
Peter Thompson, Monash University, Australia
Felix Mavondo, Monash University, Australia
Karen Brunsø, Aarhus University, Denmark

How Do Postconsumers Navigate the Multiple Orders of Contemporary Consumer Society? Emotion and Reason in Young Consumers’ Narratives of Consumerism .......................................................... 602
Johanna Moisander, Aalto University School of Economics, Finland
Shania Määtätä, Aalto University School of Economics, Finland
Minna Autio, University of Helsinki, Finland

An Analysis of Hyperopic Consumers’ Perception of Indulgence Behaviors .................................. 604
Wei Chen, University of Connecticut, USA
Narasimhan Srinivasan, University of Connecticut, USA

Imagining Place-Based Community Through Consumption? An Autoethnography ................................................. 604
Michelle Hall, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Social Sharing of Consumption-related Emotions: Benefit from What Your Customers Say About You .......................................................... 605
Inés López, University of Murcia, Spain
Salvador Ruiz, University of Murcia, Spain
Luk Warlop, KU Leuven, Belgium

Brands and Othering: A Study of Children’s Social Identity Formation .......................................................... 607
Terhi Väistö, Aalto University School of Economics, Finland
Johanna Moisander, Aalto University School of Economics, Finland
Sammy Toyoki, Aalto University School of Economics, Finland

The Dynamics of Post Millennium Consumer Utopia: Pluralism, Personalization, Participation and Personification .......................................................... 608
Prashant Saxena, National University of Singapore, Singapore
More to Loathe than to Love? The Reinforcement and Contestation of Stigma in the Reality T.V. Show “More to Love”  610
Daiane Scaraboto, York University, Canada
Eileen Fischer, York University, Canada
Annie Blanchette, University of Exeter, UK

Agency, Objects and the Dead: Can Consumer Culture Speak?  611
Ming Lim, University of Leicester, UK
James Fitchett, University of Leicester, UK

“Written Just for Me?” The Role of Consumer-Related Factors in the Persuasiveness of Personalized Communication  612
Ewa Maslowska, Edith Smit, ASCoR, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Bas van den Putte, ASCoR, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Does the Distribution-Sales Relationship Differ Between Channels and Countries? An Empirical Analysis  612
Hubert Gatignon, INSEAD, France
Erin Anderson, INSEAD, France
Joseph Lajos, HEC Paris, France

A Typology of Consumption Value: Teasing out the Unique Properties of Utilitarian, Symbolic, Experiential, and Aesthetic Consumption Qualities  612
Even Lanseng, Norwegian School of Management, Norway

Imagined Brands in Global Brand Culture: China and the Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony  614
Wu ZhiYan, University of Exeter, UK
Janet L. Borgerson, University of Exeter, UK
Jonathan E. Schroeder, University of Exeter, UK

Consumption, Ethnicity and Tensions in Non-Western Contexts: An Exploration of the Kabyle Minority in Algeria  615
Nacima Ourahmoune, Reims Management School, France
Nil Özçaglar-Toulouse, University Lille Nord de France, LSMRC, France

Dominance and the Appeal of Violent Media  617
Laurence Ashworth, Queen’s University, Canada
Martin Pyle, Queen’s University, Canada
Ethan Pancer, Queen’s University, Canada

How Brand Attitude and Loyalty Are Affected by Co-branding Types: The Role of Brand Identification  619
Na Xiao, Queen’s University, Canada
Fang Wan, University of Manitoba, Canada
Jill Lei, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Canada

Producers Consuming: Marketer Identity and the Creation of the Themed Retail Environment  620
Aron Darmody, York University, Canada
Eileen Fischer, York University, Canada

Linearize This! Why Consumers Underestimate Food Portion Changes and How to Help Them  621
Nailya Ordabayeva, INSEAD, France
Pierre Chandon, INSEAD, France

An Exploratory Study of Consumer Reactions to CO2 Labeling: The Struggle of Eating What You Want and Doing the Right Thing  623
Pia A Albinsson, Walker College of Business, USA

Shared Spaces and Personal Corners in Social Networking Websites: The Contracted and the Cryptically Revealed Self  624
Sofia Christidi, University of Bath, UK
Richard Rosenbaum-Elliott, University of Bath, UK
Eager Vigilance in Consumer Response to Negative Information: The Role of Regulatory Focus and Information Ambiguity
Hua Li, University Paul Cézanne Aix-Marseille (Cergam) and SKEMA Business School, France
Dwight Merunka, University Paul Cézanne Aix-Marseille (Cergam) and Euromed Management Marseilles, France

“Subcultures of Prosumption” – Prosumption as Distinction in Freeskiing
Niklas Woermann, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Two Defending Strategies of Threatened Brand Identity in Co-branding: The Moderating Role of Perceived Identity Fit
Na Xiao, Queen’s University, Canada
Fang Wan, University of Manitoba, Canada

Consuming Metaphors: Being a Consumer
Hillary Leonard, University of Rhode Island, USA


development will examine and debate emerging key issues that are essential to moving the consumer research agenda forward. Each paper develops interesting conceptual and theoretical perspectives on consumers’ voluntary process of reducing consumption and questions how market processes are engaged in the politics of degrowth. What ideological shifts will be required to make personal, private habit a matter of public policy? What sacrifices will need to be made? What does reduced consumption mean if possessions have been a key source of identity formation? And what role do social norms and social acceptance play in the development of anti-consumption and disposal practices? This special session offers to discuss the conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues of anti-consumption and reduced consumption, marketing’s role in consumer resistance and social justice, as well as, the interplay of agency and structure in processes of consumption reduction.

The first paper uses visual analysis to present the shift required in personal cleaning habits in order to reduce water consumption. While most developed nations have water security, as well as water of very good quality, Australia’s south-east is an excellent example of what happens when resources are presumed to be automatically available but become problematic. Drawing a person’s daily, routine cleaning habits out from the privacy of the bathroom to the glare of public scrutiny has implications. Interview data shows that the exemplars of the water study offer new routines from varying ideological frames that can be adopted by mainstream consumers, perhaps with some adaptation.

Why do some consumers decide to reduce their consumption while others take this far less seriously? The second paper explores the concept of sacrifice and the meanings that attach to the process of downshifting. Drawing from the consumer theory of consumer desire and consumer emancipation, this paper goes on to consider the liberatory act of self-realization that can be accomplished through sacrifice and examines pertinent social and psychological theories. Based on phenomenological interviews the experience of downshifting is discussed to show that distancing oneself from the logic of the market can be personally rewarding when experienced with others.

Given consumers’ choice to reduce their consumption level and to opt for not consuming particular brands, products or activities, the third paper rightly questions the actual meanings of not consuming. The issues of defining the idea of not-consuming and understanding the implications of anti-consumption are raised. While anti-consumption cannot simply be about rejecting the marketplace, nevertheless there are multiple variations of resistance, protest, and focus. The issues raised in this paper foreshadow the fourth and last paper that considers the potential for practice theory to find a comprehensive explanatory framework for sustainable daily routines. Practice theory has much to offer and as Kjellberg suggests it offers a viable framework from which to assess the intersection of consumers, markets and consumption (2008, p.162), or reductions in consumption whether voluntary or required. Using the example of disposal to consider the everyday habits and routines of a household opens up the discussion and challenges some of our assumptions about consumer agency, structure and the sources of social norms.

ABSTRACTS


Marcus Phipps, University of Melbourne, Australia

Water consumption is a key challenge for many places around the world. In Australia, a developed nation that is a significant exporter of food, access to water was once taken for granted. Severe drought, heavy restrictions and public debate challenge expectations of rights to water. A visual analysis explores urban water users’ alternative approaches to reduce their water consumption as they respond to the extended drought. Fieldwork photographs illustrate household efforts to reduce reliance on mains water. Key is the necessity to make conventionally private bathroom behaviours a matter for public concern and challenge the social norms of personal cleaning.

“Moving into the Woods: Finding Meanings through Sacrifice”

Helene Cherrier, Griffith University, Australia

The informants for this study shifted from living and consuming the urban life to living in remote places where consumer culture is not as prevalent. In the process, they have reduced their consumption to a bare minimum, aiming toward a simple and sustainable lifestyle. The analysis shows that reducing consumption can be conceptualized as a sacrifice which 1) offers the means for cleansing the sacrifier of his/her guilt and 2) can lead to a meaningful existence when experienced with others. Additionally, this study notes that the challenges, conflicts and comprises experienced in altering consumption lifestyle are mostly expressed in terms of weak social ties and feelings of loneliness. The research lends support for three observations: sacrifice can be liberating and emancipating, individual and private emancipatory practices are temporary, and one can reject only by embracing something greater (Kozinets 2002; Kozinets & Handelman 2004).

“What Does “Not Possessing” Mean?”

Itir Binay, Monash University, Australia

This paper aims to assist with better conceptualisation of the meanings of not-possessing by reviewing literature on materialism and anti-consumption in relation to the symbolic meaning of possessions. Literature on anti-consumption is classified as “anti-consumption by preference” and “anti-consumption by rejection.” Whilst “anti-consumption by preference” paradoxically requires some level of consumption, “anti-consumption by rejection” implies moving away from possessions as sources of meaning. It is proposed that the understudied research context of eco-communities, where inhabitants commit to sharing, would help theorise meanings of not-possessing as well as utopian spaces of escape from consumerism.
Acknowledging disposal as a site for theorisation is important for discussions of reducing consumption. The marketing discourse has long assumed that disposition is the terminal point for production but this is no longer tenable. Disposal can instead be regarded as a new point in the valuing of objects and, by implication, also be a new point in the relationship of people to goods. To reduce, re-use and recycle requires a fresh look at the nexus of goods, producers, and consumers. This paper considers this through the lens of practice theory and within the context of disposal.

SELECTED REFERENCES

(Appendix of references on request)


SESSION OVERVIEW

Gekås Ullared (GU) is a department store located in the countryside in Sweden, in a small village named Ullared with about 800 inhabitants. Yet, it is the largest department store in Scandinavia selling for 3 billion SEK (2009). 100 million “cupcake paper molds,” 12 million packages of baking paper, 1 million bottles of shampoo, 12 million pair of socks and 2000 ton of candy are sold per year. During 2008, nearly 4 million people visited GU. Many people travel far in order to get to the store. Statistics from GU shows that an average visitor travels 230 kilometres one way and visits Gekås two times per year. Some visitors come from other countries such as Denmark and Norway. GU also runs a camping site nearby the store that includes small cottages of different sizes covering 700 beds in total and space for 350 caravans. The camping includes sauna, hot tubs, jacuzzi, fire-places for barbequing and mini-golf. Not far from the camping GU recently built a bathing place by filling an artificial lake with sand from the sea. GU also runs a motor museum, which for example, holds the white Excalibur ones owned by the heavyweight champion of the world Ingmar Johansson. During the autumn 2009, a docu-soap on GU was broadcasted in Swedish television, being one of the most popular TV-programs.

In order to understand the phenomenon Ullared, a group of researchers from University of Borås visited the department store and stayed at the camping site during three days in August 2009. Interviews and observations were made with customers, camping guests and employees. Based on the fieldwork, this session focuses on consumption patterns, family consumption, company strategies and problematic service encounters as well as making reflections on what makes Ullared one of the most popular tourist destinations in Sweden. The likely audience are researchers interested in consumer behavior and shopping, but also practitioners. The session contributes to consumer research in understanding shopping as a leisure activity. The different theoretical perspectives are believed provide a more comprehensive understanding of shopping at Ullared.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Creating Positive Experiences”
Daniel Hjelmgren, University of Borås, Sweden

In 1983 Berry coined the term “relationship marketing” (Grönroos 1994). According to Coviello et al. (2002) relationship marketing differs from more traditional transaction marketing by less focus on the company’s capability to recruit new customers, and more on its capability to retain customer relationships. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) point out the economic benefits of focusing on retaining customers rather than trying to recruit new ones. According to Reichheld and Sasser, a company which increases its customer retention by 5% may increase its profits by 25-85%. Grönroos (2002) argues that the key to maintain customer relationships is the ability to provide customers with positive experiences. According to Grönroos, positive experiences may also have a positive effect on customers’ propensity to spread positive rumours about the company that can facilitate the establishment of new customer relationships.

This paper aims to provide some insight into how Gekås Ullared (GU) establish and maintain customer relationships by giving its customers positive experiences. The paper is based on three interviews and a tour at the retail store. The interviews were conducted with Boris Lennnerhov (CEO), Carin Kjellgren (Purchasing Manager) and Thomas Karlsson (Buyer and partner). The tour was held by Boris Karlsson (Security Manager). According to Boris Lennnerhov (CEO), GU’s expenditures on so-called traditional marketing such as advertising and direct marketing are low. Instead, the company marketing is primarily built on trying to provide customers with positive experiences. This is something the company seems to manage quite well. A recent GfK report says that 85% of the visitors at the retail store considered their visit as good or very good (Norborg 2008). GU’s low prices probably have an important impact on how customers perceive their stay at the retail store. Prices are kept down by the large flow of goods, which allows for a lower price mark-up per sold unit. Another important reason is the company’s low renting costs. While many of the competitors have their stores and offices at so-called A-locations where rents are high, GU’s store and office are located in an old disused chrome factory which gradually has been expanded. Apart from prices, customers’ experiences may be affected by 1) assortment, 2) supplementary services, 3) availability, 4) attitude of the staff, and 5) physical environment (Lovelock & Wirtz 2007).

Assortment
GU’s assortment is broad and includes everything from clothing and house-wares to electronics and toiletries. Despite large costs due frequent price reductions and waste, women’s wear is the most important part. This is explained by the fact that most customers are women and that they primarily visit GU in order to buy clothes. Long-distance customers are primarily attracted by the outer garment. Outer garments are expensive and the customers may therefore save a lot of money by buying them cheaply. However, according to Carin Kjellgren (Purchasing Manager), the outer garment is not enough for making customers travel far in order to get to the retail store, but must be complemented with other articles.

Supplementary Services
Important supplementary services at the retail store are the service desk, the tourist information desk, and the two canteens. Long-distance customers may need accommodation. GU therefore runs a camping site nearby the retail store. GU also runs a motor museum, which, for example, holds the white Excalibur ones owned by the heavyweight champion Ingmar Johansson.

Availability
In order to make the retail store more accessible, GU has several times increased the number of parking spaces. Another way to make the store more available has been to increase the opening hours. The store is now open seven days a week. GU started to increase its opening hours on Saturdays. When it was no further room for increasing the opening hours on Saturdays, GU decided to even open on Sundays. In order to make the store more available, GU has also tried to eliminate the queues at the entrance of the store. Nevertheless, queues are still common. Queues appear about 50 days per year. Sometimes, the queue is more than two kilometres long.

Attitude of the Staff
How the customers experience their visit to GU is probably also affected by how they are treated by the staff. The staff’s ability to treat customers well has probably been positively affected by the fact that GU never have been forced to reduce the number of...
employees in order to increase its productivity. A major reason for this is the high growth, in 2009 sales increased by as much as 16%.

Physical Environment

In order to provide positive experiences, GU puts a lot of efforts on making the retail store as clean and pleasant as possible. Garments which have been taken by the customers into the test room, but proved to not fit, are left on a rack just outside the test room. When the rack is full, it is moved out to a certain sorting hall. After the clothes have been sorted they are quickly placed back into the store.

Concluding from above, the ability to attract customers is not only affected by the low prices, but also by the assortment, the supplementary services, the availability, etc. Apart from making more detailed descriptions of these different variables, future research should focus on how they really contribute to the customers’ experience of their visits to the retail store.

REFERENCES


“Family Consumption–tradition, conformity and distinction”

Karin M. Ekström, *University of Borås, Sweden*

Interactions and negotiations in families occur to a great extent through consumption. Shopping is sometimes a leisure activity. Some families travel to Gekås Ullared (GU) merely for shopping while others combine the visit with camping. The purpose of this paper is to discuss family consumption at GU and to find out what motivates families to visit GU. It is based on interviews with families and employees as well as observations in the department store and on the camping site nearby. The results are linked to conformity and distinction.

Family Consumption

The results show that a visit to Ullared has become a tradition among certain families. Children who earlier accompanied their parents to visit GU are now going there with their own families. Research on consumer socialization has focused on how children learn to become consumers (Johnston 1999). The results indicate that children “keep up with their parents” and have been socialized to visit GU. A reason for families to shop at GU is the cheap prices for clothes to children. It was common that both parents visited the children’s clothes department together even though their degree of involvement varied. The trip was often planned, for example by using purchase lists. Impulse purchases were also common. You are surrounded by loss leaders from the time you enter the store. Families visiting GU for a day seemed to have a somewhat different purchasing pattern than the families that stayed camping.

Families without children often began the shopping trip together, then split up to shop separately and later reunited. Traditional role specialization was noticeable at the women’s clothing department and in the department selling tools and electronics. Both women and men were found in the men’s clothing department, probably as a result of women being involved purchases of men’s clothes. Some couples shopped together during the entire visit, in particular elderly. Another observation was that some men who accompanied their wives seemed to be a bit bored.

Conformity and Distinction

Besides material necessary consumption (e.g., food, clothes) social emulation (Duesenberry 1949) is a central motivation to consume. Hjort (2004) calls this social necessary consumption, to be like everybody else and not deviate. Consumption has become important as a social marker in society (e.g., Bauman 1998). Everybody participates in “the catwalk of consumption (Ekström 2007; Hjort and Ekström 2006). The visit to GU can reflect conformity, to do like everybody else who visits GU. Some products sell in very high volume (e.g., 12 million socks) and people may influence each other to buy these products. Again, this indicates conformity. An employee indicated that trendsetters do not visit GU, but followers. The Joneses’ (in Swedish Svenssons’) visit GU, GU does not advertise, but rely on word-of-mouth. The recent docu-soap of GU has received a lot of attention in media. An article in a newspaper indicates that the docu-soap has led to 15 percent increase of visitors (Dagens Industri 2009).

Distinction is another driving force for consumption, to appear as unique, but within certain social norms. Conformity sets its limitations. A visit to GU can signal distinction in terms of finding bargains or by having a unique experience unusual from other department stores (e.g., staying in line before the store opens). Conformity and distinction sometimes appear simultaneously. For example, by purchasing a popular product (e.g., an Shakti mat) at a bargain price and by having a unique shopping experience. A product can express distinction in one context, but conformity in another. Customers create distinction by finding bargains and having unique experiences. Another distinction is to combine the visit to the shopping department with camping. The holiday can then be perceived as gratis since the products are purchased at a bargain.

The management of GU is aware of the importance of creating distinction for their customers. For example selling products at low prices perceived as bargains. GU is different from regular bargain stores in that they also sell brands. Another distinction is the orderliness created by the employees, but also by the store layout. GU also creates distinction by emphasizing service and good customer relations.

Finally, in relation to distinction, it is interesting to discuss why families think shopping at certain stores is finer than shopping at others. How is status constructed in families? It was earlier discussed that family members are socialized to think positively about visiting GU and that values and preferences are transferred from parents to children. In future research, it would also be interesting to find out how messages indicating that GU is not a preferred place to visit are transferred within families, i.e., why do families who can afford the travel costs stay away from GU.

REFERENCES


also found that personnel in a similar way judged customers entering the premises. Reynolds and Harris (2006) described how they sometimes used the telephone to warn each other. The personnel also “scan” the lane of customers and try to spot potential problematic customers. Check-out counter personnel describe how they try to help customers that are angry due to fact that they cannot return products (especially electronics) without a receipt of the purchase. One way is to try and find receipts in company’s computer system. A related way is to be not too firm on principles but instead try to oblige the customer even if he/she is wrong. It is also important to appear competent and not hesitate since it in these situations can make the customer’s behavior worse. Another way is to let someone else in the organization handle the situation. If the situation escalates and personnel feel that they cannot handle it they have the option to call on security. Personnel at the check-out counter also describe that when discovering ongoing incidents with misbehaving customers in other counters they sometimes use the telephone to call the counter and give their support and ask if they should call security.

After Incidents

After a specific incident several of the personnel at the check-out counter and the return counter emphasize the importance of talking to colleagues about it. In that way they also share experiences. They also mention that it is important not to take it personally. Some also try to forget it as soon as possible. This seems to be related to work experience. The more experienced personnel find it easier. Sometimes personnel also give vent to their feelings by temporary isolating themselves from customers and other employees, for example by visiting an empty room. Talking to colleagues and temporarily isolation were something that Reynolds and Harris (2006) also found in their study. An additional way to handle situations with customer misbehavior is that personnel try to relate to the customer’s situation and in that way somewhat excuse the behavior.

Conclusion and Future Research

The study has identified a number of tactics used by frontline personnel to handle acts of customer misbehavior. Knowledge about these tactics can be used by management in education for personnel in order to further improve the customer service and the way these incidents can be handled. Future research should investigate other retail stores in order to further expand the knowledge about customer misbehavior and tactics used among frontline personnel.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

A long history of research on the environment and sustainability has sought to identify harmful consumer activities and marketplace practices that damage the health and well-being of both humans and the earth (Fisk 1973; 1974). This body of research has successfully identified contradictions between social and economic efficiency that have led to many of the problems we face today such as over-consumption, unfair distribution of resources, and global warming. In this special session, we take a decidedly different and more hopeful tact. We examine three local community-based initiatives that offer some constructive exchange alternatives and are based on life-affirming values of sharing, capacity building, and wise stewardship over our limited resources.

Specifically, across the three papers, we examine the ongoing social construction and negotiation of new norms and values within three local community engagement projects: a co-housing initiative, a community time bank, and an online item exchange community. While these three projects differ in substantive focus, size, and scale, they are all examples of community members enacting their values through local forms of more sustainable exchange. Also, these initiatives are relatively new so, in some cases, we are able to see the actual development and formation of new social norms and community practices to affirm these values. In each of these papers, we focus substantively on the successes and failures that the community faces as they build these new social spaces. We seek to move toward a better understanding of community efficacy and to inform the development of an applied theory of community change.

Sharing is an act that binds people together and the quintessential examples of sharing arise within the family (Belk 2010). Moreover, the home is routinely an important site in which many family exchanges and sharing take place. Thus, Shona Bettany’s examination of the development of a co-housing project offers a provocative look at how co-housing members navigate exchange expectations within this shared and intimate space. She employs discourse analysis to examine tensions as families negotiate new ideas about local community.

Lucie Ozanne and Julie Ozanne examine the development of a time bank community. Time banks use a form of community exchange based on the notion that everyone’s time is equal in value. As such, time becomes a unit of value in which participants give and receive help in exchange for time credits. Based on focus groups, interviews, and participant observations, we see that community members are creating new norms but are negotiating these norms by comparing and contrasting them to marketplace exchanges and more familial forms of exchange.

Zeynep Arsel and Susan Dobscha examine an internet-mediated item exchange community that is both international and grass roots. This community operates like many other gift economies by people posting or requesting free goods that are then offered as gifts (Giesler 2006). While a set of norms are evolving to guide behavior within this new social space, the authors explore fissures and contradictions that reveal a dynamic and evolving community of non-reciprocal exchange.

In conclusion, this session should be of particular interest to scholars interested in issues such as sustainability, community building, community resilience and efficacy, sharing, gift giving, generosity, and altruism. Lucie Ozanne will guide discussions.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Performing Local Community through Co-housing: A Discourse Analysis of the Value and Values of Sharing the Home”
Shona M. M. Bettany, Bradford University, UK
Sharing is “a communal act that links us to other people” and the quintessential examples of sharing arise within the family home, routinely an important site in which many family exchanges and sharing take place (Belk 2010). In the Western world, insights on sharing focus on the family home, as the family represents what might be called a shared family identity (Epp and Price 2008).

Distinctions and boundaries are easily drawn between the private sharing sphere of the house and the public sphere outside (Belk 2010; Allen 1989). In the literature, distinctions have been made between “sharing in” (sharing within the family) and “sharing out” (giving to others outside the boundaries of the family, seen as more akin to gift giving and commodity exchange). This bounded family home context normalizes and routinizes sharing activities, and access to insights about consumer sharing is fairly straightforward, hence the understandable focus on this context. However, what consumer research insights might be accrued from examining a structured and intentional sharing scenario within the context of the home that blurs the boundaries between public and private, and “sharing in” and “sharing out”?

One such phenomenon, co-housing offers the potential to explore practically and theoretically, new implications, public benefits and novel models of exchange arising from this way of living.

There has been a contemporary resurgence in the development of co-housing schemes and other similar developments with a focus on community sharing. Co-housing schemes are communities that bring individuals and families together in groups to live together as a community that shares common aims, activities and facilities while also enjoying their own self-contained accommodation and personal space. The growth of this phenomenon has been linked to contemporary societal concerns in the Western world over ecological issues, sustainability and the alienating effects of the breakdown of traditional local communities in town and cities. This contribution is part of a wider ethnographic study of a specific co-housing development in the North of England. In this specific work, reflecting the current stage of development of the subject co-housing project (the planning and promotional stage) the author examines the discourses underpinning the promotional material developed and disseminated generally by co-housing projects within the UK, Europe, and the USA.

The findings show that “local community” far from being an essential state that “co-housers” aspire to, is being creatively and actively performed in and through the practices and processes of developing co-housing projects and promoting them to prospective participants. In this creative performance of local community, the value and values of home and resource sharing are being co-created by participants, who are negotiating the inevitable challenges through
the development of new community practices and collaborative forms of exchange that resonate through their promotional activities. The discourse analysis explores the negotiation of several ambivalent or dualistic discourses in promoting the value and values of co-housing to prospective community members. These are traditional/modern, independence/co-dependence and utility/aesthetic. The ability of members through their promotional activities to creatively negotiate these discourses acts to perform “local community” as a shifting, inherently fluid actor within the promotional material produced, a boundary object, that allows these incompatible discourses to co-exist and produce a fluid yet coherent “local community” to engage prospective participants.

“Building the Strength of Local Community through Time bank Exchanges”

Lucie K. Ozanne, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Julie L. Ozanne, Virginia Tech, USA

A time bank is a community exchange system that rewards informal volunteering by depositing an hour for each hour of service and then these hours can be used to access other services available within the system (Williams 2004). The time bank in this study began in 2005, has grown to almost 250 members, and currently represents about 13% of the local population. Currently, over four hundred hours are exchanged each month and time bank membership has expanded to include a local school, radio station, organic grocery store, community garden, and a childcare facility. Using focus groups, interviews, and participant observation, some interesting findings are emerging.

The time bank breaks down barriers and allows neighbours to ask and offer help through indirect exchanges. The time bank is a community resource that provides goods and services, but time bankers affirm more intangible benefits such as intergenerational exchanges of valuable skills (i.e., grandmotherly neighbours teaching preserving fruit while teenagers troubleshooting computer problems) and supporting vulnerable members of the community. Members also value the sense of comraderie and the fun of working with others. For example, time bankers will engage in community projects, such as working on the summer street festival, finding that even physically demanding tasks are more pleasant when shared. Or, “Wine and Weed Wednesdays” demonstrate that tedious gardening chores can be integrated with pleasant social exchanges. Community members are able to get more quickly integrated into the town by actively engaging in the time bank. Thus, a potentially anonymous town slowly shifts into a community no longer populated by strangers but by friendly town dwellers met at time bank exchanges. Informants communicate the time bank is like the safety net of an “extended family.”

One valuable outcome of the time bank is that it documents many of the often hidden talents and skills that exist in the community. Even individuals who may feel like they have nothing to give can become aware of capacities they possess that can be exchanged. In addition, the time bank documents the tremendous diversity of skills that exists in their community. The time bank leverages the distributed knowledge of its members to expand connections and exchanges with other community organizations such as local nonprofits, government agencies, and schools.

Despite these obviously positive exchanges, ruptures do emerge that suggest that not everyone views the time bank in the same way. For example, some members fall back to market-based expectations that one can only spend hours once they have earned them. Thus, they conceptualize the time bank as being made up of givers and takers of time; they do not want to be “indebted.” However, the time bank works best when it affirms that all community members have valuable capacities. Thus, an irony within these exchanges is that the act of taking can be an act of generosity when you are affirming the value of another’s labor and providing them with time to spend in the time bank. Thus, a challenge for the time bank is to move from exchange relationships defined by a hierarchical dichotomy of giving and taking to be able to move to more egalitarian notions that all exchanges ultimately suture the community and can be capacity affirming.

“Local Acts, Global Impacts? Examining the Pro-Social, Non-Reciprocal Nature of Freecyclers”

Zeynep Arsel, Concordia University, Canada
Susan Dobscha, Bentley University, USA

Is non-reciprocal, pro-social behavior an antidote to consumerism? Does sharing among strangers within a geographic community foster communal bonding? In a recent article, Nelson, Rademacher and Paek (2007) found that members of a local Freecycle community had a distinctly less materialistic relationship with consumer culture than the general population. Furthermore, they found that Freecyclers have higher levels of civic involvement and politicized consumption than non-Freecyclers. Our presentation builds on this assertion to further investigate how Freecyclers’ participation in this activity serves to increase community cohesion and personal and social sustainability goals. We propose two questions: 1) are Freecyclers acting upon some greater moral imperative when they “OFFER” those items that they no longer need, and 2) are Freecyclers engaging in this transient act of sharing as a means to combat overconsumption and materialism?

Freecycling can be viewed as a pro-social (Benkler 2004) online community that facilitates exchange of goods with the principle of generalized reciprocity (Nelson and Rademacher 2009) and with the greater goal of environmental sustainability. It started as a group of friends in Tucson, AZ who realized that their trash might be another’s treasure (company documents) and has grown to over 5 million users in 85 countries. Its core mission is to promote sharing among its members so as to reduce the overall impact consumption has on the environment. Specifically, it serves as an intermediary among those people who wish to get rid of things that still may have some use value. In brief, there are two broad categories of posts: OFFER and WANTED. While OFFER posts are preferred, Freecycle.org instructs its moderators to not snub their noses at WANTED posts. OFFER posts provide goods (almost no services are offered on Freecycle) to give away, WANTED posts are inquiries by people looking for things they do not currently have. For example, goods such as baby clothes, cribs, toddler beds, toys, and junior sports equipment show that some goods lose their use value over the course of a child’s life. Another common product category is furniture, which the participants claim “still has life” but may not fit in a new home or “doesn’t go with the new décor.”

Previous research on Freecycle suggests that participants who joined Freecycle could fit into one of four categories of motivation: self-interest, decluttering, environmental concerns, and helping others (Nelson, Rademacher, and Paek 2007). While the founders’ mission was to create a space in which to facilitate free exchange of used goods, whether or not this behavior actually promotes notions of sustainability in the community are unclear. Similar to Eckhardt and Bardhi’s work (2010) that found that consumers who used car-sharing services were not driven by environmental motives nor did their actions stimulate community activism, we may also find in this study that Freecycle may in fact promote overconsumption rather than serve to reduce it.

Our theoretical orientation aims to extend the theories on sharing and exchange. Belk’s article on sharing (2010) outlines three
prototypes of marketplace behavior: sharing, gift giving and commodity exchange. Accordingly, exchange and transfer of ownership is required for the latter two, while sharing involves non-reciprocal pooling of resources resulting in joint ownership. Second, sharing involves caring and love without reciprocal expectations. Our paper explores a case that may provide an exception to the dichotomy between the commodity exchange and sharing. We investigate the behaviors of an online community whose mission is to offer and request goods free of cost in a very localized manner without any reciprocal expectations (a condition of sharing) while providing no personal or caring component (a counter-indication of sharing). We suggest that this exception condition of impersonal “sharing out” (Belk 2004; Widlock 2004) provides a fruitful context to explore a frontier where the act of sharing becomes an act against what could be perceived as a hegemonic market structure, supporting Belk’s (2009) reference to the Buddhist belief that sharing builds community and provides an antidote to materialism and overconsumption.

A preliminary analysis of Freecyclers and their online behaviors show that, while a few peripheral members might be exploitative and self-interest seeking, the core membership have developed a strong normative system to sustain the group values of non-reciprocal redistribution of goods no longer having any use value for the owner. The norms tend toward the positive and non-sanctional, such as “no bashing,” “no spam,” “be nice,” and “don’t begrudge the WANTED posts” (Freecycle documents). The norms of the community are also constantly evolving. For example, recent activity promoted a lengthy debate about the appropriateness of a Freecycler reselling an item that they had received for free. While the community has no formal policy on this behavior, the discussion was split on the ethics of this behavior. It is these fissures in the normative system of the community that provide the most interesting spaces for inquiry.

Finally, can Freecyclers simultaneously pursue self-interest and contribute to the greater good? Is it required that the motivation of the participant be communal in nature for the greater good to be served? Much like those consumers who use their curbside recycling bins to avoid negative peer evaluation, their actions serve to reduce overall environmental degradation.

(References are available upon request)
SESSION OVERVIEW

The family is not a natural formation. That is to say, families are discursively and materially produced through the practices and discourses that prevail in particular socio-historical contexts. The contingency of family constellations is vividly depicted in Ker- reen Reiger’s (1985) study of the Australian family. In her book, Modernizing the Australian Family, 1880-1940 she explored how professional experts (such as members of the medical profession, teachers and kindergarteners, domestic science and child guidance specialists) had set out to transform family and domestic life through “…efforts to introduce technology to the household and to define the housewife as a ‘modern,’ ‘efficient’ houseworker” (Reiger 1985, p.2). Taking up a Foucauldian perspective on subjectivity formation, Chambers (2001) suggests that by studying discursive practices, the family can be seen as one of “the key regulatory discourses through which our identities become gendered. …So the family can be seen as a discursive construct. Political rhetoric, academic knowledge and popular media texts are all discourses that place restrictions on ways of talking about the family as a topic” (Chambers 2001, p.26). Food and its consumption has been the centre of the family and health debates in the public sphere for centuries. Thus we focus on the particular discourses of food and how these are implicated in the shaping of the notion of family.

Beginning with the notion of the fluidity around the idea of “family,” which takes on meanings within a particular context and discourse, we follow Hall’s (1997) idea that we examine carefully the “elements” of the discourse around the “family” in particular socio-historical contexts. The statements about, the rules that prescribe, the “truth and authority” of knowledge about and the practices around food and family need to be carefully studied. This is where we situate our study.

This special session focuses on the way one particular part of cultural discourse around food and health shape the form of the “family” as a construct. The similarities/differences between the messages around family, home, food and consumption communicated via popular culture in the Scotland, Denmark, England and Australia are examined in this session. This session contributes firstly, to the international debate about the role of marketing and popular media in promoting lifestyles to consumer subjects; and secondly to academic and policy understanding of changing views on the “Consuming family.”

From Denmark, Kristensen and Askegaard explore the discourses of morality, modernity and mistrust around milk. The social meanings of milk and the risk society are examined within the context of questions of identity. The issues of consumer choice are detailed in relation to the controversy over whether milk keeps its traditional place in the consumption sphere or becomes an object of distrust. It points to the ever changing discourses around food and its place in the family.

Scottish children speak about their experiences of snacking, and the meaning and place of such “not meal” foods in their lives; and the place of snacking in the family. The increasing “agency” of child consumers in making food choices is highlighted, while revealing at the same time the parents’ role as guardians of family health. The shift in how children and parents see their roles in food choices and their perceptions of agency are explored by Marshall in his paper.

Using a socio-historical comparison, Schneider, Davis and Hogg explore discourses in comparable magazine advertising in Britain and Australia, mapping shifting views on the family, children and women in relation to food and health. Changing subject positions over 5 decades are identified and analysed.

We anticipate that this session will draw an audience of scholars working in the areas of food, family and discourse. The discursive device of ‘family’ has been used to shape consuming subjects for domestic products, food, leisure and many other product categories. Food is a key arena where these discourses are played out. For scholars interested in how cultural notions of family and food are used by the market to shape everyday consumption, these papers form a discussion point drawing on a global network of research.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Got milk? Then Get Rid of It! The Making of a Mythology of Family Health”

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Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

In Denmark, while milk belongs to the generally worshiped daily foods contributing to a healthy lifestyle. As such, milk traditionally symbolizes the practice of caring for the family (Jönsson 2005). More recently, however, this position has become increasingly challenged by various market agents. A recent, very popular book on health (Mauritzen 2008), advises consumers to mistrust official health recommendations of drinking milk and to abandon the consumption of milk, sugar and gluten altogether. Following the guidelines of the book and the numerous commercial and educational activities including courses, public arrangements etc. that sprang from it, a number of Danish consumers have completely abandoned milk, thereby expressing mistrust in the Danish government, its official dietary advice as well as the food industry. Instead, and still according to the advice of Mauritzen (2008), they have turned to what is generally referred to as “their own bodily experience and inner senses.” Given the popularity and public visibility of this movement the dairy industry as well as a variety of public health organizations have been forced to publicly debate the viewpoints expressed by Mauritzen in an official attempt to refute the accusations. Thus, the struggle for milk takes us into moral discourses and values, through which consumers position themselves within their social, cultural and economic context.

This work is based on 10 in-depth interviews with Danish consumers who have followed the guidelines of Mauritzen (2008) and as a consequence introduced fairly radical changes in their dietary patterns, not just personally, but pertaining to the family in general. In addition to the interview data, we also base our research on the first author’s participation in three public conferences and a brunch event held by followers of Mauritzen.
We thus focus specifically on the interaction between self-proclaimed experts, public health policy and consumers. Drawing on the work of Wilk (2001) and Miller (1998) and taking departure in the milk struggle among Danish consumers, the aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between consumption, modern family identity and moral discourses. The milk struggle represents an example of how food consumption is closely associated to the notion of trust and mistrust (Luhmann 1979) and risk (Beck 1993) and is illustrative of the competing strategies of modern governance of health that shape the discursive environment in which families struggle to navigate. Consequently, our work contributes to the questioning of the standard model of the consumer most often underlying public health campaigns, presenting the consumer as a predominantly cognitive being; an information processor making informed choices (Lindbladh 2002; Yoder 2008).

We will discuss how the notion of free choice, individual control and self-discipline in connection with food consumption plays a central role in consumers’ notion of healthiness, as the data will show these notions have penetrated as well the consumers’ self perception as the ways in which they seek to construct family through caring behaviour (Miller 1998; Warde 1997). In addition, many consumers rely on their own bodily experiences and inner senses to decide on which food to consume. Ultimately, by focusing on the relationship between the enterprising self and trust/mistrust in a neoliberal context (Luhmann 1979; Rose 1999), the aim of the paper is to give possible explanations of the prevalent mistrust in health messages from the government by analysing the link between health, body, individual and state in a Danish setting.

REFERENCES

“Be(com)ing Consumers: Young Children’s Everyday Accounts of Snacking”
David Marshall, University of Edinburgh, UK
Scotland ranks second to the USA in terms of obesity and recent reports have shown one in five boys (18%) and one in ten girls (14%) aged 2-15 are now obese (Grant, Fischbacher, and Whyte 2007). While much of the attention has been on the influence of marketing and promotion on children’s food preferences (Hastings et al. 2003) we know much less about how children snack. Given the shift towards child centred parenting, more negotiation and democratisation of the family (Dixon and Brannwell 2004; Johansson 2006) there is a question about the role children play in food related decisions. According to Ofcom (2005) the majority of parents will often defer to their children’s food preferences buying HFSS foods. Romani (2005) suggests that children now have more agency in shaping their own food consumption. Children appear to be resisting parental expectations about food and ideas about eating properly (Bisogni et al. 2007). However, there is a question over the degree of agency, in the sense that children’s food consumption may be discretionary (children choose), negotiated (children contribute), or mandated (parents decide) (Marshall et al. 2007)

This paper looks at Scottish middle class children’s accounts of their snack consumption and reports on qualitative research with 8-11 year old Scottish primary school children about their snacking experiences both at home and in school. It reports on the children’s own accounts of snacks and snacking and shows that much of their eating activity is mandated by adults concerned with regulating both the type of snacks they eat and how much is consumed of both “healthy” and “unhealthy” snacks. Children’s accounts ranged from free access to certain snacks through to highly restricted access for other items reflecting different degrees of agency. The discussions on pocket money revealed the limited extent of their discretionary expenditure on snack foods. It appears that children are being included in this democratisation process but are generally not responsible for buying their own snacks. Negotiation with parents was reported in the shopping aisle and at home but this depended on the type of product and snack occasion. There was little resistance to the idea of eating properly and children discussed snacks in relation to a much broader range of eating experiences into which they had been socialised. Overall, the children’s level of discretionary consumption was limited, leading to the conclusion that when it comes to this aspect of food choice children are “becoming,” rather than “being” food consumers and are still primarily reliant on parents for their snacks.

REFERENCES
“Children, Food, Health and Marketplace Discourses in 50 Years of Magazine Advertising in Australia and the UK”

Teresa Davis, University of Sydney, Australia
Tanja Schneider, Oxford University, UK
Margaret Hogg, Lancaster University, UK

A socio-historical study of Australian and UK magazine advertising over 50 years in popular magazines, focusing on food advertisements featuring or directed at children, is presented. The study examines the discourses regarding health and food within the larger societal discourses of childhood and marketing directed at children as evidenced in popular culture in the 2 countries. It examines these discourses using historical methods, drawing on 50 years of archival material that “tracks” these discourses and the formation of subject positions across the decades.

A historical slicing sample was used based on Hand and Shove (2004) as well as Martens and Scott (2005). We sampled advertisements, editorials and columns from the first year of every decade considered (1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001). Within each of the first years of each of the decades we sampled the first weekly issue in January, the second weekly issue in February. This is, a comparative study using Australian (Women’s weekly) UK (Good Housekeeping and Women’s Day) data. Shifts in the construction of “health” and childhood are identified. The changing role of the mother as guardian of children’s health is also explored. A macro level analysis is offered that seeks to link key political, social and cultural events that may have influenced the discourses as reflected in popular magazine advertising.

The history of the consumer in Australia has in many ways mirrored that of the rise of the consumer in the UK context. However, particular differences and unique local conditions can be identified by looking closely at specific discourses as manifested in the documents and material evidence over time. This paper is an attempt to track and uncover one “sub-discourse” of children as consumers as seen from the perspective of two influential and popular magazines over a period of 50 post war years. This “sub-discourse” is considered within the particular context of food advertising.

REFERENCES


SESSION OVERVIEW

This session brings together three papers that delve into issues of heterogeneity in brand communities and consumption-oriented (activity centered) communities. Until recently, researchers primarily emphasized the “homogeneity of people united by a common commitment to a particular set of consumption items or activities” when exploring brand and consumption communities (Schouten and McAlexander 1993, p.389). Increasingly, practitioners and consumer culture researchers alike recognize the import of examining more closely the elements and structure of heterogeneity in brand and consumption communities (Cova, Pace, and Park 2007, Fournier and Lee 2009). Nevertheless, an understanding of heterogeneity and structure within brand and consumption communities is still in its infancy. We recognize that sometimes oppositional tensions within a brand community can contribute positively to identity enactment and community growth (Fournier and Lee 2007; Muñiz and Schau 2005; Schau and Muñiz 2002). However, substantially different brand meanings among sub-tribes within a brand or consumption community can thwart corporate brand strategy (Cova et al. 2007). The session redresses the gap in our understanding of heterogeneity in brand and consumption communities. Specifically, our session examines the strategic management of heterogeneity within three different consumer collectives characterized as: brand community, consumption community and consumer collective. Each community is further characterized by differing levels of naturally emerging heterogeneity, a differing presence of brands within the collective and vastly different strategies for managing heterogeneity.

The first paper focuses on the outdoorseiten.net (ODS) community. In this German-speaking online forum of more than 13,000 members, community members discuss topics related to outdoor sports and develop user-generated equipment considered superior to commercial offerings and labeled under the community’s own brand and logo. The community operates with a democratic ethos and shares a broad grand narrative about outdoor lifestyle and user-generated innovation. Heterogeneity is purportedly valued as a source of innovation, but in this community, management of conflicts actually favors homogeneity by privileging member consensus over innovation, leadership, and efficiency. Consensus is rallied to resist the intrusion of commercial brands and endorsements in the forum, maintaining the exclusivity and perceived superiority of the community’s own brand and logo.

The second paper examines the consumption community centered on running. This community implicates many brands simultaneously, has high levels of naturally occurring heterogeneity, and no shared grand narrative. In fact, this community is characterized by multiple incommensurate discourses related to ideology, values, structure, and membership criteria. Strategically, multiple brands play off and exacerbate heterogeneity, fracturing the collective. The collective attempts to navigate the tensions of this heterogeneity in order to preserve the advantages of diversity. Some brands and community segments gloss the homogeneity stressing a unified grand narrative, while other brands and community segments highlight incommensurate grand narratives that threaten the fabric of the community itself. In contrast to focusing on a user community that promotes homogeneity and consensus among heterogeneous users, this research highlights the strategic intent of both users and firms to manage community heterogeneity.

Lastly, we come full circle to the third paper that focuses on a collective with a strong grand narrative, where strategic management of naturally emergent heterogeneity is entirely user-controlled and brands are all but absent. In the online Anorexia Nervosa community, the grand narrative that binds the community is potentially lethal to the consumer creator and disreputable within the broader social framework. In this high stakes context, disputing the grand narrative within the community could contribute to the overall welfare of the community. However, the community uses a two-fold strategy to manage heterogeneity. The first, and most common, strategy is to quash and/or eliminate evidence of dissent, leaving an historical record that wholly supports this tragic grand narrative. The second component of the strategy is to gloss homogeneity by embracing the assumption of the silent majority’s consent and endorsement of the grand narrative. This contributes to the user experience that the grand narrative is totalizing and broadly embraced, when in fact that is not the case in the larger society and is unlikely to be true even in the limited online collective. This shows the dark side of online communities that allow for people to believe that purely pathological and marginalized discourses reign supreme.

Our session benefits from the expertise of Avi Shankar who serves as our discussion leader to animate a discussion of the implications of heterogeneity within consumer collectives. We expect this session to appeal to consumer culture researchers concerned with subcultures of consumption, brand communities, social networks, and consumer-brand relationships. Since all three of the papers investigate communities as a resource for consumer identity work, consumer researchers interested in consumer identity are also likely to be interested in the session.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Consensus Formation and Conflict Management in Self-Organized Online Communities”
Johann Füller, Innsbruck University School of Management, Austria
Gregor Jawecki, Innsbruck University School of Management, Austria

In online communities, like-minded people with similar interests get together virtually to exchange experiences made with specific products, share problems, and come up with ideas about how to modify existing products or even develop new ones. In brief, creative consumers attracted by new products and innovation can often be found in online communities that are centered around common interests (Kozinets 1999; Kozinets 2002; Lynn et al. 1997; McAlexander et al. 2002; Muniz and Schau 2005; Sawhney and Prandelli 2000; Verona et al. 2004). One such community is “outdoorseiten.net” (ODS), an online message board dedicated to outdoor sports. In this German-speaking forum more than 13,000 members discuss topics related to outdoor sports and equipment. Besides sharing their experiences with existing products, members discuss ideas for product improvements and even realize their ideas in the form of physical prototypes. For the members of the community, the developed products not only compete with but are typically considered as superior to commercial offerings. Self-made gear and equipment belong to the community’s own “outdoorseiten.net” brand and are labeled with the community’s logo. We investigate
how the community finds a consensus for key decisions through a democratic decision-making process. Data reveal how disputes that arise in key decisions require members with divergent opinions to subordinate themselves to the common community goal, and potential consequences that arise at individual and community levels.

Examples found in the ODS forum illustrate that although the community is marked by an atmosphere of friendship, trust and joint decision-making, under some circumstances the community is confronted with and has to overcome serious conflict potential. One such example is the development of the “forum 42 tent.” In this project, the community developed an outdoor tent together with the German company “Wechsel tents.” All key tent decisions (size, design, materials) were specified by community members through a democratic process, such as open polls. Participants had to accept the decisions supported by the majority of the developers’ team. The project initiator and original moderator of the “forum 42 tent” project was replaced by another community member because he tried too hard to realize his own ideas. Ultimately, he left the community frustrated. This shows the consequences that arise when members interfere with the community’s democratic values.

Another topic which led to serious discussions among the core leaders of the community was the question, whether the community should be open for advertisements of commercial companies. While one of the founders of the community endorsed advertisements, other long-time members strictly refused this possibility. In their eyes they were not compatible with the overall objective of being an entirely independent source of all outdoor-related information. Also in this case a dispute and hefty discussion arose between the members which in the end led the founder to leave the community. This example also illustrates that conflicts within the community may not only have influences on single members but also on the community as a whole. The issues with regard to advertising were one of the main reasons that in 2006 the community established a registered, non-profit foundation. The main intention of doing so was to ensure the community values and culture and to distribute the decision-making power but also the responsibilities among various members. Also, the objective was to make the community less vulnerable towards decisions and actions of single individuals. With the ODS foundation also leadership roles were established. Every year a Board of Directors is elected, which is in charge of administrative and strategic tasks. However, power of the Board of Directors is limited when it comes to day-to-day or content issues in the forums (O’Mahony and Ferraro 2007). Authority is still in the hands of the community members and project teams. Every community member is able to and actually engages in communicating and decision-making. In general the management can be described as consensus-oriented and basic democratic. Of course this leads to the fact that sometimes it takes quite a long time to find consensus and not always all members agree with the decisions of the majority. In case of serious disagreement between the ODS community and an individual, severe means are taken to protect the community and its values (Triandis 1985). These range from tolerating, ignoring, admonishing and rebuking up to banning members from the community without any exceptions not even for its founders. Our research sheds light on consumers conflicts encountered in self-managed communities of consumption confirming some dialectical tensions found in previous research on contested consumptions (Lüdicke and Giesler 2008). It adds to a better understanding on how communities and self-organized networks function, and how decision and conflict management works within communities.
implications for how community members enact their identities using commercially grounded symbolic resources.

In addition to a lack of understanding of brand heterogeneity within consumption communities, we also have a limited understanding of how heterogeneity in terms of community members manifests within these communities. Until recently, researchers primarily emphasized the “homogeneity of people united by a common commitment to a particular set of consumption items or activities” when exploring brand and non-brand consumption communities (Schouten and McAlexander 1993, p.389). Increasingly, practitioners and consumer culture researchers alike recognize the import of examining more closely the elements and structure of heterogeneity in brand and consumption communities (Cova et al. 2007; Fournier and Lee 2009). While it is acknowledged that these communities are heterogeneous, with community members possessing differing ethos and varying in how they enact the identity associated with the community (Martin et al. 2006), the implications of this for companies, and the community as a whole, has not been explored. Furthermore, research tends to focus almost exclusively on the experiences of hard-core community members (Schouten et al. 2007) with peripheral members conceptualized as “weekend warriors” and “wannabees” who simply aspire to be like hard-core members (Fox 1987; Ottes and Macfaran 2007; Schouten et al. 2007; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). While this treatment of peripheral members has proven useful in building our understandings of consumption-oriented communities, it artificially simplifies understandings of the structure of these communities and ignores the unique identity enactments and belief structures of these individuals, who frequently significantly outnumber hard-core members.

The purpose of this study is to examine heterogeneity, in terms of brand presence and community members, to add complexity and richness to our understanding of community interactions. Our findings are derived from a multifaceted investigation of a non-brand based subculture of consumption focused on a consumption activity: the distance running community. In this investigation, we use a variety of methods (depth interviews, participant observation, and netnography) to examine the interactions between the community, brands, and other corporate resource providers from the perspective of both the community and the corporate entities working with that community. Our findings demonstrate that the heterogeneity within the community results in a contested community characterized by multiple incommensurate discourses relating to the community’s ideology, values, structure, and membership criteria. These multiple discourses are in evidence both within and between segments of the community and these disparate discourses are fueled by and linked to marketing resources. Although the discourses are incommensurate, their mutual presence, empowerment, and interplay has significant consequences for the benefits that different participants accrue from membership. These benefits manifest as feelings of belonging and distinction within the community and as contrasted with non members. Finally, the interplay of the incommensurate discourses within and between segments of the community is consequential for: (1) how marketing resources are deployed by firms and engaged by consumers, (2) the benefits of community membership experienced by different segments of the community, and (3) the size, nature, and life dynamics of the community itself.

“Controlling Communities and Destroying Heterogeneity Online”

Ekdant Veer, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

In any netnographic research there exists a need to understand the interplay and dynamics between different members of the online community under investigation (Kozinets 2002). In this research I outline the ways in which multiple participants in an online community interact to strengthen the community and the bonds between participants. Such interactions are research becoming more common in consumer research, such as Hsu & Lu’s (2005) research into online gaming communities or Wiertz and Ruyter’s (2007) examination of employee interactions on employers’ blogs. Many of these interactions are public, open and although heated at times, are not seen as being overtly destructive, but rather a positive extension of free speech. However, one aspect of online communities that is not well understood is the way in which destructive behaviour is maintained and encouraged by a community. Here I show the ways in which the online community rallies together to eliminate dissidents who oppose the ideology of the group and promote their own viewpoint that can lead to tragic consequences. This research focuses on one such destructive community, that of supporters of Anorexia Nervosa.

Anorexia Nervosa is often linked with notions of control and a desire for greater control in a sufferer’s life (American Psychiatric Association 2000). Previous research has also shown that the sufferer’s desire for control could be a major contributing factor to the exhibitionist behaviour online (Veer 2009). What has not been well understood is the means by which the online community ensures homogeneity of thought within the community by controlling and often eliminating heterogeneity.

The current research looks at the video logs (vlogs) created by sufferers of Anorexia Nervosa and posted on YouTube. Once posted, viewers are able to watch the vlogs and offer their commentary on the content of the vlog, save the vlog for future viewing or even share the vlog with friends. We look at 5 separate women, all of whom have openly admitted that they suffer from Anorexia Nervosa and are looking to perpetuate their condition through online interactions. The data used in the current research is not just the vlog content, but the comments left by viewers of the vlogs. In total the dataset consists of 249 vlogs and over 10,000 short comments left by viewers. Data was analysed using an hermeneutic approach (Thompson 1997) with a particular focus on the underlying meanings and contexts surrounding the interactions (Palmer 1969).

The analysis shows that heterogeneity of the participative role within the community is acceptable; however, heterogeneity of thought is not acceptable and is quickly eliminated by advocates of the community. Most participants actively encourage the vlogger with positive affirmation. This homogeneity of thought encourages the vlogger to continue her destructive behaviour and continue to post new videos for her subscribers. However, there also exists occasions when opponents to the ideology enter the community and argue against the behaviour. Supporters of the vloggers quickly quashed this attack on the ideology of the group. Soon after this exchange the vlogger removed all comments so no evidence of dissent was seen on her page. This attack by an “outsider” strengthened the community’s devoted. This is just one example of how opposition to the group is actively discouraged by participants, not just the community leader. By repressing heterogeneity within the community the participants are able to find a form of safety that they may not feel outside of the online setting (Tajfel 1982; Turner 1987). The result is a group that strengthens their ideology through homogeneity but also draws together through their opposition to heterogeneity in a similar way that brand subcultures can further validate their own brand preference by attacking a competing brand’s user (Valck 2007).

Another means by which the vlogger draws validation for her ideology is from the viewers of her vlogs who do not offer any commentary. The assumption being that the silent majority who do not actively participate must be in favour of her behaviour. The
vlogger can sometimes engage with these viewers in her videos, for example, thanking the silent, and encouraging them to engage more in the community in an effort to gain greater control and community strength.

The key implication from this research is that destructive online communities not only exist, but thrive through repression of opposition and heterogeneity of thought. The participants in a community play different roles but all create the homogeneity of thought and control that the vlogger craves. In this research an online community draws together to validate and advocate forced starvation and rapid weight loss as a healthy and normal form of behaviour and further extenuate the destructive nature of the participants’ pathology.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST
SESSION OVERVIEW

The objective of this special session is to explore music consumption practices, focusing on issues and behaviours which emerge as a result of recent technological and social changes that have dramatically altered the nature of the music production and consumption environment. The music industry appears to have been the creative industry most greatly impacted initially by these technological and social changes (e.g., Mortimer and Sorensen 2005), and one which has also been criticized for not keeping abreast of the changing nature of music consumption practices (e.g., Burkant and McCourt 2006). This suggests that music consumption would be a rich area of research for both the music industry itself and for consumer researchers interested not only in music and arts consumption, but more generally in consumption in the digital and social media age. However, there exists a lack of research on the new music consumer and their consumption practices. This special session aims to aid the development of research in this area by demonstrating current research and by facilitating discussion of some of the key issues in the field. The special session should be of interest to those researching arts and culture consumption and also the changing nature of consumption generally in the digital and social media age.

This special session will be based around three papers and a discussion lead by Prof Jonathan Schroeder (University of Exeter) who is an expert in aesthetics and consumer research. The papers that form the special session cover a range of related issues and are all based on completed empirical studies. The session will begin with a paper (Berger, Kerrigan and Larsen) which examines where the value in music consumption lies for today’s music consumers and compares this to the intentions of various participants involved in music production. This paper therefore frames the emerging ‘new’ music consumer within recent technological and social trends, and within the industry itself. Following this, the second paper (Filimon, Lopez-Sintas and Zerva) identifies patterns and motives of digital versus CD music consumption focusing particularly on social and economic issues. Although research exists which investigates acquisition of music via digital downloads, it tends to focus only on digital acquisition, whereas this paper contextualizes digital download practices within music acquisition practices more generally. The final paper of the special session (Garcia-Alvarez, Lopez-Sintas and Zerva) continues the focus on the social elements of music consumption by exploring the influence of access to music resources on dominance and liberation in social exchanges.

Taken together, these papers raise and address a number of substantive issues which are important to the development of the field. Firstly, all papers take a social-cultural perspective, rather than the psychological perspective which has been more traditionally taken when researching music consumption practices within the field of consumer behavior. As Berger, Kerrigan and Larsen demonstrate, some of the most characteristic and important elements of new music consumption are communality and social interaction, therefore necessitating social and cultural research perspectives. This approach is also in line with, and contributes to, wider cultural and critical trends in consumer research (e.g., Arnould and Thompson 2005). Secondly, all of these papers examine elements of digital music consumption, but rather than isolating this consumption practice from all others, they explore how digital music consumption fits within the wider context of music consumption practices. This enables an understanding of the interplay of digital consumption practices and music consumption practices as a whole, thus throwing light on the complexity of music consumption and providing insights for a more general understanding of aesthetics in everyday consumption.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Moving On: The Music Industry’s Struggle to Create Value for its Customers”
Marc Berger, King’s College London, UK
Finola Kerrigan, King’s College London, UK
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Over the last two decades countless industries have experienced a revolutionary transformation under the impact of new digitally based information technologies (e.g., Jennings 2007). These developments have substantially affected commerce, enabling new methods for connecting producers and consumers (referred to as e-commerce) and radically changing traditional production and distribution processes (Vaccaro and Cohn 2004). Technological advances in digitalising information have particularly affected content-providing industries. Overwhelming evidence proves that the media and entertainment sectors have felt a significant impact by the emergence of new media and the Internet (Mortimer and Sorensen 2005). Media products have become little more than information that can easily be digitised and reproduced without significant loss of quality, at marginal costs of close to zero (Clemens 2003). Producers of such information goods have traditionally relied heavily on the protection of their intellectual property rights in order to capture the returns to their investments (Davis 2005; Gowers 2006). But widespread modern technology has made it simple for everyone to enjoy copyright protected works via illegal online distribution channels and effectively bypass traditional media’s established business models (Dali 2007; Berry and Papagiannis 2007). The study explores where the value in music consumption lies for today’s music consumers, and compares this with the intentions of different value-creating stakeholders on the industry side. It is argued that while many factors in the music industry are subject to constant technological change the reasons for the consumption of music have remained largely the same over centuries. However, unlike many other studies of the impact of new technology on the music industry, this paper focuses largely on off line and communal elements of music consumption which feed the consumption of music in electronic formats. The paper concludes that any successful business model must therefore (1) consider music increasingly as a service, combined with a number of value adding elements and (2) learn to monetise on the communal aspect of music consumption,
as a key element for success lies with social relational mechanisms.

The music industry, particularly its recording side, was the first to experience difficulties under the new conditions of the digital age, predominantly caused by its overdependence on physical sales (Kusek and Leonhard 2006). Since then a substantial number of strategies and business models have been developed, essentially focusing on the exploitation of a larger variety of channels and products (IFPI 2008; 2009). However, so far none of these business models have offered a single sustainable solution, and as a result, even a decade after the advent of illegal online file sharing, large parts of the industry, particularly (major) record labels, are struggling to reinvent themselves (Burkart and McCourt 2006). In fact, ten years on, the industry is still experimenting with a wide range of business models, which, on the distribution side, include embedded and behavioural/targeted advertising, pay-per-use or “freemium” models, whereby content is initially offered for free and supplemented with a tiered pricing structure for premium use. Yet with music sales last peaking in 1999, the industry has repeatedly and wrongly called the bottom of the market for almost a decade now (MacMillan 2009). Allen (2008) has stated that revenues that labels have generated from digital distribution models have not been sufficient to replace the revenues lost from the decline of physical products. But do these developments suggest that music itself has been devalued, is now taken for granted and thought of as naturally available for free?

Paradoxically, while large parts of the music industry are in deep crisis, there is overwhelming evidence that more music than ever is being consumed (e.g., Godin 2009; Napier-Bell 2008; Arthur 2009; Leonhard 2009). At the same time there is also evidence that the reasons for the consumption of music have remained largely unchanged over centuries (e.g., Economist (1) 2009; Larsen, Lawson, and Todd 2009). The question is then do the new business models developed for the conditions of the digital age really focus on satisfying music consumers’ needs and wants in the digital age? Does the music industry communicate effectively with its consumers, and has it initiated a constructive dialogue to help develop a sustainable business model for itself? And to what extent is it really justified that large parts of the music industry try to locate the origin of their problems to a place beyond the limits of their own control?

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the understanding of current music industry dynamics and explore possible causes of the current situation. In contrast to previous research it explores positions and arguments on both the consumer and the industry side and aims to identify the extent to which consumer expectations, attitudes and value perceptions coincide with the business models offered to them by the music industry. The research process was subsequently divided into two stages. On the industry side the research methodology was dominated by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with professionals from different parts of the music industry, to explore the motives and intentions behind new business models, their sustainability, underlying mechanisms to generate revenue and the extent to which their development has been influenced by actual consumer needs and wants. On the consumer side, the research draws on semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with music consumers, conducted at three major UK-based one day music festivals between June and August 2009. Data gathered from both perspectives were then used to extract those aspects of the music industry which draw on the most prevalent reasons for music consumption and are thus likely to form crucial elements of a sustainable future business model.
adds new evidence to the controversial debate related to the impact of the Internet technology, and the file sharing that it enables, on music sales.

Technology, the Internet in particular, has changed the way many goods are consumed and many industries are continuously changing their business models in order to better fit the new emerging forms of consumer demand. The digital music industry accounted for around 20% of recorded music sales in 2008 (IFPI 2009) and recent findings seem to support the theoretical prediction that the peer-to-peer service (P2P) is negatively impacting album sales (Michel 2006). The existing literature distinguishes several approaches to the issue. (1) The research on trading copyrighted materials focuses on the motivation behind consumer’s decision of whether to purchase rather than copy or vice versa, with some research supporting the idea that small-scale sharing allows for price discrimination among targeted groups of consumers making both producers and consumers better off (Michel 2006). But, as most of the supporting theory was developed before the Internet, this research does not result in a useful defence of P2P. (2) The analysis of sampling effects also returned contradictory evidence: with some authors arguing that the consumers who sample music through P2P services would be more likely to buy music afterwards, and other authors suggesting that this behaviour would hold only for some music consumers, that is, the ones who ended up liking the music sampled free of charge via file-sharing. The possibility that consumers may simply dislike the sampled music turns out to be a severe limitation of the model with some researchers arguing in favour of the sampling effect decreasing the music sales (Leibowitz 1985). (3) The analysis of consumers’ preferences, distinguishing between low and high music preferences, didn’t offer a complete explanation either: while low music preference consumers are expected not to buy significant amounts of music, this scenario says nothing about the behaviour of high music preference consumers (Michel 2006). (4) Other authors focused on consumers’ attitudes, for example Sandulli (2007) found that price, assortment and discovery of the P2P music networks were the main factors in favour of higher proportions of P2P music in Spain. Still, the impact of these factors seems to depend on the market. US, UK, China or India, are some examples of countries where in spite of growing P2P networks, the CDs market behaves differently.

The existing literature is therefore not very conclusive and suggests that a more appropriate framework of analysis could give more insights into this phenomenon. We turn here to Bourdieu’s (1979[1984]) social theory with a two-fold objective: first, with an explorative technique based on multilevel models, we try to determine to what extent Internet music consumption patterns in Spain depend on the socioeconomic status of the individuals and second, we compare digital music consumption patterns and motives to download or purchase music. Bourdieu’s cultural theory overcomes some of the above limitations, by identifying patterns that could be generalised to consumers in the same social strata.

The data came from the “Survey on Habits and Cultural Practices 2006-2007” undertaken by the Spanish Ministry of Culture (MC). It included 14,822 Spanish citizens and residents, of both genders, aged 16 or older. The variables were structured by region (18 in total), habitat, and socioeconomic variables (MC 2007). Music consumption was measured by several variables referring to: the frequency; technological devices used to listen to music; the place; the time dedicated to listening to music during the week, the musical genre and the mode of access (free download/purchase). The main motives indicate that 8% of the consumers value the easy access to digital downloads, 10% of them value the affordability, in case they have to pay, about 0.6% choose to first listen to a track before buying it while 0.4% of the consumers do it because they only want a single track and not the whole CD.

Preliminary findings indicate that socioeconomic indicators are important: free music downloading has a strong generational component, in favour of young segment (below 25 years). Single independent individuals or married/couples living alone have a higher probability of downloading music compared to married/couples with kids at home. Occupational status distinguishes among employed, self employed and students, who use this service more compared to unemployed, retired or housewives. The size of the habitat indicates that the larger the habitat the higher, on average, the propensity of digital music downloading. Home technological equipment returned positive estimates, significant in particular for the software (Office, MP3, and DIVX). Digital music consumption is positively related with listening to music on the radio (whatever the frequency) but not from CDs; individuals being not heavy listeners of CD music are less likely to download music. A greater interest for music increases the propensity of downloading music but, only the heavy buyers of music CDs (above 10) seem to be affected in their purchasing decision though not in a significant manner. Concerning the musical genres purchased, overall, the estimates turned out to be negative though not significant. At region level, family size estimate was positive and significant.

The results indicate that the heterogeneous relationship between the consumption of digital versus CD music can be explained in socioeconomic terms. While for some digital music consumers, music downloading appears to be a substitute for CD music (individuals with a strong consumption of CDs) for others it is rather a complementary good (the weak CD buyers).

**REFERENCES**


“Domination and Liberation Through Social Exchanges for Music Access”

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The aim of the present study is to provide evidence of the influence of access to music resources on identity formation, whether social, personal or felt, based on the different power relations that are developed within social exchanges where these resources circulate. We endeavoured to unravel the complexity of this social phenomenon by listening to, observing and interpreting the actions of individuals as they accessed music through exchanges in the marketplace or in the social arena. We accordingly adopted an interpretive and phenomenological framework (van Manen 1990;
Bergum 1991). Our sampling process began with a criterion-based selection of individuals, followed by snowball or chain sampling. Face-to-face semi-structured personal interviews were conducted in Barcelona with 23 young people aged from 14 to 36 years.

Our theoretical frame of interpretation is based on the developments over the symbolic interactions, the theory of social exchanges and the sociology of consumption. According to Goffman (1963), social interactions refer to the environments in which individuals are in each other’s response, whether directly through face-to-face communication or indirectly through technological devices. During these interactions, each member, while viewing the conduct of the other member(s), participates with his own identity and gradually develops and adjusts his conduct (Horton and Strauss 1957). The fundamental reason for these interactions is the access to resources which are under the control of other individuals, creating linkages with them through exchanges.

As Strauss and Horton have highlighted (1957), interaction often is turned into a contest of control. When the links among individuals are not equivalent, then dominance emerges within the members of the exchange (Emerson 1962), where the person in control of these resources is the dominant member, exercising “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977[1970]) upon the seekers of these resources, who are the dominated members. In this case, where one member has a power advantage and expresses generosity when choosing to share it, social exchanges occur within an imbalanced relation (Emerson 1962). For Blau (1964), the recognition of this power by the weaker member of the relation is a psychological reward, strong enough to motivate the social exchange. During the course of social interactions, statuses change (Horton and Strauss 1957), according to who has become the dominant member in a social relation after the exchange. These social relations contribute to the production and reproduction of social categories and to an individual's identity, whether social, personal or felt (Goffman 1963).

In the specific case of social exchanges of music, Dolfsma (2004) has shown how music consumption partly creates identity through the communicating messages it sends to the relevant audience. The interpretation that Williams and Copes (2005) and Williams (2006) have offered about the meaning of attending at live concerts is highly illustrative, providing evidence that participation in face-to-face musical events was considered to be the marker of status that classified individuals as true fans.

We have found a variety of exchanges used by our interviewees to access music, analyzed through the theoretical framework of social exchanges (Emerson 1962; Homans 1958; Yamagishi and Cook 1993), these can be divided into three broad categories: negotiated, generalized and gift giving exchanges. Negotiated exchanges are conducted in the market arena (formal-purchase of original albums and tickets to live performances and informal–purchase of copied albums by unauthorized sellers), while generalized exchanges are divided into local (borrowing albums from public libraries), personal (sharing music among friends), and global (downloading music from the internet).

Our data have indicated that symbolic domination and liberation have a direct effect in the way others interpret an individual's identity. As far as dominance is concerned, negotiated exchanges in the formal market provide power to the dominant member towards their friends who did not possess the appropriate economic capital. Firstly, tangible objects, such as original music albums, are a traditional and highly visible means of marking status for classificatory purposes and the personal value of members in a closed social circle (Goffman 1951). These albums when forming a collection, represent what Veblen (1965) called “conspicuous consumption,” meaning valued goods displayed in order to signal the owner's social category. Dominance is furthermore developed within two types of social exchanges: a) personally generalized exchanges, where the dominant member chooses with whom he wishes to share his music, forcing “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1989) towards the dominated members, b) and gift giving, where the symbolic value of an original album is creating or maintaining a personal and social bond of exclusiveness between the giver and the receiver. Secondly, attendance at a music concert upgrades the social status of the attendee due to its rare symbolic value; a unique experience in time that can be verified only by those who have also attended and admired by those who haven’t. In both cases, personal and felt identity are positively re-valued.

Yet, negotiated exchanges in the informal market, as well as globally and locally generalized exchanges have provided liberation in music access. Mostly in the case of globally generalized exchanges, individuals can share music, reducing their dependency upon it and putting in function the balancing operations needed for the improvement of their social position. The result is the erosion of the value of cultural knowledge as a status marker and social classifier, and an improvement in the felt identity of the dominated.

Nonetheless, it seems that dominance still finds ways of appearing: firstly, through the feeling of being chosen among all the peers of the Internet as the appropriate source of downloading music files, improving social and gradually felt identity; and secondly, within personally generalized exchanges between those who download and those who still do not, attributing power to the individual that has the technological expertise to access music and provide what is requested. In this case, personal and felt identities are being improved. Thus, a dependency on peers having greater economic and cultural capital has shifted to a dependency on peers having greater technological and cultural capital.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Aesthetic consumption examines how consumers are motivated to experience beauty, emotion, sensory stimulation, and escape through consuming art, art-like objects in art participation and in everyday life (Venkatesh and Meamber 2008). Aesthetics has a role in the production and consumption of fashion, retail spaces, visual images, and the arts (Charters 2006; Joy and Sherry 2003; Murray 2002; Penalozza 1999; Thompson and Haytko 1997, Deighton 1992; Mclaran and Brown 2005; Schroeder 2002). Aesthetic consumption has managerial implications: for example, Joy and Sherry find that aesthetic consumption informs consumer evaluations of marketplace experiences, such as a visit to a museum (2003). Some limitations of the current research on aesthetic consumption are in theoretical approaches to the emotions experienced during and after aesthetic consumption, aesthetic consumption in groups, and aesthetic consumption outside the context of artistic and museum experiences.

The abstracts presented in this session extend current theoretical approaches to aesthetic consumption by moving it into a new context, the ritual: sustained family rituals, ritual consumption of fashion and luxury brands, and consumer evaluation of retail and service rituals. From these contexts, the research will offer theoretical contributions to consumer behavior research broadly and aesthetic consumption specifically. There are three areas of contribution, all related to ritual: the role of cultural norms of aesthetic consumption in creating and consuming sustained family rituals, consumer fashion preferences and everyday aesthetic rituals of the body, and the role of ritual aesthetics in influencing consumer perceptions of retailers.

The three abstracts offer audiences interested in ritual, aesthetics, family ritual, fashion and the body, retail, and consumer preference formation an opportunity for a substantial discussion of a topic that is at the cutting edge of consumer behavior scholarship. The work on Sunday dinner is in the draft stage, the work on fashion is in theory development, and the work on the aesthetics of embedded retail rituals is in write-up. The discussant, Jonathan Schroeder, is an innovator in aesthetic consumption theory development and research and is widely considered an expert in the area.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“The Aesthetic Consumption of Sunday Dinner”
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Aesthetic consumption refers to the sensory experience of consuming everyday objects that have aesthetic qualities as well as consumption of art, art-like goods, and artistic events. (Venkatesh and Meamber 2008). Overall, the research looks at how consumers are motivated to experience beauty, emotion, sensory stimulation, and escape through everyday consumption of goods with instrumental and intrinsic value or through consuming the arts and arts performances (Joy and Sherry 2003; Murray 2002; Thompson and Haytko 1997, Deighton 1992; Mclaran and Brown 2005; Schroeder 2002). Although most inquiry explores individual aesthetic experiences, such as a museum visit (Joy and Sherry), Otnes et al., in their research on family negotiation of Christmas tree decor, imply that there is a connection between aesthetic consumption and ritual.

This abstract asks how creating aesthetic goods influences aesthetic consumption in the context of an enduring group ritual, specifically, Sunday family dinner in Zagreb, Croatia. The context moves aesthetic consumption research beyond the individual, the everyday, and the museum. Sunday dinner is a sustained ritual: it occurs regularly over time and elicits enduring, shared emotions (Collins 2004). Consumers manifest the dual role of creating the elements of aesthetic experience (i.e., preparing the food and the table) and consuming the experience they created. Prior aesthetics research examines aesthetic consumption of goods created by others, such as art. The aesthetic goods and experiences in my research have as their referent socio-cultural norms of aesthetics and aesthetic consumption practices, rather than in the art world, as has been previously researched.

The research takes a grounded theory approach, developing an understanding of aesthetic ritual consumption from a phenomenological perspective (Glaser and Strauss 1967). From September 2006 to July 2007, I conducted in-depth interviews in Croatian and in English with fifty informants, using a semi-structured format (McCracken 1988). I also conducted small focus groups, participant-observation of meals, took and elicited photography of meals, and wrote field notes. I participated in meals with 20 families, including visiting 10 families twice. I used Interaction Ritual Chains (IRC Collins 2004) to understand the ways that the elements and processes of Sunday dinner relate to the overall aesthetic consumption of the ritual.

In the findings, three themes emerged that illuminated the role of aesthetics in consumers’ experiences of Sunday dinner: time, cultural norms of aesthetic goods and experience, and co-presence. Time is central to preparing what informants describe as a “real” meal. The “nice” table is an aesthetic element composed of cultural practices of hygiene and setting the table with sets of aesthetic goods. Thus, there are aesthetic elements (the goods) and aesthetic processes (preparation) involved in aesthetic consumption of group rituals. Finally, co-presence of family members is a vital ingredient in aesthetic consumption of group ritual.

Time emerged as a theme throughout informant discussions of the processes of creating the meal’s aesthetic elements. Vanda L., an informant between the ages of 35 and 39 explains the reason that Sunday dinner is at 2pm for every family in Zagreb. “You can’t have it at noon or 1 [on Sunday] because you have to make the soup and the salad and there is a lot of preparation going into it, if it is the real thing.” As a participant in family meals, I observed that hostess always opens the meal by serving it at the table, from the tureen, using a ladle. The soup is always bouillon from chicken and vegetables. Soup is a central aesthetic element in the aesthetic consumption of lunch. Thus, for the aesthetic consumption to be “real,” in other words, for consumers to experience the meal as aesthetic, it must include culturally determined aesthetic elements (soup). Preparing this aesthetic element in specific ways is important enough and prevalent enough in families in Zagreb such that almost every family eats at the same time, 2pm. It is an aesthetic and cultural practice.

The aesthetic process of creating aesthetic elements also involves hygiene, which refers to the ways the family members prepare the goods for the table. Hana B., who is between the ages of 55 and 59, discusses the way she maintains the table’s aesthetics. After mentioning that she uses the dishwasher and washing machine to care for her plates and tablecloths, she says, “I love when everything looks nice. It is socializing and I think the surrounding needs to be nice. And no matter how much money one has, it can always be nice and tidy, because that doesn’t demand any big amounts of money. One just needs to be methodical and keep doing it, so to
notions of beauty, taste, and aesthetics have received much attention. Within a more culturally oriented discourse, the approach as the analytical technique using qualitative data. Entwistle 2000; Scott 2005), and our empirical work employs a Sherry 2003; Shusterman 2008) and fashion theory (Barthes 1983; Thompson and Haytko 1997; Steele 2004; Barnard 2007; Miller 2007; Langman 2008).

These literatures reveal an underlying relationship between consumers’ notions of self, body and physical appearance on the one hand, and aesthetic rituals dressing, grooming and adornment on the other. Consumer researchers are beginning to pay attention to these rituals, especially through the emerging notions of visual culture, aesthetics and images (Schoeber 2002; Bloch, Brunel and Arnold 2003; Hagtavedt and Patrick 2008; Venkatesh and Meamber 2008). Fashion theorists acknowledge that if "sartorial fashion can be a form of art then we need an aesthetics of fashion… … [and] new ways of providing a serious theoretical and aesthetic basis for the study of [body]" (Miller 2007, p.25). In describing a journal devoted to fashion theory and research, Steele (2004) says, "Fashion Theory takes as its starting point a definition of ‘fashion’ as the cultural construction of embodied identity” (p.2). We combine these strands of consumer and fashion research to pose a particular set of questions:

What ritual effort is exerted by consumers to look good and dress beautifully?

What metaphors do consumers use to describe their experiences with high fashion?

What shape and form does the perception of “high fashion” and “high fashion brands” take in consumers’ minds?

The answers to these questions will help us develop a better understanding of the aesthetics of consumer experience in relation to fashion and body.

In this study we employed a modified ZMET technique (Zaltman 1997) and had informants collect images of what high fashion meant to them. We used these images to probe issues related to the body, beauty, and actions taken by individuals to look good. Such a visual elicitation technique is designed to uncover rich descriptions of the people, the context, and products in the picture.

Our presentation explores some ways in which aesthetics can be applied to everyday aspects of people’s lives. It points to the aestheticization of everyday life through fashion and bodily adornment (Featherstone 1992). Although our focus is on fashion, we envision many avenues for study and application in consumer research, from the design of products such as ceramics and dinner/kitchenware to the design of personal technologies such as mobile phones and other devices. Everything consumed at some level can be viewed through an aesthetic lens, particularly when bracketed from the realm of utility.
“The Impact of Aesthetics in Embedded Service Rituals”  
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Elizabeth Crosby, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA  
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Rituals continue to be a vibrant dimension of many consumption experiences. An area that has received recent attention are the rituals created by retailers and service providers that are designed to achieve strategic outcomes, such as enhancing consumers’ experiences in the marketplace, building brand loyalty and creating consumer traditions with retailers and providers at their center (e.g., Kjeldgaard 2008; Sandikci and Omeraki 2008; Otne, Ilhan, and Kulkarni 2009). One dimension of ritual behavior that remains underexplored is how aesthetics shape ritual experiences, even as consumers and providers alike devote a great deal of time, money, and effort to the acquisition, display, and storage of ritual decorations, foods and beverages, apparel/uniforms, and accessories (Harrison 2009). Recent research in consumer-to-consumer rituals reveals that aesthetic elements provide consumers with ways to compete for status in broader social and narrower kinship circles, to create and continue cherished traditions, to feel transported through their interaction with beautiful and sacred objects and other sensory delights, and to experience pride and security through ownership and display (e.g., Otne et al. 2009; Sredl 2009).

This paper deepens the stream of research on ritual aesthetics by analyzing consumers’ perceptions of rituals that are embedded into retail or service provider offerings. We define “embedded rituals” as those that retailers or service providers perceive as so integral to their marketplace offerings that they do not make exposure to or participation in these activities optional for consumers. Furthermore, the provider controls the delivery and content of the ritual, and while they are often co-created, embedded rituals are not typically adapted for individual consumers. As such, they are distinct from rituals where consumers can opt out or escape from participation or observation. The study of embedded rituals offers researchers intriguing opportunities to explore issues relating to intimacy and privacy, boundaries, consumer emotions and agency in the marketplace. More strategically, it also offers the opportunity to gain consumer insights into how marketing decisions regarding ritual execution and performance can impact the effectiveness and appeal of these activities. To that end, this paper explores the following questions: 1) How do the aesthetic choices that marketers incorporate into embedded rituals impact consumers’ experiences of these events? 2) How do these choices and other elements (e.g., skill of the ritual actors) impact consumers’ perceptions of the overall atmospherics that pervade embedded rituals?

Our data set consists of the following: in-depth narratives, depth interviews with consumers, and in-depth participant observation by the research team. Narratives were collected from undergraduate and graduate students in 2008 and 2009 at a large university in the US Midwest. Students were instructed to write about a ritual that a retailer or service provider had offered, and the ways in which the strategic ritual choices made by these providers impacted their experiences. A total data set of 151 narratives was created, with 97 of those specifically discussing rituals that meet the definition of “embedded.” In addition, eleven depth interviews were conducted on the topic of retailer/service provider rituals with adults ages 25+ in both a small and a large city in the Midwest in 2009. Of these, nine discussed some aspect of embedded ritual practice. With respect to participant observation, the team visited a retail site (specifically, a Japanese Teppanyaki-only steakhouse) and each researcher prepared a set of in-depth field notes from the experience. The team then shared and compared these notes, and met and discussed their findings. The team consists of four women, two of whom were not born in the United States, and two of whom are novices with respect to qualitative research and analysis. This diversity contributed to a variety of interesting interpretations of the embedded ritual, and revealed interesting areas for future research.

The resulting text revealed a variety of emergent embedded-ritual contexts, including: consumers’ participation in their own or others’ birthday celebrations at restaurants, traditions such as the “Seven-Inning Stretch” at baseball games, highly scripted service rituals such as recitations of menu items vs. being offered the menu in print, highly scripted greeting and/or parting rituals by salespeople, tours, orientation sessions and ceremonies that celebrate rites of passage in the marketplace (e.g., turning 21 at a bar, and receiving a free drink and bar “membership number”). In terms of our research questions, aesthetic choices impact consumers’ experiences of embedded rituals in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, aesthetic choices can impact memorability of the event and desire for repetition of the ritual, can create an ambiance that sacralizes the activity, can alter consumers’ perceptions of their own identity (e.g., by surrounding consumers with sumptuous trappings and making them feel wealthy or like royalty), and can concretize favorable impressions of the retailer, especially when one aesthetic choice is to stress the cleanliness and simplicity that encompasses and embedded ritual. On the negative side, the aesthetics inherent in embedded rituals can violate consumers’ sense of privacy, make them feel hemmed in or stifled, lead them to experience negative emotions such as embarrassment and resentment (e.g., by having to be associated with gaudy, loud or overly fragrant ritual artifacts), and cause them to shun the retailer or provider in the future. Furthermore, consumers elaborate upon how aesthetics contribute to overall atmospherics, by imparting and expanding upon a variety of metaphors. Positive metaphors that describe embedded-ritual contexts include: palace, heaven, community, and club. More negative metaphors include: hell, outsider, tomb, and joke. And while the tenor of most of the consumer text generated in this study was positive with respect to embedded rituals, consumers also were quite pointed in their discussion of when and how these rituals proved intrusive, irritating or annoying—and how aesthetic elements contributed to these perceptions. Our paper concludes with recommendations for retailers and providers, in terms of how they can manage and control the aesthetic elements of embedded rituals in order to create meaningful and memorable marketplace encounters for consumers.
SESSION OVERVIEW

The Subject of Neoliberal Consumer Research

Consumer research, as a discipline of study, is embedded in a larger field of what could be called the political economy of knowledge production. While the managerial, and even political, value of the discipline is not in question, researchers tend to ignore the ideological and ethical dimensions of the discipline in their investigations. It may be useful to investigate the kind of politics consumer researchers pursue when questions of citizenship, sustainability, social justice, and equality are conceived in terms of consumer choices without reference to regimes of rationality outside of which consumer practices could not be grasped as political (Moor 2007). Recent consumer research within the domain labeled as “consumer culture theory,” has attempted to place consumption and ‘consumer culture’ within a larger socio-economic, ideological, and political context (for a review see Arnould and Thompson 2005). As insightful and engaging as much of this work on consumer ideology may be, it treats the politics of consumption within the frame of consumption itself, thereby uncritically “assuming,” and non-reflexively reproducing, the notion of a “politicalness” of consumption choices. This is not to deny that (the choice of) brands, cars, and coffee houses can be the site of ideological struggles. They certainly can! However, treating consumer practices as ideological and political within this established norm betrays a curious disregard for the political rationality that allows us to speak of consumer choice as political.

Consumer researchers are not the only group to study the political effects of consumption. Under the heading of political consumerism we find a sizeable literature that discusses the possibilities and limitations of individual or collective consumer choices as expressions of political power (for a more critical view see Littler 2009; for a review see e.g., Micheletti, Fissltesdal, and Stolle 2004). Recently, a growing camp of management theorists, public policy professionals, CEOs and economists (with the occasional intervention from marketing and consumer research) have embraced Prahalad’s (2005) celebration of “the base-of-the-pyramid (BoP) consumer” as the ultimate social, economic, and political weapon against global poverty. Yet, similar to the work done in consumer research, these two bodies of literature fail to isolate critically what forms of political rationality are performed and rendered productive by a practice that considers consumption as political. If Foucault is correct in asserting “that ‘practices’ don’t exist without a certain regime of rationality” (M Foucault 1991, p.79), then it appears that talking about the practice of ideological and political consumption without asking the larger question about the political bias of our knowledge creation and without investigating the discursive field that makes ideological struggles over consumer

1We do not focus on the vast majority of consumer research practiced and published in our journals because it shows no particular interest in problematizing its work from a political perspective. That does not mean that we would want to exclude this body of work from our critique. On the contrary, it is in many ways our main target. But we believe that the politics of knowledge of “mainstream” consumer research is rather obvious. It is therefore more interesting to look at the body of consumer research that is willing to engage with questions of power, politics, and ideology and ask what kind of politics it promotes.

And in this regard at least, ‘mainstream consumer research and CCT research converge albeit coming at this position from very different directions.

items (or the “consumer” himself, as in the case of BoP) rational makes for an incomplete discussion. We wonder if rectifying this oversight—if, in other words, engaging in a reflexive understanding of our own political project—could puncture, as Brown (2006, p. 690) puts it, “the conceit of our innocence and virtue [and] tell us things we would rather not know about ourselves, in particular revealing identifications and desires we consciously disavow.”

In particular, by constructing a social landscape where the responsibility of individuals to actively pursue a form of market morality is investigated but not challenged, consumer research, one could argue, has already adopted a neoliberal rationality that depoliticizes social and economic powers and reduces participatory democratic processes to self-interested market choices and struggles over the meaning of brands (Critchley 2007; Wainwright 2003). In our literature, especially among the CCT brand, the vast majority of articles presents the consumer as the model neoliberal citizen “who strategizes for her- or himself among various social, political, and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options. A fully realized neoliberal citizenry would be the opposite of public-minded; indeed, it would barely exist as a public. The body politic ceases to be a body but is rather a group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers” (Brown 2005, p.43).

The benefits of a neoliberal brand of consumer research are many. Perhaps chief among them is that a neoliberal rationality (where politics is economic) allows for eschewing the question of who is “responsible for responsibility?” (Littler 2009); that is, who is responsible for suggesting collective, structural, or political action beyond the facilitation of the exuberance of market agency (now understood as democratic exuberance).

This special session brings together three papers that look at the political rationality of market choices as a site of ideological, political, and social struggle. Again, we do so not because we question whether the market is political (we know since Marx that markets and market choices cannot be independent of the state and that the economy is always a political economy), but because we are interested in investigating what kind of political project consumer research pursues that examines and reports on, say, processes of brand contestation while ignoring the somewhat larger question of “how flows of democratic energies become oriented within Neoliberalism” (Littler 2009, p.65); a consumer research, in other words, that largely ignores the question of a separation between the economy and the state in political terms. Hence, we investigate and critique from different theoretical and methodological perspectives, the contemporary landscape of political intelligibility and possibility in a field that tends to equate consumer subjectivity with political subjectivity. Collectively, the papers argue that a consumer research that often uncritically and sometimes triumphantly finds consumption and the exploitation (or “free expression”) of personal consumer desires to be the central site of political subjectivity and a valid expression of participatory democracy exemplifies the neoliberal political program of an “end of politics” (Lemke 2002).
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EXTENDED ABSTRACTS
“The BoP Consumer in a Neo-Liberal World”
Sammy Bonsu, York University, Canada

As recently as the 1980s and 1990s, several influential business strategists reaffirmed the need to neglect poor markets by way of near activist proclamations regarding the perceived belief that these markets offered no real value to the firm (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1989; Ohmae 1985; 1987). Framing these markets as such contributed to the corporate neglect of developing markets, save the upper crust of consumers (Prahalad and Lieberthal 1998). With the saturation of markets in the so-called developed countries and globalization becoming the philosophy that guides business strategy, abandonment of the imperialism-informed strategies of earlier decades has given way to a renewed focus on the poor consumer as the antidote to the ills of the firm in contemporary capitalism. Some have noted that this strategic shift may have been forced by contemporary global political and financial dynamics that now seems to facilitate the migration of business and political power to emerging countries (e.g., Prahalad and Lieberthal 1998). It is in this context that the Base-of-the-Pyramid (BoP) corporate strategy emerged.

The Base-of-the-pyramid strategy is a radical re-conceptualization of poverty alleviation as a problem best resolved through market processes that support entrepreneurship development on a massive scale (Hammond and Prahalad 2004; Hart 2007; Prahalad 2004). The strategy adopts the idea of consumer co-creation of value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) which, in the context of the BoP, allows the firm to coordinate—as opposed to impose—a market-based solution to poverty that recognizes the resources and potential profits at the base of the pyramid (Simanis and Hart 2008). The approach places the firm at the center of the poor’s wellbeing in that the firm invests in the market and directs the intended transformation of the poor populace into entrepreneurs and consumers toward presumed outcomes that include poverty alleviation for the BoP consumer and significant profits for the firm (Hart 2007; Kandchar and Halme 2008; Prahalad 2004). That is, the firm seeks to convert the heretofore neglected poor into a consumer by framing this individual as a potential beneficiary of corporate resources that can be mobilized for her socio-economic wellbeing. The BoP strategy thus indicates a purposeful manufacturing of the consumer as a subjugated partner in a mutually beneficial set of market and consumption processes (Hart 2007; Simanis and Hart 2008; UNDP 2008).

From this perspective, the BoP is reminiscent of the “civilizing mission” that undergirded colonialism and purported to serve the interests of the colonized, in spite of its wanton disregard for their welfare (Rodney 1981). As the nation-state cedes authority to the all-powerful global firm by reason of capitalism and globalization, the firm has assumed governance responsibilities, and is applying this authority to excite local knowledge that can be converted to firm profitability (Kobrin 2001). By seeking to instigate and activate “local knowledges” through BoP strategies, the global firm engages in a crucial recasting of how to manage the BoP consumer who is now supposed—on the basis of rational choice decision-making—to freely join the world of active consumers (Triantafillou and Nielsen 2001, p.63). Consumer empowerment constructed as benevolence toward socio-economic development is transformed into knowledge that is relevant to the firm’s financial success. In essence, the BoP is a colonizing project that seeks control over market resources under the guise of consumer empowerment.

In discussing this paper, we will draw on the observation that the BoP strategy seeks a radical transformation of the poor individual into an entrepreneurial consumer who, by necessity, assumes a neo-liberal stances and employs self-monitoring technologies to operate in conformity to the predicts of “free” market norms. We will conceptualize the BoP strategy as an exercise in Foucauldian “governmentality” (Foucault 1991), whereby capitalist ideology employs democratic pretensions to trap consumers into participating in their own exploitation. In so doing, we draw attention to the neglect of the political and related dynamics in the consumer culture theory project and call for increased attention to the logics and rationalities that inform contemporary consumer research.

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Neoliberalism and/in Consumer Research

As I write this abstract, I am presented, inescapably, on television, the radio, the newspaper, and any number of online sources with what amounts to a minute-by-minute account of the incoming retail numbers for so-called Black Friday (traditionally a big shopping day on the Friday after Thanksgiving, which is on the third Thursday of November) and for “Cyber Monday,” a more recent invention that extends the Thanksgiving shopping spree online and into the following week (for many this requires shopping from work). Reeling from arguably the worst economic crisis in the history of the United States, the results of two of the biggest shopping days of the year are becoming the most important news of the week. Retail numbers are to the ailing economy what the thermometer is for the feverish patient: a way to calculate and put a number to the severity of the illness; except that in the case of the economy, the higher the number the happier everyone will be. Enlisting, or to use Althusser’s well-known term, interpellating the consumer (however “shopped out”4) as an active agent in the historical project of restoring America’s dithering economic as well as psychological, social, and cultural health is yet another example of how personal consumption is constructed as an act of social action, moral duty and active political participation (see Sassatelli 2007). But I think what is more important to understand is that these particular moments of intensification bring to the fore a political subject that considers the market (and the economy more generally) as the organizing and regulative principle of all aspects of the state and society; a neoliberal subject that may not act against his (class) interests, as is often suggested, but whose interests are aligned with that of the market (Brown 2006).

For many theorists in the social sciences and the cultural studies-informed camp of consumer research, consumer culture and the society of consumption have been regarded as the embodiment, long awaited, of an enlightened modernity. From this perspective, the ascendency of consumption and the democratization of middle-class materialism beginning in the immediate post-war years, “far from being supremely alienating, […] stands for the expansion of civil society, the first moment in history when central political and commercial organs and agendas became receptive to, and part of, the broader community” (Miller 2007, p.3). In light of the tight entanglements of the economic and the cultural (Slater 2002; 2005) and consumption and society, considering consumption as intrinsically political seems plausible (see e.g., the recent Hummer studies by Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler, see also Giesler 2008; Holt 2006; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Thompson and Arsel 2004). However, while I do not wish to diminish the importance of consumption in the organization of social, political, and cultural relations, I wish to argue that this focus on consumption misses the corresponding rise of a culture of production, in particular of the production of self-producing subjects, and a culture of selling, i.e., of selling something to someone. It misses, thus, that the expansion of consumption goes hand in hand with an expansion of the range and spheres of market exchanges.

In my comments I want to argue that the rise of consumer culture as field for democratic participation needs to be considered (and critiqued, not just reported on, which is the focus of the studies mentioned above) as part of a larger transformation of an extension of the rationality of the market, the schemes of analysis it offers and the decision-making criteria it suggests (Michel Foucault 2008,p.323).

Within the project of Neoliberalism, a constructivist enterprise that intends to govern subjectivity through culture (Lemke 2001), the institutionalizing of a consumer culture becomes one element of neoliberal governmentality aimed at exhorting individuals to produce themselves as autonomous, entrepreneurial, and profit-maximizing subjects, including in domains “that are not exclusively or not primarily economic: the family and the birth rate, for example, or delinquency and penal policy” (Michel Foucault 2008). In a consumer culture (or society) the subject is morally responsible for navigating not just the market but the entire social realm using rational choice and cost-benefit calculations grounded on market-based principles to the exclusion of all other ethical values and social interests (Hamann 2009). In this account, the cultural myth of consumption as empowering and consumer choice as political expression of widespread democratization functions as a wedge to break up residual social dependencies and alternative rationalities.

I will use the case of Prahalad’s (2005) enormously popular and influential book *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid* as illustrative case to make the point that via the mobilization of the consumer (here in an “emergent” consumer culture) neoliberal governmentality targets the conduct of the individual in its entirety in an attempt to shape the individual’s orientations in a more entrepreneurial and self-reliant form. My account points to the need to understand consumer culture as a kind of ethical framework that encourages the individual to cultivate himself as an entrepreneur who considers everyone around him as a consumer (and producer) of something. Consumer culture and a society that equates rationalities of the market with civic participation and hails the consumer subject as ethical model for citizenship, has therefore the potential, following Brown (2005, p.43), to be deeply undemocratic:

The model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for himself or herself among various social, political, and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options. A fully realized neoliberal citizenry would be the opposite of public-minded; indeed, it would barely exist as a public. The body politic ceases to be a body but is rather a group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers . . . which is, of course, exactly how voters are addressed in most American campaign discourse.”

Thus, I am arguing for “bringing in” a political economy of consumption if we are to prevent our work from replicating the

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4 A term frequently used by the well-known economist Nouriel Roubini of New York University’s Stern School of Business to express a situation where the vast majority of Americans is no longer able to maintain customarily high levels of consumer spending because of massive and mounting personal debt and declining incomes. Roubini maintains, therefore, that unlike less severe economic downturns in the past this recession cannot be fixed by high or even increasing levels of domestic consumption. 

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“Consumption as a Practice of Self-Formation: The Neoliberal Politics of Consumption (and Consumer Research?)”

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hegemonic “consumption as empowerment, liberation, and self-realization” accounts of much of consumer research from the 1990s up until now, characterized by “professors earnestly spying on young people at the mall, or obsessively staring at them in virtual communities” (Miller 2006, p.4). To paraphrase Littler (2009), it would be important to ask how the expansion of consumption (of brands, for example), and market relations more generally, comes to appeal to and activate the subject’s desire for democratic and participatory cultures and investigate critically how this energy is used or oriented? Responding to the neoliberal fantasies of empowerment and freedom through consumption does not mean to deny the possibility of emancipatory consumer politics or individual pleasure of consumption. But it means that we are conscious of the material conditions and institutional practices, and critical of the politics of subjectification, that installs an ideology of consumerism and ‘the market’ at the center of contemporary notions of citizenship, political participation, and practices of freedom.

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“The Neo-Liberal Consumer Subject”
Alan Bradshaw, University of London, UK

The meaning of the term “consumer” is in a constant state of expansion bringing us to a point in which consumption is understood to mediate the political economy, social structures and ideologies. Indeed it is now common for governments to claim legitimacy on the basis of an ability to deliver increased levels of consumer spending. Within this expanded frame, there appears to be significant overlap between the consumer subject and the radical political subject; hence we regularly encounter consumer research literature that analyses the consumer in terms of agency, empowerment, resistance, emancipation. Yet to consider the overlap between the consuming subject and the radical political subject is to acknowledge that, as Butler (2009) reminds, we are engaged in the practice of framing and that any application of a frame is an act of containing and determining and therefore any frame is an editorial embellishment of the object and is politically saturated. This insight creates an epistemological problem for a field which is concerned with expanding the frame of the consumer. This paper contends that the conceptual project of expanding the frame of the consumer converges with the neo-liberal enterprise which is concerned with the application of market rational to all walks of life. This is not to say that scholarly projects concerned with expanding the frame the consumer are somehow inherently neo-liberal but it is to say that we urgently to question the distinctions and convergences between how the enterprises frame the subjectivity and therefore what this paper attempts is to analyse the frame of the consumer from the perspective of the radical political subject. As such the paper is an attempt to reach outside of the canon of literature that exists within consumer research and conduct a literature review comprising of contemporary readings of consumer culture from major philosophical figures.

Neo-liberalism is generally understood to be concerned with a radically free market, maximized competition, free trade achieved through economic deregulation however as Brown (2005) identifies, neo-liberalism is sustained by a political rationality that produces its own normatives and subjectivities and is increasingly manifest as a type of common sense. This common sense concerns a systematic extension of market values to all institutions and social actions and a reconfiguration of all human and institutional activities as rational entrepreneurial actions.

The psychological internalisation of this neo-liberal rationality, according to Bauman (2005), creates a subjectivity best exemplified by immigration policies that promises entry visas for the “brightest and best.” In applying under such circumstances would-be migrants,
Neoliberalism and/in Consumer Research

parallel to the faith of all subjects of a consumer culture, are in the business of promoting an attractive and desirable commodity to enhance the market value of the good they are selling, and of course, the good that they are selling is themselves. Hence for Bauman within a neo-liberal conjuncture consumers are simultaneously the promoters of commodities and the commodities being promoted.

However inasmuch as neo-liberalism always presents itself as a series of consumer choices and as much as the consumer decides, responsibility is devolved resulting in a social order which takes the form of what Zizek (2009) terms a self-propelling dance indifferent to its consequences in social reality. What follows, according to Zizek is consumers configured as passive nihilists, immersed in lifestyles, narratives and pleasures as they actively construct fake utopias with disregard to fates of those excluded. The fate of those excluded is writ large upon by various key theorists of our age including Bauman (2007), Badiou (2008) and Butler (2009) who all describe a rising context of systematic suspicion, contempt and surveillance of outsiders and a formation of an underclass of those unable to reconfigure themselves as commodities capable of generating value in a society of consumers. Hence the prevalence of neo-liberal rationality and its internalisation within the consumer subjectivity contains what Bauman describes as an ethical blind-spot which generates collateral damage in the form of social injustice. In a market rationality which treats entrepreneurialism as a normative, the corollary holds that we are not responsible for others. This rationale is described by Badiou as politically manifest as a form of what he terms Yankee Imperialism; a systematic servility towards the powerful, hard work by the poor and contempt and fear for those who do not live as consumers do. Encapsulated therein is a key distinction between the model neo-liberal consumers who, as described by Brown, strategises for themselves among various social, political and economic options and not one who strives with others to alter or organise those options, an opposite of a public-minded citizen.

The identification of a convergence between the framed consumer and model citizen within neo-liberalism with its attendant ethical blind spots and collateral social injustice raises important questions for the field of consumer research. The intended purpose of this paper is to identify these threads of thought that exist outside the field of consumer research and to present them for discussion within the context of the special session. It is submitted that seriousness of the issues of social injustice raised justify this unorthodox approach.

REFERENCES
Exploring the Boundaries of Market-Mediated Social Mobility of the Marginalized

Marius K. Luedicke, University of Innsbruck, Austria

SESSION OVERVIEW

“[E]ach class resembles a hotel or omnibus, always full but always of different people” (Joseph A. Schumpeter 1955, p.126).

Social mobility concerns the movement of people between social positions of all kind (Hradil 2001). The equal opportunity of men of all origins to freely choose occupation, class, or political and religious beliefs has long become a constitutionally established right in most high-income nations, a fact that renders social mobility issues (as the contrary of hopelessness and stagnation) a central public policy concern.

Classic thinkers such as de Tocqueville, Pareto, Engels, and Veblen have argued already in the 19th Century that the high rates of upward mobility have contributed to the relative absence of working-class radicalism in the United States (Lipset and Bendix 1992). Contemporary scholars such as Strauss (1971), Blau and Duncan (1978), and Goldthorpe (1987; Clark 1990 for a review) continue to substantiate the role of social mobility for maintaining social peace, or sparking civil revolutions (see Lipset and Bendix 1992) and explore conditions for and consequences of social mobility across nations and social contexts (Kerckhoff 1984).

However, socio-demographic evidence has consistently shown that upward social mobility remains a relatively uncommon exception to the entrenched forces of social reproduction (Ravallion, Chen, and Sangraula 2007; Sassen 2006). For example, while American citizens increasingly cherish the American dream, i.e. to start poor, work hard, and end rich (80% agreement in 2005, up from 61% in 1999), recent statistical polls suggests, to the contrary, that actual chances for leaping from the lowest to the highest income brackets are lower in the US (and the UK) than in any other high-income nation (Hertz 2006, p.1). According to Hertz (2006), 1.1% of lowest class and 1.8% of middle class citizens make it to the top of the American income hierarchy, while almost half (47%) of the citizens retain the income category of their parents (vs. 15% in Denmark).

Recent European polls have revealed a higher mobility than in the US, but also various negative trends. The downward mobility of middle class consumers in Germany, for instance, has increased 7% between 2000 and 2006. Consumers that have slid into the lowest income bracket also grew 9% more likely to remain stuck in this category for more than 5 years, and exhibited a significantly higher dissatisfaction with their economic situation (Grabka 2008).

In summary, global mobility research suggest that for many of marginalized consumers upward mobility will remain a dream in Western world, while non- or downward mobility is on the rise.

How can the marginalized citizens of the lowest strata (re)gain economic and social status? What obstacles are they facing when trying to climb the socio-economic ladder? A century of sociological inquiry suggests that the likelihood of status gain for an individual depends predominantly on the context of upbringing, gender and ethnicity, educational merits and the parents’ socio-economic status (Hradil 2001). The general “inter-generational elasticity”—i.e., the openness or closedness of a certain social system—differs dramatically between societies, providing better a priori chances to children born into contexts that encourage upward social mobility (Blanden, Gregg, and Machin 2005).

A common result of the myriad empirical studies is that since parents, race, or context cannot be chosen—pursuing a good education (i.e., better than peers’ and parents’ education) is the most viable and open path to upward mobility, especially for citizens with poor starting conditions (Kerckhoff 1984).

However, even though consumption has long taken center stage for demonstrating status and superior cultural capital in high-income nations, and even though market globalization has opened unprecedented paths for market-mediated social mobility, consumer researchers have largely remained silent on this topic. Research published in the Journal of Consumer Research, the Advances in Consumer Research, or the Journal of Consumer Culture has explored social status topics either with the aim of better identifying target segments (cf. Holt 1997) or considered mobility issues arising from cross-border and intra-national migration (Penaloza 1994; Üstüner and Holt 2007). None of these studies has directly addressed market-based opportunities and obstacles for consumers’ social mobility.

The goal of this session is to present empirical insights about the role of the marketplace—in its various social functions—for marginalized consumers’ upward mobility. Equipped with ethnographic and interpretive tools, the authors approach three sets of distinct economic, cultural, and social conditions where social mobility is rendered more or less likely due to specific marketplace interactions of their informants. The participants in these studies are considered marginalized through their various social environments for exhibiting specific combinations of low income, low education, and low prestige migrant status.

The opening presentation of Tuba Üstüner and Craig Thompson addresses opportunities for marginalized Turkish migrants to gain cultural capital through labor in Turkish middle-class service environments. The authors reveal that their rural migrant informants successfully attain economic and cultural resources, internalize them as forms of self-improvement, and use servicescape figurations as an empowering means to pursue their own consumer-oriented identity projects. However, the authors also provide evidence that the migrants’ social acceptance outside of the service environment remains limited by the well-protected social boundaries established by their middle-class clientele.

The second study, presented by Zuzana Chytkova and Dannie Kjeldgaard, details vertical and horizontal social mobility options arising from juggling different roles of womanhood in Italian immigrant contexts. The authors interpret the lived experiences of Romanian women who strive to find identity positions between influential discourses of traditional and modern womanhood. During the negotiation of their identity, these women acquire social and cultural capital, which can help them to climb the social ladder in their new home country.

The third study by Marius Luedicke and Elisabeth Pichler focuses on the social mobility constraints experienced by Turkish immigrant consumers in Austria. Building on Bauman’s 2004 cultural critique of “Wasted Lives,” the authors discuss how the marketplace, and particularly certain consumption styles, leverage (or attenuate) the integration/rejection conflicts that permeate contemporary high-income nations. They find empirical support for Bauman’s theory and show how consumption-related marketplace mechanisms reinforce social boundaries and exclusion for ambitious marginalized consumers, rather than opening up the social fabric and allowing for migrants’ integration and social upward mobility.
In summary, the session contributes to consumer research in three important ways. First, it addresses issues of market-mediated social mobility that have previously attracted scant research attention considering its great socio-cultural importance. Second, it offers new knowledge on how the market facilitates social mobility as a workplace, as a provider of identity resources, and as a means of granting or denying access to social spheres. Lastly, the session intends to stimulate consumer researchers to explore the role of the marketplace for upward and downward social mobility and illuminate the role that marketplace resources play in the Western societies’ noble quest for human equality.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“How Servicescape Figurations Mediate Socio-cultural Differences Between Consumers and Rural Migrant Aesthetic Labourers”
Tuba Üstüner, Colorado State University, USA
Craig J. Thompson, University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA

This study investigates how socio-cultural differences between consumers and service workers are mediated by the institutionalized power relationships and asymmetrical interdependencies that operate in a servicescape context. These socio-cultural dimensions of servicescape interactions and institutional identities have fallen in a theoretical blind spot that exists between the respective analytic orientations of the service relationshipArnould 2005; Berry 2002; Vargo and Lusch 2008) and sociology of servicework paradigms (Hochschild 1983; 2003; Sherman 2007). This oversight is particularly glaring because, in the global service economy, these occupations are increasingly being filled by workers matriculating from deeply impoverished rural areas (Sassen 2006). Indeed, one of the most significant trends impacting global economic development is a massive population shift from rural to metropolitan areas (Meng 2004). Numerous studies of developing economies have documented that rural inhabitants have considerably less access to educational resources and, a higher proportion of households headed by individuals with little or no formal education, than their socio-economic counterparts in urban areas (Ferreira and Walton 2006).

These socio-economic shifts also create a structural mismatch between the socio-cultural backgrounds these service workers bring to the urban glamour zones and the aptitudes needed to effectively perform aesthetic labor (Witz, Warhurst, and Nickson 2003). Although many forms of service work fall on the low end of the income and occupational status scales, they are by no means a province for unskilled or deskilled workers. Many of these service jobs are highly interactive, requiring specific forms of cultural knowledge, practical skill, and interpersonal acumen that generate symbolic and aesthetic value for a metropolitan and well-educated clientele.

Our analysis highlights the commercially-mediated power relations that create a new class of aesthetic laborers and also bind customers’ and workers’ identities in a network of asymmetrical interdependencies known as figurations (Elias 1978). Our research context is the hairdressing industry in metropolitan regions of Turkey. Much like their North American and European counterparts, Turkish hair salons tend to foster long-term relationships between hairdressers and customers. These relationships also represent an intersection between the rural, socio-economic periphery of the globalizing economy and its consumer-oriented socio-economic center points (Sassen 2006).

To gain insights into the relational dynamics of this servicescape context, we interviewed 9 hair salon-owners, 11 staff at varying stages in their careers, and 11 middle or upper-middle class women who patronize such salons. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and ranged from 1 1/2 hour to 2 1/2 hours in length. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim (and translated into English). Each interview began with general questions about the participants’ background, personal interests and life goals, and then proceeded with queries about their specific experiences as salon workers or customers. In keeping with the conversation with a purpose of depth interviewing (McCracken 1988), participants largely set the flow of the interview, with the first author asking follow-up questions and probing for more descriptive details. In making sense of the interview data, we used an iterative, part-to-whole process of hermeneutic analysis (Thompson 1997). Initially, we first independently analyzed the entire set of transcripts and formed provisional understandings of emergent thematic commonalities.

Our analysis reveals that these servicescape figurations play out through an intricate system of interpersonal strategies and alliances. Salon owners become the de facto enforcers of customers’ institutionalized authority through their actions in creating an appropriate salon aesthetic and socially conditioning (through sometimes heavy handed methods) their employees in the prevailing middle class norms. Owing to the fact that the salon is, indeed, a path for attaining economic and cultural resources, rural migrant and urban underclass men accept these modes of governance and internalize them as forms of self-improvement and in turn gradually become distanced from their rural or squatter social networks and cultural heritage. As these men build their professional reputations as hairdressers, they also begin to believe, and not without some practical justification, that they can wield subtle forms of influence over their middle class clientele. For customers and hairdressers, the structural realities of class stratification, become less relevant to their interactions than their respective perceptions of who is being placed in a position of greater dependency over the course of the relationship.

Accordingly, customers and hairdressers’ servicescape interactions are oriented toward managing and recalibrating the asymmetrical interdependencies which bind them together. In many cases, these relational practices are conventional aspects of the servicescape script. These standardized conventions enable customers to experience their class-based advantages as self-evident entitlements which can go without saying and that need no justification. For example, customers’ expectations of empathy and indeed anticipatory emotional responsiveness become one of the de facto means through which they implement their class privileges over hairdressers and other salon workers.

In contradistinction to the repressive portrayals of emotional (and aesthetic) labor advanced by the sociology of servicework paradigm, we show that hairdressers (and their young apprentices) view servicescape figurations as an empowering means to pursue their own consumer-oriented identity projects, rather than as an alienating disciplinary regime. Seen in this light, the Turkish hairdressers are strategically deploying the cultural and economic resources gained through their subordinated position in these servicescape figurations to circumvent other pressing socio-cultural limits on their consumer identities.

Our analysis also brings into sharper relief how confluences of class and gender positions aremanifested and negotiated in the institutional positions, interaction norms, and shifting power relations of a servicescape. On the hairdressers’ side, their reconfigured identity positions demonstrate that patriarchal advantages are not equally distributed across class strata (or even geographic region as social actors move from rural to urban settings). As these working class/squatter men seek to gain higher class standing by entering the metropolitan hairdressing profession, they also abdicate some traditional forms of patriarchal authority. In effect, they are trading
utility in metropolitan and middle class status systems. Economic, social, and cultural (Bourdieu 1990) which provide more utility in metropolitan and middle class status systems.

“Migrant Women’s Identity Formation and the Marketplace: Between Constraint and Creativity”

Zuzana Chytkova, University of Pisa, Italy
Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

In this presentation we discuss immigrant women’s identity negotiation processes and strategies and their effect on the women’s subjective position within the host country’s social structure. We demonstrate the way female migrants acquire and mobilize capital resources in discursive spaces emerging from ideologies of traditional and modern womanhood in the context of the food cooking practices of Romanian women in Italy. Our findings suggest that acculturation processes are not just a matter of negotiation as suggested by previous research, but that such negotiation is constrained by the ideological identity spaces in which the migrant is situated and the resources the migrants can bring to bear within these ideological spaces. However, they also indicate that, through the deployment of marketplace-based symbolic resources, the acculturation process can lead to an increased cultural and social capital that eventually allows for a transcendence of the assigned dominated subjectivities.

The research builds on the previous findings within the postassimilationist stream that questioned the linear assimilation of immigrant consumer behavior from home to host culture, and centered, instead, around the idea that immigrants use the marketplace offerings in the creative negotiation of the two cultures. This viewpoint, however, has been questioned by Üstüner and Holt (2007) who argued that such creative hybrid identity projects are made impossible in conditions of lacking social, cultural and economic capital. The current research focuses on the intersection of these two viewpoints, considering the immigrants’ identity negotiation through marketplace within the constraints of the sociocultural conditions.

The findings presented here focus on the women’s use of symbolic assets offered by the marketplace representation of the “modern woman” in the negotiation of their traditional gender role, whose construction and meanings are tightly bound to a specific culture, and should therefore be considered as an aspect of consumer acculturation. Food and cooking practices, on the other hand, are a key element not only in gender role (Lupton 1996), but also in self-identity construction (Giddens 1991). Drawing on Butler’s (1988; 1999) conception of gender as performative, consumption, including cooking practices, is not seen as expressive, but rather as constitutive of gender.

We identify two principal discourses that shape the gender identity construction of the respondents. The traditional woman’s role is based on the normative gender discourse in pre-communist, socialist and post-communist Romania and centers around the notion of self-sacrificing, asexual, passively enduring Virgin Mary. The modern woman myth has its foundation in the marketplace representation of the “just do it” woman (McDonald 2000) and revolves around the concepts of individualism, independence and active diligence/self-help.

A semiotic analysis of the respondents’ descriptions of the home and host food sign systems revealed a common underlying structure, which is, however, drawn on in different ways. In fact, in their construction of gender identity, the respondents employ different strategies of interpretation of the mentioned discourses that are also employed as interpretational codes of the food sign system. The enactment/performance of such strategies (through cooking practices), then, constitutes the new, hybrid gender scripts.

The two principal strategies, the strategy of conformity (with the traditional role) and the strategy of emancipation, lie on the opposite sides of a continuum that leads from the more traditional gender ideal based on the discourses in the home culture, towards the imagined ideal of a modern woman. The position of these two strategies on the extremes of the continuum, does not mean that they would lead to a purely modern or a purely traditional gender script, but rather that the strategies situated at one extreme or the other would employ the elements of one discourse to oppose the other and vice versa.

A third strategy of gender discourse negotiation is the strategy of cosmopolitanism. It is a strategy adopted by women with high cultural capital in terms of education, or originated in urban areas where the normative force of the traditional discourse is weaker. This is a strategy which seeks to go beyond conformity or emancipation in taking a conscience and reflexive distance from the dominant gender discourses. It resembles what Ozanne and Murray (1995) defined as emancipated consumer, in that the adoption of this strategy requires acknowledging the code (discourse) and its structuring effect (Arnould 2007, p.99). The cultural capital also allows these women to take the reflexive distance from the dominating discourse in the host culture that assigns them the subjective position of low-status migrants and such repositioning within the host society structure is enforced by the socializing with peers of other nationalities than their own.

The research has shown that the adoption of the strategy of emancipation provided the respondents with the symbolic resources needed for pursuing education of all kinds (university, driver’s school, grammar course, communication course), leading to the acquisition of higher cultural capital. As noted also in the opening section of the session, cultural capital tends to be the asset low-status consumers can employ to achieve upward social mobility. While such effect is difficult to assess in a short-term inquiry, the informants’ accounts of their migration experience suggest that such result can be achieved. The gradual increase in cultural capital, in fact, leads to the adoption of the strategy of cosmopolitanism that allows overcoming the dominated subjective position of “poor immigrant” in the host country in favor of the self-identity of “world citizen.”

The strategies of gender script negotiation are not always a viable way of subjectivity transcendence. In certain circumstances, in fact, the strategy that the women desire to pursue, is not practicable due to contextual influences, such as a lack of resources, or personal history. The result is a shattered identity project not unlike that described by Üstüner and Holt (2007).

The result of the analysis demonstrates that in the case of cross-border female migrants, the low social and economic capital in the host country, can, but does not necessarily lead to exclusion from consumer culture and a shattered identity project, as described by Üstüner and Holt (2007).

Consumer acculturation of poor cross-border migrants, in fact, allows for the appropriation of symbolic resources that can lead to a heightened cultural and social capital and, ultimately, to an upward social mobility within the host society.

“Limitations of Immigrants’ Market-mediated Social Mobility”

Marius K. Luedicke, University of Innsbruck, Austria
Elisabeth A. Pichler, University of Innsbruck, Austria

Literature on acculturation has (empirically) bolstered up the widely held assumption that migrants can foster integration and attain social mobility within their new societal environments by adopting local skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (e.g., Peñaloza 1994). To Bourdieu (1984; 1986), the practices of acqui-
Focusing on market participation practices, we evaluate the immigrant con-
sumer’s adoption of high status goods. This approach is important for con-
eras. Adopting a hermeneutic mode of data analysis (Thompson 1997), we focused on evaluating how and why specific forms of social, cultural, and economic capital were effectively accumulated by immigrant informants while other forms were actively foreclosed by domestic informants. Through this empirical design we were able to gain insights into the market-based social and structural boundaries of immigrants’ upward mobility.

Our study yields three important insights for consumer culture theory. First, our work supports Bourdieu’s (1984) argument that possessions alone no longer qualify as symbols for the owner’s social status (see Holt 1998). The derogatory domestic responses to immigrants’ BMW ownership demonstrate that high status goods are weaved into webs of particular taste, knowledge, and behaviors—i.e., brand systems (Luedicke 2005). No longer just object ownership, but also the social presentation of a brand-specific habitus, e.g., how to (not) drive or accessorize a BMW, allows observers to evaluate the social standing of the owner. In this process, the social standing of the observer itself is crucial for his/her upward mobility evaluations. From an immigrant perspective, Turkish BMW ownership and consumption habitus symbolizes achievement and class, while the same ownership and habitus evokes a significant social backlash among domestic respondents.

Second, our findings hold empirical support for Bauman’s (2004) cultural critique. We reveal active constructions of boundaries for social mobility projects where immigrant consumers entered into a competition for market resources (e.g., combining a high prestige brand with low status habitus) and public spaces (e.g., populating a traditionally Austrian culinary strip with Turkish restaurants). Furthermore, we found acculturation behaviors that appear particularly foreign to domestic observers (e.g., spending time outside in the streets, [Cova and Cova 2001]) to frequently evoke anxieties of a hostile takeover of sacrosanct places and cultural habits. In turn, market participation practices that fill an actual provision gap (e.g., Turkish fruit and vegetable stores) were readily gratified with status recognitions and immediate social interaction.

Lastly, pairing the Baumanian quandaries with our empirical findings, immigrant consumers establishing of countervailing marketplaces and consumption habit appears reasonable rather than hostile. The growth and perpetuation of parallel worlds opens new paths of parallel upward social mobility that enable marginalized consumers to convert their social, cultural, and economic capital acquisitions readily into higher social standing typically denied by the broader organized society (Bauman 2004).


SESSION OVERVIEW

“The familiar is not necessarily the known”
G.W.F. Hegel

Things like pots and bowls, wine jugs and oil flasks, doorways and door knobs may appear uninteresting, but these objects are representative of the daily lives of past peoples, just as they are ours now. Such mundane, small things used in commonplace activities and ordinary places that housed such activities provide an important understanding of a dense anthropological and cultural texture of social phenomena and social processes (Deetz 1977). In consumer and market culture research, we have given only a scant attention to mundane objects, experiences, and spaces while most consumers, most of the time, engage in ordinary, routine, and continuous consumption practices entailing simple objects in plain spaces. This session turns the focus to the ordinary, the Hegelian “familiar.” By defamiliarizing and examining the familiar practices, objects, and spaces we hope to animate, gain new insights and uncover new perspectives into familiar consumption and market phenomena.

In consumer culture research the focus has been generally on spectacular or extraordinary consumption activities and spaces. Perhaps that’s because we are interested in change and transformation-processes which are generally associated with or more visible among so-called marginal groups, extreme behaviors or happenings, and magical spaces. This focus enabled the field to uncover experiential, symbolic, and resitve consumer experiences; it generated understandings based on identity projects, reflexivity, taste, social positions, and marketplace cultures and ideologies. However, with such a focus, the more mundane consumption, which might entail little reflexivity and may be slower-to-change, went unnoticed. We believe that a focus on the mundane will augment our understanding of consumer and market culture and changes thereof, while charting new sites of investigation. Hence, this session aims to raise two interrelated questions: 1) what can we learn from studying ordinary consumption and spaces; and 2) what can we glean about things that do not change or change slowly.

In broader social sciences, scholars have engaged with the mundane to some extent–common places, provisioning, sugar, laundering, bottled water, and so on–to provide important insights into the workings of consumer culture (e.g., Boym 2001; Miller 1998; Mintz 1985; Shove 2003; Wilk 2004). These studies suggest that the ordinary things, while usually consumed inconspicuously and unreflectively, often govern people’s lives and are tied to remarkable social-cultural processes and systems. Furthermore, while mundane objects, ordinary places and routines are agents of continuity, they often are facilitators of social change as well. This paradox is worthy of consumer research. The issue is however what kinds of empirical, analytical, and theoretical approaches and/or tools are required for consumer researchers to investigate the ordinary, hence the unnoticed, in consumption. Thus, in this session we challenge ourselves to reflect upon the potential of the mundane in enhancing consumer culture research and ponder over the ways mundane things, spaces, and activities could be studied both in terms of methods and ways of theorizing.

The papers in this session engage with the continuing expansion of the contours and repertoires of the Consumer Culture Theorizing (CCT) research domain (Arnould and Thompson 2005). The papers place the mundane–tea-drinking (Ger and Kravets), small stores where contemporary traits of store design have not been applied (Borghini, Sherry, and Joy), and unpretentious hot dog stands (Askegaard, Kjeldgaard, and Østergaard)–as an empirical base for their theoretical arguments. Each paper focuses on a range of cultural experiences in circulation, in particular, residues and continuities against the latest influences be it new tea implements, or new types of uses and forms of hot dog stands in Denmark, or moving away from unspectacular stores in Italy and the USA and emerging cultural changes. The authors focus on various tensions such as the dialectic between the attachment to and detachment from ordinary places in identity (re)construction, the memories and comparisons of the new and the old, romantic versus inconspicuous authenticity of consumption experiences, and the ordinary and the special. Finally, each paper explores the complex dynamics between the mundane and the extraordinary at the intersection of social, cultural, political, and market relations.

This session will contribute to the ongoing debates regarding the contexts, methods, and ways of theorizing in consumer culture studies. We expect the session to appeal to the researchers interested in consumption and relationships between markets, cultures, and everyday living. Because of the diversity of cultures represented by the research sites (Turkey, Denmark, Italy and the USA), and the thought-provoking undertone of the session, we expect a very lively discussion session. The discussant, Daniel Miller, will open the session up with reflections on his own research about mundane aspects of consumption. After the paper presentations, which we suggest to be fifteen minutes each, Daniel Miller will ensure rich opportunities for discussion.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“The Persistence of a “Traditional” Practice: Turkish Tea Encounters Glocal Changes”
Olga Kravets, Bilkent University, Turkey
Güliz Ger, Bilkent University, Turkey

When you arrive at the airport, a poster of Turkish tea in tulip-shaped glasses on a round tray with a tri-legged handle announces the welcome. For most people, a typical day in Turkey starts with the morning tea, continues with tea at work, and ends with tea at dinner. Turkey is more known for its coffee than tea; yet, it is the tea that greets one everywhere-offices, hospitals, buses, trains, restaurants, repair shops, and homes. In the streets, one can see a tea-waiter making his nonstop tea delivery rounds. In many workplaces and homes, the teapot continuously boils, so that steaming hot tea is ready all the time. Conventionally, tea is brewed in a double teapot and is defined by a slightly tangy taste and a ruby-red color and is served in tulip-shaped glasses that display the color. Like water, there is a single taste of some variety. While this conventional drink of any time, any place, and anyone continues to circulate, recently popular cafes, shopping malls, and vending machines promote world coffees, soft drinks, and flavored or herbal teas. Most recently, Coke acquired a domestic producer of herbal teas and started making black Turkish tea.

How can consuming something as plain as the one-taste, one-color black tea from a one-shape glass persist amidst the diversity of the global era? This is the question we seek to answer by exploring the continuities and changes in the tea drinking prac-
tice in Turkey. This empirical context provides an opportunity to examine the dynamics between the continuities, represented by the vision of “traditional” Turkish tea, and changes, fostered by strong market forces, such as multinational producers and vendors of coffees, flavored teas, and soft drinks. We explore the continuities and the discontinuities in the micro-practices, routines, and material constituents thereof, including the material aspects of tea itself. We examine how the slow-to-make, one-kind-only, and just “there” tea can persist against the governing projects of modernity, and globalization, ethos of consumerism, and the potent values of convenience, practicality, healthy or fashionable living, and choice. Through interviews and observations, we examine the nexus of the social and the material in trying to understand how materials and discourses afford and/or impede sedimentation and transformation in the tea drinking practice.

We find that tea drinking is a distinctly sensual aesthetic experience, animated by the “magical sound” of the kettle boiling, smell of a tea leaves blend, radiating color, clinking of a tiny spoon, warmth of the glass in one’s hand, and the melody of sipping. All cumulate into pleasures of tea drinking, which is ongoing, routine, and almost a background activity. Tea drinking is a cultural practice, implicating the cherished ideal(is) of hospitality, sharing, and togetherness. Indeed, it both brings about and helps to enact particular forms of sociality. We find that the continuities can be emphasized, negotiated, and challenged with new tea drinking implements. For example, the ruby-red color is reified as ideal and normal, when teabags offering this color are produced, when people choose transparent over foam disposable cups, and when they ask for a lighter (color) tea as opposed to “normal.” Likewise, the fast pace of life and the discourse of efficiency are negotiated through, for instance, adoption of larger tulip-shaped glasses, requiring fewer refill trips. That is, new materials and sensibilities take root alongside the old. Interestingly, this occurs against the backdrop of the rhetoric of Turkish sociality, and the discussions of why the Turkish tea would never disappear.

We learn that the tea-drinking practice survives through the ethos of “traditional” Turkish tea, as (re)presenting Turkish culture, its values and norms such as sociality and hospitality (at home and work), its artifacts such as the double teapot (large enough for sharing), and its institutions such as the family. It lives on by flexible interpretation and practice of canons, such as color, which in turn affords measured inclusion of new material implements and discourses. Importantly, the Turkish tea-drinking spirit endures through fleeting and/or punctuated enactments, such as backgammon playing accompanied by tea or the workplace sociality accompanied by tea. Furthermore, we see that the arrival and adoption of new tea-drinking implements demarcated the “traditional” tea drinking as a special and dedicated activity, in contrast to the ordinary, mundane, and taken-for-granted activity: a routine became a ritual to be engaged in on special occasions and times. When juxtaposed to the novel trendy mugs, colorful teabags, and fancy electric kettles, the well-worn tulip-shaped glasses, loose tea, and çaydanlık articulate and emphasize anew the significance and cultural meanings associated with tea-drinking practice in Turkey, such as hospitality, generosity, and sociality. Notably, the emergence of the “traditional” tea in some spatiotemporal realms does not preclude the continuation of its invisible existence in others. That is, contrary to Bourdieu (1984), becoming a sign of “good taste” did not make Turkish tea less accessible.

Overall, we highlight the movement between the ordinary and the special; the two are not distinct realms. We suggest that we need to focus on continuities when studying change, since the two exist in the context of one another. We show that such focus requires attending the (typically unnoticed) mundane, everyday activities and material matters, rather than the usual emphasis on the symbolic aspects of changes.

“Ordinary Spaces and Sense of Place”
Stefania Borghini, University of Bocconi, Italy
John F. Sherry, University of Notre Dame, USA
Annamma Joy, University of British Columbia, Canada

Commercial spaces have always represented meaningful places for consumers. From ancient times they have stimulated the call of the exotic, the magical, discovery and entertainment (Goss 1993; McGrath 1998; Maclaran and Stevens 1998). Nowadays themed and experiential retail environments are more than the simple background of our lives. Leveraging aesthetic and hedonistic pleasure (e.g., Arnold and Reynolds 2003), such stores are the settings for pleasurable experiences in increasingly sophisticated ways. They celebrate consumers’ gender identity (Borghini et al. 2009), materialize personal utopias (Maclaran and Brown 2005), and provide therapeutic value and opportunities for spiritual growth, thus contributing to consumers’ culture and self-affirmation (Kozinet al. 2002).

The strategies of marketers are increasingly focused on the idea of designing and improving commercial settings in such a way as to generate specific experiences and meanings in consumers. The agenda of retailers is therefore full of interventions aimed at capitalizing on this trend by elaborating and enriching commercial spaces. Theorists have eagerly responded to this escalation of retail spectacle.

Our study challenges this path by looking at the meaningful bonds that consumers have with what we call ordinary places, i.e. small, informally branded or unthemed stores or restaurants. In the light of the dialectics of small and large, discreet and pervasive, hidden and manifest, placid and aggressive inspired by Bachelard (1964), these ordinary commercial settings fall into the former category, while themed and branded stores fall into the latter. The dimensions of our familiar places accord well with the reformist agenda articulated by Gronow and Warde (2001, p.4) in their exploration of ordinary consumption.

In analyzing the essence of store attachment, we reveal how the deepest and strongest links with favorite commercial spaces are often the ones forged with those mundane spaces where contemporary traits of store design have not been applied. Data were collected by means of ethnographic methods including direct observation, in-depth interviews and the application of projective techniques. With the help of three research assistants trained as interviewers, about 80 interviews lasting between 10 and 120 minutes were carried out. Overall, the interviews resulted in a data set of approximately 360 pages. Our findings reveal a complex picture of the relations which consumers establish with commercial locations.

Places and emotions always intertwine, creating a fabric of memories and sensations which mark individuals’ lives and become part of their identities, their cultural and personal heritage. Ordinary, small places, unadorned by any strong trait of brand essence or marketers’ intervention, very gradually become important and inescapable partners of their habitual visitors. In small locations which provide unobtrusive and discreet settings for individual exploration, consumers feel safer and more protected. The social pressure of fitting the positioning of the store brand to its visitors is almost absent. Social interactions with both salespeople and marketers are more intense, which reinforces emotional and social bonds. Thus, ordinary places come to remind consumers’ of their domestic settings, becoming like a second home, or a source of emotional shelter, to them. Additionally, original and distinctive
spaces created with the creativity and touch of single entrepreneurs meet consumers’ needs for authenticity, simplicity and stability.

According to our data, time does not appear to erase significant experiences in ordinary commercial locations from consumers' memories. Nonetheless, important changes in individuals' lives (moving to a new home, a new job, divorces, etc.) may interrupt the relationship. Consumers may also find stores which are more suitable for satisfying new needs and desires. In these cases, however, mundane places visited regularly for long time in the past provide food for personal memories and prompt comparisons of new with old. Their stock of precious recollections facilitates both social interaction with other visitors and personal assessment on life projects in these new settings. When people look back over their lives, they tend to recollect memories about the stores or places they used to attend, even though they are no more considered as favorite places.

In analyzing the dynamics of sense of place and attachment beyond these stories, we reveal how separation from locations to which consumers feel very close is a necessary step for identity evolution. When consumers realize the constructive function that these locations have played in their pasts, they attribute to them a new function. In personal memories, the mundane places where consumers have spent much time, regularly and in a smooth and natural way, assume a role of identity markers, spaces which indicate a personal evolution. This detachment gives rise to a new dignity attributed to these places, whose significance is heightened precisely because they no longer contribute to the individual’s present identity. The sense of place of commercial locations resides in this seeming paradox. The dialectic between attachment and detachment from ordinary places is a major component of the process of identity construction; it is a path or journey from one physical space to the next (Casey 1993) or, better, from one commercial location to the next.

Pølsevogn: A Mundane Consumption Experience (While It Lasts?)

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Per Østergaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

“Coldfeet Café”: A Mundane Consumption Experience (While It Lasts?)

The everyday is platitude; but this banality is also what is most important” wrote Maurice Blanchot (1987). Inconspicuous consumption experiences often belong in the doxa category of consumer practices, generally neither particularly loved or hated by consumers but accepted in their taken-for-grantedness (Wilk 1997). As such, they provide mundane experiences that are outside the experience economy but nevertheless often constitutive for non-reflexive feelings of identification and attachment. This study analyzes the cultural experience of consumption at the “pølsevogn”—the humble and inconspicuous open air (mobile) hot dog stand typical in Danish street scene, also nicknamed the “coldfeet café”; an ambivalent designation referring not without affection to the café-like community and coziness that may emerge among its customers and the owner of the establishment as well as to the inconveniences of this primitive, outdoor fast food outlet.

Consuming at the pølsevogn is a classical urban food ritual dating back to 1921 when the first mobile hot-dog stands were allowed in Denmark (Thomsen 1995). At the culmination of its penetration in the 1970s, it had become a highly present part of the Danish “foodie cityscapes,” the ubiquity of food availability in contemporary urban environments (Bell and Valentine 1997). As such, it is an authentic food experience which does only partially lend itself to Groves’ (2001) description of authentic foods as “something apart from daily routines” and as something which contains artisanal qualities in the production process. Granted, few people eat every day at the coldfeet café, but there is nothing exceptional in terms of artisanal or gastronomic qualities about the menu. Thus, the pølsevogn challenges this widespread image of authentic food seemingly constituted by a creative class and its romanticized picture of authenticity. This consumer experience is basically classless: people of all social backgrounds can and will go there—often or occasionally. In all its mundane simplicity, it is a widespread traditional routine and a convenience solution rather than a ritual (Marshall 2005) although, as we shall see, this might be changing.

The doxa character of the pølsevogn, i.e. its inconspicuous authenticity positions it simultaneously as something quintessentially Danish and something absent from the formulation of a national canon of food cultural icons. An illustrous example is the fact that since a few years now, the first thing one sees when arriving in the baggage claim area in the Copenhagen airport is an adapted version (fixed, not mobile stall) of the pølsevogn. Homeyness is instant. As such, the pølsevogn and its offerings in spite of its mundane character is clearly a part of a food-nation identification scheme (Bell and Valentine 1997).

The pølsevogn for quite some time held a large proportion of the market share in the Danish fast food market. As such, its history is akin to the one of Jolly Cola, a local cola brand that had a major market share in the Danish cola market until the (inevitable?) take-over by the American giants (Askegaard and Csaba 2000). In fact, when the hamburger culture first entered Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s, it did so through the medium of the pølsevogn through an addition to its standard range of products: the beef steak sandwich, which was (and is) a burger stripped of its salad and other fresh greens and served with the standard ornamentation from the pølsevogn, its sauces, fried onions, cucumber salad, beef roots and gravy. Only later, did the global burger chains per se enter the Danish market.

The increased competition may be a significant part of the explanation why the number of pølsevogne has fallen drastically over the last decades (Thomsen 1995). Certain voices in popular media have raised concern that they are gradually disappearing from the cityscape, being replaced by more comfortable (and occasionally also healthier) alternatives of fast food consumption. This reflects a sparse but growing reflexivity on the significance of this part of the Danish cityscape/food culture and mobilized forces for its rescue. The pølsevogn has for example become incorporated in large family celebrations (silver anniversaries, 60th birthday parties etc.) as an alternative to the “go-home” meal usually served at the end of such parties by way of a “hire-a-pølsevogn” marketplace service. In such instances the pølsevogn emerges as an extraordinary food experience. The purpose of this paper is to seize the moment and analyze this mundane consumption experience confronted with “the threat of authentification” by which it becomes part of a cultural canon of national heritage, and thereafter disappears out of the mundane, non-reflexive universe of experiences. The present indications of the reflexive stance to the pølsevogn and its role as an institution for mundane consumer practices presents an interesting opportunity to empirically follow the actual discursive and practical transformation processes of a food cultural institution caught in the tension of being defined in iconic or indexical forms of authenticity (Grayson and Martinez 2004). We are thus interested in the process of emerging reflexivity and “musealization” in a subpopulation of high cultural capital consumers and the extent to which media coverage of this reflexivity changes the perspective of ordinary consumers.

Data collection for this project includes videographic as well as interview-based and observational data. From the data are emerging indications of both a non-reflexive as well as a reflexive stance.
on the pølsevogn experience, reflection the distinction between two types of food consumers also proposed by Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2007). The data collection spans the whole Denmark geographically and is ongoing; the scheduled completion is in late spring 2010, so that we can sustain our theoretical reflections with fresh data at the time of the European ACR conference.

To summarize, this project aims at investigating the transformation processes and associated cultural tensions of the definition of a traditionally mundane food cultural institution. Furthermore, it is part of an ongoing and more general search for a “Nordic consumer culture” (Kjeldgaard, Østberg, and Askegaard 2007) as a response to Cova’s suggestion of a Mediterranean marketing and consumer culture (Cova 2005).

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SESSION OVERVIEW

This special session seeks to explore the commodification of the body in contemporary consumer culture. In particular, this session raises ethical concerns over the progressive objectification of the body and questions the extent to which the body and its parts can be commodified at the expense of dehumanizing the embodied self. We locate this debate within the growing interdisciplinary literature focusing on the notion of the posthumous body, which is transformed into objects for consumption (Haraway 1991; Giesler and Venkatesh 2005).

The cyborg represents imagined possibilities for the amalgamation of human, animal, and technological elements. This is not science fiction. Although Frankenstein’s monster is an image that repeatedly symbolizes scientific hubris, the use of a host of artificial, mechanical prostheses that extend life and enhance bodies in medical and other contexts are now routine, even prosaic (Helman 1988). Heart valves, pace makers, artificial hip joints, prosthetic arms and legs, and synthetic lenses are now regularly implanted in human bodies. In fact, it has been argued that the figuration of the cyborg is not radical enough (Hayles 2006). The “routinization” of medical practice often ameliorates ethical questioning as clinical technologies become normalized. New medical technologies are troubling because they challenge assumed impermeable boundaries (Haraway 1991). While the breach of corporeal boundaries, Western conception of the coherent self is violated (Helman 1988; Hallam et al. 1999) thereby, subjecting the body to reification and commercial exchange (Seale et al. 2006).

While there has been a growing interest by consumer researchers in the relationship between the body, identity and consumer culture, there is surprisingly little research that conceptualizes the commodified body. Body commodification has been a growing area of study in the broader social sciences, particularly in the field of sociology (e.g., Featherstone 2000; Seale et al. 2006) and anthropology (e.g., Sharp 2000). Studies include human trafficking, labor exploitation, female reproduction, prostitution, body trades, cannibalism, organ transplantation, transsexual surgery, genetics and immunology. Elsewhere, Marx (1867/1976) alludes to the production of commodity as fetishized goods, where the self is alienated under conditions of capitalism. The three papers in this special session cast a critical light on the commodification of the body by discussing three inter-related themes.

1. Most consumer research has tended to commodify the human body by looking at what is done to the body and its parts. In particular, the body is fetishized as a site of consumption, where identity projects are enacted (e.g., Thompson and Hirschman 1998; Rook 1985; Velliquette et al. 1998) and biopower is manifested (Foucault 1976; Thompson and Hirschman 1995). More recently, the body emerges as a site of intervention in Consumer Culture Theory (Patterson and Schroeder 2009) in which consumers are regarded as embodied agents embedded within a network of marketplace cultures (Arnould and Thompson 2005). In other words, the body is conceived as an inert entity, readily subject to the discourses of commodification. Such a perspective tended to overlook the body as a living conduit, which constitutes the material interaction between the producer and the consumer (Dant 2006). The three proposed papers problematise this view of the body-as-object by examining what the body does, that is, viewing the body as active in consumption practices and with agency in how it acts, and “speaks” to us.

2. Consumer studies of embodiment usually conceptualize the body as a lived project, whose existence is concretely grounded in the material world. Few researchers consider the posthumous body, which despite the cessation of biological life, continues to beckon us towards an orientation of life (Seale 1998; Hallam et al. 1999; Merleau-Ponty 1945; 2002; Heidegger 1927; 1962) – both in material and virtual worlds. The first two papers explore the dead body as infused with intentionality; how dead bodies and parts continue to express and display remnants of humanness, and thus, challenge the notion of the corpse as necessarily passive and inert. The third paper considers “post-alive” bodies from another temporality: i.e. bodies of the future that call the future into the present and cause the future to co-exist with the present in aesthetics, philosophy and technology (Rutsky 1999; De Landa 1997).

3. All three papers explore the emergence of the technologized body by addressing the blurring of human and machine boundaries. Firstly, Lai considers how meanings surrounding the heart (within the context of organ transplantation) are continuously shifting as advances in medical technology such as human-animal transplant, cloning and the mechanical heart-transgress the marker that defines what it means to be human, machine and animal. Secondly, Saren and Goulding explore the technology of plasmation in the Body World exhibition, which transforms the human body into a work of art, thereby blurring the boundaries between the human subject and exhibited object. Last, Campbell and O’Driscoll show how the future body is depicted in consumer culture in two contrasting ways: as either an intense, relentlessly visceral embodiment or an as an ethereal, disembodied state, where human bodies gradually give way to “bodies of information.” These two visions of the future body reflect two contrasting ideologies about the human, the future and the ontology of technology.

Likely Audience. This session will appeal to those interested in posthuman consumption, including those with an interest in embodiment, materiality, commodification, identity and mortality.

Timing. Speakers will have 20 minutes each to present their papers. Prof Jonathan Schroeder (an expert scholar in the field of embodiment, materiality and posthuman consumption) will synthesize the papers and lead the discussion with the audience for 15 minutes.

The Session Structure. Will focus discussion leading to a clearer conceptualization of the commodified body in consumer research.

Levels of Completeness. All three papers are based on completed research.
EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“The Love Muscle: Commodification of the Heart as the Gift-Of-Life”
Ai-Ling Lai, University of Leicester, UK

This paper explores the commodification of the heart within the context of organ donation, demonstrating how its symbolic properties as a sacred emblem is reworked into the “gift-of-life” promotional discourse to appeal to potential donors (intended audience). The paper considers how such appropriation of meanings is met with ambivalence among potential donors interviewed in this study, who continue to embrace the heart not only as a sacred symbol, but also as an existential ground for transcendence.

The paper begins with a visual analysis of how the heart is represented in the “gift-of-life” promotional discourse. I discuss how the representation of the heart is imbued with popular, religious and cultural narratives-which have attained cultural currency that is likely to be recognizable among the Western populace irrespective of their religious background (Mongoven 2003). Such a representation resonates with the cultus devotion to the ‘Sacred Heart of Christ’ that has historically and culturally dominated Western understanding of human solidarity and sentiments (Manning-Stevens 1997; Petrovits 1917; 2008). Manning-Stevens posits that the heart is able to transcend the facticity of its material existence as it is semiotically overdetermine and as such is able to straddle between scientific and cultural discourses.

“The heart is on the verge of losing its materiality in discourse. This is no doubt due to its semiotic overdetermination; as a physical object and metaphor it signifies many levels, regardless of medical science’s conviction that it is a muscle, a pump. The heart is thus paradoxically freed from a ‘scientific’ discourse of the self...Instead the heart is allowed to recoup a metaphoric space in which it operates as a symbol of the conjunction of body and soul.” (Manning-Steven 1997, p.276)

Richardson (1996) and Youngner (1996) argue that the “gift-of-life” discourse conceal the darker side of organ transplantation. In preserving the sacred representation of the heart as a symbol of love and sacrifice (Manning-Stevens 1997; Mongoven 2003), it simultaneously masks the unspoken dimension where the heart is objectified within the practice of organ transplantation. In her ethnographic research, Sharp (1995) found that transplant recipients often anthropomorizes their organs by infusing them with personality and animistic quality. These recipients undergo what Sharp called “transformative experiences,” where the incorporation of foreign body parts are said to have altered their experience of being-in-the-world (Lock 2002) and transform their definition of the self (Sharp 1995). Here, the heart is experienced as agentic and permeated with life-force. It is therefore not surprising that these recipients consider the heart as the source of emotion and personhood. However, Sharp also observes how these recipients are reproached by medical professionals who encourage them to objectify their organs using “neutral” images (e.g., the heart is merely a pump or muscle)-thereby eradicating the emotional significance of the heart so prominently portrayed in the gift-of-life discourse.

Within the broader practice of medical sciences, the body and in particular the heart are increasingly being reified through the process of corporeal industrialization (Helman 1988) –where organ cloning, xenotransplantation, organ farming, mechanization of body parts–threaten to fragment the body into replaceable spare-parts. With organ shortages (in particular the heart) become ever more pressing1 (UK Transplant 2008), organ cloning and farming open up an industrialize space that facilitate the mass-production of body parts, alluding to Ritzer’s admonition to the McDonalization of body and society (2004). In short, the heart occupies an ambivalent position within the practice of organ transplantation. On the one hand, the heart is promoted as a sacred symbol saturated with emotional and cultural significance while at the same time one must contend with the objectification process that define the heart purely as a biological entity (Ohnuki-Tierney 1994).

The status of the heart as a commodified object as well as an embodiment of the self has implications in the extent to which potential donors consent to donating it. This paper presents the embodied narratives of the participants as they consider the prospect of donating and receiving a heart. Here, my participants often draw on their embodied experience of the heart (e.g., heartbeat signifies vitality) and incorporate culturally familiar narratives and adage (e.g., home is where the heart is) to interpret the meaning of the “gift-of-life” message. The narratives they construct around the heart are often elaborated and rife with paradoxes. Participants experience the heart as a source of life (the heart “knowingly” sustains their lives through heartbeat) as well as an emotional conduit of the self (the heart as a seed of love). It is therefore difficult for them to consider giving away their heart while they can still hear their heart. For them, the heart has intentionality that perpetually sustains their existence and their selfhood. They express concern over the propensity of biomedicine in manufacturing the heart in an industrialize manner-as organ cloning, xenotransplantation, heart valves, bionic heart become a reality—alluding to the alienation of the self in future posthumanist society.

In sum, this paper raises questions pertaining to the degree to which the heart can be commodified as a sacrificial gift while still retaining its cultural and existential significance. Through the embodied narratives of participants, this highlights the agentic property of the heart, which even in death, continues to chime with the rhythm of life, signifying its transcendental capability and thus, defines what it means to exist and have emotion.

“The Body Worlds”
Christina Goulding, University of Wolverhampton, UK
Michael Saren, University of Leicester, UK

The use of the dead body in art has served many different purposes throughout the centuries including religious education and control, e.g., Dante’s inferno (Skrade 1974), as a source of humor and caricature (Wright 1968) and as a means of instilling fear and repulsion (Howard 1964). Despite the proliferation of the grotesque in classical and contemporary art and the increasing numbers of visitors to art galleries showing such exhibitions as the controversial “Body Worlds” there is no research that attempts to examine the phenomenon from a consumption perspective. This is surprising given the increasing pervasiveness and commercialisation of the body as evidenced through the popularity of Gerry Springer, the modern day freak show, and the use of the grotesque in Benetton’s “offensive” advertising. In an information and media saturated world death is increasingly used to gain consumers’ attention (Goulding et al. 2003; Stone 2006). Professor Von Hagen has mastedminded possibly one of the most controversial exhibitions of recent times with his “Body Worlds” display. This consists of a number of plastinated corpses and when it was first taken on tour was described as:

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1The latest statistics documented by UK Transplant (2008) indicate that potential donors are least willing to donate their hearts, 60% of those registered as potential donors opt-out from donating their hearts.
“A globe trotting flay and display carnival that has taken 26 preserved corpses and 175 anatomical parts on tour to eight million people in six countries in 37 juggernauts. Once in situ the corpses hang out in a variety of poses with a collective casualness about the dilapidation that makes Gap models look formal. There is a chess player, whose strategy may be kept secret, but whose brain lies revealed, and an anatomical flasher wrenching apart his own skin.” (Death and a Salesman, The Times, 21/11/02)

The exhibition which has contributed towards Von Hagen’s estimated £45 million fortune also includes a skinned man sitting astride a horse with his own brain in his hand and the body of a young, pregnant woman with her stomach opened to reveal an unborn foetus. Poses and displays of these once living corpses have provoked condemnation from some religious leaders, accusations of exploitation and profiteering, but also praise for demystifying the workings of the human body by literally revealing its functions. Originally, based on controversial media publicity we chose Body Worlds as a site to analyse the grotesque body and its commodification. Namely because:

• The plastinated exhibition of human bodies in the ‘Body Worlds’ offers a direct and extreme form of commodification.
• The Body Works offers the potential to study a variety of consumer experiences ranging from disgust to educational to the humorous.
• Professor Von Hagen’s exhibition is controversial and has attracted extensive media attention, enabling us to analyse secondary reportage of the exhibition as well as researching the experiences of individual consumers.
• To date the exhibition has been attended by over 25 million people globally and is still on tour.

In this session we draw on the findings of observations at the exhibition and also an in-depth analysis of on-line stories of visitor experiences at Body Worlds. These reveal that the consumption experience is not simply a matter of gazing on the dead body but is multi layered and often extreme with regard to conflicting motivations and outcomes. Our discussion focuses on a number of emergent themes which include:

• The Body as Spectacle
• Dehumanizing the Human Body
• The Plastinated Body and Mortality Salience
• The Body as Repulsion/Fascination

“Analyzing Bodies that Do Not Yet Exist”
Norah Campbell, Trinity College, Ireland
Aidan O’Driscoll, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

This paper examines how bodies of the future are constructed in advertising. Other disciplines have investigated how futures are visually represented: e.g. scientific advertising (Haraway 2000; 1997; 1991), visions of cyborgs or futurised bodies in advertisements (Toffoletti 2003), medical images (Waldby 2000), and visions of technology in advertising (Goldman, Papson, and Kersey 1998; 2003). The representation of the future is a routine strategy in ICT and automobile advertising, and an area that should be investigated by consumer behaviour. We argue that the future is imagined in advertising in two broadly divergent ways: one which is intensely embodied and visceral and one where the future is completely disembodied. Both types of aesthetic tell us a lot about implicit attitudes towards humanness, the future and technology.

The first category of advertisements that depict future humans, repeatedly combine iconography of the primitive, technology and horror. We trace how this reflects the eschatological significance attached to technology (Wagar 1982). In the West, there has long been a “doublessness” (Bell 2001, p. 7) associated with technology—a desire for it and a dread of it that speaks of the ambivalent position that technology; a “schizoid” stance, alternating between the technophobic and the technophilic which is still a structure of feeling in the west today (Thompson 2004). Huyssen (1986) attributes this to the two poles of experience people had with new technologies in the late 19th century. On one hand, technics was aestheticised and fetishised (in world expos such as the Crystal Palace, garden cities, the cité industrielle of Tony Garnier, the Città Nuova of Antonio Sant’Elia, and the Werkbund), and on the other the military machinery of World War I. The avant-garde expressed this bipolar experience in various ways in Dadaist, Futurist, Cubist and Constructivist art.

Baudrillard’s (1981) psychoanalytical reading of technology describes it as a force which, despite its outward association with progress and human civilisation, is perennially “haunted by the temptation of a reverse evolution which coexists in it with the potential for progress” (Baudrillard 1981, p. 130). Such an imaginary forms part of our ancient “techno-anxiety.” Images in advertising that imagine the future body often combine visual iconography of the primitive, technology and horror to create body images that are intensely visceral and which call attention to the idea that the future will be a resolutely embodied one. This paper will present the ways in which these three visual tropes many seem unrelated and contradictory, but their repeated interrelation in advertising reflects one implicit discourse about the future body in philosophy.

We then present a contrasting aesthetic regime where the future is imagined in advertising. Here human bodies are strikingly absent, and the world is instead populated with bodies of technology. While “identity” is a much theorized concept in marketing and consumer behaviour, and image research has examined the interrelations of gender/sexuality and identity, race and identity, and class and identity, very little work has been undertaken on the important ways in which technology and identity are represented. However, science and technology in any era produce an aesthetic imaginary, which is the consequence of an epoch’s imagination of self and universe (Mazlish 1993). Advances in science and technology in the past sixty years—especially in the areas of computation, cybernetics, nanotechnology and network (graph) theory—have produced new tropes for thinking about life in the globalised, networked, de-centred world of high-technology. In its promotion of ICTs and automobiles, advertising has long been a rich and pervasive site for imagining these tropes; and it is striking how infrequently human bodies figure in such advertising.

Here we will investigate how the future world in advertising is often devoid of people, and as a consequence how agency is distributed through nonhuman things. First we will show the repeated depiction of a world that is self-organising. Self-organisation—a major trope of cybernetic science—is often visualized in futuristic advertising. Many ICT advertisements take literally the concept of self-organization that is found in natural and technological systems and apply it to the brand. Siemens Building Blocks (2005), RAF Flying Objects (2007) and O2 Planets (2005) are typical examples of such a strategy. Self-organization arises when the internal structure of a system evolves without any input from an external designer or central system. Developing its own logic and internal constraints, the system “learns” about its environment and organizes itself around
it, often in surprising ways. As Cilliers (2000, p.89) remarks, self-organization is a logic that implies “that structure is neither a passive reflection of the outside, nor a result of active, pre-programmed internal factors, but the result of a complex interaction between the environment, the present state of the system and the history of the system” (Cilliers 2000, p.89). These advertisements leverage the trope of self-organization by depicting technology as devoid of human intentionality.

Second, these advertisements endow technology with qualities that do not yet exist, and are hence an ideological vision of technology. One of these qualities is weightlessness. Technology is portrayed as a weightless force that moves through the sky to create things in the Earth below. The calm, precise movements of the technology seem to be guided by an invisible hand, lending the system “the trope of self-organization by depicting technology as devoid of human intentionality.”

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Background

This special session is proposed by some members of caQutus collaborative—a Think Tank initiated at the University of Texas–Pan American (UTPA) that has globally dispersed affiliated researchers. This collaborative initiates, supports, and critiques studies of Culture, Business, Markets, Consumption, Organizations, Globalization, and related topics from poststructural and cognate perspectives. The session will be run as a “roundtable,” with brief position paper statements by the caQutus collaborative fellows who have agreed to participate in this session, followed by discussions that involve all session attendees. The position papers will be developed later into articles for journal special issues or a book.

Introduction

The financial crisis of 2007-2009, which very nearly derailed capitalism, has an unnoticed shadow dimension that exposes the fragile mythologies of consumer sovereignty. The consumer-related aspects of the financial crisis have received very little attention.

This session focuses sharply on what this crisis, and crises of a similar nature, imply for the philosophical foundational blocks of consumer and market orientations—the ideas of a potent and sovereign consumer (Friedman and Friedman 1990)–that undergird the main edifice of consumer research, especially in business school settings.

The present crisis points to the vacuity of the mythology of the sovereign consumers, the supposedly omnipotent women and men who—with a mere swipe of their credit cards—are capable of sending major global brands scampering all over the globe in search of ways to please these consumers.

The so-called sovereign consumer, in fact, is revealed in a period of abject crisis as starkly powerless: the emperor has no clothes. The consumer is a mere afterthought during the heat of the crisis, when seismic tremors shake up the financial foundations of the capitalist system. The “empire,” in fact, consists of altogether different global actors and forces (Hardt and Negri 2001) than “sovereign” consumers.

In the paragraphs to follow, the backgrounds of the four presenters—all fellows of the caQutus collaborative—and the topics of their brief position papers for EMAC-2010 are summarized.

ABSTRACTS

“Marketing and Consumers: Handmaidens of Finanzkapital”
Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA

Nikhilesh Dholakia is Professor in the College of Business Administration at the University of Rhode Island (URI). He is also a Fellow of caQutus collaborative, a poststructural research group initiated at University of Texas–Pan American (UTPA). His research deals with globalization, technology, innovation, market processes, and consumer culture. His publications include the book Consuming People: From Political Economy to Theaters of Consumption, coauthored with A. Fuat Firat.

In the short presentation “Marketing and Consumers: Handmaidens of Finanzkapital,” Dholakia develops the argument and presents evidence showing that all aspects of marketing and consumption—from lofty ideals of consumer orientations and consumer sovereignty to high-level corporate marketing officers who target their strategies to brand-obsessed consumers—are mere handmaidens of fast-globalizing financial capital, or to use the classic 1910 Hlderferding shorthand phrase, of “Finanzkapital” (Hlderferding 1910). The choice of the feminine gender for marketing elements, in subservient relation to a macho global Finanzkapital, is deliberate. In periods of economic normalcy, the power structure and relations of Finanzkapital, much like the Wizard of Oz, stay concealed and marketing and consumers are placed on a false pedestal of sovereignty—made to look and feel and even act like powerful queens that wield enormous power over corporate decisions and choices. With crisis, these pretenses crumble rapidly; and the marketing and consumer elements are revealed in stark terms for what they are: handmaidens of Finanzkapital. The way out of this predicament is to foster multiple ways of consuming and producing outside the orbit of Finanzkapital, and thereby whittle away the pernicious global trap of finance-driven capitalism.

“Alladi Venkatesh is Professor, Management and Computer Science, and Associate Director, CRITO (Center for Research on Information Technology) University of California, Irvine, USA.

His research focuses on Community-based Technologies (Home Informatics and Networking; Youth and New Media, Consumers and Electronic Environments), and Cross-Cultural Research and Global Sign Systems. In particular, Venkatesh’s work deals with the networked home and how consumers and households are adapting to new technologies of information and communication. He is

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In this EACR presentation, the focus is on how markets create value—value defined broadly as a set of economic, social and cultural benefits accruing to the members (humans as well as institutions) of a social/economic system. The presentations follows the ongoing debates on markets and marketing (see Penaloza and Venkatesh 2006; Venkatesh, Penaloza and Firat 2005; Lusch/Vargo 2006) and thus this is both a continuation and departure from previous work. In the last two or three years, marketing scholars have raised the following critical issues that concern us here:

a) How our field (i.e., marketing) has ignored the discourse on markets as a set of historically constituted institutional arrangements as well as sites of business/marketing activities.

b) How the exclusive focus on marketing as a set of activities (e.g., 4Ps) limits our ability to comprehend the institutional processes especially in the global arena.

c) How other disciplines (e.g., sociology) have wrested the opportunity and come up with some central ideas, and

d) Why we should return to “markets” as our focus.

In this paper, our attention focuses on the relationship between markets and the creation of value. At a more micro-firm level this is also presumably the goal of marketing. We begin with the notion that markets are institutional arrangements that create value for their constituencies and the legitimacy of markets arises out of their value creating potential.

The purpose of this paper is to elucidate three value paradigms—exchange value, use value, and sign value—and demonstrate that the dominant discourse in marketing has paid greater attention to the issues concerning exchange and use paradigms, and opportunity now arises for us to fully explore the system of sign value and integrate it into our discourse.

**“Open Sky Marketing”**

*Pierre McDonagh, Dublin City University, Ireland*

Pierre McDonagh is Founder and Director of the Centre for Consumption which is primarily associated with Dublin City University but is linked with other colleges including Royal Holloway, Exeter and Edinburgh University Business School. Overall it is a centre which aims to bring together people who are interested in consumption and provide a forum in which interesting things can happen. Pierre’s research problematizes a positive role for marketing in society in relation to nature, food, music and sport. Initially he developed work around Green Management and advertising, editing a book on Green Management with Andy Prothero in 1997 (for Dryden) now published with ITBP. He has written a number of articles around the theme of nature expounding the theory of ESC—Ecological Sustainable Communication. He has won the *Journal of Macromarketing* Charles Slater Award for best article with William E.Kilbourne (Clemson) and Andy Prothero (University College Dublin). He has since extended this work to look at music, food, & sports marketing; and serves as Global Policy & Environment Editor for the *Journal of Macromarketing*, European Editor for *Markets, Globalization and Development Review* (MGDR), and serves on the editorial boards of *Consumption, Markets & Culture, Journal of Marketing Management* (UK).

In this brief presentation, Pierre rearticulates the theory of ecological sustainable communication as a form of eradicating ecological alienation that may occur between an organization and its stakeholders. He makes the argument that—following Paul Virilio’s work *Open Sky*, which considers the social destruction wrought by information technology and the global media—we now require Open Sky Marketing. In Virilio’s view, hyper-information existence—facilitated by technologies of ubiquity, virtuality, and instantaneity—is not a liberating state of affairs. Instead, such existence entraps people in a “gray ecology,” robbing them of color, of the possibility of spatial distancing, of rooted sensory perception—in short, of humanity. Open Sky marketing that reconnects people personally and humanly, McDonagh submits, is a requirement for survival of the species and that the present financial blip is the opportunity for society to finally embrace Ulrich Beck’s ecological enlightenment as a means to this end.

**REFERENCES**


SESSION OVERVIEW

In this session we focus on understanding the consumption practices of contemporary nomads, an unexplored area within consumer research. Contemporary nomads are deterritorialized consumer groups who engage in frequent geographic mobility as part of their voluntary spatial displacement, economic strategies, and self identity formation and transformation (D’Andrea 2009). Specifically we examine consumption patterns among transnational mobile professionals, surfers and the Roma. Bauman (2000) argues these types of nomads are the new elite in today’s globalized society due to their flexible social and cultural capital. Studying these contemporary nomads allows us to re-examine fundamental consumer behavior theories such as the extended self and consumer ethnicity, as well as methodologies such as ethnography.

The three studies in this session expose and challenge the nation-state orientation that has driven the acculturation and cross-cultural literatures within consumer research. We also challenge the limited conceptualization of mobility as a linear model of home and host country. The session introduces new concepts and methodologies to allow consumer researchers to go beyond boundary crossing and engage with deterritorialization. Specifically we introduce liquid modernity (Bauman 2000), the global city (Sassen 2001), and biosocial ethnography (Canniford 2010) as lenses to understand nomadic consumption. This session is likely to be of interest to consumer culture theory (CCT) scholars, as well as consumer researchers interested in acculturation, globalization, possessions, ethnography and ethnicity.

This session examines three types of mobile consumers. First, the global nomads which represent the power elite of global bureaucratic institutions; second the neo-nomads counterculture of surfers (D’Andrea 2009); and third the traditional nomadic consumer as represented by the Roma. By examining the role of possessions in mobility, the first paper finds that the experience of liquidity that comes with elite forms of global mobility lessens the identity role of possessions and enhances the role of consumption practices. The second paper argues for a new form of ethnography, biosocial ethnography, which enables the researcher to engage with consumption communities which migrate with natural phenomenon such as surfers following the rhythms of the ocean. Finally, the third paper focuses on the nomadic Roma to illustrate how ethnicity is co-constructed through consuming the global city and taking advantage of its multi-ethnic resources.

A major feature of this session is the participation of Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology Saskia Sassen, Columbia University and Centennial Visiting Professor of Political Economy at the London School of Economics, as the discussant. She is one of the leading scholars of mobility and globalization, especially in the area of denationalization and transnationalism. She is a founding thought leader in going beyond the nation in understanding the importance of space in globalization. The papers in this session are shaped by her work on global cities and mobility, and we anticipate devoting a significant portion of the session to hearing her reflections on the three papers. All the papers in this session are completed projects, and all participants have agreed to be present.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Understanding the Changing Role of Possessions in Global Mobility”

Fleura Bardhi, Northeastern University, USA
Giana M. Eckhardt, Suffolk University, USA
Eric J. Arnould, University of Wyoming, USA

Possessions as an extension of the self have been a lynchpin of consumer research over the past 25 years (Belk 1988). However, during the last decade, conversations in social sciences on liquid modernity (Bauman 2000; Giddens 1991) and globalization (Appadurai 2005; D’Andrea 2009) have hinted at the changing significance of possessions in consumer lifestyles. Attachment to things becomes problematic in a liquid world characterized by global flows of information, capital, people and heightened values of immaterial things (e.g., complex financial instruments) and their management. In this world value is derived from ideas, experiences, and temporally congealed nodes of significance (Rifkin 2000). In a liquid society, there are no permanent or stable life projects; as such, life projects are in constant transition (Bauman 2000). Once individual life projects change, what is valued also changes.

By contrast, as conceived in most consumer research object attachments fix one to place, time, and singular identity projects and inhibit the possibility of change. We investigate how and why the role of possessions has changed among a group of highly mobile global consumers who are not anchored to any physical location or geography, and whom we can call global nomads (Featherstone 1995). Global nomads are characterized by deterritorialized knowledge and skills and permanent and voluntary global mobility with a porous sense of self that changes with location (Featherstone 1995; Iyer 2000). This group of consumers enables us to investigate at the micro level the impact of liquid society on consumption.

In examining consumers in mobility, acculturation studies have considered possessions crucial in sustaining identity in mobility. As mobile subjects examined in this research stream remain anchored to a country of origin or destination during their mobility (e.g., immigrants or expatriates), they use attachment to possessions to symbolically sustain connections to these spatial or relational anchoring points. Acculturation studies have also focused on the sojourner whose consumption is shaped by an effort to belong to a new cultural context or to maintain the connections to the home left behind (e.g., Mehta and Belk 1991; Oswald 1999; Penaloz 1994). Thus, this model is limited in guiding our understanding of global nomads whose identity and lifestyle is unmoored from national geographies or homogeneous cultural contexts. Mobility studies have recently unearthed new ways of thinking about crossing borders (D’Andrea 2009; Urry 2003). Rather than consumers being rooted in one country and then transplanted into another, movement tends to be more fluid as they continually travel and cross borders in a seamless way (D’Andrea 2009), such as the particular groups of the global nomads in our study. The mobile deterritorialized lifestyle of global nomads begs the question as to the role that possessions play in such mobility. We explore relations between such people and their possessions in this study.

Because of the differences in the nature of mobility and identity anchoring between global nomads and sojourners, we would expect
the value of possessions to change. To investigate this, we examine the behaviors of a fourteen transnational mobile professionals, global nomads, recognized in recent sociology of globalization but neglected in consumer research. Specifically our research questions are how and why they tend to eschew object attachment. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews that lasted from one to two hours (McCracken 1988) conducted at the informant’s place of residence, work, or in airports. As nomads integrate mobility as part of their economic and identity strategies, we sampled informants that traveled globally as part of their profession for 80 percent of the year and expressed cosmopolitan tendencies (D’Andrea 2009; Featherstone 1995). Our sample includes highly educated professionals, both men and women, predominantly from Western Europe and North America.

Counter to findings of the acculturation (Askegaard et al. 2005; Mehta and Belk 1991) and cosmopolitan literature (Jun et al. 2001; Thompson and Tambaiah 1999), we find no sacred or salient role for possessions as identity anchoring mechanisms among global nomads. As they are not anchored in a country of origin, global nomads are not attached to or collect possessions or artifacts from the home country. Global nomads minimize ownership and importance of possessions to enable their mobile lifestyles. In most cases, possessions are not part of their extended self (Belk 1988). When asked about the role of possessions in their lives, our informants do not express a sacred role for possessions and see possessions as barriers to spatial and spiritual deterritorialization.

Global nomads learn overtime how to live in a state of mobility. Some of them start out with traditional attachment to possessions, but realize possession attachment is not compatible with their nomadic living circumstances, and detach themselves over time. In contrast with the literatures on acculturation and possession attachment more generally, this does not seem to have negative effects on our global nomads. Most of our informants learned or recognized the value of this detachment fairly early in their mobile lifestyles, and treat possessions non-problematically in a utilitarian manner. Furthermore, their relationship to possessions is focused on use-value rather than attachment value: goods are valued in as far as they enable them to quickly reterritorialize in a new culture, but they lose value as they move to a different place.

We also find that to navigate their mobility global nomads value consumption practices rather than attachment to possessions. Practices hold meaning because of their use value as well as their fluidity. Engaging in local consumption practices, such as consuming local foods, music, art, etc., enables global nomads to quickly enhance local social and cultural capital and embed themselves temporarily in a locality. While the nature of these practices is localized and as such, it changes with each destination, participation in such consumption practices is almost routinized. In a world of transnational, deterritorialized mobility, practices, not objects, may provide more security and identity value (Nowicka 2007).

Our findings suggest that possessions are not always as important to consumption theory as suggested from prior work. In outlining how possessions lose identity value in a world of global mobility, we contribute to a theory of materiality in consumer behavior that looks beyond conventional representations of materialism. Things are at best tools, not the primary site of consumer identity work. We extend Holt’s (1995) work on the importance of practice in understanding consumption rather than objects. We identify the unique nature of nomadic consumption practices as flexible in the sense of enabling deterritorialization. Our findings contribute to the discussions on the de-materialization of consumption within the work on cocreation (Vargo and Lusch 2004). In sum, we begin the work of identifying how global mobility shapes consumption, and we demonstrate how studies of mobility can help the field move beyond the acculturation paradigm.

**“Biosocial Ethnography: Catching the Drift of Nomadic Consumers”**

Robin Canniford, University of Melbourne, Australia

Existing forms of multi-sited ethnography permit us to collate a mosaic of influences from which global cultures are constituted (see Abu-Lughod 1997; Burawoy et al. 2000; Canniford 2005). Previous studies in consumer research have utilized such forms of ethnography to access and assess transient and mobile marketplace cultures. Some such studies explore phenomena that move within cultural structures and architectures—bikers moving around road networks for example (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Other studies recognize the role of nature as a conduit or setting for escape and catharsis (Arnould, Price, and Otnes 1999; Belk and Costa 1998). Nevertheless natural events and environments are often cast in supporting roles to the front-stage action that preoccupies our analyses (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993).

Building on this work, this paper investigates marketplace cultures that are embedded in natural environments. Reflecting on the poem “Dart” by Alice Oswald, I present a case for a “biosocial ethnography,” a version of thick description that acknowledges how culture floats within shifting natural and social figurations. Oswald’s conversations with people who live and work on the river Dart in Devon produce a representation of nature and culture that moves us from source to sea. The poem sketches an outline of a shifting shape, acknowledging that we cannot step in the same river twice, but simultaneously recognizing the more stable orders that accompany this moving force. In other words, Dart illustrates how people, water, earth, creatures, legend, economies and natural forces are created through the course of a river; a body of water obeying geology and gravity.

Dart raises questions as to the status of culture and nature as dichotomous phenomena. If an overarching aim of modernity has been to steer culture outside the threatening influences of nature (Newton 2007), then what do consumers who embed themselves in natural phenomena tell us about how we should conceive of the natural environment in consumer research? Are nature and culture ontologically equivalent? If not, how can we assimilate knowledge of these categories in order to build theory that better recognizes the influences of nature on consumers? Oswald achieves her correspondence between nature and culture by giving voice to the river itself:

...who’s this moving in the dark? Me.
This is me, anonymous, water’s soliloquy,
all names, all voices, Slip-Shape, this is Proteus,
whoever that is, the shepherd of the seals,
driving my many selves from cave to cave...

This conjoining of man and nature is a puzzling reality of the human condition to which further attention is warranted in consumer research. I would like to suggest that biosocial ethnography is a method that can fulfill this need by accounting for how consumers move and flow according to the influences of natural environments. As Oswald considers natural and human voices together, so too can ethnography portray the variety of actants (and the variety of manners in which we understand them) that effect consumer experiences. In this situation, machines, animals or plants are allocated agency in the construction of social life (see Callon 1986; Latour 1996 1999).

Following my own studies of surfers (Canniford 2005), I argue that this emphasis is particularly useful for investigating nomadic consumers who follow (or hunt) natural phenomena that appear to
migrate: waves, snow, wildlife, seasons, winds, aurora, tornados, solar eclipses, etc. In these cases, consumers are observed as oriented towards environmental forces that sustain their actions and cultures, yet move them through time and space in interesting and unfamiliar manners.

What should we do then, in order to stay in touch with participants for whom structures such as clock-time, urban geography and roads become less meaningful than the course of a river, the tide, seasons, or snow falls? Biosocial ethnography suggests that the researcher should detect and delineate the natural influences that order the motivations of such consumers. By orienting ourselves to these influences, site selection and sampling become fluid, highly mobile procedures. Further to this, we may enter into a process of parallel interviewing of phenomena that are often regarded as ontologically different (Newton 2007). At the level of representation, I wish to suggest that the biosocial ethnographer should consider the boundaries of the “natural” and the “social” by uniting voices from introspection, autobiography, thick transcription and thick inscription (Arnould 1998; Holbrook 1995). Through these diverse procedures, we can re-unite fragmented constructions of time, nature, space, marketplace and subjectivity.

“Consuming the City: How Global Structures Facilitate Resistance to Ethnic Co-optation”
Ela Veresiu, York University, Canada
Markus Giesler, York University, Canada

This presentation advances a growing research stream on consumer acculturation by analyzing the formative relationships between ethnic consumer identity construction and globalization. In this presentation, we will first review the leading conceptualizations in classic and consumer theories on migration and highlight their theoretical omission regarding the conditions of possibility to reclaim co-opted ethnic symbols and practices. Next we explore the importance of global cities and the citizenship discourse as a structuring mechanism in migrant consumer identity construction. The main goal of this presentation is to examine how previously co-opted nomadic consumer identities, which actively reinforce nomadic ideals while subverting ascribed national cultures, are re-politicized and reclaimed through everyday consumption in the global city.

The idea that the sociopolitical discourse of the nation-state dominates contemporary society has become a staple notion in sociology, migration and cultural studies (Beck 2000; Chernilo 2006; Wimmer and Schiller 2002). Contemporary migration theory conceptualizes the nation-state as an ideological force that assimilates the particular symbols and practices of nomadic ethnicities into nation-state cultures and citizenship norms. This is an example of ethnic co-optation, whereby the dominant form of sociopolitical organization (the nation-state) brings into its system opposing movements (e.g., nomadic lifestyles) through extensive socialization mechanisms (Lastick 1980; Pettai and Hallik 2002). This classic governmentality argument has led researchers in consumer culture theory (e.g., Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Oswald 1999; Thompson and Tambiah 1999; Peñaloza 1994) to approach immigrant consumer identity as a dyadic, passport-driven construct involving mainly national identifications and agents. However, migration and consumer culture theory ascribes little to no potential for individuals with nomadic predilections to also use consumption and the commercial marketplace in order to reclaim and re-politicize their co-opted symbols and practices.

For this reason, both classic and consumer theories of migration would not have predicted the important role of a prominent postmodern consumption scape—the global city (Sassen 2001)—in helping construct migrant identities that actively promote the oppositional aspects of the nomadic ethnicity attenuated by the process of national mainstreaming. According to global sociologist Saskia Sassen (2006, p.321), “through the thickness of daily life and local, mostly informal politics, cities can accommodate and enable the unbundling of the tight articulation of the citizen and the formal state politics.” Consequently, today’s citizenship is moving away from the classic definition comprised of strong national ties in exchange for certain citizen rights, towards a revised definition containing new structures of power relations and positions detached from national sentiments (Sassen 2006). The struggle over the meaning of space and citizenship has empowered certain migrant consumers to re-inforce their previously nomadic, non-national cultural identities, especially through their consumption behavior.

To contextualize this phenomenon, we focus on the historically nomadic Roma ethnicity that is comprised of approximately 50 million people. Overview studies (Belton 2005; Liégeois 1994; Petrova 2003) commonly associate the Roma as a victimized ethnicity whose nomadic culture has been stripped away in favor of indoctrination into nation-state cultural norms through centuries of official persecution, slavery, forced assimilation and attempted integration via social programs in all the countries that they traveled to. Yet, after extensive conversations with 18 community leaders and individuals of Roma ethnicity (both male and female) in Toronto, Berlin and Pisa, where everyday activities (e.g., housing, working, education, dressing, religion, cooking, family, and traveling) were discussed, we found that they use the available structures and consumption resources of the global city to create partial and inconsistent acts of resistance against the dominant forms of socio-cultural normativities. For example, mobility remains an important aspect of their lives, as is demonstrated by their involvement in several selling-oriented economic activities at once that constantly change over time. The informants described themselves as self-employed, who enjoyed traveling to various markets in order to buy and sell goods and services, which ranged from cars, to handicrafts, to clothing, to music, much in the same way that their nomadic ancestors earned a living. Furthermore, they consume technology, food and housing in a way that reinforces their family-oriented, tight-knit community lifestyle by mainly using it to stay constantly connected with each other. The informants also mentioned the importance of creating Roma organizations and centers in these cities that actively promote their traditions and cultural roots to the outside world, as well as provide a network of assistance and information exchange for Roma citizens.

Methodologically, this analysis is part of a larger ethnographic and netnographic (Kozinets 2002) investigation of Roma consumption in Toronto, Berlin and Pisa. Our collection of ethnographic and consumer interview data was completed in the summer of 2009 and subsequently analyzed. We solicited informants through Roma activist websites as well as local and national Roma community centers and associations. In order to better understand the sociocultural and political context in which Roma consumption unfolds, we also interviewed regular (nation-state based, sedentary) citizens, as well as city officials in the respective cities. In total, we analyzed 39 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which ranged from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours in length, as well as 140 pages of online materials and archival and historical data using the iterative interpretation process of hermeneutical analysis (Thompson 1997).

Our results offer new insights into the process of global migration. Scholars in contemporary migration theory and consumer research have proposed different mechanisms and modes through which individuals acculturate, including marketplace forces and political struggle. Which mechanisms and modes of acculturation may or may not play a role in nomadically oriented consumer identi-
ties has remained unexplored. Our findings shed useful theoretical light on the construction of nomadic citizenship, a hybrid migrant identity, through the structures and resources provided in global consumption scapes.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

This special session aims to encourage discussion and reflexivity among consumer researchers concerning the role of language and discourse. Since the interpretive movement in consumer research, the field has witnessed a proliferation of theoretical perspectives, which evince distinctive ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions about language (Shankar et al. 2001; Hudson and Ozanne 1988). In particular, Stern (1998a) observes an underlying tension between the “modernist privileging of representation versus the postmodernist privileging of ‘discourse’ and ‘dialogue’” (p.2).

Concurrently, scholars working within the interpretive paradigm tend to uphold narrative as a dominant mode of representation and analysis (Shankar et al. 2001; Stern 1998a). This is not surprising as the inception of interpretive research coincided with the narrative-turn in the broader social sciences (Berger and Quinn 2005; Shankar et al. 2001), which is “constituted by diverse analytic languages and growing representational heritages” (Berger and Quinn 2005, p.3).

Despite the growing prominence of narratology in consumer research (e.g., Stern 1998b; Shankar et al. 2001), Parsons argues in her paper below that this has yet to inspire a discursive analytical approach to understanding consumption. Similarly, Fitchett and Caruana observe the tendency of interpretive consumer researchers to eschew discursive and linguistic approaches in favour of a phenomenological tradition to research. Narratives generated through phenomenological interview (Thompson et al. 1989) for instance, serve as a medium through which participants and researchers come to “describe” their consumption experiences and lifeworld. Such discursive approaches are grounded in the Husserlian strand of phenomenology, which seeks to reinstate the subjective voice of the consumers, who are assumed to be sovereign and agentic (Stern 1998a). Drawing from Gadamerian hermeneutic-philosophy, Lai critiques the axiological tenet of Husserlian phenomenology, stating that researchers must go beyond simply “understanding” (Verstehen) the human world “from an insider’s perspective” (Hudson and Ozanne 1988, p.511) and “reproducing” them through “thick description” (Geertz 1973). In a manner of speaking, such a view exudes an objectivist-realist veneer (Schwandt 2000; Shankar et al. 2001)—which presupposes that “true” meanings exist within the subjective realm of individuals, and is therefore immutable. Here, language is considered as a static “abstract system of concepts whose subjective realm of individuals, and is therefore immutable. Here, language is considered as a static “abstract system of concepts whose principal role was to refer to objects in the world” (Potter 2001, p.40). Hermeneutic-philosophy rejects such a view of language, claiming that meaning is perpetually coming-into-being as it is discursively negotiated in a dialogical manner within a linguistic community (Gadamer 1975; 2004; Arnold and Fischer 1994). From a sociolinguistic perspective, Hill aims to contribute to this “turn to discourse” (Potter and Wetherell 2001) in consumer research by considering how linguistic devices mediate social relationships within the context of research interviews. In her paper, she draws our attention to the function of linguistic politeness in establishing identity and negotiating “delicate” topics in consumer accounts. As such, her paper calls for greater linguistic reflexivity, in which language is assumed to be action-orientated (Potter and Wetherell 2001; Elliot 1996).

The four papers in this session variously concur with the view that language is performative—in that its role is more than simply a descriptive representation of “reality” (Elliot 1996; Hackley 1999). Rather, language is ‘made to do things’, where people construct and negotiate their version of the world (Berger and Luckman 1966; Potter and Wetherell 2001; Elliot 1996; Hackley 1999) while at the same time maintain their personal and social standing (Trask 2007). This is most obviously demonstrated by Hill in her exploration of “linguistic politeness,” which is a practice involving the strategic organization of linguistic action to establish “etiquette” that conforms to a specific communicative event (Kasper 1997). Similarly, Lai illustrates how “language game” is enacted by ambivalent organ donors to “play down” their marginalized standpoint as they find themselves having to negotiate against the normative grain to donate organs. Grounded within the post-structuralist tradition, Parsons addresses the “social functioning of language,” by considering how identities of antique dealers are discursively produced and negotiated through social interaction that takes place within the marketplace institution that informs it. Lastly, Fitchett and Caruana adopt critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how consumer subjectivities for tourism experiences (and in particular the notion of the independent traveler) are constructed and maintained via discourse conventions in “alternative” travel guides. Thus, these four papers represent contributions along a continuum of discourse and linguistic-based approaches, which are grounded in a diverse range of philosophical tenets.

Likely Audiences. This session will appeal to interpretive consumer researchers who are working with textual as well as visual materials. In particular, this session will be of interest to scholars interested in the linguistic aspects of research, including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, hermeneutics, ethnomethodology, narrative theory and sociolinguistics.

Timing. Speakers will have 15 minutes each to present their papers. Ai-Ling Lai will synthesise the papers and lead the discussion with the audience for 15 minutes.

Levels of Completeness. All four papers are based on studies which are already finished.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“An Anxiety of Absence and Agency: The Legitimacy of Textual Analysis in Consumer Research”

James Fitchett, University of Leicester, UK
Robert Caruana, University of Manchester, UK

One of the achievements of ICR was the promotion of discourse based approaches. The history of interpretivism and the history of discourse based approaches to consumption are in many important respects intrinsically linked together. Early interpretivist initiatives in consumer research during the mid to late 1980s and often drew up on theoretical and philosophical innovations in the social sciences more generally to justify a conception of consumer experience as an essential textual one, and to represent consumer action and agency as a matter of discourse. The dominance and popularity of postmodernism and poststructuralism at this time should not be underestimated in terms of the intellectual capital it offered to an interpretivist movement in need of a credible philosophical referent to justify its claims to progressiveness and radicalism. As a result of these movements and interactions, discourse based readings of the consumer and consumption issues gradually became a more...
prominent feature of consumer research, first on the margins and then eventually as part of the mainstay of the consumer research establishment, eventually being accepted as part of a consumer researchers’ conceptual and methodological “tool box.” Despite an acceptance of discourse based approaches, we would argue that they continue to lack widespread acceptance in consumer research, especially as compared to other interpretivist movements. We would also argue that discourse based approaches are relatively undervalued in consumer research/marketing when compared to cognate disciplinary areas such as organization studies for example.

The interpretivist consumer research movement has essentially come to be distilled into two main approaches: phenomenology and discourse. The phenomenological tradition seeks to champion a hermeneutic insight into the nature of consumer “experience” and is the most prominent/dominant approach in interpretivism today. Methodological and philosophical issues aside, we would argue that there are reasons why interpretivists have favoured phenomenology over discourse, and that the lineage of consumer research to consumer behaviour and then to marketing is an important factor. The ideology of marketing, and the marketing concept (at least as it was first framed in the 1950s and 1960s) sought, among other things, to reinforce and enhance the perceived place, status and “sovereignty” of the (individual) consumer and to some extent phenomenology speaks to these core axioms and beliefs. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why orthodox “positivists” were essentially and eventually able to come to terms with the interpretivist tradition because at one fundamental level both prioritise an agentic philosophy for the consumer whose “experience” of the world (whether empirically or phenomenologically inspired) is held as paramount. Discourse based approaches, we suggest, remain more marginal both within interpretivism and within consumer research more generally, and part of the reason for this is that a text based, discourse analytical approach to consumption often de-centres if not marginalises completely, the individual “voice,” “experience” or “phenomenal account” of the consumer. One of the features of much discourse based consumer research is the apparent absence of the consumers’ voice, and if this voice is present, it is often demoted to simply one type of discourse among others with no especial priority or significance.

To illustrate some of these themes around the status of discourse and text based analysis we reflect on the some of the challenges we faced when seeking to publish recent work using discourse based approaches, and offer a commentary of some of the common editorial and reviewer concerns over the approach. In the first study we re-visit a piece of research examining the construction of the idea and notion of the “independent traveller” in popular tourism literature. The research applied a critical discourse analysis approach to examine how consumer subjectivities for tourism experiences are constructed and maintained via discourse conventions in popular “alternative” travel guides. This paper (Caruana et al. 2008) examines the ways in which a sense of independence is successfully offered to consumers within paradoxically mass-market communications. Reviewers for the paper were generally supportive in terms of the decision to apply a discourse based reading, but retained concerns over what was seen as a weakness stemming from a lack of a consumer voice. This critique, which has particular relevance for a phenomenological approach, highlights the systemic reservations within interpretivist CR about text and discourse based analyses in which the use of a text, or the agency of the consumer is not given space or priority.

“Discourse, Identity and Marketplace Institutions”
Elizabeth Parsons, Keele University, UK

“Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciation strategies.” (Hall 2004, p.17)

Whilst highlighting the centrality of discourse to identity formation, Hall is making a call for attention to “specificity” in identity studies. This paper then explores the specific discursive formations and practices of antique dealers in the institutional site of the antiques market. It is argued that conceiving of the world of antique dealing as a “marketplace institution” is particularly useful as it directs attention towards the sharing and circulation of discourses within and between networks of dealers, traders, collectors and auction houses. In this study, the specific functioning of discourses of taste and aesthetics, and of morality and care are explored, with a key focus on the ways in which these discourses are differentially (re)created, taken up and combined in dealers’ identity projects.

Consumer research has seen a relatively recent narrative turn, which has underlined the importance of stories, story telling, and the narration of consumption related experiences and events (e.g., Shankar et al. 2009). However, to date little work within the consumer research tradition has employed a discourse analytical approach to understanding consumption. Consumer researchers have yet to fully explore the social functioning of language in the creation of consumer, (and producer) identities in relation to specific institutional and organisational settings. In addition, studies of consumption have typically focused on both individual (Belk 1988; Ahuvia 2005) and collective (Kozinets 1999; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001) consumer identity formation. But relatively little research has focused on the identity formation of market producers and intermediaries such as retail staff, market traders and dealers, either in an individual, or group (professional), sense (although see Belk et al. 1988; Sherry 1990; Parsons 2005; 2007).

The paper takes a position on identity that sees it as discursively produced. Such a view runs counter to accounts of identity as fixed, pre-existing and governed by rationality. Instead it views identity as contextual, contingent and formed through social action and discourse (Foucault 1984; Butler 1997; Davies and Harre 1990; Hall 2004; Fairclough 2004). In this view social interaction plays a central role in both negotiating and giving shape to identity. To better understand the implications of discursive practices for dealer’s identities the world of antique dealing is conceptualised as a marketplace institution in this study. A view of the world of antique dealing as a marketplace institution is useful in that it allows for continuity of the traditions and practices associated with antique dealing, as well as their attendant power relations. In particular it underscores the embeddedness of antique knowhow in the processes and practices of market exchanges.

Antique dealers in two UK locations, a Scottish city and an English regional town, were interviewed for the project. Over the two-year course of the project the author also made regular visits to antique fairs and shops with the aims of becoming familiar with the cultural vernaculars of antique dealing. Interviews followed the open-ended format and were conducted typically on the shop or showroom floor. Discussions covered issues such as sourcing, valuing, pricing and selling goods. The discourse analytic approach taken in this paper places an emphasis on understanding the situated meaning (or, as discussed above, embeddedness) of narratives.
A Hermeneutic Appreciation of the Performative Role of Language in Consumer Research

Ai-Ling Lai, University of Leicester, UK

This paper seeks to elucidate the ontological position of hermeneutic philosophy in privileging the performative role of language. Drawing on the hermeneutic tradition espoused by Gadamer (1975;2004), I consider how meanings come into being as a negotiated performance when members of a linguistic community participate in a dialogue. For Gadamer, “language is a medium of hermeneutic experience” (p.385) and thus, constitutes the very fabric of everyday life that “makes possible man’s being-in-the-world” (p.440). As Merleau-Ponty (1945;2002) observes, language enlivens the “experience of dialogue,” through which the perspective of those we seek to “know” (participants) is interwoven into the perspective of the knower (researcher). Gadamer (1975;2005) calls such merging of perspectives a “fusion of horizons,” which he posits is “an achievement of language” (p.363). In other words, language has intentionality in that it is orientated towards achieving intersubjective understanding. Gadamer considers how members of the linguistic community are drawn into “language game” as they assert their place and subjectivity in relation to each other and to arrive at a common understanding that are mutually enriching (Merleau-Ponty 1945;2002). Thus, to arrive at a mutual understanding, the researcher and the participants “work within” specific linguistic conventions in a give-and-take manner (Macquarrie 1972). Hermeneutic philosophers therefore “see meaning as a matter of coming to terms” (Schwandt 2000, p.195). As such, understanding is provisional (Thompson et al. 1994) and thereby open to revision (Thompson et al. 1994) and indeterminacy (Churhill and Wertz 1985).

In arguing that meanings are indeterminate, hermeneutic philosophers do not mean to connote that they are arbitrary. Rather, meanings must be interpreted within specific interpretive horizons (or standpoints) from which they are articulated. Hermeneutically speaking, our understanding of the world is always perspectival, in that there are different vantage points from which to view the world (Gadamer 1975;2005). In the negotiation of meanings, both participants and the researchers are able to occupy different interpretive standpoints and to shift between them. It is the indeterminacy and perspectivity of meanings that underpin Gadamer’s linguistic theory when he argues that the role of language goes beyond simply “reproducing” phenomenological description of subjective experience (Verstehen). Through a dialogical encounter, the horizon of the researcher and the participants are unavoidably modified (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Schwandt 2000). Hence, hermeneutic researcher needs to consider not only the “what” of meaning production but also “how” meanings are arrived at in a dialogue—i.e., “how” language is “used” to negotiate the shift in perspectival standpoints.

To demonstrate this, I present a hermeneutic analysis of transcripts derived from 14 active interviews conducted with potential donors who harbour ambivalent perception towards organ donation. When enter into a dialogue with me (as the researcher), my participants find themselves having to justify their socially-marginalized standpoint as an ambivalent donor—against the prevailing cultural and moral background, which deem organ donation as an act of altruism and heroism (Mongoven 2003). By employing a disclaimer, my participants work within the normative discourse by confessing to their “selfishness,” “hypocrisy” and “guilt” and in so doing attempt to “disarm” what they perceive as my ‘potential social judgment’ of their marginalized position (Potter and Wetherell 2001). It is through the linguistic act of confession that my participants present their “countervailing” perspective of the phenomenon. Here, they shift between different interpretive standpoints to make sense of their societal obligation and hence their place within the transplant community. Thus, speaking from the vantage point as ambivalent potential donors, my participants reflect on their subjective position as a “citizen” who must assume “responsibility” in preserving the “health” of the social body (Mauss 1950;2002). Using humour, euphemism and irony, my participants undermine the idea of societal obligation, condemning its “failure” to “discipline” the “social deviancy” of transplant recipients, whose embodied lifestyles (e.g., smoking, drinking) fail to conform with the notion of so-called ‘responsible citizen’ (Mauss 1950;2002; Titmuss 1972). In doing so, they are able to ‘play down’ their stigmatized position as ambivalent donors, arguing that the act of donation is ideologically vested in the interest of the transplant patients and the medical professionals. Interestingly, when asked to articulate their position as potential organ recipient, my participants “confess” to having “double standards” as they actively negotiate previous social, emotive and personal concerns surrounding organ donation out of their narratives.

In summary, this paper presents a hermeneutic appreciation of language, which is founded on the assumptions that meanings are “negotiated” through dialogue. As such, language is more than simply a descriptive representation of the experiential and cultural world. Instead, language takes on a performative role in facilitating the fusion of horizons between the knower and the known and in so doing, bring to light perspectival standpoints underpinning a phenomenon.

The Performance of Linguistic Politeness in Consumer Accounts

Beverley Hill, University of Winchester, UK

Language is central to researchers interested in exploring talk and interaction in organisations and markets (e.g., Gabriel 2004; Boje 2001; Coupland 2001; Stern et al. 1998) and language-based analytical methods, such as discourse, narrative and conversation analysis, are becoming increasingly valued in management research (B.A.M. 2009). This paper contributes to the further study of language and discourse by exploring linguistic politeness within consumer accounts of marketplace experiences. Research texts rarely comment on politeness in interviews contexts, other than to urge “polite persistence” (Bryman and Bell 2003, p.481) in making contact with potential respondents and in requesting an interview. Indeed, as researchers we rarely question it ourselves. We assume politeness, on our part and that of the individual being interviewed, as an implicit dimension of the researcher/respondent relationship. Politeness is accepted as...
a social norm and, as such, its use is not explicitly questioned in research interview interactions.

In consumer research, politeness or “etiquette” is defined as the forms, manners and ceremonies accepted or required in social relations (Ruth and Ottes 2006, p.560). This is certainly one perspective on politeness, adhering to the commonly understood meaning of the word, showing that one has good manners and consideration for others. In the linguistic sense, politeness is defined as “the practice in any speech community of organizing linguistic action so that it is seen as appropriate to the current communicative event” (Kasper 1997, p.374). Sociolinguists maintain that individuals adopt politeness strategies in social interactions to achieve personal and social aims, showing not only courtesy and deference, but also social position through language (Trask 2007, p.223). As such, linguistic politeness within consumer accounts is worthy of investigation in order to contribute further to the “turn to discourse” (Wetherell et al. 2001) in consumer research. This paper proposes that researchers look beyond taken for granted assumptions about politeness in interviews and attend to its use more fully in analysing interview transcripts, questioning how and why politeness is used in consumer accounts.

Brown and Levinson’s (1987, p.61) sociolinguistic theory of politeness is based on the concept of face as something that “can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction.” They maintain that all individuals have “positive face” and “negative face.” Positive face refers to a person’s need to demonstrate membership of a social group, while negative face refers to a need to be individual and independent, to get what they want without causing offence (Trask 2007, p.223). Brown and Levinson (1987) propose a number of strategies that individuals will adopt to avoid face loss, depending on their estimation of the threat of face loss to either party. The choice of strategy depends on a number of factors; firstly factors relating to differences between the speakers themselves i.e. the perceived social and power distance between the speaker and listener. In addition, the choice depends on the speaker’s evaluation of how threatening or dangerous a particular speech act is seen to be in a given culture.

Strategies of negative politeness occurred most strongly in my respondents’ talk of social class, where the respondents’ own opinion of the perceived social class categorisation of other parents and children was invariably expressed with difficulty. Indeed, this is clearly perceived as “high risk” talk in that off-record strategies can be used in this context (see Extract 7). Social class it seems is potentially a “delicate topic;” similar to talk of pride in one’s country (Condor 2000) and race (e.g., Billig 2001). Expressing opinions of social class, as a form of stereotyping, is feared by respondents as being not “politically correct” (see Suhr and Johnson 2003) and thus they adopt strategies to avoid being negatively categorised themselves. In talk of social class, interview respondents adopt the full range of discursive strategies identified by Van Dijk as typically used to avoid prejudice claims i.e., disclaimers, mitigation and euphemisms (1984; 1989; 1992) and discourse markers such as hesitation, false starts and repetition (1987).

The use of politeness strategies in relation to such themes is important as it indicates “what conversational participants themselves consider as negative social action” (Overstreet and Yule 2001, p.46). This is based upon their understanding, a shared knowledge, of what is acceptable within a given culture. Thus, for consumer researchers, the context of use of politeness strategies can be useful in revealing cultural knowledge of acceptable and unacceptable discourse, by drawing attention to behaviours that are considered to adhere to or to violate social norms. However, at another level, the use of politeness depends upon the specific discourse context itself i.e., the interview situation, and the respondent’s judgment of the researcher as an individual. Eelen (2001, p.iv) claims that as politeness is “situated at the intersection of language and social reality” its study is useful for understanding not only wide-scale social and cultural norms (as seen in the ‘social class’ talk in the extracts above) but also specific social relationships and roles (Eelen 2001, p.iv).

REFERENCES
54 / In A Manner of Speaking: Understanding the Role of Language and Discourse Analysis in Consumer Research


SPECIAL SESSION
Sharing In and Sharing Out: Problematizing the Consumption of Public Space
Luca M. Visconti, ESCP Europe, France

SESSION OVERVIEW
Following a rich tradition of studies dealing with gift giving, and an even richer amount of contributions on market exchanges, consumer scholars are recently turning attention to more participated forms of consumption. Sharing appears a promising alternative to mere market utilitarianism and the hidden reciprocity of gifts (Belk 2010), thus fueling transformative practices in consumer life (Mick 2006). However, despite the pervasiveness of sharing both within and beyond family boundaries, reluctance to study the topic has been so far enduring due to researchers’ rationalism, and the invisibility and ubiquity of sharing (Belk 2010). Extant works have mostly debated the various forms of sharing (Belk 2007; Epp and Price 2008; Ozanne and Ozanne 2008), underlined its bonding effect (Turner and Rojek 2001), or deployed comparative prototypes to mark its distinctiveness from gift giving and commodity exchanges (Belk 2010).

Nonetheless, this entire stream has maintained the focus on privately owned goods, leaving untended the realm of public goods consumption (Clarke and Bradford 1998). Tellingly, we observe that commons are structurally related to forms of free as well as inescapable sharing (Sargeson 2002). The entitlement on public goods is in fact extended to all citizens, who are asked to participate in the consumption of goods as water, education, health-care, the environment, internet, and public space. As such, the forms of sharing of public goods granted for a community and performed by this community ultimately affect the economic growth of a country (Sargeson 2002) and its rate of social (in)justice (Borgman 2006).

This session presents a set of thought-provoking studies focused on the shared consumption of public space in contemporary urban environments. Public urban space is defined as “a destination, a purpose-built stage for ritual and interaction” (Kostof 1992, 123). While this view accounts for the sociality and rituality public space may hold, other theorists comment on the liminality and loneliness of public space as “non-place” (Augé 1995) if not the danger and fear characterizing our towns (Bauman 2005). This session documents transformative practices, rival ideologies, alternative uses, and ludic expressions of public space consumption worldwide. All are pervaded by the intention of revitalizing the space we all consume and share, being public space either in terms of the physical environment we daily cross as dwellers or the conceptual ground in which the market and social life are embedded.

In detail, the first paper examines the ideological debate stimulated by street art, as a relatively permanent and ideologically dense expression of public space appropriation. Differently, the second contribution illustrates more extemporaneous and ludic aspects of space appropriation as captured by playful forms of resistance and flash mobs. The third paper enters the domain of urban planning and space appropriation as captured by playful forms of resistance and contribution illustrates more extemporaneous and ludic aspects of the entitlement of public space, spanning from the most extended forms of self and collectivization (sharing in) to the most individualistic ways of its consumption (sharing out), which stimulate dialectical confrontation.

The session relies on a set of multi-method studies, all having strong ethnographic rooting and covering a wide geographical scope (Canada, U.S., and Europe). All studies are in the advanced stage of, if not completed, inquiries. We believe that this session will be promising, drawing a large and broad audience. First, given that currently over half of the world population lives in cities and that public space constitutes an inescapable public good, we think the consumption of public space involves all of us as citizens. Second, and more precisely, these papers will jointly stimulate researchers on public goods at large, and space in particular.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS
“Speaking of Public Space: Cultures and Countercultures in the Confrontation about Street Art”
Luca M. Visconti, ESCP Europe, France
Laurel Anderson, Arizona State University, USA
Stefania Borghini, Università Bocconi, Italy
John F. Sherry Jr., University of Notre Dame, USA

Recently, discussion about public space has been revitalized by the attention that street art has acquired in the media, public policy, social discussion, marketing strategies, and the arts (Borghini et al. forthcoming). Our multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995), primarily conducted in the States and Italy but expanded much beyond by means of extensive netnographic analysis (Kozinets 2002), accounts for this increasing and pervasive impact of street art. Among others, we observe media interest for the dialectical confrontation between supporters and opponents of street art as well as a remarkable amount of companies (e.g., Adidas, Nike, Puma, Etro, Murakami, Nestle, Porsche, Zurich, Bic, Palais de Tokyo, etc.) deploying street art codes to market their products, lay out their stores, or create their ads. Also, we document a spirited confrontation about street art in public space animating experts in the arts, some celebrating it as a democratic, open-air museum, others rejecting the defacement of public walls. Even public governors have entered the arena, sometimes assigning spaces to artists for free expression or embellishments, other times embittering disciplinary measures, more rarely opening participated debates with the citizens about the maintenance of given artworks (e.g., Bristol, Bethlehem, etc.).

Interestingly, we note that such debate about the meanings, consumption, and sharing of public space stimulated by street art takes place both within and beyond the marketplace as traditionally meant, that is, as the place of commodity exchanges (Belk 2010). Beyond the market, we focus on dynamics of sharing in and out public space, which overcome price-based exchanges to include sociality, public activism, and ethics. On this side, our research highlights the existence of rival ideologies of public space consumption sustained by street artists and city dwellers in particular. According to the level of individualistic versus collectivistic appraisal of public space showed by inhabitants and artists, we identify and illustrate four different ideologies of public space consumption: i) “privatization” of public space; ii) dwellers’ resistance to alienation; iii) artists’ claim for street democracy; and, iv) dialogical confrontation.

Parallely, we also detect the relevance of street (art) ideologies
within the market. The visibility progressively assumed by street art and its ideological power are able to infuse new meanings into brand narratives (Cayla and Arnold 2008). Especially when brand narratives are constructed around a complex and partially conflictual system of parts (“brand gestalt,” Diamond et al. 2009), companies may appreciate the potentialities hidden in the incorporation of the multifaceted street art’s values, communication codes, and/or aesthetic style-marks. The complexity and variety of meanings accompanying street art makes it a multivalent storyteller, which marketers can learn to accommodate, respect or even endorse.

Thus, our work reveals the connections between the social world and the market (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006). On the one hand, ongoing social debate—in our case about public space consumption via street art—may inspire marketing strategies by updating market conversations, refreshing companies’ communication style or rejuvenating products and stores (Borghini et al. forthcoming). On the other hand, the social debate can be also fuelled with the expansion of the market. Street art is a vivid example of market contestation—as such, a counterculture—since it openly attacks the overwhelming presence of commercial ads in the streets (what world famous street artist Banksy defines “brandalism,” 2006), the constant incitement to materialism, and the celebration of individualism against joint possessions (Belk 2010).

Even more peculiarly, our work also unpacks the connections between privately owned and collective goods. The counterculture of sharing as framed in the context of public space consumption assumes its proper features only in sharp confrontation with the dominating culture of materialism rooted in private consumption. Similarly, the literature on consumer resistance (Murray and Ozanne 1991) and social movements (Kozinets and Handelman 2004) assume additional depth when we locate such anti-consumeristic countercultures of privately owned goods in close propinquity with the collectivistic appraisal of public goods, and public space here in detail. We argue that some of the arguments developed around public space mirror, overthrow or endorse the traits sustaining individual materialism as well as consumer resistance.

While interpreting our ethnographic data, as researchers we had to move back and forth the private and the public, as well as the market and the social. Critics of marketing and consumption in contemporary life are realizing that indictments of countercultural selling out and corporate co-optation of dissent are increasingly misplaced. There is a dawning recognition that “marketing has simply become so diffuse as to be a social activity,” and that both counterculture and corporation seek common goals: “wider appreciation of…good art…enough compensation for creators…and the elimination of tacky and dumb advertising…” (Moore 2007, p.86).

“Flying with Feathers on Bubbles: Reclaiming Public Space through the Sharing of Ludic Experiences”

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Public spaces represent spheres of deliberation and action, and are open to all citizens independent of identity politics (Arendt 1998; Habermas 1991). However, according to Habermas (1991) these spaces have lost their character with the rise of industrialization, mass media, and popular culture. Today, most citizens frequent these spaces without much thinking of what makes these spaces public. Using ethnographic research and actor network theory (Latour 2005; Brenbeck, Ekström, and Mörck 2007), we investigate how the “publicness” of such spaces is realized when citizens actively attempt to reclaim these spaces by engaging in playful forms of consumer resistance. We investigate the events promoted by a group of citizens in Toronto, Canada, who engage in temporary, yet highly visible forms of resistance, such as large-scale pillow fights, communal bubble blowing parties, giant light sabre battles, as well as massive versions of human chess and capture the flag. Our analysis suggests that these ludic experiences become instrumental in mobilizing publics, which we argue is central in understanding how public spaces are stabilized (Foster 2007), qualified (Callon 1998), and shared (Belk 2010) in post-industrial societies.

Our examination of the urban playground movement is an ongoing multi-method study initiated in May 2008. We have employed ethnographic techniques such as participant observation and interviewing; and recorded data through field notes, photography and video. All three authors were active in the field. We each transitioned between the roles of observer and participant thereby enriching our perspectives of the phenomena. In addition, we have amassed online archival data (e.g., digital pictures, videos, and media texts) from a range of websites and profile pages on social networking websites.

Our observations suggest that these playful acts initially mobilize a loosely connected network of participants. Such mobilization starts as the events are announced on Facebook pages, blogs and websites. The announcements typically invite citizens to participate in events by wearing distinct costumes, such as dressing up like Santa Claus, or bringing interesting objects, such as glow sticks. Participants who adhere to these self-proclaimed “weird” requests are often the ones who bring high visibility to the events. It is through these “weird” objects, costumes, and performances that the movement can “translate” public space (Latour 2005), forging new links between participants and uninformed bystanders who are then invited to take part in the event impromptu, through playing and/or partying. As such, the translation and the mobilization of publics become possible by sharing ludic experiences. It is important to emphasize, this translation is stabilized temporarily and destabilized right after the event (Foster 2007).

The sharing of ludic experiences is one among many organized or loosely organized events that can qualify (Callon 1998) a space as public. In the process of playing and partying on a street, participants reclaim a piece of public space, however temporarily, and in doing so they ascertain to one another as well as anyone passing by that the space actually belongs to all citizens. One particularly illustrative event was the Blackout party, celebrated in Toronto on every anniversary of the 2003 power outage which spread across both Canada and the United States. During this event, the crowd comprised of both participants adorned with costumes and banners, and carrying musical instruments and even splash pads and benches; and the regular frequenters of the city center, grew so intensely that they physically stopped the flow of automobile traffic at one of the most central intersections in the city, reclaiming it to all pedestrians under the motto “Streets are for People.”

Interestingly, as sharing (Belk 2010) of ludic experiences among participants at these events intensifies, the potential for further and wider degrees of sharing emerge. One particular event was in effect “unsuccessful” precisely because sharing was limited if not nonexistent. The small number of participants to this specific event made the act of reclaiming public space non visible if not nonexistent and moreover the participants most of the time stood still, showing nearly no signs of play.

It is important to note that not all participants nor bystanders arrive with the same degree of awareness and understanding of why these events occur and what they accomplish in terms of reclaiming public space. Interestingly, even without awareness, their participation helps the movement mobilize publics like themselves, which may not necessarily produce political participation or change. Following Foster’s (2007) argument that creating and
mobilizing publics around objects has become central in creating value as well as in destabilizing the very same value, we conclude that the public spaces also represent the same characteristics as many of the other objects of the post-industrial society: they do not exist hence are not shared outside the actions assembling and qualifying them as public.

“Consuming Invisible Cities: Desires, Imagination, and Utopia in Urban Transformation”
Luca M. Visconti, ESCP Europe, France
Pauline Maclaran, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Yuko Minowa, Long Island University—Brooklyn Campus, USA

Throughout history, observing and describing consumers, markets, and cities known and unknown were the source of inspiration, fantasy and imagination for explorers, merchants, and scholars, including consumer researchers (Cook 2008). Contemporary cities constitute fast moving, dynamic, and multi-semantic texts for consumption, since market exchanges, consumption experiences and consumer socialization are increasingly incorporated into city life (e.g., confront Anjaria’s analysis of the market and city life in Mumbai, 2008).

At the same time, the multi-textuality of the city goes hand in hand with a long list of pressing questions, among others safety (Bauman 2005), lost space (Trancik 1986), anonymity and conformity (Sennett 1977), or glocality (Featherstone 1990). It is no wonder, then, that cities are dynamic scenarios, constantly reshaped in search of transient answers to similar and additional problems. New jails or surveillance cameras cope with the quest of security, new green areas reduce the grayness and unhealthiness of urban life, taller or additional buildings increase the number of beds, landmarks attract tourists and commercial exchanges, and so forth.

From this perspective, as dwellers we daily consume public space in our cities and we react—consciously or not—to the ongoing transformations of the urban text. Arguably, “The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, ... The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it; it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature.” (Park and Burgess 1984: 1) Said differently, a dweller and his/her cityscape are mutually connected to the point that individual and city identities become imbricated (Simmel 1903).

Therefore, the purpose of our paper is to investigate how we relate to our cities and, more specifically, how we project ourselves in the future of cities that undergo urban transformations. By invisible cities we thus indicate the areas of cities that are subject to architectural modification. We mostly focus on projects of major urban renewal as those implying urban requalification, urban redesign, landmark buildings, and the extension of cities through the creation of brand new neighborhoods. As such, these changes in the urban architecture may be due to the natural development of a town but also to specific external shocks, like international expos or funding. Empirically, our ongoing research is multi-sited (New York, Leicester, Barcelona, and Milan), multi-method (ethnography, researcher introspection, guided introspection, netnography), bi-gender. Currently, our dataset includes around 60 pages written in prospective essays, more than 20 depth-interviews in the four contexts of inquiry, web data, and an impressive amount of secondary data (photographs of the sites, urban projects and renderings, articles, documents, etc.).

Emergent interpretations first document the variety of ways dwellers use to define public space. Depending on how this space is consumed, it can be an agora, a forum, a locus for creativity but also a hideaway, a transit place, a room for memory. Second, urban transformation is understandable in the light of three different though related concepts: i) imagination; ii) desire; and, iii) utopia. Imagination relates to people’s capability of calling up things that are not present but exist elsewhere or to anticipate things that do not exist. Urban transformation implies high rates of anticipation, since it requires consumers of cityscapes to construct alternative consumption realities close to Bell’s and Costa’s (1998) idea of “fantastic consumption enclaves”. Desire identifies the motivating force behind consumption, “a hot, passionate emotion quite different from the dispassionate discourse of fulfilling wants and needs” (Bell, Ger, and Askegaard 2003: 327). Thus, desire leads to the representation of the wishful, long awaited state of being. Interestingly, our study investigates consumer desire in front of goods not already at the disposal of consumer being projected in the future. Utopia differs from desire since what a consumer may wish for him/herself can be detached from the idea of utopian perfection, which can be boring for some, unrealizable for others, or even undesirable (Brown, Maclaran, and Stevens 1996). Third and last, we observe four typologies of urban renewal strategies according to the maintenance or alteration of the visual and the identity of the cityscape: i) subversion; ii) re-generation; iii) re-destination; and, iv) preservation.

In so doing, we extend our understanding of the architectural skeleton of urban consumption and we appreciate the way consuming desire can be connected to consumer imagination and utopia as stimulated by the future town.

“Heterotopia and the City: A Guerilla Garden in Athens”
Andreas Chatzidakis, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Pauline Maclaran, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Alan Bradshaw, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Shona Bettany, University of Bradford, UK

Heterotopias, according to Foucault (1986), are spaces of “otherness” where alternative forms of social organisation take place, forms that stand in stark contrast to their surrounding environment. Whereas the concept of utopia envisages a future state of perfection, heterotopia is in the here and now, facilitating what Marin (1984) terms “utopic spatial play,” the function or process of utopian thinking rather than its ultimate realisation (Maclaran and Brown 2005). In this paper we use the concept of heterotopia to better understand tensions simmering beneath city skylines in relation to citizens and uses of public spaces. Our interpretive case study is a guerrilla garden in Athens where we have used an ethnographic approach that includes interviews, documentary and website analysis, participant observation and netnography.

Guerilla gardening is a countercultural movement currently sweeping across Europe. Similar in many ways to street art, its participants seek to reclaim and beautify the non-places within cities (Auge 1995). Instead of graffiti art, however, guerrilla gardeners plant vegetables, fruit, herbs, trees and flowers in order to breathe life into drab, dilapidated and derelict spaces that abound in the city. Primarily rooted in environmentalism, guerrilla gardening’s political aim is to force a reconsideration of land ownership in the city (Padup 2008; Tracey 2007). As such, it can be seen as part of a larger trend towards citizens claiming “economised public space,” e.g., urban playscapes (Belk et al.), graffiti artists (Borghini et al. forthcoming) and squatting communities (Üstüner and Holt 2007).

In this paper we focus on an extreme instance of guerrilla gardening when residents in a bohemian neighbourhood of Athens (Exarchia) created a park overnight in a deserted parking lot, in defiance of the mayor and town planners and in the aftermath of the Athens riots. Using Hetherington’s three categories of difference by which he identifies the Palais Royal as a heterotopia—materiality,
social practices and events contained therein—we analyse how the park creates a heterotopic space that challenges and resists existing social orderings. Ultimately, through this “spatial play” (Marin 1984; Maclaran and Brown 2005), we argue that the park acts as an agent for transformation in the urban environment.

Materiality. Bringing nature back into a city reputed for its grey spaces and lack of greenery (Ioannou and Serras 2007), the Athens garden juxtaposes natural materials with its concrete surrounds. A profusion of foliage now demarcates the garden as a place of tranquility and repose for the denizens of Exarchia. Trees have been planted throughout the park. Standing proud in brightly hued flower beds bordered by craggy stones, they offer welcome relief from the city’s colorless concrete facades. Similar to Chicago gardens noted by Oswald (2005), this park has become a quasi-sacred space.

Social Practices. The social ambivalence of the park invites an eclectic variety of groups that co-exist within its borders. Mothers visiting with children in the playground area and elderly folk resting on the many wooden benches mingle alongside politically motivated anarchists, left-wing residents and students. For older visitors, the park reminds them of a past era: people of all ages hanging around the same square, playing and interacting with each other.

Events. Anyone can come to the weekly gatherings and request permission to use the park for events such as theatrical performances, talks, gigs, movie and poetry nights, anti-consumerism seminars, gifting bazaars etc., provided there is no entrance fee. Any commercial venture is kept away and the park relies on volunteers and donations for its support. In addition, a more recent initiative concerns the creation of a permanent forum for non-reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Another requirement is that all events are not explicitly affiliated with any political parties, addressing another utopic aim: people of different ideological and political backgrounds creating new forums for dialogue in the will of creating and sharing a space that caters for all.

Hetherington (1997, p.13) suggests that almost like laboratories, heterotopias “can be taken as the sites in which new ways of experimenting with ordering society are tried out.” The guerrilla park in Athens provides a rich context to explore not only citizens’ experimentations with new forms of public good engagement, but also how these provide the impetus for various new types of participative consumption to emerge (e.g., gifting bazaars), sharing in common a negotiation of discourses associated with emancipation from the bonds of materialism, possessiveness and an increasingly economised public life.

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Consumer Acculturation: The Social Construction of Poor
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SPECIAL SESSION
Exploring the Norms and Rituals of Household Food Consumption:
‘Doing Family’ at Dinner Time
Benedetta Cappellini, Worcester University, UK
Elizabeth Parsons, Keele University, UK

SESSION OVERVIEW
From a consumer research perspective theorists have begun to explore everyday domestic food consumption practices to inform understandings of gender identity and family relations (Moisio et al. 2004). We contribute to this literature by discussing in particular ‘how different households interpret and adhere to the rules and conventions’ at dinner time (Marshall 2005, p.82) and how in doing so they materialise collective family identity, family relations and individual identity (Epp and Price 2008). We argue that ordinary family meals play a crucial role in defining and re-defining individual identity as well as perpetuating family collective identity and family relations. We also open out debates surrounding meal consumption to include the range of practices involved at mealtimes which occur after the cooking event to include serving, displaying, eating and clearing up after the meal.

Discussions of family identity and everyday food consumption practices highlight two inter-connected themes that have been neglected in consumer research to date: those of everyday mealtime practices and of family as a collective identity. Although studies have underlined that despite working and school commitments, family dinners remain an important appointment within daily family life (Cheng et al. 2007), making both symbolic and instrumental contributions to the production of family (DeVault 1991). Very little has been said about how practices surrounding meal consumption have implications in constructing, reinforcing or changing collective family identity. Consumer researchers looking at family domestic food consumption have mostly explored the materialisation of mothers’ identities (Charles and Kerr 1988; Thompson 1996) yet the intersection between mealtime practices and the identities of other family members remains neglected. In addition when it comes to exploring ‘the domestic meal as object to examine’ (Marshall 2005, p.82) the meal has been conceptualized largely in terms of (maternal) cooking practices (Moisio et al. 2004; Bugge and Almås 2006). Thus through an exploration of ordinary practices surrounding dinner consumption this session attempts to centre the everyday meal more fully in debates over family collective, relational and individual identity.

Chitakunye’s paper focuses on the implications of mealt ime television consumption for family meal rituals. The paper suggests that consuming television constantly re-negotiates family relations by encouraging members to consume TV programmes separately as well as collectively. Similarly Cappellini’s and Parsons’ paper looks at household relations at dinner time and finds that it is in the everyday sharing of a thrifty meal that all family members are involved in practices of abnegation, wherein resources are saved and then invested in extraordinary meals wherein the entire household is celebrated. Marshall’s paper considers the role of the family meal in children’s food socialisation and the ways in which individual identities are negotiated within the collective. He argues that while children are voluntary participants in these domestic eating occasions they regard meals as an aspect of consumption over which they have much less control. In the process of engaging in family meals they are both conforming to and at the same time challenging ideas about domestic dining. This session will appeal to those interested in everyday domestic food consumption practices and family relations and identity. It will also appeal to those interested in routine, rituals and conventions.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS
“We Fast and Feast together: The Devotional Household at Dinner Time”
Benedetta Cappellini, Worcester University, UK
Elizabeth Parsons, Keele University, UK

Interpretive consumer research looking at everyday consumption practices and family relations emphasises how consumption in the household is not driven by self-satisfaction, rather by caring and loving for other family members (Thompson 1996; Miller 1998; Marshall 2005; Epp and Price 2008). Feminist studies looking at domestic food consumption practices have shown how cooking meals is an everyday practice that women accomplish in order to materialise their love for their family (Murcott 1982; Charles and Kerr 1988). Indeed Moisio et al. (2004) underline the importance that women attribute to their practices of making homemade food for reinforcing familial bonds and family identity. Bugge and Almås (2006) show how preparing a meal is a practice that women describe as important for defining their own identity and their positioning within the family. Similarly, De Vault (1991) shows how the range of practices consisting of feeding the family were perceived by her female participants as an essential and “natural” abnegation embedded in their gendered roles of being good mothers and wives. Miller (1998) explains women’s abnegation through his theory of shopping, wherein he argues that women’s everyday shopping has similarities with the process of sacrifice. Miller argues that sacrifice is a process wherein people save their best resources to donate to their deity or object of devotion. He points out that this form of sacrifice is largely practiced by women, (as mothers and wives) who, through their everyday thrifty shopping, produce extra value to be invested in extraordinary consumption. In these extraordinary consumption events their objects of devotion (children, husband and the household) are celebrated.

From these studies we understood that caring is a prerogative of mothers and wives who materialise their devotional love through everyday shopping, cooking and other practices surrounding family meals. However, what we know very little about is the role(s) of other family members in such a process of sacrifice. Simply described as objects of devotion, and the purpose of women’s everyday sacrifice, we know little about how other family members contribute to such a process of sacrifice particularly where the household is celebrated. While maternal practices have received significant attention, very little has been said about what husbands and children say, do and make in their everyday family food consumption practices. Given this theoretical and empirical gap, this paper seeks to understand if (and if so how) individual identities and roles of family members contribute to materialise their devotional love for their households. In doing so, it looks at everyday family practices surrounding dinner consumption in 20 middle class families, living in Stoke on Trent, UK. The study follows an interpretive strategy and adopts a multi-method approach which combines a series of in-depth interviews with observations of participants during dinner time. Combining interviews with observations helped the researchers to understand how people materialise their ideas, know-how and emotions, and how they describe and perform their everyday mealtime practices.

The findings demonstrate that all family members, although
to different degrees, materialise their devotional love at dinner time. In accord with previous research (De Vault 1991; Miller 1998; Bugge and Almas 2006) we found that women, as mothers and wives, are the ones who more often sacrifice themselves by taking responsibility for the practices constituting ‘the meal’, as well as abnegating her own desires in order to satisfy others’ desires. However, in a few cases we found that men, as fathers and parents do not simply “help” or “contribute” towards making a meal (see de Vault 1991), rather they are similarly responsible for feeding their family, and as such they abnegate their own desires in order to satisfy others’ desires. The findings also demonstrate that instead of talking about a maternal sacrifice as an unbalanced gift exchange between the mother and her object of devotion, we can talk about an everyday sharing (Belk 2010) of thrifty meals and of extraordinary meals. For example all members of the household are called to save “something” in the course of the week by eating thrifty meals (saving time, work and money), and to invest what they have saved in extraordinary food occasions. In this respect the children of the household are also involved in practices of abnegation. In closing the paper both refines and opens out debates in consumer research surrounding meal consumption and identity in arguing that instead of talking simply about a devotional mother who sacrifices herself in her everyday shopping we can talk about a devotional household which sacrifices itself in ordinary meals in order to celebrate itself during extraordinary meals. Thus it is not only in sharing extraordinary meals (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991) that families celebrate themselves and maintain their identity, rather it is in the process of sharing thrifty and rich meals that familial bonds are sustained and reinforced.

“Re-negotiating Family Rituals at Mealtimes: The Participatory Role of the Television”

Pepakayi David Chitakunye, Royal Holloway University, UK

Eating at home has always been regarded as a time when all family members come together from their diverse and separate activities to affirm their relatedness and love (Levy 1996). Yet traditional mealtimes have become more fragmented with members of a family often eating at different times to suit their own personal schedules (Warde 1997). Although food meanings, and the rituals and practices in which these are embedded, contribute to family identity and domestic life (Marshall 2005), there has been little consumer research to explore how these are changing and how children and their interaction with material objects such as the television influence these changes. So, our purpose is to explore the daily mealtime interactional processes that unfold when a valued object (such as the television), is held by the family. My approach generates a deeper understanding of changing mealtime rituals. In doing so, we contribute to the field of consumer behaviour in two ways: 1) I show how material objects can transform relationships within the domestic context of food consumption; and 2) we also draw attention to how the materiality of particular spaces influences and shapes food consumption practices. Consumer researchers have acknowledged that “material objects play many roles in social life, by providing sustenance, shelter, safety, entertainment, and as tools to accomplish tasks” (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988: 531), and may also be used to extend and convey our self-concepts (Belk 1985); convey our connection to others and help express our sense of self (Rook 1985). In this way, consumer research has become increasingly focused discussing materialism (Belk 1985; Ger and Belk 1996), that is, “the role of material objects in affecting terminal goals such as life satisfaction, happiness, and social progress” (Claxton and Murray 1994:422) rather than materiality, or the relation and co-creation of subjects and objects. Much less attention has been paid to the role material objects play in mealtime rituals. More important for this paper are the mundane routine ways in which objects are taken up in everyday lives (Parsons 2009) particularly at meal times.

The school was used as a site of data collection for home practices. Informants were young people aged between 13 and 17 years. Given increasing concerns about children and young people’s dietary choices (Young 2003), it seemed important to focus on this age group. Consent (in writing) was sought from a responsible adult, that is, the Headteacher at Wells High School (pseudonym), and parents or guardians at home. The fact that the data collection was school based meant that it was quite straightforward, and the selection of informants on the basis of year groups within the schools, effectively ensured that informant’s age was a known factor. Interaction with informants was in protected environments. To protect the identity of informants, pseudonyms have also been used. The multi-method qualitative enquiry was divided into two stages. Stage 1 included the use of visual diaries (23 diaries); personal depth interviews (13 informants); and online interviews (9 informants). Stage 2 focused more on family mealtime observations (4 families). During my family visits, I sat and participated in their activities through meal preparation and eating. Each family was visited at least five times. In all the families, I tried to immerse ourselves into the site. I helped in making meals, and ate with informants. These constant repetitive visits to the families, over a period of two years, were vital in deepening our experience of action, conversations and the mealtime context.

My results show how children engage with material culture in everyday life. This demonstrates ways in which the television is mediating family mealtime rituals. I argue that the materiality of food consumption environments play an important role in changing mealtime rituals. I would like readers to perceive the TV location as a site of identity formation and negotiation within the family. This perspective is in line with Epp and Price (2008), when they discussed the processes of object movement and network transformation. Whilst Epp and Price (2008) focused on the processes that move an already singularised object in and out of a network, my results extend this discussion by identifying some of the participatory roles of the television during family mealtimes. Drawing from the results, I argue that the television is an agent of cultural change. On the one hand, there are TV programmes encouraging family members to consume separately, thereby encouraging an individual sense of identity. On the other hand, there are TV programmes encouraging collective family viewing. This encourages a collective sense of family identity. In this sense, I argue that the television programmes are reconfiguring different forms of identity. The TV location can also be perceived as an area of retreat by both parents and children as they seek independence from each other. Again, I see the TV coming in between the tensions between parents and children. As demonstrated by the findings, family identity is constructed in action, especially when all family members gather to eat watching television. This suggests that the TV programmes are allowing other ways of family identity to re-emerge. This also reflects the struggles between personal and family identities that take place in everyday life. I conclude that the materiality of food consumption locations transforms consumption relationships, and the choice of food consumed.

“Informal/ality: Children’s Identity and Family Meals”

David Marshall, University of Edinburgh, UK

Formal aspects of eating have engaged scholars such as Douglas (1975) who show us how food acts as a code often communicating and reflecting social relationships between diners. The inclusion or exclusion of courses, or components, in a meal comes
to signify the nature of the occasion. Looking at the structure of meals can tell us something about the relationship between diners. Meals provide us with a set of rules and guidelines regarding the time, place and type of food fit for the occasion and act as ‘eating scripts’ guiding our food selection and arguably making life easier (Kjaernes et al. 2001; Marshall 2005). These scripts are played out in various rituals, routines and everyday conventions that provide some continuity and stability in our meals (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Warde 1997; Marshall 2005). In a market that proclaims ‘free’ choice much of what we choose to eat, or serve, is determined by the nature of the eating occasion and those present. In the case of family meals researchers have focused on the idea of the ‘proper’ meal—a hot cooked dinner synonymous with “meat and two veg” in British households (Murcott 1982; Charles and Kerr 1988; de Vault 1991; Makela 2005). It is clear that this eating event has a special place in domestic life but in discussing the decline of the family meal some have asked if this is a universal, stable, regular practice or ‘myth’ (Jackson et al. 2009). Elsewhere there is evidence that this continues to be an important family eating event (Marshall and Pettinger 2009; Cheng et al. 2007).

Epp and Price (2008) in looking at family identity alert us to the need to consider all relational units, including children, and what is perhaps most surprising is the lack of children’s voice in this debate around family meals. Much of the work into meals excludes children from the accounts, their wishes and requests are subsumed within the accounts of other family members, usually the father (Cook 2009) or the mother (Bugge and Almås 2006). Yet children clearly contribute to this collective event, by their very presence, and contribute to this collective identity when they ‘sit down at the table’. Eating family meals is part of food socialisation and learning to eat properly is part of the symbolic transition from being a child to being an adult. However, there are interesting questions over the ways in which children influence family eating both indirectly, by virtue of their presence and directly through their participation in food related activities. Rather than seeing socialisation as a one way process from parents to child we might consider the extent to which children are actively engaged in family food decisions. Some have argued that children’s wishes are not only accommodated within the family but increasingly driving family food decisions to the extent of redefining ideas about ‘proper’ meals (Romani 2005; Nørgaard et al. 2007; James et al. 2009).

This paper explores the experience of eating, and mealtimes, as part of childhood socialization (see Warde 1997; Epp and Price 2008). While largely conceptual it draws on eight group discussions at two schools and a short survey with 106 primary school children aged between 8 and 12 years old in Edinburgh Scotland. The study focused on snacking but meals featured as part of this research investigation. Approval was granted by the local authority to approach the School Principal and written parental/guardian consent was obtained with assistance from the school. All of the data was collected in the classroom with class teachers present. The findings show that children see family meals as an important part of their everyday food practices and meals they actively participate in family meals they have limited influence over this aspect of their food consumption. Meals are seen as adult occasions and children are cognisant of what makes them different in terms of the rules surrounding what is acceptable and prohibited on these occasions. For the most part this is a collective activity and while participation at the meal is usually non negotiable children do have other demands on their time, usually centred around leisure activities which means that there is some ebb and flow around participation in this family event. When present at the family table they often eat the same meal as the rest of the family but their favourite meals are included as part of the meal repertoire. Rather than seeing meals as confrontational children have been socialised into these more formal eating events but there is evidence of some informalality surrounding when family meals are eaten, for example, eating meals without all family members present, or shifting mealtimes to accommodate leisure activities, or eating in front of the television, or having a ‘takeaway’ at the weekend. Other opportunities for informal eating are found in snacking which complements and sits in stark contrast to the family meal. Some of these differences are reflected in debates around healthy eating. These children were highly dependent on their parents or guardians to provide meals for them and in many ways the family dinner, this proper meal, provided a means of conforming with family ideas and eating conventions as well as presenting opportunities to challenge, within certain parameters, what was acceptable. Children are ‘becoming’ in the sense of being socialised in relation to family meals but also exerting some influence in this prescribed aspect of family food culture. In the final analysis the paper considers where children ‘sit’ in relation to food and argues that while they are becoming more integrated into decisions around family food their influence on the family meal remains restricted and they are attracted to more informal aspects of eating.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

How individuals construct their identities through consumption has been a central concern of consumer research since Belk’s (1988) seminal paper more than twenty years ago. This session brings together three novel approaches to Belk’s notion of possessions and the extended self by investigating the interrelationship between consumption, possessions and self in three ethno-cultural contexts: North America, Europe and Asia. These three papers revisit Belk’s work on extended self and more specifically on self, others and possessions in terms of functions of self-expression and/or self-transformation.

This session is situated within CCT research (Customer Culture Theory) exploring consumer identity projects which focus on “a social arrangement in which relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets” (Arnould and Thompson 2005, p.869). In consumer identity projects, consumers use their resources (e.g. materials, symbols and experiences) to act out different aspects of self (Schau et al. 2009) as “the marketplace has become a preeminent source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people… construct narratives of identity” (Arnould and Thompson 2005, p.871).

The first paper (Connell and Schau) reasserts Belk’s (1988) claim that possessions serve as bridges to relationships with other people. Depth interviews with 36 American and Canadian informants reveal a prerequisite for successful identity extension to another person: the presence of a willing recipient of that consumption object or practice. This paper builds on the notion of identity politics by examining how identity transfer is negotiated between two people. The second paper (Wong and Hogg) examines the nature of the boundaries between the extended self and possessions (i.e. the self-possession boundary) and the construction of the self in terms of how the self is expressed and transformed through possessions. Drawing on narratives from 20 consumers in Hong Kong, this paper shows that the extended self can incorporate close others through extended possessions (i.e. gifts given to close others as informants’ possession). This paper provides a nuance of our understanding of how extended possessions mediate the relationship between consumers and their close others. The third paper (Karanika and Hogg) examines the relationship between the self-expressive and self-transformative nature of cherished possessions. Drawing on the stories of 30 consumers in Greece, this paper examines how possessions express and/or transform the self. This paper provides a nuance of our understanding of possessions as extended self and their functions.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Consumer Identity Augmentation: The Symbiotic Relationship between Self-Extension and Self-Expansion”
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As consumers are active identity seekers and makers (Arnould and Thompson 2004), they sometimes engage in attempts to grow identity beyond the corporeal self (Aron, Aron, and Smollan 1992; Aron et al. 1991; Belk 1988). Scholars in both consumer research (Belk 1988) and in social psychology (Aron et al. 1991; Aron et al 1991) have produced impactful frameworks for how individuals engage in identity augmenting behavior. Belk’s (1988) framework, originally appearing in the Journal of Consumer Research, was written in the context of possessions, and a large percentage of its many citations are within the realm of business or consumer research. Aron’s framework (1991; 1992), originally appearing in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, was written in the context of close relationships with other people. Similarly, a very large percentage of the citations for this research are in psychology journals. While these two parallel theories have similarities, there are important differences between them as well.

In Belk’s (1988) paper on possessions and the extended self, he asserts that individuals cathect objects with meaning and extend their identities from themselves into objects. Two papers by Aron and his colleagues (1991; 1992) offer a theoretical framework for how individuals envelope aspects of a close other’s identity into their own identities and a scale to measure inclusion of other in the self. However, consumer researchers have tended to neglect the Aron framework and psychologists have tended to neglect the Belk framework. This is not entirely surprising, given the focus of the Belk framework on possessions and the Aron framework on relationships. In this research, we argue that neither framework is superior to the other. Rather, we believe that the Belk framework is also useful in the context of human relationships, and the Aron framework is similarly useful in the context of consumer behavior. We parse out the differences between these two theories and suggest that they actually represent two distinct strategies for growing identity beyond the corporeal self, and we offer the term identity augmentation to encompass the two different strategies.

We conducted depth interviews with 36 informants and find them using distinct strategies of self-extension (Belk) and envelopment/self-expansion (Aron) in pursuing their identity projects. Because we were interested in how individuals either seek to extend their relationships with objects of consumption to others or envelope aspects of a close other’s consumption relationships into their own identities, we conducted nineteen of our interviews with individuals from nine different families. In these cases, we separately interviewed both parents and children in order to gain emic perspectives of both relationship partners when identity augmentation attempts are made.

We find that individuals indeed engage in attempts to both extend their consumption relationships to close others as well as envelope/extend aspects of consumption relationships from close others. Identity extension (active attempts to instill a consumption behavior in another) was commonly observed among parents when interacting with their children. Behavior ranged from subtle attempts to influence the child’s consumption to apologetic, overt consumption mandates. In contrast, identity expansion (enveloping aspects of another’s consumption) was commonly observed among children (minor or adult) toward their parents.

When conducting our interviews, we found several instances where the identity extender’s attempt to augment was met either enthusiastically or without resistance from the potential identity expander/enveloper. In this case, both parties were satisfied, as both were able to augment identity simultaneously, and shared consumption was at best extremely satisfying for both parties or at worst uneventful. We also observed instances in which the extender’s attempt to augment identity through consumption was rejected. If the
object of consumption was not important to the extender’s identity, the augmentation attempt was typically abandoned. However, in cases where the object of consumption was indeed very important to the extender’s identity, he or she was forced to negotiate with the relationship partner about which aspects of the consumption the other was willing to absorb.

We also found instances in which heavily involved partners in an identity augmentation project left others out. In this case, (1) extension was not attempted and (2) some individuals were not successfully able to self-expand/envelope aspects of identity from close others. In these cases, those left behind often felt resentful or abandoned, while those engrossed in the identity augmentation project tended not to notice the feelings of the person left behind, and chalked up their lack of involvement in the identity augmentation project as disinterest in it.

In summary, we find evidence that consumers engage in distinct strategies of augmenting identity. We find that neither Belk’s nor Aron’s framework is superior to the other in describing identity augmenting behavior, but rather describe two unique strategies of doing so that are both requisite to successful identity transfer. Finally, we observe that while successful attempts to augment identity generally yield positive results for all involved, failed attempts can lead to potential damage to close relationships.

“Exploring the Self-Possession Boundary through Hong Kong Chinese Consumers’ Narratives of Important Possessions”
Phoebe Wong, Lancaster University
Margaret K. Hogg, Lancaster University

What constitutes the ownership of possessions? Can we draw a line to denote a possession boundary between what is mine and what is yours? Possessions and the extended self (Belk 1988) have received extensive attention in consumer research. Belk (1984) has suggested that there are different cultural interpretations of the concepts of the extended self and possessions. Rudmin (1990; 1994) argued that “the legal facts of ownership coincide with the psycholinguistic sense of ownership, and it is difficult to disentangle them and bring and the latter into focus” (1994, p.492) and suggested that “people have a readiness to extend ownership beyond its factual bounds. … This demonstrates that conventional definitions of ownership do not encompass the full psychological domain of the concept” (1994, p.501). The self-possession boundary is defined as the construction of the ownership boundary (i.e., this possession is mine) that is usually recognised between people’s sense of self and what constitutes their possessions (Belk 1988; Belk 2007; Rudmin 1990; Rudmin 1994; Pierce et al. 2001; Pierce et al. 2003). This paper explores the nature of the boundaries between the extended self and possessions (i.e. the self-possession boundary) and the construction of the self in terms of how the self is expressed and transformed through possessions.

Chinese consumers tend to place more emphasis on the interdependent view of the self-construal that focuses on togetherness and embeddedness with significant others or in-groups (Triandis 1989; Markus and Kitayama 1991). The Chinese sense of self is defined mainly by webs of relationships (Morris 1994) and is constructed by the connectedness to and interpersonal relationships with significant others, family and friends (Aaker and Maheswaran 1997) so that an individual with the interdependent self-construal becomes “a single thread in a richly textured fabric of relationships” (Kondo 1990, p.33).

 Possessions are artefacts of the self (Kleine et al. 1995). “Self-artefacts help narrate stories of the self and reflect self-developmental tasks similar to those underlying life narratives” (Kleine et al. 1995, p.341). We reveal different aspects of ourselves by retelling stories of our possessions and have a sense of ownership towards the possessions we narrate. The ownership of possessions can be viewed in the light of legal and psychological perspectives. The legal ownership of an object is acknowledged by society as specifying the owner’s right to have the object and is protected by the legal system. In contrast, psychological ownership is recognized by the individual who has a feeling of ownership over an object. “It is the individual who manifests the felt rights associated with psychological ownership” (Pierce et al. 2003, p.87). In other words, psychological ownership can occur in the absence of legal ownership where individuals do not actually own an object (Wilpert 1991; Etzioni 1991; Furby 1980; Peck and Shu 2009; Chen 2009). Possession ownership is a state of mind and refers to individuals’ feelings of ownership towards material or immaterial objects (e.g., ideas, people or beliefs) (Pierce et al. 2003; Pierce et al. 2001). As Belk (2007) noted “we can come to feel possessive about and have a sense of ownership toward things that are not our property—a panoramic view, our children, a seat in a classroom, and even our belief” (p. 131).

The snowball technique was used in identifying twenty informants (ten males, ten females). In the present study, informants were asked to share stories about their meaningful and important possessions. Their selves and identities are embedded in their stories as Georgakopoulou (2002) says that “if selves and identities are constituted in discourse, they are necessarily constructed in stories” (p.428). Interviews were not strictly conducted and this was in line with Wagner and Wodak’s (2006) method of narrative interviewing. Rather, the flow of topics varied depending on each individual’s stories. In this study, data analysis was undertaken in two stages and structured around firstly within-case analysis–restorying/ retelling informants’ stories; and secondly cross-case analysis. Data analysis yielded a number of themes that revealed how informants interpreted what constituted their self-possession boundaries.

Our findings showed that the self-possession boundary of informants includes self-gifts, gift-receipts, other objects (e.g. photos or songs) and gifts that they have given to their close others (e.g. parents, romantic partners and friends). While most of the informants’ possession stories in this study are in line with Belk’s western-based definition of self-possession boundary, some of informants’ possession stories did not fit neatly into any western-based description (e.g. informants considered gifts that they had given to close others as still remaining as part of their own important possessions). This is what is termed and identified as informants’ “extended possessions” in this study (Wong and Hogg 2010). The extended possessions not only are the extension of informants’ self but also closely connect the informants and close others together. Chinese regard possessions as a means of including significant others so that “altruism and egoism merge because group-based identity is enlarged as the welfare of any group member is enlarged” (Belk 1984, p.757). This implies that Chinese people have “a broader and more holistic idea of what a possession is” (Eckhardt and Houston 2001, p.256). This places a different interpretation on how the self-possession boundaries are understood and experienced among Hong Kong Chinese informants. In addition, informants’ extended possessions contain a self-expressive function that symbolises different aspects of the relationships between the informants and their close others (e.g., informants’ filial piety towards their parents and stable marital relationships). The extended possessions also consist of a self-transformative function that enables informants to construct their relationships with close others (e.g., building up a romantic relationship in an early dating stage through gift-giving, strengthening friendship or maintain familial relationships with family members).
The objective of this research was to explore the self-possession boundary between the extended self and extended possessions i.e. what constituted ownership of what might be called extended possessions among Chinese consumers. In addition, this paper explores the self-expressive and self-transformative functions of extended possessions. Against the backdrop of Chinese interdependent culture, Hong Kong informants narrated stories about their important possessions ranging from objects that they owned to objects that actually belonged to close others, not to the informants themselves. The research findings reveal that a broader interpretation of possessions and the extended self (as seen from these Hong Kong stories) that could contribute to and enhance the existing literature on possessions and the extended self.

“Exploring the Self-Expressive and the Self-Transformative Character of Cherished Possessions through Stories from Greek Female Consumers”
Katerina Karanika, Lancaster University
Margaret K. Hogg, Lancaster University

The marketplace has become an arena in which individuals choose, construct and communicate their self-identity, constantly seeking self-expression and self-transformation through consumption (e.g., Belk 1988; Wallendorf & Arnould 1988; Dittmar 1991; Richins 1994a; 1994b; Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, Holt 2002, Arnould and Thompson 2005, Ahuvia 2005). Possessions and products are used as symbols and instruments for constructing identity, identifying the self in relationship to other people and building relationships with close people. Belk (1988) provided the foundations of this research on symbolic consumption. He used the terms “self,” “sense of self,” and “identity” interchangeably for how a person subjectively perceives who s/he is, and Belk discussed the use of possessions for defining, extending, and strengthening the self as well as for communicating meaning about the self to the individual and to others. Belk discussed possessions as self-extensions that can extend the self symbolically, as when a uniform allows us to express more than we would otherwise express; and/or that can extend the self instrumentally, as when a tool allows us to do something we would not otherwise be able to do. In other words, cherished possessions express the self and/or transform the self into a new desired form (Ahuvia 2005). The distinction between self-expressive and self-transformative possessions reflects the symbolic-functional dichotomy approach to understanding consumers’ uses of material possessions and products that became well established in the marketing and consumer research literature (e.g., Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Solomon 1983; Dittmar 1991 and 1992) and suggests that material possessions are often used to symbolise/express and/or to enable or transform identities.

However, some consumer research supports the view that this theoretical distinction between symbolic and instrumental possessions is often transcended (e.g., Schouten 1991; Belk 1992; Silver 1996; Thompson 1996; Nobel & Walker 1997; Price, Arnold and Curasi 2000). For example, consumer research on transitional objects (that is, those that help us through liminal periods) suggests that self-transformative objects are not just instrumental, but are in fact symbolic as well (e.g., Belk 1992; Nobel & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991; Silver 1996). Therefore, calls have been made for more exploration of the relationship between the self-expressive (symbolic) and the self-transformative (instrumental) character of self-relevant possessions (Ahuvia 2005, p.180) and this study addresses this gap.

This phenomenological study explored Greek female consumers’ experiences with their meaningful possessions and products. Convenience and snowball sampling was used to recruit thirty participants. Interviews were transcribed and a phenomenological-hermeneutical analysis (Thompson et al. 1989; 1990) using a back and forth, part-to-whole interpretation mode was applied to the data in order to generate theory building around consumers’ experiences with their self-relevant possessions and products.

Respondents in this study valued possessions and products as self-extensions both for their symbolic and instrumental properties that helped them define the self variously in relationship to other people. Respondents valued possessions and products both for symbolically expressing the self (for expressing, symbolising, representing and communicating a desired self and separation from an undesired self) and for transforming the self (for enabling or facilitating a desired self and for preventing or offering relief from an undesired self). Purely self-expressive possessions, purely self-transformative possessions and possessions with both self-expressive and self-transformative character were associated with different possession meanings. As Belk (1988, p.139) suggests “we cannot hope to understand consumer behaviour without gaining some understanding of the meanings that consumers attach to possessions”.

The meanings respondents attached to their cherished possessions often related to others i.e. connection of the self with others (possessions associated with interpersonal ties, with transitions related to loved ones, with nurturance of loved ones and with communication) and differentiation of the self from others (possessions associated with distinction from others and with autonomy from others).

More specifically, possessions related to interpersonal ties (e.g., gifts) and transitions related to loved ones (e.g., wedding rings) were valued for their self-expressive, symbolic character; for expressing, symbolising, representing and communicating a desired self and separation from an undesired self. Moreover, these valued possessions tended to be experienced as irreplaceable (Grayson and Shulman 2000); respondents resisted replacing them even with an exact replica because participants felt that the replica would not be able to sustain the same meaning as the original.

Possessions and products related to recreation (e.g., music players), security (e.g., medication) and communication (e.g., mobile phones) were valued for their self-transformation, instrumental character; enabling or facilitating a desired self and preventing or offering relief from an undesired self. These valued objects tended to be experienced as replaceable (Grayson and Shulman 2000); respondents valued these items but they would be willing to substitute them with a replica.

Possessions and products associated with positive distinction (e.g., personal appearance goods), autonomy (e.g., cars) and nurturance (e.g., houses and gifts to loved ones) were valued for their self-expressive as well as for their self-transformative character; i.e., for representing a desired self and separation from an undesired self as well as for enabling a desired self and preventing or offering relief from an undesired self.

In conclusion, this study shed light on the self-expressive and self-transformative character of valued possessions and extended theory by showing that the theoretical distinction between self-expressive and self-transformative possessions holds or is transcended depending on the possession’s meaning which often regards other people. Self-expressive possessions were associated with interpersonal ties and transitions related to loved ones; self-transformative possessions were associated with communication, recreation, and security, while possessions associated with distinction, autonomy and nurturance had both a self-expressive and a self-transformative power.
REFERENCES


SESSION OVERVIEW

The title of the session is a not-so-subtle allusion to the Lewis Carroll (1871) text in which the titular Alice steps into a world that reflects—and yet inverts—aspects of her own world. Venturing through the looking glass is offered as a metaphor for examining consumer research from the perspective of the marketing research practitioner. This session turns the academic gaze on our compatriots in the field and examines both their assumptive frames and related practices as they seek to “know” the consumer.

That a professional, even “scientific” approach to understanding consumers might evolve was perhaps the inevitable result of Taylorism. Early evidence is found in the first decades of the twentieth century with pioneers such as Arthur C. Nielsen founding his eponymous agency in 1923 (Wood 1962). Yet the swell of consumer and market research that would later become an industry did not take place until the marketing concept, a construct first articulated by Drucker (1954), had become firmly rooted in the American corporate consciousness. The marketing concept says that to achieve strong performance, firms should identify and satisfy customer needs and wants better than their competitors (Kirca et al. 2005).

Fifty years ago, a perfect storm was brewing in the churning waters of the American marketplace as firms’ increasing efficiencies were resulting in an abundance of goods just as consumers’ post-war wealth provided access to aspirational goods for an expanding middle class. Yet a dialectic tension between producers and consumers was building (Holt 2002) as marketers began fumbling for a response to an increasingly aware and agentic audience (ibid, p. 82). Seeking new skills of persuasion, scholars were increasingly drawn into the course of a focus group.

Consumers appropriate to marketing purposes are produced during the sessions. The ability of the focus group to convey a sense of naturalness and realism despite an artificial and staged setting, with flesh-and-blood consumers, watching them talk ‘naturally’ and the resulting intense competition among organizations has pushed consumer research into a vaunted—and unprecedented—position of power. Given the ubiquity of applied market research and its critical role in knowledge production, consumer representation, strategic rationale and use as rhetorical logic within the firm, it is incumbent upon consumer scholars to investigate its mechanisms and impact.

Accordingly, the papers presented herein represent an initial foray into an interrogation of contemporary market research activities; we seek to unpack the ways they influence consumer representation, marketplace offerings and the markets that result. The authors consider a gamut of activities that constitute research projects, including: the choice of methodology (e.g. the implications of focus groups and ethnography); the epistemological and ontological frameworks that underpin and reproduce consumer construction, and the movement of meaning, authority and power that accrues to individuals who possess consumer knowledge within (or tangent to) the organization.

This multi-disciplinary session is relevant to all consumer researchers, but would be particularly of interest to those concerned with consumer representation, consumer culture theory, cultural codes and consumers’ role in marketplace dynamics. The session extends and contributes to recent investigations by consumer researchers of the practices of marketers (see, for example, Zwick et al. 2002; Schroeder and Zwick 2004; Cambaz and Penaloza 2006; Desroches and Marcoux 2007; Cambaz and Eckhardt 2008; Zwick and Cambaz forthcoming). In surfacing marketers’ role in shaping not only market meaning, but consumer representation and resulting markets themselves, this program of inquiry provides a meta-context for studies of individual consumer behaviour and enriches theories of consumer culture by consciously considering the marketplace context in which individuals consume and make meaning.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Fit for Marketing: On Respondents’ Performance as Consumers in Focus Groups”

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Since the famous theorization of the “marketing concept” (McKitterick 1957) marketers derive their legitimacy in business and in the world at large from taking action in the name of consumers. Knowing the consumer has thus become the motto of a huge epistemic enterprise, ranging from academic journals to large market research corporations. In line with the approach set forth in this session’s proposal, we are less interested in investigating the consumer’s persona per se than with exploring that epistemic enterprise using focus groups as case study. Market research’s use of focus groups is analysed with an aim of understanding how consumers appropriate to marketing purposes are produced during the course of a focus group.

In spite of their known limitations (Malefy 2009, for instance), focus groups remain a market research tool of choice to marketing practitioners. The preference for focus groups is certainly due, in part, with the very lively experience of enacting a close encounter with flesh-and-blood consumers, watching them talk ‘naturally’ from behind the two-way mirror. The ability of the focus group to convey a sense of naturalness and realism despite an artificial and constrained setting is perhaps its most striking feature.
To understand this paradoxical achievement of focus groups, we take as a point of departure of our analysis that focus group’s consumers are represented rather than presented. Focus groups are performances, both as staged play and as exploit. A focus group indeed is a scenic device: it has a monitoring screen, an invisible public, a backstage area, and a moderator. Behind the mirror, steeped in darkness, with the sound piped in from the room in front, the marketing team watch a sort of show. The moderator also gives a performance; his success (or failure) in “animating” the consumer’s persona before the eyes of the client is at stake. In this exhibition of the consumer answering the marketeer’s question in person lies the exploit part of the focus group. Focus groups are thus literally spectacular: their scripted nature, their theatrical display—all elements are there to provoke the thrilling experience for a marketer of watching a consumer without being seen.

When the performance is succeeding, what we call the “focus group effect” is at play. This is an effect of the experience of direct access to consumer reality. This effect stems from a space being split in two by a two-way mirror—a frame within which one can see an artificially constructed (though extremely lively and thus plausible) sample of the social world. Placing a pane of glass between two sets of people creates, in a sense, a type of distance analogous to the apparatuses of objectivity in the natural sciences, but which is somehow at odds with an interpretive stance in the social sciences (Rabinow and Sullivan 1988; Latour 2005). We of course all live with “real people” and with “real consumers” (as we ourselves are). But through a most curious combination of closeness and remoteness, the focus group device produces the surprising effect of exhibiting “real people” as a rare and unique experience. However, the focus group effect is not produced solely by the way the equipment is arranged. A series of “framing” techniques are put into play that makes it possible for respondents to personify consumers—a being otherwise understood as “elusive,” “multiple,” and “fragmented” (Gabriel and Lang 1995). The framework cut in two by the two-way mirror is prepared by a series of preliminary framing operations: construction of an agreement between the client and the market company on what must be shown, selection of respondents, and group moderation techniques.

Based on the authors’ experience as market research practitioners in France, the presentation investigates the construction of that essential marketing being—the consumer—through focus group sessions. Our aim is not to point to the artificiality of focus groups to invalidate the method on that ground. On the contrary, we consider marketing practitioners as fully aware of this artificiality—this being an essential component of focus groups that makes it possible to manipulate parameters and so to produce appropriate consumers opinions (Lezaun 2007). Our aim is rather to reveal the underlying framing techniques that allow such an impersonation of the consumer and to reflect upon the nature of the knowledge thus produced. Making use of recent sociological work on the “performativity” of economics, the presentation will consider market research as an analogous to the apparatuses of objectivity in the natural sciences.

Within the ideological field of market research the implementation of a “new” ethnographic method alters the market oriented enactment of consumer representations and marketplace imageries. Hence the conventional depiction of market research as a neutral technique of information gathering, analysis, dissemination and implementation (Kohl and Jaworski 1991) is replaced by a performative stance in which market research practices do not simply represent or discover consumer preferences and desires in an independent and definite market external to the market researcher. Instead, market research practices equally enact consumers and marketplace imageries on the basis of their contextual and ideological embeddedness (Law 2007; Osborne and Rose 1999). This makes the identification of the ideologies structuring these procedures particularly pertinent and important for understanding market research as projects of marketplace-making.

Within consumer research, marketplace ideologies have most notably been explored through consumer narratives and practices (example see; Hirschman 1993). The understanding of ideology drawn upon in these and other studies is not unanimous and Kozinets (2007) has recently emphasized this ambiguity and suggested a notion of ideological discourse conceived as an articulation of a chain of ideological elements around a nodal point. In doing so he refers to the role of ideologies as they simultaneously constitute and structure as well as are constituted and transformed by marketplace activities. In this vein the current study focuses on the ideological embeddedness of market research practices and the implications for marketplace enactments.

The study is based on three years of multi-method and multi-sited exploration of a practice of “ethnographic” global market research in a global advertising agency. The analysis of practitioners’ narratives, everyday practices, and multiple document data has lead to the identification of the ideologies structuring marketplace realities. Such mapping of the ideological field of ethnographic market research methods has served as a basis for exploring processes of marketplace enactments in the encounter between advertising practitioners and their clients. In this way the study demonstrates how the ideological embeddedness of market research practices orchestrates the enactment of consumer representations, new product development and market communication strategies.

Within the ideological field of market research the implementation of a “new” ethnographic method alters the market oriented enactment of consumer representations and marketplace imageries. In the movement from more conventional methods such as focus groups and market surveys to an “ethnographic gaze,” representations of consumers and marketplaces shift. From a perspective in which consumers are portrayed as individuals concerned with the fulfillment of their needs and wants through the consumption of products divided along the lines of political and social categories, the ethnographic method evokes consumers through so-called cultural narratives in which consumption activities are represented as the


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Market-oriented and consumer-centric ethnography has recently morphed from the position of a suspicious, untrustworthy and altogether strange kind of method into the center of trendy and highly relevant research techniques for marketing practitioners and marketing academics alike. At the core of this research methodology lays the assumption that human actions and intentions can be examined through the lens of cultural meaning systems. As the importance of culture for understanding markets and market activities is increasingly recognized (Miller 2003; Slater 2002), market ethnography momentarily encompasses a scent of superiority compared to more conventional market research techniques. For market research practitioners, ethnographic methods are perceived to provide a fertile ground for the exploration of brand meanings and the socio-cultural life worlds of consumers. It thereby provides new insight into the role and meanings of products and services. In concurrence with the overall performative perspective of the session, the shift in market research methods fuels the opportunity to explore the implications and consequences on the enactment of consumer representations and marketplace imageries. Hence the conventional depiction of market research as a neutral technique of information gathering, analysis, dissemination and implementation (Kohl and Jaworski 1991) is replaced by a performative stance in which market research practices do not simply represent or discover consumer preferences and desires in an independent and definite market external to the market researcher. Instead, market research practices equally enact consumers and marketplace imageries on the basis of their contextual and ideological embeddedness (Law 2007; Osborne and Rose 1999). This makes the identification of the ideologies structuring these procedures particularly pertinent and important for understanding market research as projects of marketplace-making.
outcome of consumers living logical and meaningful lives. Thus the initial ontological premises of market research methods are re-enacted in the “findings” as consumers are reframed from individual seekers of satisfaction to social beings on the search for meaningful lives. Equally, markets are reconfigured from a stratification by product category to a division along lines of cultural narratives. The implications of these changes have been traced into processes of NPD and market communication and indicate a significant systemic relationship between the ideological reframing of consumer representations and marketplace imageries, and the decisions made by advertising clients concerning product positioning, distribution channel or consumer segmentation. In this light, the study provides empirical evidence and contributes to arguments of consumers and markets as social constructions (Peneloza and Venkatesh 2006).

It is argued that consumers and markets are not discrete units of analysis waiting to be mirrored and unveiled through market research and other marketing activities, but rather that market “realities” are partially constituted through the enactment of ideologically embedded practices of market research.

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In recent years, scholars have increasingly interrogated marketers’ inextricable role in producing consumers through their practices (e.g., Cayla and Peñaloza 2006; Zwick and Knott 2009). The present study extends this stream of research by examining an organization’s efforts to identify and understand its consumer and the representations that result in the course of product development. In an age of commoditization, abundance and inevitable redundance, acquiring consumer “insight” lures with promises of competitive advantage, e.g., “Differentiation will not come by being the cost leader or developing the best technology [but] ...by being the best at understanding the many and varied needs and characteristics of customers and developing products and services that truly meet those needs” (Wills and Williams 2004, p.396).

Even as the imperative to determine who target consumers “are” and what products or features might move them grows, consumer research and the use of its findings within organizations have gone largely unquestioned. To examine the practice of applied consumer research and its implications for the construction and positioning of marketplace offerings, a study of twelve North American firms producing consumer goods and services in six industries was initiated; preliminary findings prompted a more in-depth examination of one of the firms. The resulting case study examines five organizational units of a major automotive manufacturer each seeking to understand “The Consumer” at different points of the company’s production process. Methods employed include semi-structured interviews with key informants in market research and product development and participant-observation of consumer insight meetings.

Identifying and interpreting a target consumer involves individuals throughout the firm and the product development process. In the focal firm, most research findings were transmitted to other relevant departments in the organization according to reporting protocols, although the information was often synthesized, simplified or otherwise reframed for consumption by individuals considered too busy or otherwise incapable of doing their own analysis. The assortment of actors interacting with and interpreting consumer research was varied: work by Advanced Planning, Market Intelligence, R&D, Design, a design research lab and marketing was supplemented by wide pool of research vendors including the firm’s advertising agency. This melee was further complicated by the fact that all of these functions exist in multiple geographic locations with complex power and reporting relationships. For example, some of the units served as localized extensions of headquarters (based in Asia), while others were technically independent yet dependent upon headquarters to provide strategic direction and determinations.

Close read of organizational texts reveals that throughout the many activities undertaken to apprehend consumers’ needs and desires, the interpretation, form and value of “consumer insight” shifts as primary ownership of the rendering moves. Some of these shifts are natural by-products of morphosis; for example, the level of analysis and detail necessarily varied with temporal frame as the project of identifying prospective customers moved from broad “futurecasts” of consumers’ behaviors to the more closely specified brief required to bring a product to market. However, other actions are not as easily explained. For example, it was not uncommon for each unit to initiate additional research despite being provided with information not only considered adequate for the next phase of development, but also unalterable in the name of consistency. Not surprisingly, tension resulted among stakeholders jockeying for the presumed authority that accrued to a group who had a more “complete” portrait of the consumer, evidenced in practitioners’ frequent disparaging of other units’ research while valorizing their own as well as the ongoing re-interpretation, revision, and even sheer disregard for the research findings they were provided.

Such replication and inefficiency implies that there is value derived from controlling knowledge about the consumer. I posit that because understanding the consumer and his or her desires is held to be a prerequisite for exemplary product development (and ostensibly, related financial performance), dominion over the definition of the consumer serves as an internally codified asset I term “consumer capital,” a form of intellectual capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998) composed of knowledge about current or prospective consumers. Consumer capital is a productive resource; in this case, one that can be leveraged for power, prestige or legitimacy within an organization. While not cleaving semantically to orthodox definitions of capital (see Dean and Kretschmer 2007), consumer capital is congruent with constructs such as social and cultural capital (e.g. Bourdieu 1986) that position relationships and experiences as capital-like resources.

This study enriches extant discourses on how end consumers are interpreted (e.g., Durgee 2004; Kover 1995) by foregrounding the polyvocal and polysemic dynamism of the interpretive act. Equally, it challenges rhetoric on consumer insight that assumes that organizational actors share a unified sensibility, finding instead that the value realized by subunits in “knowing” the consumer— even in the short-term—can outweigh the benefit realized by an uncontested representation.

REFERENCES


SESSION OVERVIEW

In consumer behavior studies, the issue of consumption compromises is often discussed under the construct of compromise effects—a type of context effect, where the consumer tends to choose the middle or compromise alternative among a given set of choices. These compromise effects have been shown to be both robust and common in consumer decision-making, with the compromise choice seen as conflict reducing for the consumer, often combining some preferred mix of attributes from the given alternatives (Dhar and Simonson 2003; Sheng et al. 2005; Simonson 1989; Simonson and Tversky 1992). Yet, many of these studies have focused on the preferences and choices of the individual consumer, rather than the relative preferences, compromises and tradeoffs amongst the members of other key consumption units. This session introduces both an alternative consumption perspective and an important decision-making context to examine the notion of compromise—that of the family or household. The focus of this session is on the often competing consumption goals of individuals within contemporary families and the resulting consumption compromises that evolve and impact family dynamics, identity and cohesion. A variety of approaches are used by each of the authors to examine and understand decision tradeoffs and consumption concessions within the family, focusing on compromises related to family ideals and standards, everyday and ritualized food consumption, and technology. In these papers, consumption compromise amongst family members is seen not only as a conflict reduction strategy, but as a tool for inclusion, integration, the preservation of family structure and the establishment of new family processes and practices.

In the first paper, Peñaloza and Cavazos Arroyo discuss the role remittances play in the consumption of transnational families whose residences span the borders of Mexico and the U.S. Consumption decisions in the wider transnational family unit are seen to be complex and highly intertwined. Compromises made by family members here (in Mexico) and there (in the U.S.) have a profound impact on the transnational family, in ways family members attempt to regulate changes in each other’s consumption and negotiate transnational aspects of consumption. In Cross’ paper, food consumption compromises are examined in the context of bi-national family units, where one partner or spouse was born and raised in the U.S. and the other was not. In these families, the cultural and consumption divide occurs within the particular household and presents its own tensions. Compromise is seen to occur both within and across everyday and celebratory occasions, and individual family members often concede their culturally-based food preferences for the perceived greater benefit of the overall family unit. In the third paper, Venkatesh analyses the manner in which the integration of new technologies within the home leads to the establishment of new routines and the compromise of existing family processes. He discusses both the positive and negative impact of new technologies and three key functions arising from family/technology interactions.

In the three presentations, the authors move beyond a focus on the individual as a consumer and invite us to examine consumption compromises and interactions within the family setting (Epp and Price 2008; Miller 1998). It becomes clear that compromise in consumption decisions is essential for the maintenance of group cohesion and harmony in these contemporary family structures. Families in the 21st century are compositionally complex and face a myriad of consumption challenges, novel practices and constraints. This complexity within the family unit leads to a different kind of compromise effect than is often discussed in the literature—where the chosen alternative isn’t necessarily the middling one and tradeoffs occur within and across consumption venues, cultural settings and household decision contexts.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Remittances in Transnational Family Consumption: Compromises Here, There, and Beyond”
Lisa N. Peñaloza, École des Hautes Études Commerciales du Nord, France
Judith Cavazos Arroyo, Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla, Mexico

This research examines the intricate blend of socio-cultural meanings and economic values through which remittances are incorporated into the consumption of Mexican transnational families. Our specific interest lies in documenting the ways members juxtapose, interweave, and reconcile in their consumption family ideals and life standards (here in Mexico), there (in the U.S.) and beyond (in imaginings/comparisons of life beyond these national domains).

The transnational family is global, with estimates of over 200 million migrants worldwide (Bertossi 2008). In Mexico, where one of five adults receives remittances, migration has become a cultural rite of passage in diffusing beyond the poor to affect all sectors of the population and all regions (Suro 2003). A record $26.1 billion dollars was received in 2007, although the amount fell to $25.2 billion in 2008 with the global economic recession (Key Broadcasting Corporation News (2009). Most remittances received in Mexico are sent from the U.S. due to its proximity, higher level of development, and vibrant social networks (Smith 2006).

Our conceptual framework draws from previous research on transnationalism, consumer culture, and the family. Research on transnationalism helps conceptualize socio-economic differences, life standards, and aspirations between and across nations that impact transnational families (Parella 2007). Work on consumer culture situates various global-localized consumption forms in rela-
tion to intra- and inter-national flows of people, capital, products and services, and ideas (Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard 2005; Üçok 2007). Work on the family provides crucial insights regarding changing family ideals and relations as members creatively love and seek to better their lives across distances of space and time (Hirsch 2003).

Our research design interviews sixteen persons ranging in gender, age, family composition, social class, and rural/urban residence. Questions inquire into living arrangements, roles, and relations in the families; form and frequency of remittances; and the contours of daily and festive consumption patterns in the short and long term, with attention to juxtapositions, conflicts, and tradeoffs in meanings and values here (in Mexico), there (in the U.S.) or beyond (in imaginings/comparisons of life beyond either national domain).

Findings elaborate mechanisms of transcultural authority and power in the changes in appearance, demeanor, and comportment that those who come back and those who remain notice in each other and act to regulate. In expressing approval and disapproval, family members and friends apply and contest cultural principles in the attempt—at times conscious, at times less so—to mold each other’s consumption to transcultural standards. Subsequently, members continue the consumption in question, asserting cultural skills/knowledge; return to previous patterns in exhibiting cultural resilience and familial deference; or exhibit combinations of the above, arresting the changes while together, only to regress when living apart. At times family members welcome the changes, incorporating such consumption in “bettering” their lives, even as the ordeal of living apart challenges all involved. We qualify these findings with attention to the importance of the consumption in question, ideals and priorities regarding family relations, and the scope of time of family conviviality. Notably, transcultural consumption patterns change with lived experiences in the two places and with comparisons and imaginings of life beyond them.

Theoretical contributions add to knowledge of transcultural consumption. In documenting consumption in the family left behind and dissecting the cultural power in economic, material, and emotional resources members engender at home, our work helps expand the study of consumer acculturation beyond individuals (Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994) and provides some insight into changing gender roles and understandings of what it is to be a family in Mexico.

Our second contribution builds knowledge of how the family serves as an arena of power in negotiating transcultural facets of consumption. Members weave through a plethora of congruent and competing cultural meanings and economic values in consuming products, services, investments, and savings in the short and long term; in receiving and integrating gifts; in caring for children and parents; and in attending to community obligations. Detectable in these consumption patterns is a complex, dynamic multicultural-economic calculus that reproduces hierarchical relations between the nations.

Our third contribution adds to understandings of how transnational family ideals and standards of living bring about global moves of people, currency, and products that exact important parts of the global economy. Ultimately, enhancing consumption is what transnational families seek and attain, with one or more members moving to work to send remittances that make a better life for their families. Even so, the changes here, there and beyond are too much for some families. Returning to the cultural-economic calculus, these families produce economic values well beyond the costs of remittances, travel, phone, gifts, etc., and yet the surplus cultural meanings of such consumption are not enough to produce their families. While most families interviewed remained together; in a few the compromises were insufficient or exceeded their ability to live as families. In all families, changes in the emigrant and in family members living at home made life difficult at times, strain- ing the very family union that such migration and remittances were intended to enhance.

REFERENCES


“The Many Sides of Compromise: Tradeoffs in Contemporary Family Consumption”

Samantha N. N. Cross, Iowa State University, USA

This research focuses on the manner in which the members of bi-national households (i.e., households where one spouse is born and bred in the country of residence, while the other spouse is an immigrant to that country) negotiate conflict, achieve compromise and sustain identity through their consumption practices. Various blending processes manifested in the lives of culturally diverse households are explored as both an outcome and as a process of conflict resolution and compromise. This analysis thus aims to provide a balanced perspective of the dynamics, interactions and preferences of culturally diverse partners in bi-national homes by specifically examining the meanings behind their everyday and ritualized food consumption relationships, patterns and practices.

In this research, I ask the following questions: 1) How is compromise manifested in culturally diverse families in the context of ritualized and everyday food consumption? 2) What are some of the factors that result in consumption compromises in these families and are some manifestations of compromise more acceptable than others? The research questions are explored using a combination of pantry observations, photographic data, depth interviews and elicitation techniques to better understand the consumption choices.
characteristic of culturally diverse households.

The findings suggest that the blending process taking place within bi-national households can take several forms: blending, both symmetrical and asymmetrical; transformation; as well as a core/periphery relationship. In the bi-national family, immigrant and native spouses adapt, adjust and even acculturate, to some extent, to each other’s cultures within the household (Cross 2007). These relationships are inherently fraught with higher levels of ambivalence and anxiety (Sekhon and Belk 2005). Food consumption provides a key medium to acknowledge, negotiate and assuage some of those anxieties.

In these families, consumption and purchase behavior does seem to be about relationships and the love and sacrifices made to sustain those relationships (Miller 1998). The adaptation processes in these culturally heterogeneous families are manifestations of compromise, but potentially also indicators of inherent conflicts given the dominance of one culture or another that seems to prevail. Thus, individual partners seek to strike a balance between the consumption expectations of the native spouse and the culturally-based food preferences of the immigrant spouse. Compromise in food consumption choices and offerings is both a means of achieving harmony and a manifestation of respect for what each culture has to offer. Individual preferences are both encouraged and contained, as the bi-national household as a unit accommodates, unifies and eventually develops into a distinct entity that is greater than the sum of its founding partners.

Much of the current literature on cultural identity and immigrant adaptation focuses on individual adaptation and identity (e.g., Alba 1990, Alba and Nee 2003, Foner et al. 2000). In the family-decision-making literature, the emphasis is also often on the consumption preferences and decision roles of individual family members, not on the household as a distinct consumption unit (Commuri and Gentry 2000). However, from this research, bi-national households are seen to have a collective uniqueness and presence. The bi-national family unit has a shared identity that often differs from that of each of the individual partners, which needs to be supported and maintained by both spouses to flourish. The bi-national family is seen as a distinct consumption entity that encompasses both cultures, yet the aggregate unit is shown to be more than the sum of the dual perspectives and traditions of the culturally diverse spouses. This combined existence is manifested in everyday life through various behaviors and relationships, including language, food consumption, exposure and networks, all to varying degrees depending on the particular household.

Through the portrayal of food consumption behavior in bi-national families, this research makes an important contribution to the literature on family decision making. The analysis demonstrates that while there are clear similarities between mono-national and bi-national households, there are also key differences in consumption behavior, including shopping venues and product sources, purchase motivations, specificity of preferences, impact of internal and external constraints, negotiation goals and everyday consumption experiences. Food consumption is shown to be a manifestation of negotiated influence and compromise between the immigrant and native spouses, with the bi-national family unit providing a unique setting for harmony, resourcefulness, ingenuity and ultimately enhanced food consumption experiences. This research highlights the importance of considering household characteristics and cultural diversity within the home as additional factors in better understanding family decision making and consumption.

This research clearly shows that it is essential for researchers in consumer behavior to consider not just the preferences, choices and compromise effects of consumers, but to also examine the collective needs of other discrete consumption units. The bi-national family is an aggregate entity, but an entity with a role and requirements that transcend those of the family members of which it is composed. The findings from the current research therefore hold implications not only for family dynamics, but also for understanding group dynamics in other contexts. The bi-national household setting provides a micro-group context in which to understand group dynamics, cross-cultural interactions and compromise processes among partners, that may have applications for other culturally diverse group and societal decision making settings.

REFERENCES

“Family Interactions with Digital Technologies–Establishing Routines and Compromises”
Alladi Venkatesh, University of California, Irvine, USA
Recent literature suggests that as new technologies and multimedia enter the home, there is an ongoing process of integration of technologies into the family life (Shih and Venkatesh 2004; Hoffman, Novak, and Venkatesh 2004). The research shows that technology integration involves both establishing new routines and compromising existing family processes through technology adoption and use. This paper identifies how these family processes are being resolved.

With the arrival of digital technologies (e.g., desktop computers, laptops, and mobile devices) households are undergoing some fundamental transformations, or, so it seems, at least on some fronts, and over time. Not all families undergo this transformation. However, for those that do, the question remains, how does this transformation occur? Recent literature suggests that as new technologies and multimedia enter the home, there is an ongoing process of domestication of technologies (Lehtonen 2003). In the beginning, families go through a process of experimentation, trial and error. As technologies get entrenched into family life, households begin to view them as sources of new practices. Theoretically, routines and compromises are a way of coming to terms with technologies and adapting them to family practices. This paper identifies how these sometimes conflicting processes are being resolved, with a focus on the intersection of family life and technologies.

New technologies create new opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, we see that technologies serve three functions: an enabling function, a mediating function and a transforming function. On the negative side, they can be disruptive or lead to sometimes less than desirable consequences. Both the positive and negative impacts are the focus of this research.
The enabling function is the simplest—it enables existing or ongoing functions to be performed more efficiently. The mediating function suggests that these technologies mediate between the household and external environment. The transforming function suggests that technologies introduce new sets of possibilities that did not exist before, or alter the existing activities in some fundamental ways. Around these three functions, families establish routines and compromises. Routines indicate that technology use is now part of the family’s daily activities. Compromises suggest that either some activities/routines are foregone while other activities are introduced into the home, or some other activities have to be performed differently. Survey data was collected from a national sample of 1181 households in 2008 to study how families integrate home computers into their everyday life. In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews of 23 families were also conducted. In the survey, we identified a set of key activities performed by the household members which involve the use of computers. A four item routinization scale (cronbach alpha 0.83) with a maximum score of 16 was administered, with the sample being divided into routinized households and non-routinized households. Routinized households are defined as those scoring greater than the median on the routinized scale, where the median is 11. Non-routinized households are those with a score of 12 or higher.

We examined a list of activities and differences between the two categories of households in terms of how they integrate the technologies into family life. The paper identifies 18 activities (e.g., email, online shopping, accessing news and sports, calendar, online banking, job-related work, hobbies, vacation planning etc.), and finds significant differences between the two groups across all the activities. For example, routinized households demonstrate a greater involvement with technologies across almost all activities performed with the computers. These households are seen to have more positive attitudes towards computers (not shown here).

In terms of demographics, routinized households exhibit higher income, higher levels of education and are more likely to have children in the household.

It is clear that technologies can be disruptive or at least force families to make compromises. While the families surveyed recognized the role of technologies in improving their everyday life patterns, there were also some noteworthy issues and concerns. Some of these issues were uncovered in the in-depth ethnographic interviews. For example, not all families found the digital world to be totally hospitable. Those that were accustomed to personal service encounters were now forced to deal with digitized modes of communication. Families were also concerned about privacy and security issues and were not sure that there was enough protection against voluntary or involuntary disclosure of data. Families with children were also very concerned about their children’s access to undesirable web sites. This was a major concern particularly for families with pre-teen and early-teen aged children. These families were forced to weigh issues of parental control with the desire to ensure that their children not be left out of the digital revolution. Families had similar concerns about the participation of their children in social networking sites. Families feel that they also spend too much time on computers at the expense of more critical activities.

Thus, this paper demonstrates that new media technologies give rise to new behavior patterns and experiences. The introduction of these new technologies in the home compels families to develop routines around technologies and make compromises as appropriate. Modern technologies are seen to be both enervating and constraining. This paper discusses some of the pertinent issues surrounding these types of challenges.

REFERENCES
ABSTRACTS

“Counteractive Construal in Consumer Goal Pursuit”
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The present research explores a self-control operation, namely counteractive construal, that helps consumers resolve the conflicts between an important goal and a short-term temptation by altering the construal of the temptation. We propose that when experiencing a self-control conflict, consumers intentionally construe temptation as more damaging to the attainment of a long-term goal, and use these distorted construals to help resolve the conflict in favor of the goals. Three studies provided converging evidence for the counteractive construal hypothesis. We found that people who were experiencing self-control conflict expected tempting food items to contain more calories, and were consequently less interested in consuming these temptations.

“Emotivational Self-Regulation”
Sabrina Bruyneel, K. U. Leuven, Belgium
Baba Shiv, Stanford University, USA

Previous research has focused on the importance of cognition in consumer self-regulation. In the present project, we demonstrate the motivational impact of emotion on self-regulatory goal adoption and adherence. We manipulate ‘emotivation’ by having consumers imagine how they would feel if they failed or succeeded at an important self-regulatory goal. In two studies, consumers who imagined experiencing positive emotions resulting from self-regulatory success were less inclined to adopt a self-regulatory goal, but persisted longer at goal-consistent behaviors than consumers who imagined experiencing negative emotions resulting from self-regulatory failure or control participants not imagining any emotional outcomes.

“Clouds on a Sunny Day: The Downside of Positive Mood for Self-Control”
Jordan Etkin, University of Maryland, USA
Francine Espinoza, ESMT, Germany
Anastasiya Pocheptsova, University of Maryland, USA

We propose that positive mood affects the perception of the differences among goals that an individual is pursuing and increases perceived inter-goal conflict. Such an increase in inter-goal conflict has negative consequences for self-control when people are pursuing multiple goals. Across four studies we provide support for this proposition and show that being in a positive mood decreases consumers’ motivation to pursue their most important goals and also affects perceptions of means of goal pursuit.
SESSION OVERVIEW

Researchers investigating sensitive topics are vulnerable to certain (and sometimes hidden) risks that can threaten primarily their personal welfare and consequently the progress of their investigation (Lee and Renzetti 1990). Whilst this literature stream owes its growth mainly to disciplines such as psychology, sociology, law and criminology (Sieber and Stanley 1988; Lee and Renzetti 1990; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle 2000; Liebling and Shah 2001; Banyard and Flanagan 2006), consumer researchers have largely overlooked this important issue and instead have stressed the welfare of the “researched” (Hill 1995; Bristor and Fischer 1993; Sayre 2007; Baker and Gentry 2007).

With a focus on investigating “sensitive topics” and conducting research in “difficult contexts,” the session follows three objectives: 1) To explore “researcher vulnerability” by providing a series of stories from personal experiences of challenging contexts 2) To demonstrate the impact of such vulnerability on the operationalization of the research process 3) To discuss possible methodological innovations to overcome the problems that arise as a result of this vulnerability.

In the proposed special session we will debate what unifies researchers who study consumer culture, suggesting that it is not simply the theoretical lens we bring to the task, but also the methodological sensibilities we bring to particular consumption contexts. Whilst the question of “how” highlights the potential difficulties (methodological, technical, psychological, emotional, and physical) associated with investigating these areas, the questions of “why” and “where” could reflect the very humane nature of consumer researchers’ commitment to “social responsibility” (Liebling and Shah 2001; Sieber and Stanley 1988) when embracing such risks for the sake of practicing consumer research.

Session Structure. First, Jafari discusses the risks involved in conducting interpretive consumer research in Iran. Focusing on political ideology, he explains how international relations (at a macro level) can influence the research context (at a very micro level). Second, Hamilton and Downey reflect on the emotional challenges of research involving low-income families and home-bound consumers set in the culturally divisive context of Northern Ireland. They argue that although accessing vulnerable consumers’ lived experiences exposes both physical and psychological researcher vulnerabilities, this is necessary so that we can come close to understanding the full implications of consumer culture.

Finally, Dunnett, Hewer and Brownlie explore researcher vulnerability through the lens of emotional exchange, placing empathy centre-stage and thus revealing the agentic processes of meaning making and identity re-imaginations which individuals undertake when diagnosed with a serious illness. Speakers have a maximum of 20 minutes to present their papers. This will be followed by comments by the discussion leader, Darach Turley, who has significant expertise in this area given his research on coping with bereavement. The discussant will also direct audience questions and comments.

Levels of Completeness. Each of the papers relates to at least one of the author’s doctoral research studies, all of which have been successfully completed.

Likely Audience. The session will appeal to a wide audience including those interested in interpretive consumer research, those working in the domain of Transformative Consumer Research and those who have a theoretical interest specifically in consumer disadvantage, consumer vulnerability, consumer exclusion, consumer identity or a more general interest in studying consumer culture. The session will also appeal to doctoral students and early career researchers.

Contribution. This session draws attention to the largely unexplored methodological issue concerning the way in which the researcher can be affected by the research process. Together, the papers highlight demanding issues that are often hidden from others. Debate around the topic of the challenging contexts we choose to work within will also enable audience members to share their own experiences in the field and thereby through this discussion better equip us for the challenges that practicing such research poses.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Vulnerabilities of the Estranged Researcher and Researched”
Aliakbar Jafari, University of Strathclyde, Scotland

In this paper, I reflect upon my own experiences of conducting interpretive consumer research on sensitized topics (e.g., identity, gender, ethnicity, religion, and agency) and demonstrate how international relations (at a macro level) influence the research environment (at a very micro level). I demonstrate how the West’s insistence on enforcing a Western model of democracy onto the country can cause a series of problems for Iranian social scientists. Then, with a particular focus on the ethical and emotional vulnerability of the researcher, I argue that such difficulties ultimately hinder the great potential of consumer research in providing direction for social policy.

Although such areas of identity, agency, religiosity, ethnicity, and gender issues are intrinsically sensitive, what makes them even more sensitive are the specific circumstances of the Iranian context. As Sieber (2005) and Banyard and Flanagan (2006) affirm, the actual sensitivity of any research lies more in its social context than its topic. In this case, the sensitivity of such topics goes beyond their immediate boundaries and finds its roots in the political history of Iran’s relations with Western powers (e.g., the USA’s 1953 coup d’état in Iran). For instance, the most recent conflict is related to the USA’s openly stated plan for the change of regime in Iran through silent revolution. In 2006 the USA Congress approved the Bush Administration’s allocation of a yearly budget of $75 million for the support of democracy in Iran. This plan—which was criticized by a large number of Iranians both inside and outside of the country—had severe counter effects. Since 2006, and in response to such conspiracies, social policing has increased in the country (Ebad and Sahimi 2007) as the Iranian State adopted defensive strategies to annihilate the USA’s plans. That is why in the discourse of Iranian authorities there is a strict political divide between the two categories of “Khodí” (those who are one of us) and “Gheir-e-khodi” (those who are not one of us). This divide draws a “red line” between “Khodí” and “Gheir-e-khodi.” Understanding the boundaries of this ‘red line’ needs any researcher to be well aware of the political structure and challenges in the Iranian context. Crossing this red line may result in serious problems for the researcher and also the researched. As I will explain in this paper, the researcher may be accused of “spying for enemies” (by collecting data for them) or acting as “enemies’
agent” (by helping the silent revolution). As a result, the researcher may be at the risk of being arrested and imprisoned.

This threat is further fostered by the fact that the social sciences are accused of disseminating secular ideology in society. Therefore, in a context where there are constant calls for purgation of the social sciences of the ills of Western philosophy, anything that deals with or reflects upon Western philosophy is a threat to the foundations of Islamic-oriented humanities. The bigger scientific difficulty is that critique is not tolerated even if it is enthusiastically and genuinely geared to the betterment of the society and strengthening the foundations of a scientific dialogue with Western philosophy.

Apart from the issue of safety of the researcher, I also explain the methodological and technical difficulties experienced in my fieldwork. After experiencing a strenuous process of getting ethical approval for my research, data collection and sampling were the most challenging parts of the work. Even though the research is now accomplished, the story is yet to continue as another risk is related to my professional development as an academic. This is about the dissemination of the research in the form of publications and implications of the work for social policy in Iran. Given the significant implications of the work for social policy, it would be a complete waste that the results of the research cannot reach the decision-making centres in the country. This, I argue, results in further ethical dilemmas and emotional vulnerability. That is, whilst the commitment of the researcher to ‘social responsibility’ (Liebling and Shah 2001; Sieber and Stanley 1988) requires the researcher to offer directions and implications of his/her research to social actors (e.g., social policy makers), lack of appreciation of the research outcomes creates a sense of isolation and rejection in the researcher. Such a feeling, I discuss, is harmful to both the personal safety at risk.

As a result, the researcher (for not being able to actively engage with practice and pursue further research) and society (for closing the doors to knowledge transfer). Whilst some may argue that dealing with such dilemmas is matter of personal choice of the researcher in developing an academic career, I conclude the paper by rejecting such a simplistic approach and calling for revisiting the role of researchers in benefiting society at large. Those who view research simply as personal reputation building or winning bread might need to defamiliarise themselves with their role in a broader social context.

“Challenging Contexts and Vulnerable Voices: Exploring Consumer Exclusion”
Kathy Hamilton, University of Strathclyde, Scotland
Hilary Downey, Queen’s University, Northern Ireland

This paper is a reflexive account of the challenges experienced in research studies involving low-income families and homebound consumers. Our aim is to highlight the role of emotions in the consumer research process, an issue that is often neglected in favour of more rationally focused methodology discussions such as sampling techniques and analytical rigour. We identify areas where the physical and psychological vulnerabilities of the researchers were exposed and discuss the strategies employed to manage these situations.

Given the fragmentation, pluralities, instabilities and paradoxes of consumption patterns (Firat and Ventaksh 1995), it is necessary that consumer research should focus on a wide range of unique and diverse consumer conditions. Heroic discourse of consumer culture often heralds the benefits of economic growth and improved standards of living. However, there remains a significant percentage of the population who struggle to participate in the marketplace, encountering obstacles in their attempt to meet the standards of normalcy (Baker 2006). Consequently, they are defined as, “inadequate,” “unwanted” “abnormal,” “blemished, defective, faulty and deficient” and “flawed” (Bauman 2005, p.38, 112-113). It is only by highlighting their stories that we can come close to understanding the full implications of consumer culture.

Research in this area then has an increasingly important role in our field, both for researchers seeking theoretical advancement and for transformative consumer researchers and their goal of social change. Traditionally, vulnerable consumers have been excluded or at least under-represented in marketing and consumer research and although in recent years we have witnessed more research attention in this domain, research methods advice specific to studies involving vulnerable consumer populations still remains limited.

We suggest that constructivism offers an appropriate framework for research involving vulnerable consumers. Constructivism refers to the range of perspectives that see the person as actively engaged in the creation of their own phenomenal world (Burr 2003). All constructivist psychologies share the belief that none of the many ways of understanding that people have developed provide a purely objective view of the world. Rather meaning and knowledge are subjectively constructed as human beings have the ability to create understandings that help them navigate life, regardless of whether these match an external reality. We highlight how both radical constructivism and social constructionism can be fruitful philosophical approaches to researching vulnerable consumers. Such approaches place the emphasis on understanding consumers’ lived experience and demand that researchers develop a deep connection with informants. The emphasis on subjectivity therefore dictates that the social world must be understood from within rather than explained from outside (Hollis 1994).

Deeper involvement with informants inevitably provokes a stronger emotional response. Through capturing the subjectivity of low-income and homebound consumers, the researchers were confronted with stories of hardship, exclusion, deprivation and isolation. It is not to deny that quantitative researchers are emotionally unaffected when they focus on statistical analysis of poor and disabled consumers. However, when such statistics are brought to life the “numbers become names,” and when researchers are welcomed into informant’s homes, emotional reactions intensify (Widdowfield 2000). Both studies were conducted in Northern Ireland within communities where political unrest, cultural division and high criminality were in evidence, thus placing the researchers’ personal safety at risk.

We argue that the value of exploring emotional responses becomes apparent in three key ways. First there are clear academic benefits as acknowledging emotions provides readers with a deeper understanding of the research context. Indeed Woodthorpe (2007) argues that researcher’s emotional accounts can tell us as much about the topic under investigation as the data itself. Second, the sharing of our research experiences can have important therapeutic benefits. Researcher vulnerabilities are often experienced alone, perhaps driven by the fear that others may interpret the admission of vulnerability as a sign of weakness or even researcher incompetence. By swapping stories and experiences researchers can reduce such feelings of isolation. Third, as long as these issues remain obscured, we risk creating a barrier that prevents others, particularly doctoral and early career researchers, from entering this worthwhile and important research stream. We argue that it is important that the researcher’s awareness of potential vulnerabilities does not create supplementary filters in relation to engaging with respondents. Empathy and adherence to respondents’ social worlds are not just effects on the researcher, but ways in which the researchers gain the confidence of respondents and access to their consumption stories. Indeed, it could be argued that experiencing vulnerability can actually sensitise the researcher to the context of consumer exclusion. It is better for the researcher to enter the field.
without preconceptions, open to experiencing it and embracing vulnerability first hand, as a reflection of the diversity of humanity.

“Empathetic Sensibilities in the Practice of CCT-inspired Research”
Susan Dunnett, University of Edinburgh, Scotland
Paul Hewer, University of Strathclyde, Scotland
Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling, Scotland

The paper is drawn from a study that sought to extend the notions of brand community to the domain of a social support community where the brand can be understood as the illness or its symptoms that community members have in common. In this context people are brought together not only by the need for social support and community caring, but also by the need for self-transcendence through being involved in various ways in collective identity work where projects of individual value become objectified through collective efforts to create and recreate social and cultural identities. In terms of the substantive research objectives of the study, the work reveals that interpretive research in the empirical setting of an at-risk community of caring not only helps to illuminate how consumer interaction resocialises commodities as branded goods or services, it also reveals that consumption practice generates community through socializing individuals into a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds. In addition to those insights, the researcher’s reflexive account of the data generation processes, including the detailed interaction episodes between informant and researcher, reveals that a variety of “empathetic sensibilities” undergird the subtle processes of identity work and exchange that drive negotiations. Those “empathetic sensibilities” come with an emotional cost and it is the character of those costs that we seek to consider via a reflexive accounting of the data generation processes.

Building upon the insights developed in the previous two papers and taking our cue from previous consumer research into at-risk groups living with serious illnesses (Adelman 1993; Kates 2002; Pavia and Mason 2004; Wong and King 2007), this study seeks to explore the context of people suffering from multiple myeloma.1 Arnould and Thompson propose that as consumer culture theorists we answer the call “for consumer researchers to broaden their focus to investigate the neglected experiential, social, and cultural dimension of consumption in context.” (2005, p.869). In this paper, we argue that what unites and defines CCT and interpretive consumer research (IRC) scholarship is not simply our theoretical and conceptual toolkit, but also the methodological sensibilities we bring to the task of unpacking and working within critical consumption contexts and the challenges we encounter when researching and immersing ourselves in such contexts.

In this respect, we explore researcher vulnerability through the lens of emotional and empathetic exchange, bringing to the fore the unforeseen terrain of consumer culture theory, focusing upon its associated “sensitive” contexts (Renzetti and Lee 1990). The practice of both CCT and ICR-inspired research within such contexts demands an empathetic sensibility towards those researched, a sensibility characterised by the forging of social bonds which we believe are central not only to the gathering of high-quality data but also the task of generating meaningful insights, for as Harrison et al. suggest: “To get good data—thick rich, description and in-depth intimate interviews—we are enjoined to attend to reciprocity in our method.” (Harrison et al. 2001, p.323). Empathetic exchange attends to the imbalance of power between the researcher and the researched. Reciprocity thus acts to empower the researched: “Through judicious use of self-disclosure, interviews become conversations and richer data are possible” (Harrison et al. 2001, p.323). The invitation we make to respondents to tell their stories results we argue in emotional exchanges wherein the sharing of vulnerabilities is essential. However, such an exposure brings in its wake a dual burden—to those researched, who recount their difficult experiences—but also to the researcher in terms of the psychological costs of entering this sensitive terrain. Through attempts to empathise with the respondent the researcher, to some degree, assimilates the threats and risks recounted—the fear of illness, concerns about relapse from remission, the inevitability of death and dying. Such emotional exposure is re-lived and recounted through the passing months and years. When attending to the responsibility of data analysis and making a theoretical contribution we take on the weight of re-telling stories of struggle and hope, especially when we reflect upon those departed.

Work in such challenging contexts we argue has important consequences for the practice of consumer research—placing empathy centre-stage—to reveal the processes of meaning-making and identity re-imagination which individuals encounter when diagnosed with a serious illness and forcing us to reconsider the limits of the traditional patient role and the possibilities of agentic practices brought forth. To share this journey is not without its psychological costs and emotional risks; but we must not avoid these sites simply because they are difficult; rather, we must look to our discipline to better equip us for the challenges that practising such research brings in its wake.

REFERENCES

1 Myeloma is an incurable form of bone marrow cancer. It is estimated that there are 75,000–100,000 myeloma patients at any time in the USA, and upwards of 15,000 in the UK. Symptoms of this disease include pain, bone loss, anaemia and immune system suppression. Treatment for the disease is usually in the form of gruelling courses of chemotherapy and/or stem cell transplantation. Patients may have the disease for several years and it is characterised by periods of active disease and remission (Durie 2003).


We argue that close study of the character of imputed tensions between aesthetic integrity and commercial appeal illuminates several themes in consumer culture research (Holbrook 2005; Bradshaw & Holbrook 2007; 2008). This proposal sets those themes in the context of an organizing framework by means of which we propose to enact those tensions for further inspection, exploring the practice turn and related themes of consumption context as generative principles.

The proposal is partly inspired by the work of Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) and Venkatesh and Meamber (2008). Their work is drawn to contexts where consumption, like kinship, is a domain through which projects of individual value become objectified through collective identity work. We share an interest in how interaction resocialises commodities as branded goods or services whose meaning is socially negotiated: in other words, how consumption practice can be understood as something that generates community through socializing individuals into a “network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds” (Bender 1978, p.145). We bring those ideas to an evaluation of the practice turn in consumer culture research, using them to frame the construction of consumption as aesthetic practice (Charters 2006; Venkatesh & Meamber 2006; 2008). After Bourdieu (1990) we position such practice as ‘regulated improvisations’, situated within communities of consumption.

We explore this idea in the context of music-making as identity work, framing “music” as “culture in the making,” as aesthetic accomplishment in social and material context (Wallendorf 1980). The presentation illustrates these themes through discourse and musical performance. It reworks aesthetic practice as structuring dispositions involving ‘spontaneity without consciousness’ (Bourdieu 1990, p.56) drawing attention to the embodied features of listening as shared aesthetic consumption (Joy & Sherry 2003). Through performing an empirical site for observing dispositions, it reveals how games of distinction and local art-world knowledge (Becker 1974) work to produce consumption community. We show that the current status of “music” as analytical object within consumer research reveals narrow assumptions about positioning subjects and objects within accounts of consumption practice. We suggest that an adequate treatment of “music” as culture in the making has the potential to broaden the scope of the study of aesthetic practices in consumer research.

Live musical performance by the three presenters is used to illustrate and reinforce key themes from each presentation, drawing uniquely upon each presenter’s experience as practising marketing academic and jazz musician.

**Likely Audiences**. This session will appeal to those interested in consumption as aesthetic practice, including those with an interest in consumption communities, communities of practice, performativity and embodiment.

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**SESSION OVERVIEW**

“A significant artist transcends the taste of his time because he has the capacity to create his own audience and to transmit his own original taste to it.” (Pareyson 1992, pp.52-53), as cited by Guillet DeMonthoux (2004, p.78)

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACTS**

“**Music and Commercial Environment Aesthetics: Controlling the Uncontrollable**”

*Steve Oakes, University of Liverpool Management School, UK*

It has been suggested that music contributes crucially to environmental aesthetics (Kozinets et al. 2002) by making shopping environments more attractive to consumers. Bitner (1992) introduced the servicescape concept highlighting music as one of a range of physical environment dimensions (e.g., temperature and scent) impacting upon responses of consumers and employees within commercial environments. Literature reviews examining the impact of the “musicscape” upon consumers (e.g., Oakes and North 2008) revealed that the overwhelming majority of such studies are quantitative. It is argued that there is a need for qualitative research acknowledging the subjective experience of musical consumption, even when it merely involves passive, unsolicited exposure within a retail or service environment. For example, while specific musical genre studies (e.g., Wilson 2003) revealed how jazz is particularly effective in restaurants in encouraging diners to stay longer and spend more, the true value of jazz is evident in live performances where its improvisatory nature can convey a unique and subjective sense of excitement and unpredictability (Oakes 2009).

Ronald Milliman’s (1982; 1986) articles are perhaps the most frequently cited studies in the field. However, using various musical compositions, he drew commercial conclusions about musical tempo effects upon consumption speed and spending without acknowledging interaction effects with other musical variables (e.g., genre) or servicescape variables (e.g., lighting and décor). Milliman’s (1986) restaurant study has also been criticised for failure to use a no-music control condition (Bradshaw and Holbrook, 2008) and for choosing arbitrary musical tempo parameters (Oakes, 2003).

Sloboda and Juslin (2004) argued that emotional responses to music may be intrinsic because they are caused by the structural characteristics of music (e.g., tempo and harmony). However, sources of emotion may also be extrinsic because their point of reference is outside the music. Such responses arise when a piece of music triggers memories of events in earlier life that become inextricably associated with the music. These memories may elicit emotions, shape relevant associations, and influence behaviour. Although retailers may choose a piece of music that is generally liked by the demographic segment they are targeting, they cannot account for the potentially negative associations that it may have for particular individuals. Music has the potential to make the past come alive. There is a need for research that gains vicarious access to the richness of consumer perceptions, experiences, and memories triggered by music heard in commercial environments. Music is
strongly linked to values of personal authenticity and emotional self-realisation. It can trigger retrieval of consumer memories either voluntarily or involuntarily. Consumers may evoke the past through a nostalgic lens or by imagining what they never actually experienced. For example, Blair and Shimp (1992) revealed how music associated with an unpleasant experience lowered brand evaluation through transfer of affect. Furthermore, Sawyer (2005) argued that the semiotic concept of indexicality (the association between a sign and its object) explains how musical meaning is context-specific and referential. Indexicality thus suggests that music can evoke autobiographical, emotion-laden experiences and associations from the listener’s past, with subsequent transfer of this positive or negative emotion to evaluation of the environment in which the music is heard. The complexity and unpredictability of consumer response to music highlights the folly of many studies that regard music as the functional and convenient servant of commercial calculation. Bradshaw and Holbrook (2008) consider background music a subversion of aesthetics and suggest that musical culture is degraded when marketers seek to use it as a means of social control. Illustrations of such aesthetic spaces will be provided through musical performance. The paper concludes that musically unsophisticated marketing practitioners have been unable to influence consumers through music, while marketing academics have failed to comprehend the subtlety of aesthetic space.

“Miles Davis: Artist, Marketer, Consumer Researcher?”
Noel Dennis, Teesside University Business School, UK

Using Kind of Blue (and the wider cannon of Miles Davis’s work) as a research context, the paper argues that the art vs. commerce debate misrepresents aesthetic practice. Kind of Blue is widely held to be a cornerstone jazz recording and remains the number one selling jazz album of all time. The paper considers in what ways the commercial success of Kind of Blue influenced the artistic integrity of Miles Davis For many Kind of Blue epitomizes jazz. Herbie Hancock eloquently defines Kind of Blue as the cornerstone record for jazz. (The Making of Kind of Blue, 2008). Of all the albums Miles Davis recorded, Kind of Blue is arguably his most profound and the one that took jazz in new directions. Prior to the launch of Kind of Blue in 1959, bebop (or modern jazz as it was often referred to) was very much at the forefront of jazz. The bebop era of jazz marked a huge change in the jazz scene and several commentators have argued that this was the point that jazz became an “art form” (Early 2008). Gabbard (1996) points out that the aesthetic of bebop made jazz more complex and arguably more esoteric and distinctive, but less appealing to the public.

Bebop was an innovative style of jazz developed by leading modernists of the 1940s, including Charlie Christian, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Gioia (1997) notes that proponents of this new genre developed its vocabulary in backrooms and after hours’ clubs, typically to please themselves and other like-minded members of the jazz community. What distinguishes the aesthetic of bebop from that of previous styles of jazz is its complex harmonic structures and fast tempos. To be able to realise the aesthetic in performance demanded of players an immense technical command of their instrument and a close knowledge of complex harmonic structures. The paper illustrates the work and functioning of the aesthetic and its related vocabulary through performance. By means of historical and biographical data, the paper contextualises the changing musical aesthetics of the time, illustrating how the vocabulary of jazz continued to develop and transform performance. It discusses how a group of musicians, including Miles Davis, had become disgruntled with the aesthetic of bebop, feeling that it hindered creativity. Miles Davis was about to take jazz aesthetics in a completely new direction with Kind of Blue. The release of the album had a profound impact on jazz concepts and performance. Kind of Blue marked the start of a new era and aesthetic which is now termed “modal jazz.” The term “modal jazz” originated with George Russell, who worked with a different aesthetic to bebop’s frantic tempos and myriad chord changes. Discussing how Russell’s method was used in production, the emerging distance between the aesthetic of Kind of Blue and bebop reveals how the architecture of new aesthetic space was being assembled.

In terms of aesthetic practice, the paper shows that Miles took an astonishingly minimalist approach to the studio work for Kind of Blue. He deliberately avoided writing complete musical charts for the recording and instead sketched out the form of the tunes only hours before the recording session. This approach was far removed from what the musicians had been used to previously. But it is fair to say that the team of musicians he had assembled rose to the challenge Miles posed and their improvisations on the album reflect this. Most of the tracks that appear on the album were recorded in just one take. Kind of Blue not only transformed the aesthetic landscape of jazz, it was also a considerable commercial success. To date it has sold approximately four million copies worldwide and continues to sell on average 5,000 copies per week worldwide (www.cannonball-adderly.com). From the very beginning, its commercial potential was evidently at the forefront of the distributors’ mind. According to Cook (2005), Columbia records invested heavily (for a jazz album) in the marketing and advertising. Although Kind of Blue was an experimental record, ushering in new aesthetic space, it appealed to people who had previously shown little or no interest in jazz. After Early (2008), the paper suggests that this may be explained by the fact that artistic innovations often succeed because they take the audience somewhere they have not been, while passing a lot of well-known gateposts, including those of the impressionistic music Ravel and Debussy.

The paper concludes that commercial success need not be viewed as selling out, as some academics argue (see for example, Holbrook 2005). Miles’s commercial success was only possible due to his creativity and artistry. But arguably just as important was his ability to anticipate and respond to changing cultural patterns and deal with what Hirschman (1983) calls “the costs of satisfying this new audience [and] the demands of marketing themselves to the masses” (ibid, p.48). Miles is, of course, only one of thousands of functioning musicians who comfortably stride both the artistic and commercial sides of music, both famous and anonymous. Perhaps now is the time for academics to retire the “art-commerce” binary and begin to find ways to conceptualize how these different aspects of the same endeavour work alongside, rather than against, each other. We show how Miles Davis was not only a great jazz trumpeter and aesthetic innovator, but also a talented marketer.

“Consumption and Communities of Aesthetic Practice”
Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling, UK

The paper is inspired by the work of Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) and Venkatesh and Meamber (2008). Their work is drawn to contexts where consumption, like kinship, is seen as a domain through which projects of individual value become objectified through collective identity work. The paper shares an interest in how interaction resocialises commodities as branded goods or services whose meaning is socially negotiated: in other words, how

It is fair to say that Russell’s theory also influenced composition and many great jazz works such as Coltrane’s “A Love Supreme,” Bill Evans’s “Re: Someone I Knew,” and Russell’s very own “All About Rosie” which are all based on the concept (Nisenson 2000).
consumption practice can be understood as something that generates community through socializing individuals into a “network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds” (Bender 1978, p.145). The paper will bring those ideas to an evaluation of the practice turn in consumer culture research, using them to frame the construction of consumption as aesthetic practice (Charters 2006; Venkatesh & Meamber 2006; 2008).

After Bourdieu (1990) the paper positions such practice as “regulated improvisations,” arguing that “the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the habitus, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions” (ibid 52). Acknowledging Holt (1995; 1998), the paper explores the idea of structuring dispositions as a way of framing consumption practices. It brings this insight to the context of music-making as identity work, framing “music” as “culture in the making,” as aesthetic accomplishment in social and material context (Wallendorf 1980). The presentation reworks jazz aesthetic practice as structuring dispositions involving “spontaneity without consciousness” (Bourdieu 1990, p.56) drawing attention to the embodied features of listening as shared aesthetic consumption (Joy & Sherry 2003).

REFERENCES


SESSION OVERVIEW

This session is intended to invigorate narrative inquiry in consumer research by uncovering innovative approaches available to address some of our most central questions. Narratives serve many functions of interest to marketers. Stories affect the way we make sense of and assign meaning to consumption experiences (Deighton 1992; Giesler 2008; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001), aid in managing identity tensions, and help us deal with the contradictions we encounter in social life (Ahuvia 2005; Epp and Price 2008; Thompson and Haytko 1997; Thompson and Tanybah 1999). One reason scholars have latched onto narrative as a method of inquiry is that narratives are constructive, not just representative (Escalas and Bettman 2000), performative, not just performance (Langelier and Peterson 2004), and affective, not just reflective (Bochner 2002). Thus, the stories we tell are consequential.

The late 1980s and early 1990s marked a “narrative turn” in the human sciences (Bochner 2002, p.78). This turn was, in part, a response to what some scholars referred to as a crisis of representation. Scholars challenged the scientific view of language as representative of the world rather than constitutive of the world. The first narrative turn marked a shift away from orthodox approaches to scientific representation and toward interpretivist perspectives of human sense-making (Bochner et al. 2000; Mumby 1993). Early in the 21st century, narrative inquiry has been viewed as a rallying point among scholars who believe that the human sciences needed to become more human—“narratives may come closer to representing the contexts and integrity of those lives than do questionnaires and graphs” (Bochner 2002, p.79). Scholars now argue that we are approaching a “new narrative turn” that works within and supersedes multiple paradigms (Baxter 2004). For example, scholars in the critical paradigm examine power relationships and the ways narratives instantiate social control; interpretive researchers view narratives as reflective and constructive of meaning and culture; and those working within the positivist paradigm focus on predicting outcomes such as satisfaction or loyalty.

Reissman (1993) argues that analysis of narratives can attend to three functions of language: 1) ideational, referring to the content or what is said; 2) interpersonal, examining the role of the relationship among speakers such as in joint storytelling; and 3) textual, referring to structure, syntax, and semantics. “Meaning is conveyed at all three levels” (Reissman 1993, p.21). Consumer researchers have most frequently applied ideational analysis, but analysis of interpersonal and textual narrative elements remain under-utilized (Stern 1995; Stern et al. 1998). Each of the three papers advances narrative methodologies by foregrounding Reissman’s functions of narratives, capturing multiple levels of data (cultural, collective, relational, and/or personal narratives), and examining the collaboration and tensions exposed therein. However, the departure points and diverse use of narratives offer rich opportunities for discussion.

The first presentation by Amber Epp and Linda Price highlights the interpersonal and textual functions of narrative. This paper highlights in-person, verbal group constructions and emphasizes the interplay among group, relational, and individual perspectives within a family. In the second presentation, Ashlee Humphreys examines how consumers use cultural texts to orient personal consumption behaviors. This paper attends to the ideational and textual functions of narrative and elaborates on these to link individual story meanings to canonical forms of narrative. Hope Jensen Schau and Albert Muniz, Jr. draw from written narrative accounts to unfold how a brand’s stories are elaborated and edited over time by multiple authors. Their work further explores the ideational and interpersonal functions of narrative. Data collection and analysis are complete for all three papers and writing will be completed by the time of the conference.

This session is expected to appeal to a broad audience among the ACR community, given its reach across multiple modes of inquiry. The presentations may garner attention from scholars interested in identity construction, collective goals, brand narratives, narrative archetypes, and cultural scripts. Further, as narratives are central to brand communities, subcultures, organizations, families, and individual consumers’ experiences, these scholars also may find the session useful. Our discussion leader, Craig Thompson, frequently employs narrative methodologies in his work. Craig’s research complements the collection of papers in the session as well as adds a different perspective. He is also quite adept at engaging audiences.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Eliciting and Analyzing Collective Narratives for Theory Building in Consumer Research”

Amber M. Epp, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA
Linda L. Price, University of Arizona, USA

Consumer researchers are increasingly interested in collective phenomenon and the social aspects of consumption. Through the stories they tell, groups create a sense of community (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001), reinforce community bonds (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993) and shape values or beliefs (Muñiz and Schau 2005; Thompson 2004). Frequently-told stories can be particularly important to brands, as they create mythology or folklore for the community or brand (Holt 2004; Thompson 2004). Within these groups, multiple constituencies co-exist with the potential for overlapping or disparate identities, goals, and behaviors (Epp and Price 2008). Internal groupings characterize both families (spouses, siblings, parent-child coalitions, and individuals) and organizations (departments, cross-functional teams, units, or regions). Subcultures contain internal groupings that typically are differentiated based on their commitment to and participation in the group (Kozinets 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Brand community members distinguish between true believers in the brand and opportunists (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001). Finally, market systems often deal with conflicts among producer and consumer groups (Giesler 2008). The prevalence of these structures underscores the need for methods that can generate multiple levels of data to study the interplay among internal groupings as well as collective-level phenomenon.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the collective narrative method to study relational and group-level constructs as well as the interplay among internal groupings. Other researchers recognize the value of narrative as a method for understanding consumers’ experiences (Ahuvia 2005; Escalas and Bettman 2000; Kleine et al. 1995). However, these studies examine individuals’ consumption stories, but do not take advantage of the potential for investigating relational or collective accounts. The primary contribution of this method is its capacity to produce relational and collective data to make collective constructs more accessible.

Collective constructs such as social goals and joint preference construction are typically studied using one of three approaches:
1) key informants, 2) combining individual members’ perspectives to arrive at collective-level constructs, or 3) generating choice models. The collective narrative method has several advantages over other approaches. Given that collective narratives are co-constructed in situ, among participants, there is no need for grouping perspectives together. Instead, what results is interactional data, and participants have opportunities to respond to one another directly. New collective perspectives that may differ from individual perspectives emerge naturally in conversation using this method. This allows researchers to observe the co-construction processes of group-level constructs (e.g., collective goals, values, and brand meanings) in a new way. Finally, this method offers a way to move beyond the dyad in studies of collective constructs and generate not only group-level data, but also data for analysis of interaction among internal groupings.

We integrate illustrations from a study of 21 families’ collective consumption narratives about their most recent vacation experiences in order to make the method more accessible to researchers, offer continuity across procedures of data collection and interpretation, and demonstrate how the method might be useful for theory building. One of the most compelling contributions of the collective narrative method is that it allows researchers to access group constructions of participants’ experiences. Using this method, we were able to capture the way that families interact (how they are a family; how they do family: how they respond to one another) by observing the collective telling of their narratives. The narrative is a performance of family identity, but it also reveals the interplay of identity coalitions within the family. Echoes within a family (i.e., Addyson/daughter: “We were going to have our feet dangle in the water.” Bob/son: “Yeah. We were going to have our feet dangle in the water, and…”) at varying levels of intensity are more easily uncovered in this collective narrative than if the voices were individually gathered and then combined. Although we would see redundancy of themes in individual interviews, we would not see the way the voices follow each other, mirror one another, answer in unison, and collect into a bundle. Coalitions form as echoes with other voices instantiate identity bundles. Similarly, discordant voices may seem disagreeable in individual interviews, but in the context of a collective narrative, they may playfully entice other voices to participate. This is reflected through competition in telling (Sadie/mother: “Who wants to start?” Elise/daughter: “Me!” [raises hand]. Kali/daughter: “Me.” [raises hand]) and also in monitoring one another for errors (Ajay/son: “We normally get candy.” Lacey/mother: “We never do that. No we don’t.”). These kinds of patterns cannot be observed with an individual voice at play, but only as families collectively tell stories do we see harmonies and departures.

Given that collective storytelling behavior is informative about the relational culture of a group (Veroff et al. 1993), evaluating the interactional aspects of storytelling can be revealing. There are at least three stories being told that are of interest: 1) the described emic story told by the group that depicts their consumption experience, 2) the observed emic story being told by the way the group interacts during the narrative, and 3) the etic story being interpreted and reframed by the researcher that evaluates the interaction between the described and observed group stories. Tracking between the described and observed group interactions offers depth of analysis and triangulation across data. For instance, researchers could find support for the described behaviors in their observations of a group’s interaction. In contrast, observed non-verbal interaction might tell a different story than the described verbal interaction. Consider circumstances when during the group telling, non-speakers are rolling their eyes, shaking their heads in disagreement, or shrugging their shoulders in indifference. These types of responses help researchers characterize whether and how collective constructs are shared or contested among group members.

“From Silver Screen to Explaining Dreams: The Effect of Cultural Text on Personal Consumption Narratives”
Ashlee Humphreys, Northwestern University, USA

People are routinely exposed to stories about consumption in a variety of cultural forms—films, novels, plays, and television. How do consumers use these cultural narratives to organize consumption practice? The goal of this research is to study the place of specific cultural texts—gambling films—in the narrative construction of lived consumer experience. Using a combination of archival analysis and depth interviews, I find that personal narratives of two types—stories about the self and stories about others—draw from different elements of the cultural narratives of gambling. Personal narratives about the self tend to draw from cultural narratives of disillusionment while personal narratives about others tend to draw from hero and loss-of-control narratives.

A narrative is the representation of a temporally-ordered sequence of events (Labov and Waletzky 2003). Previous research in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) has studied how people use narrative scripts to understand their life trajectories and personal experience (Mick and Buhl 1992; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). Other work in CCT has developed models for understanding narratives from cultural texts such as advertisements, television programs, and movies (Hirschman 1988; Holbrook and Grayson 1986; Levy 1981; Stern 1995). However, scholars in consumer behavior have yet to directly combine the analysis of cultural texts with the analysis of personal interviews to assess the interaction between a particular cultural text and the personal narratives that consumers use to understand their individual consumption experience. Combining approaches in this way enables researchers to pinpoint the origin of particular narratives and trace the effect they may have on consumer behavior.

Building from work in sociology (Swidler 2001) and cultural studies (Jenkins 2006), some consumer behavior research has studied the ways in which consumers, particularly fans, use culture. Kozinets (2001) and Schau (2004), for example, investigate the role that a particular cultural object plays in organizing consumer groups, but they do not conduct systematic analysis of the cultural text itself to illustrate how specific cultural narratives are used by fans to narrate consumption experiences. While this work has considerably advanced our understanding of the ways in which consumers use cultural objects, it has not yet addressed the specific role that cultural narrative—a story that has temporal order—plays in organizing consumer experience.

To investigate the role of cultural narrative in consumer experience, I conducted eight interviews, each lasting one to two hours, with light to moderate casino gamblers. Ages ranged from 20 to 55, and all informants were male. Analysis of cultural texts was conducted on 14 gambling films ranging from 1951 to 2007 (for methodology, see Humphreys 2009). Informants, on average, had seen 4 of the 14 movies from my dataset. From the interview texts, I unitized the data into discrete narratives using procedures recommended by Labov and Waletzky (2003). There were approximately 30 narratives per interview. I then qualitatively analyzed personal narratives, looking for narratives that were also present in the cultural texts. Next, I coded each narrative as being a story about the self (one’s own experience) or a story about someone else (e.g., a friend, a family member, or a significant other). I further employed automatic content analysis (Pennebaker, Francis, and Booth 2007) to verify self- and other- orientation and look for themes in each
narrative. Finally, I conducted a correlation analysis to numerically assess the correlations between the object of the narrative (self/other) and the narrative type.

The research findings are of two parts. First, I find that three types of cultural narratives appear in cultural texts about gambling. The hero script is a cultural narrative in which an individual, usually a “man-of-action” (Holt and Thompson 2004), triumphs over adversity. In the texts studied, adversity usually takes the form of social constraints such as a 9-to-5 job, the police, or class boundaries. The second type of cultural narrative found in gambling texts is the disillusionment narrative that depicts a zero-sum game in which the protagonist wins, then loses, and comes out even, if a little shaken, in the end. The protagonist then abandons previous aspirations, usually those associated with risk and reward. The third narrative found in cultural texts about gambling is the loss-of-control narrative in which the protagonist is overtaken by forces outside of his control such as the law, commercial enterprise, or social influence.

Secondly, I find that personal narratives overlap with these three cultural narratives to differing degrees, depending on the type and object of the personal narrative. Specifically, when individuals tell stories about themselves, they tend to use the disillusionment narrative. When they provide narratives about others, they tend to employ loss of control or hero stories. I argue that this is because when people provide self-narratives, they are more likely to engage in evaluation of the experience rather than to simply relay events (Labov and Waletzky 2003). In providing this type of introspection, they are more likely to draw from cultural narratives that emphasize the complexity and critical insight that one would have about one’s own experience, as opposed to another’s experience. This implies that people will differentially draw from cultural discourses depending on the object and aims of their personal narrative. Future work in CCT may want to take account of this effect when analyzing the role of discourse in the organization of consumption experience.


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Consumer research, once preoccupied by individual decision making, is increasingly turning its attention to collective phenomena to better understand relationships within the marketplace. Studies of subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), brand communities (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), and consumer tribes (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007) illuminate the collective meanings in and among markets and market actors, highlighting the complex social embeddedness of consumption.

One way collective meanings are made manifest is in consumption-oriented tales (Schau and Muniz 2006), or narratives. Narratives are tales of situated action or temporally memorable episodes, and powerful organizing structures that define and illustrate individual and collective identities, values, and beliefs (Polkinghorne 1988, 1995). Narratives act as social blueprints, providing templates for actions that define social roles, guide behaviors and caution against socially undesirable actions (Carr 1991). Most often, narratives are assumed to be single-authored; however they can be ubiquitous and have unattributed-authorship as in folk tales and legends. Narratives can also be collectively authored by a set of known authors, illuminating a particular situated action. The narratives we examine focus on the manner in which commercial offerings exist in the physical and semiotic lived world of consumer collectives.

Our inquiry examines collaborative, multi-authored textual narratives centered on a commercial offering. Specifically, we examine the practice of collective storytelling about brands. The narratives are iteratively written and revised until they are generally agreed upon by the authors and offered for wider acceptance among the collective at large. Across two brands (Twilight and Vespa) we examine the practice of collective storytelling. Using a longitudinal data collection strategy, we follow the narratives from the initial circulated drafts to the collectively agreed upon final form. We collect and analyze the narratives as they evolve, as well as the discourse surrounding the narratives including consumer, corporate, competitive and media perspectives on the iterations. Capturing the narrative evolution and the discourse surrounding the negotiated meanings, we gain a unique time series vantage on brand meaning, consumer perceptions and the competitive landscape. Beyond the point-of-view of a single author or even a set of authors, this novel approach yields a 360 perspective on the practice of collective brand-oriented storytelling where multiple constituents participate in the final narrative.

Our findings reveal that there is considerable tension in collaborative storytelling. Echoing work that demonstrates the sometimes divisive tensions between and among personal and collective identities in brand collectives (Schau and Muniz 2002), we show how these tensions are reflected in the Twilight (a media brand consisting of novels and films) and Vespa (a motorized scooter) brand communities as they collaboratively construct brand narratives. Two distinct strategies emerge for handling the tension resulting from seemingly incommensurate values surfacing in collaborative brand narratives: 1) preserve homogeneity by subdividing the brand collective and allowing multiple narratives or 2) embrace the heterogeneity by explicitly producing a multi-vocal narrative. Interestingly, ignoring the tension is not a strategy used in collaborative brand storytelling, nor is explicitly resolving the source of the tension. The former is seen as inauthentic while the latter is considered beyond the scope of storytelling.

During the course of constructing a brand narrative involving unending romantic love as a cherished ideal in the Twilight community, a rift occurred about whether the characters were the manifestations of this ideal or rather simply represented this ideal. While this might seem like merely semantics, the issue in many ways mirrors the rift in Christianity between Catholics and Protestants on the narrative surrounding the rite of communion: are the wafers and wine the body and blood of Jesus respectively, or do the wafers and wine represent the body and blood. In fact during the course of constructing the brand narrative, the analogy of the Catholic-Protestant rift was frequently applied. The constituents roughly divided on age, where younger members found Edward and Jacob to be the ideals while older members believed that the young men represented the ideal of romantic love. In the end, the community opted not to resolve the difference but rather to subdivide based loosely on age and social position. Similarly, in the Vespa community, a division occurred between the “Mod” musical influence and the more alternative pop musical influence as centrally descriptive and authentic of the Vespa brand. The community opted not to have a definitive musical identity but to divide along musical preference, agreeing that environmentalism and personal freedom were central tenets while musical taste was not.

In the Twilight community a multi-vocal brand narrative was constructed to favor both Edward and Jacob as viable ideal romantic partners despite their differences (immortal/mortal, cold/hot, vampire/werewolf). Team Edward and Team Jacob are interwoven into a cohesive narrative where either could be ideal. Members do not have to choose between the characters to believe that a perfect romantic partner exists. Similarly, in the Vespa community both environmentalism and personal freedom are key values which
members perceived as inconsistent especially when compared to public transportation, so the community created a multi-vocal brand narrative: scooters are fuel efficient transportation devices like public transit and scooters are also a highly personal and self-expressive mode of transportation unlike public transport. Members of the Vespa community don’t have to identify which core value is most important; they highlight their heterogeneity with respect to these values.

To summarize, we find that through collaborative storytelling the most central brand attributes and meanings are negotiated. Collective brand narratives serve to either highlight homogeneity through subdivision (having separate narratives) or heterogeneity (sharing multi-vocal narratives) but they are not the sites of permanent tension resolution.

REFERENCES


SPECIAL SESSION

Motivational Consequences of Effort and Progress in Consumer Goal Pursuit
Szu-Chi Huang, University of Texas at Austin, USA

ABSTRACTS

“Can You’ or ‘Will You’: How Progress-Based Inferences Impact Motivation in Consumer Goal Pursuit”
Ying Zhang, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Szu-Chi Huang, University of Texas at Austin, USA

Because consumers ask different questions to establish commitment at beginning versus advanced stages of goal pursuit, we propose that progress that is made through personal effort and that is received with no effort will have distinctively different impact on motivation, depending on individuals’ relative position in goal pursuit. When progress on achieving a goal is low, people are concerned about its attainability. Because low progress that is made through effort investment (vs. endowed progress) signals higher difficulty of goal attainment, it should result in lower goal commitment and, subsequently, decreased motivation. Conversely, when progress on the goal is high and the attainment of the goal is relatively secured, people are more concerned about the value of the goal. Because progress made through personal effort (vs. endowed progress) signals a greater value of the goal, it should lead to greater goal commitment and, subsequently, higher motivation. Results from three studies supported this hypothesis.

Sara Kim, University of Chicago, USA
Aparna A. Labroo, University of Chicago, USA

We show that feelings of effort (vs. ease) increase people’s tendency to work harder and value products, provided they have illusory high control. To such people, effort signals higher efficacy of the particular outcome. Because such people usually engage in effortful pursuit of only the best outcomes, they also infer that an outcome must be the best one available if they will have to put effort into attaining it. Only among people with illusory low control, ease (vs. effort) increases tendency to engage in activities and brand preferences, because ease signals high feasibility of attaining a successful outcome. Thus, preferences are malleable and for some individuals the opportunity to challenge themselves adds value to the outcome.

“Practicing What You Preach”
Sunaina Chugani, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Susan M. Broniarczyk, University of Texas at Austin, USA

We often give goal-related advice to others. Given this involvement of ourselves in other’s goal pursuit, what is the effect of giving goal-related advice on our own likelihood of behaving in an advice-consistent manner? We provide evidence suggesting that simply giving goal-related advice allows the advisor to vicariously experience goal progress through the belief that the target will follow the advice, thus giving the advisor license to act in an advice-incongruent fashion. Thus we posit that there is an inherent mechanism in giving advice that perpetuates our failure to practice what we preach.

“Mere Accessibility Effect: Products May be Effective without Consumption”
David Faro, London Business School, UK
Monika Heller, London Business School, UK
Caglar Irmak, University of South Carolina, USA

We show that merely having access to a product can yield the effect claimed to be brought about by the product. Participants who had access to coffee (but did not consume it) during a concentration task performed better than participants who did not have access to coffee during the task. In a second study, participants who had access to a dictionary performed better in word puzzles. The effect of product accessibility on performance was moderated by self-efficacy. Only participants that received negative feedback on a previous task showed the performance enhancing effect of product accessibility.
ABSTRACT

We argue for greater incorporation of an embodied perspective on ethnicity in consumer research. A review of the history of ethnic relations in the United States and of the investigation of ethnicity in consumer behavior reveals that focal attention to the physical aspects of ethnicity is implicit in both, yet is rarely explicitly incorporated in policy making. In general, the greater the divergence of one’s appearance and dialect from Caucasian physical features and standard American English usage, the greater the likelihood of discrimination against consumers. We review some recent social science theories as to why this occurs.

INTRODUCTION

Our purpose here is to review the concept of ethnicity as it has been used in consumer research inquiry from the 1960s to the present day. We describe longitudinal patterns in the investigation of ethnicity and develop an argument for an embodied view of ethnicity which can be more directly relevant to accounting for marketplace discrimination. As a foundation for discussion, we examine the history of ethnic distinctions within the United States as a locus of economic and social discrimination.

Theories of Ethnicity

Foundational sociologist Max Weber (1998) viewed ethnicity as “common inherited and inheritable traits that derive from common descent (p. 17).” He also recognized that non-biological traits could result in ethnic assignments, for example, “differences in the styles of beard and hair, clothes, food and eating habits, division of labor between the sexes, and other kinds of visible differences can … give rise to a consciousness of kind … (p. 19).” Thus, in Weber’s view both physical type and behavioral custom could serve as bases for coalescing social groups. Weber further proposed that “Ethnic groups [are] those human groups that entertain a subjective belief for coalescing social groups. Weber further proposed that “Ethnic view … (p. 19).” Thus, in Weber’s view that “equate ethnicity [only] with shared culture” (p. 17) and omit references” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007, p. 19). This is termed the Weberian-Primordialist, WP, perspective.

Circumstantialism/Instrumentalism

Originating in the influential writings of Glazer and Moynihan (1963) and Cohen (1969, 1974), the CI framework casts ethnic groups as socio-political collectivities linked by common interests in gaining access (or maintaining access) to cultural resources. Within this view, ethnic groups organize themselves in strategic ways to compete against one another. Historical circumstances—such as access to key resources, enslavement, group size, fertility rates, and initial political or economic power—often create dominance/subordination relationships among the groups in a given society. Dominant groups typically strategize to increase or maintain their control over economic, legal, educational, and political institutions; while subordinate groups typically mobilize collective actions to challenge the existing social order (see Barrera 1979; Blauner 1969; Hechter 1975; Nairn 1977).

In this theoretical stance, ethnicity is cast as a rationalized, agentive form of cooperative behavior—based more on the identificatation of common strategic goals within the group, than in a sense of ancestral peoplehood or “consciousness of kind.” We believe that the omission of kinship, physical similarity, and ancestral origins limits the utility of the CI perspective. For example, without the inclusion of these criteria, many social collectivities experiencing histories of discrimination and responding with united actions would seem to qualify as “ethnic,” when this would not be appropriate. That is, if ethnicity were only collective action, then women, homosexuals, Marxists, disabled persons, and labor unions could all be classified as having “ethnic group” status, when clearly this is not the case.

Weberian-Primodialism

The less frequently invoked theoretical framework for understanding ethnicity, which we argue for, is Weberian-Primodialism (WP). Popularized by Harold Isaacs in Idols of the Tribe (1975), and promoted as well by Shils (1957), WP focuses attention upon the ancestral, biological, physical and kinship aspects of ethnic identity. In this view, much of one’s ethnic identity is ascribed or inscribed by virtue of where, when and to whom one is born. One of the criticisms (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007; Ferrante and Browne, 2001) frequently raised regarding the WP approach is that some persons may have multiple ascribed identities, e.g., being say, Mexican and Catholic or Serbian and Muslim in ancestry. However, this would not seem to negate the possibility that both of these heritages may be seen by the individual and by others as part of his/her ethnic identity. Further, it is also possible that these different heritages may become salient to the individual in particular situations.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHNIC RELATIONS IN AMERICA

One useful way to identify the salient components of ethnicity in a given society is to consider their application in actual social practice over an extended period of time. To accomplish this, we reviewed the history of ethnic relations and discrimination in the United States. We identified the criteria used to establish ethnic boundaries and found that they more closely adhere to the WP perspective. We now discuss these findings.
Ethnicity has always had high economic and social relevance in the United States. Ethnic caste systems based on physical dissimilarities appeared by the early 1700s with both Native Americans and Africans being judged appropriate for placement in positions of lengthy indenture or life-time slavery by European-Americans (Bayor 2003). Attempts at ethnic population genocide were also not uncommon. Berkin (2003, p. 6), for example, writes of the encounters between the British Massachusetts colonists and the Indigenous Pequot in the 1630s: “Massachusetts governor John Winthrop ordered Captain John Underhill to attack [Pequot] civil- 

tian targets. The resulting massacre at Mystic Village was recorded by Underhill... ‘Many were burnt... men, women and children.’ Villagers who attempted to surrender were... murdered, and Mass- 

achusetts claimed victory... in a contest that virtually eliminated the Pequots from New England. The few Indian survivors were rounded up and sold into slavery...”

Religion was also used to demarcate ethnic groups into domi-

nant and subordinate positions. In the Dutch Colony of New Amster-

dam, for instance, when Sephardic Jews arrived in 1624 fleeing the 

advent of the Spanish Inquisition in Dutch Brazil, Governor Peter 

Stuyvesant attempted to block their entry. He failed because other 

Sephardic Jews sat on the Board of the Dutch West India Company 

and acted to protect their co-religionists. However, Jews, Muslims 

and Catholics were barred from voting, holding office and owning 

land in the majority of the Colonies.

In 1619, the Virginia Colony permitted the arrival of “20 

some odd” Negroes from Africa who were initially assigned to 

work as indentures, but whose descendants were bound into a 

lifetime of slavery (Horton and Horton 2005). Thus by the early 

1600s, many of the ethnic ‘players’ were present on the American 

stage and physical appearance and religious practice were legally 

established as criteria for ethnic distinction. The basic structural 

forces underlying current understandings of ethnicity in marketing 

research were present from the Colonial era onward: i.e., one’s 

geographic origin (e.g., Europe, Africa, the Americas), physical 

appearance, and religion determined one’s political power, social 

class, and legal status.

Between 1700 and 1800 much of the ethnic power structure 

in the United States centered upon population size and access to 

economic and political resources. Hodges (2003, p. 23) reports that 

the Indigenous population had collapsed from 5 million in 1500 

around 600,000 by 1800, making them much less viable as an 

ethnic force. Affluent and educated, the Sephardic Jews in New 

England and the Middle Atlantic states increasingly intermarried with 

British-descended colonists, often joining the Church of England, 

and ultimately assimilated into the WASP culture (Hodges 2003).

In 1790 the Immigration Exclusion Law was enacted by 

Congress, with persons being sorted into three ethnic groupings: 

“whites” which included all Western Europeans, free “blacks” and 
mulattoes (termed Free Persons of Color), and enslaved “blacks.” 

Indigenous persons were not classified as citizens and hence af-

forded no official existence within the national population. Non-

Protestants (e.g., Catholics, Jews, Muslims) were still prohibited 

from office holding in several states (Casey 2003). Full rights of 
citizenship were accorded only to males of European descent 

and Protestant religious affiliation, and within that elite ethnic enclave, 

Anglo hegemony was also legally established. By 1815 English was 

institutionalized as the official language and all U.S. residents were 

required to attain fluency in it (Casey 2003). Linguistic conformity 

assisted in creating a national sense of “consciousness-of-kind,” but 

also served as an indelible reminder of WASP cultural dominance. 

To help maintain internal ethnic cohesion, Jews and Catholics 

continued to use Hebrew and Latin, respectively, in their religious 

services; these linguistic markers are still in use among some con-

gregations (Casey 2003).

After nationhood, economic boundaries based upon physi-

cal features came to the forefront. In the 1850s, a large influx of 

Chinese, mostly men, entered California where they worked first 
in gold mines and then on the transcontinental railroad. Although 

welcomed as “industrious and dutiful” at first, Chinese economic 

success soon led to explicit legislative efforts to protect “free White 

Labor against competition with Chinese Coolie Labor” (quoted in 
Topp 2003, p. 73). The Chinese were classified as physically differ-

entiable from Europeans and in 1877 additional immigration 

from China was explicitly barred by racial exclusion legislation 

(Topp 2003, p. 75). Additional legislation prohibited those Chinese 

already residing in the US from marrying European-Americans, 

attending public schools and holding public office.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, United States public 
policy entered an era of scientific racism—an ideology which har-
nessed the apparatus of scientific inquiry to justify the legaliza-

tion of European ethnic hegemony. Various nationalities were ranked 

according to their putative state of cultural advance, with western 

Europeans being situated atop the ladder (Ngai 2003). In Plessy v. 

Ferguson (1896), the U.S. Supreme Court legitimized the national 
policy of ethnic segregation with its espousal of the “separate but 
equal” doctrine (Ngai 2003). Indigenous persons remained disen-

franchised and were restricted to assigned geographic locales by 

the government. Ngai (2003, p. 104) reports that, “Disenfran-

chisement virtually eliminated black voting in the South”. Hispanic-descended 

persons in the American southwest, and the Chinese in California, 

shared in common their legalized exclusion from voting, office 

holding, and access to publicly funded education.

Japanese immigrants entering the Western portions of the U.S. 

from 1885-1925 made strenuous efforts to assimilate to European-

American cultural patterns (see Ngai, 2003, p. 118), but soon were 

retaliated against because of their rapid rise in economic success. 

To eliminate this unwanted source of economic competition, a Presi-

dential Executive Order was issued in 1908 banning ‘Asians’—both 

Japanese and Chinese—from entering the U.S. mainland.

Eastern and Southern European immigrants arrived in large 
national and religious groups from 1880-1925, creating novel ethnic 
tensions. Technically European, they did not speak English, did not 

share the belief that British folkways were superior to their own, 

and were not Protestant (or in the case of the 2.4 million Ashkenazi 
Jews, were not even Christian).

Smaller migrations of persons from Syria, Lebanon, Armenia 

and Palestine during the 1910s to the 1950s created an additional 

liminal group of quasi-Europeans, who were sometimes included and 
sometimes excluded as full citizens, based on a coterie of contradictory 
court decisions (Heinze 2003). The ethnic markers on which these 
decisions were grounded included language, religion, educational 
level, occupation, facial features, skin color, and proximity of home 
country to Western Europe. Importantly, in most cases, similarity in 
physical features, similarity of religion, geographic propinquity, and 
higher SES were aligned with legal categorization of the individual 
as European and the granting of full citizenship privileges (Lyman 
1998). We turn now to a consideration of how these same factors have informed ethnicity research on consumer behavior.

EARLY CONSUMER RESEARCH ON ETHNICITY

According to a search conducted by Cui and Choudhury 

(2000), the earliest consumer behavior investigation into ethnicity 

was conducted by Henry Bullock and published in two sequential 

Motivations in Black and White,” the author reports that regardless
of their race or residence in the North or South, both Negro and White consumers “sought a sense of security and belonging in life.” Remarkably cogent for its time—concurrent with the first stirrings of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s—the study focused on a shared humanity across the very different life circumstances then confronting consumers of African and European ancestry and Northern and Southern regionality.

The passage of the Federal Civil Rights Act in 1964 presaged a new and intense interest by researchers in ethnic issues confronting both consumers and marketers. Bauer et al. (1965) were the first to publish a study addressing this dilemma in the Journal of Marketing. In it we detect a normative and somewhat paternalistic perspective, tinted with prescriptive advice for marketers to “wait and see before approaching the Negro market.” The authors described a potentially valuable market “ready to assimilate to Caucasian consumption patterns,” yet divided within itself in terms of willingness and motivation to move toward full-scale European-American consumption standards.

From this initial trickle of interest, came an outpouring of books and articles devoted to studying African-American and European-American relationships in the marketplace. Sturdivant’s edited volume (1969) explored several aspects of ghetto marketing practices, finding both structural inefficiencies and exploitative credit practices characterizing the retail setting confronted by Negroes and Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles. Seven articles appeared in the major marketing journals in 1970, alone. Of these, five dealt with the impact of using African-American models in mass media advertising. Kassarjian’s (1969) article, “The Negro and American Advertising,” had stimulated interest in this topic by reporting that over the 1946–1965 time period, the use of Negro models and actors had not increased and by 1965 had only returned to the 1948 level, having decreased in 1956.

Kassarjian noted that despite having a prosperous middle class, African-Americans were predominantly depicted in menial and service roles. Dominick and Greenberg’s (1970) study of Negro actors on daytime and nighttime television commercials and programming during the 1967–1969 seasons echoed that of Kassarjian, but found that primetime television programming had begun portraying African Americans in roles on par with European-American actors’ status. Analogously, Cox’s (1970) twenty-year analysis of ads appearing in five general interest magazines documented that Negroes were increasingly being depicted in middle class roles.

Three studies in 1970 looked at the impact which these depictions had on consumer attitudes toward both the ads and the advertisers. Guest (1970) found that his (European-American) college student research subjects were accepting of Negro models in a print advertisement. However, Cagley and Cardoza (1970), also using a European-American college student sample, found that white response to integrated print ads was impacted by self-reported levels of racial prejudice.

Bauer and Cunningham’s (1970), “The Negro Market” used SES data to construct a portrait of African-American consumption patterns during the 1960s and also provided commentary on the life style differences between Negro and European-American consumers. The depiction was not favorable to Negroes. Bauer and Cunningham, who failed to partition their data by social class or income, reported (1970, p. 3), “We find them [Negroes] spending disproportionately on the maintenance of their social façade, and on such items of immediate gratification as tobacco and liquor. We find them willing to buy on credit.” These researchers also remarked on the unlikely assimilability of the Negro, due to physical appearance: “The Negro has neither a mother culture nor an appearance which allows him to blend in with the crowd (p. 6).”

The next three years witnessed an explosion of interest in the newly discerned Negro Market; eleven articles appeared in the major journals. Three of these, Muse (1971), Tolley and Goett (1971), and Schlinger and Plummer (1972), addressed consumer responses to African-American models in advertising. Findings supported the view that European-Americans responded equally well to models of either ethnicity; while blacks were especially favorable toward same-race (i.e., African-American) models.

Four articles during this time period were strategic in focus, seeking to identify ways in which marketers could capitalize on the African-American consumer segment. Gensch and Staelin (1972) made two significant points: first, that the “Black Market” was not a homogeneous edifice; second that black consumers did not necessarily desire to shop only at neighborhood or African-American owned retail stores, but in some cases lacked transportation to other shopping areas. Hills and Granbois (1973) and Whipple and Neidell (1971) surveyed African-American attitudes toward local retail outlets and found both generational and social class differences impacted patronage behavior.

Sexton’s (1972) article, “Black Buyer Behavior,” which appeared in the Journal of Marketing, served as a capstone for this set of studies, describing the bimodal distribution of income and resource allocation within the African-American community (actually two discrete communities organized by social class) and proposing that as incomes rose among African-American consumers, they would assimilate to European-American consumption patterns. His discussion was perhaps the first in the marketing literature to explicitly rely upon an assimilationist model of ethnic socialization.

A final cluster of four articles during the early 1970s introduced the normative perspective to marketing ethnicity research. Though the lower social status of African-Americans had been alluded to in earlier work, it had not been explicitly addressed from a policy-making standpoint. Sexton (1971), “Do Blacks Pay More?,” focused on an older and more affluent black population (in Chicago), Sexton found that there was some evidence that inner-city African-American neighborhoods paid higher prices for equivalent products, as compared to European-Americans. Griffin and Sturdivant (1973) later found no evidence of racial discrimination in the mobile home market; however, this finding may have been impacted by the uniformly low economic status of mobile home buyers, regardless of race.

Importantly, Longman and Pruden (1971) and Pruden and Longman (1972) reported the first marketing survey research to include Mexican-Americans, along with African-American and ‘Anglo’ consumers. This study also was the first to use an ethnic term other than ‘white’ to describe European-Americans in the marketing literature. Examining marketplace alienation, they found that Mexican-Americans and African-Americans believed that they were not receiving equitable treatment as consumers and strongly supported intervention to increase marketplace fairness. Overall this set of studies marked a turning point in the literature from viewing minority ethnic subcultures merely as profitable markets, to instead acknowledging ethnic discontent with existing marketing practices. From 1975 to 1980, there was a slackening and narrowing of research conducted on ethnicity. Focus remained trained on discerning differences between African-Americans and European-Americans, with both usually presumed to be homogeneous monoliths. Five studies (Barry and Sheikh 1977; Bush et al. 1977; 1979; Donohue et al. 1978; Kerin 1979) continued the established pattern of searching for cross-ethnic effects in advertising response and representation.
in advertising. An important article during this time period was Andreasen’s (1978) paper, “The Ghetto Marketing Life Cycle,” which chastised researchers for their relative neglect of endemic racism in the marketplace. Andreasen proposed a 7-point research agenda (e.g., family decision-making processes, power relationships in channels of distribution, product and brand beliefs) that essentially served as normative call to action for the field.

**MID-STAGE CONSUMER RESEARCH ON ETHNICITY: BROADENING THE FOCUS OF INQUIRY**

Andreasen’s request for a broadened focus for marketing policy research on ethnicity was heeded during the next decade, but not necessarily in the ways he anticipated. Although public policy issues were addressed, the primary flow of research was toward strengthening the measurement of ethnic affiliation and explicitly introducing theories of assimilation and acculturation into the interpretive gaze. Hirschman’s (1981) “American Jewish Ethnicity” article examined an affluent, quasi-European ethnic group, moving away from the unidimensional dichotomic measurement of ethnic affiliation, and focusing on personality and social psychological traits, instead of purchasing behavior.

In a later paper, she (1983) examined additional social, cognitive, and information usage characteristics among several affluent ethnic subcultures residing in New York City, i.e., Chinese, English (WASP), Greek, Irish, Italian and Jewish, finding both congruent and incongruent tendencies and suggesting that consumer research needed to be mindful of salient ethnic differences within a social class category. By the end of the decade a more diverse set of ethnic categories was being explored—notably by a more ethnically diverse set of researchers. Williams and Qualls (1989) looked at African-American and European-American responses to celebrity advertising endorsers; Lee (1989) examined Taiwanese, Taiwanese-Americans, and Americans in her study of the cultivation effects of American mass media; Schaninger et al. (1985) examined language-based consumption variations among English and French speaking Canadians (recall that language is traditionally a key ethnic differentiator).

However, the most significant event during the decade was the explosion of studies looking at the Latino/Hispanic Market, which had succeeded in attracting marketers’ attention due to its rapidly increasing size and affluence (Bellenger and Valencia 1982). Significant also was the presence of Hispanic researchers in this set of investigations and the marked use of the term Anglos to describe European-American persons. Though subtle, this was a challenge to the hegemony of Euro-American norms as the social template against which all other groups were viewed as ‘ethnic.’

Among the variables of interest in the Hispanic research stream were media usage (O’Guinn and Faber 1985; O’Guinn and Meyer 1983; O’Guinn et al. 1985; Wilkes and Valencia 1989), purchase of generic versus name brand products (Wilkes and Valencia 1985), bargain-hunting and patronage of discount stores (Wilkes and Valencia 1986), food consumption patterns (Wallendorf and Reilly 1983), preferences for specific and nondurable product attributes (O’Guinn and Faber 1986), family decision making (O’Guinn et al. 1986; Peñaloza and Gilly 1986), and coupon usage (Hernandez 1988), all of which possessed public policy significance.

Significant additions were made during this decade to enlarge the repertoire of measures and theoretical perspectives brought to bear on ethnic marketing. Deshpande, et al. (1986), for example, discerned a continuum of ethnic identification among Mexican Americans, which impacted their use of media, brand loyalty, and desire for prestige. Later work by Stayman and Deshpande (1989) showed that ethnic behaviors were, at least in part, situationally influenced, suggesting that minority consumers were aware of majority group norms and were capable of choosing when and where to mimic them.

Along these same lines, Valencia (1985) developed a scale measuring Hispanic adaptation to Anglo culture; while Shimp and Sharma (1987) constructed and tested a scale measuring consumer ethnocentrism. Hirschman (1985a) presented an analysis of four ethnic subcultures—Blacks, WASPs, Italians and Jews—based upon prior qualitative studies, and discussed the strategy of Anglo-conformity employed by some upwardly mobile minority consumers to gain faster and greater acceptance by the dominant WASP culture. Peñaloza (1989) put forward a detailed model of consumer acculturation that posited relationships between immigrants’ culture of origin and that of their host culture. Finally, Hirschman (1985b) introduced the use of neo-Marxist theory to describe the structural inequalities currently existing among minority ethnic consumers and the dominant European-American culture.

**THE LIMITS OF NEGOTIATED IDENTITY–WHEN COLOR AND CASTE WON’T FADE AWAY**

The 1990s witnessed two distinct directions for marketing research on ethnicity, both having policy implications. Clustered in the period 1990 to 1992 were 12 studies—the majority focused on consumers of Hispanic ethnicity. Articles by Donthu and Cherian (1992) and Hernandez and Kaufman (1991; Kaufman and Hernandez 1990) examined coupon-usage as indicators of acculturation and budgeting strategy by Hispanics. Patronage of the neighborhood grocery store, bodega, was found by Kaufman and Hernandez (1991) to be an important institution of Hispanic community cohesion. Yet Fennell et al. (1992) questioned the universality of pan-Hispanic culture, arguing for recognition of heterogeneity among various Spanish-speaking ethnic groups in the United States. Echoing earlier findings, Webster (1992) showed that strength of ethnic identification served to moderate the assimilation of Hispanics to European-American consumption norms.

Research interest in African-American ethnicity declined from the 1980s level. As was found from the early 1960s period onward, interest seemed to focus on consumer response to the racial identity of advertising models. However, contrasting with studies conducted in the 1970s, Whittler and DiMeco (1991) found that adult European-Americans exhibited negative purchase propensities when African-Americans were present in an advertisement. Emphasizing a possible generational effect in these results, Whittler (1991) found that European-American college students were indifferent to a model’s race in evaluating an advertised brand, whereas African American college students were more favorable toward same-race actors. In-group/out-group theory was utilized to account for these latter differences. A final article in this set (Williams 1992) called once again for researcher recognition of social class heterogeneity among African-American consumers.

This broadened grasp of ethnicity in the marketplace was carried forward through the middle and later portions of the decade. Inquiries directed toward the most-studied ethnic groups began to display a deeper interpretive sophistication. Bristor, et al. (1995) suggested that the portrayals of African-Americans in advertising were still suffused with subtle racist ideology, due to European-American hegemony in the advertising industry, itself. Taylor et al. (1995) also found racist stereotypes to underlie portrayals of African, Hispanic and Asian Americans in contemporaneous magazine advertisements; suggesting a possible ‘white backlash’ aimed at maintaining the economic and social restrictions placed on minority advancement.

Greater sensitivity to the specificities of ethnic cultures was found in language-based studies conducted by Escalas (1994) and Koslou et al. (1994), and Hispanic-directed inquiries reflected a
more highly articulated theoretical framework. Webster and Faircloth (1994), for example, incorporated reference group theory into their analysis of ethnic identity; while Webster (1994) attended to the marital roles of husbands and wives in the decision-making process, finding patriarchy more predominant among strongly identified Hispanics. Deshpande and Stayman (1994) utilized distinctiveness theory to describe Hispanic-Anglo relationships under varying conditions of minority/majority population status.

Two articles by Peñaloza (1994, 1995) used a sophisticated socio-cultural framework to discuss assimilation, acculturation, identity reconstruction, and public policy issues relevant to Mexicans immigrating to the United States. She finds evidence of complex ethogenesis processes among these border communities. Similarly, Lee, and Tse (1994) found Hong Kong immigrants to Canada displayed a multi-linear pattern of media usage based upon both prior media consumption and English language competence. Indigenous Americans were finally attended to in a study by Muller et al. (1993). Results reflected both their below average economic resources and a culture based on communal norms. Ironically, Taylor and Stern (1997) found that Asian-Americans were being portrayed in advertisements more frequently and as being of higher social status than was representative of their population demographics.

By the late 1990s research on ethnicity had become increasingly attentive to language usage patterns. For example, Roslow and Nicholls (1996) found that even for bilingual Hispanics, Spanish-language commercials remained more persuasive, suggesting that ethnic language usage played an important role in subcultural identification, extending beyond mere comprehension. Acculturation models also were developed to a higher level during this time period. Holland and Gentry (1999, p. 8 online version), for example, stated that “Ethnic groups or individual members who identify strongly with their heritage are likely to have an emotional response to the use of cultural symbols in marketing communications…”.

We close the decade of the 1990s by juxtaposing two articles that are positioned in the opposing conceptualizations of ethnicity described at the outset: the degree to which ethnicity is linked to physical features, history and ancestry versus the degree to which it is a socially constructed and socially negotiable phenomenon. The literature thus far in marketing has been largely silent on this issue; ethnicity was operationalized using either self-report and/or researcher opinion. The basis of the classification in each instance, however, was left untested.

Oswald’s (1999) article on “Culture ‘Swapping’” put forward the theoretical perspective of the social construction of ethnic identity. It drew from a variety of sources to build its thesis that ethnicity was, in large part, a performed activity based upon symbolic possessions, minority/majority group status and social class norms. Yet, as Oswald (1999, p. 308) notes, physical features did play a role in identity construction for the Haitian immigrant family that was her subject of study: “The lighter one’s skin, the higher one’s [social] class.” However, she explicitly adopts the Circumstantialism/Instrumentalism position at a later point, “In the present context, race is not a biological given, but a cultural construct: black, brown, yellow and white have no absolute meaning, but are entirely dependent on historical and social contexts for meaning (p. 309, 1999).”

However, a second paper by Rossiter and Chan (1998) discusses at length the likelihood that ethnic appearance does matter greatly in terms of the social identity which one constructs and which is assigned to oneself by others. In other words, ethnic identity is not entirely negotiable; it is not an unbounded arena of self or group construction. For example, the social psychology literature contains numerous examples in which social expectations and beliefs have been found to cluster around different physical characteristics. Among the most heavily researched non-ethnicity contexts where this has been found to be the case are personal attractiveness (Honigman and Castle 2007; Hurd 1999), hair color (Johnson et al. 2002), height (Andreolotti et al. 2001), and weight (Guendouzi 2004; Rudd and Lennon 2000). As Rossiter and Chan (1998, p. 128) comment: “The influence of physical appearance as a stimulus factor is manifest in personal interactions”.

However, by the early 2000s ethnic physical variations still had not been directly incorporated into consumer research. Rather ethnic awareness (Forehand and Deshpande 2001) and ethnic political action were being given increased attention, consistent with the Circumstantialism/Instrumentalism model. An article by Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) returned attention to the African-American community and explicitly addressed public policy issues. These researchers examined the sometimes opposing pulls placed on ethnic consumers caught between loyalty to locally-owned businesses and the attractions of the larger marketplace. They identify two ideological market segments within the African-American community: “Black Liberals who seek to erect alliances inside and outside the [Black community]… and Black Nationalists… [who] seek to construct and maintain alliances with those who appreciate and share their commitment to developing Black institutional life (p. 525).” This duality of African-American collective action is recognized as well by Oswald (2008).

A 2005 article by Harris, Henderson and Williams, drew sharp attention to the continuing presence of consumer racial profiling in the contemporary marketplace. They noted that discrimination based upon ethnic appearance, language differences and religious affiliation was still widespread. As they state (2005, p. 163),” Consumer racial profiling affects members of ethnic groups beyond those classified as African American, such as Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and Arab Americans… Indeed, since September 11, 2001, there has been heightened concern about Consumer Racial Profiling as it applies to anyone perceived as Middle Eastern.”

**TACKLING A TROUBLING TABOO: PUTTING THE ETHNIC BODY BACK INTO MARKETING POLICY**

As is evident from the review of the differing treatment of ethnic groups in North America since the Colonial era, physical appearance, and to a lesser extent, religious affiliation and language, have played key roles in determining one’s access to the marketplace. Descent from Western European, and especially British Protestant, ancestors places one in an elite ethnic community. This suggests that ethnicity in the United States hinges primarily upon one’s ancestry and the attractions of the larger marketplace. They identify two ideological market segments within the African-American prototype in appearance, religion, and language and that, therefore, consumer research efforts need to be cognizant of this social ‘truisms.’

When we examine the research conducted on ethnicity within the consumer behavior literature over the time period 1960-2009, we find that-without exception—ethnicity has been operationalized using these same core markers: i.e., physical appearance, religion, language. Of the three markers, physical appearance has received the most attention (albeit usually unspoken) as an ethnic signifier; in particular, African-Americans, Hispanics (especially those of Mexican ancestry), and Asians (especially Chinese) have been subjected to study. Only on rare occasions (e.g., Hirschen 1981; 1983) have religion and language come into play as the primary agents of ethnic assignment in marketing research.

We believe that a compelling case can be made, therefore, that one’s body is the primary marker of ethnicity in terms of U.S. social, and economic history. Yet the interrogation of why and how physical appearance plays such a dominant role in American ethnic relations has received virtually no explicit attention by consumer
Cross Race Recognition Deficit and Racial Stereotyping

One potential explanation may be found in the social psychology literature on Cross-Race Recognition Deficit (CRRD). Research in this area shows that persons have difficulty recognizing individuals of a different race (Anthony et al. 1992; Bothwell et al. 1989; Levin 1996; Lindsay et al. 1991; Malpass and Kravitz 1969, Simon and Brown 1987). In a series of experiments, Levin (2000) was able to show that the “CR [cross-race] recognition deficit... occurs because the information people select in cross-race faces is optimal for classification, [but] not for recognition (p. 559).” In other words, individuals encountering another person appear to initially make a rapid “like me/not like me” judgment. If the person is perceived to be “not like me,” s/he is processed as a categorial figure, e.g., a Black person, an Asian person, a European person, rather than as a distinct individual, e.g., “That is my friend John.”

Conversely, for same-race faces, encountered persons are not perceived as having an ethnic category membership, but rather as being distinctive individuals. Levin (2000, p. 560) states, “Across a wide variety of situations, cognitions about out-group members emphasize category-level information, whereas cognitions about in-group members emphasize individual characteristics.” Relating this phenomenon to category processing theory, Levin reports that same-race faces appear to be processed using an exemplar (i.e., stimulus-specific) strategy, whereas cross-race faces appear to be processed by comparing them to the prototype for their category, e.g., a typical East Asian, a typical Scandinavian. This suggests that even if, say, an African-American or Mexican-American consumer entered a retail setting in a fully-assimilated condition, i.e., with hairstyle, apparel and language usage fully consistent with European-American cultural norms, s/he likely would still be viewed by a European-American salesperson as a member of an ethnic category and responded to accordingly. Further, if that same African-American or Mexican-American entered the retail setting looking very prototypically like members of that ethnic group, research has shown that s/he is even more likely to experience stereotyped discrimination. For example, Maddox (2004, p. 383) reports that “racial group members whose appearance most closely resembles the ‘typical’ category member are more likely to be viewed through the lens of the category stereotype,” a phenomenon he terms racial stereotypicty bias.

Why does this Cross-Race Recognition Deficit exist? Modern sociological studies (e.g., Palmer 1991) have shown that kin-favoritism, which is consistent with the Weberian-Primordial perspective, is significantly more powerful in large, heterogeneous populations (such as the United States), because kinship group members have lower expectations of assistance and support from persons outside their group. If ethnic groups are viewed as manifestations of kinship coalitions (as Weber proposes), then we would expect a stronger impulse toward cooperation, altruism and coalition-formation to be found within an ethnicity, than across ethnicities. In short, people believe that others who resemble themselves will be more helpful; conversely they anticipate that persons who do not resemble themselves will be less helpful.

Ethnic Badging

Dunbar (1999, p. 200) highlights an additional aspect of our proposed kin-preference ethnicity model that is resonant with marketing models of consumer culture: “The importance of exchanges with kin highlights the significance of correctly identifying relatives, especially in… dispersed communities… One solution [is] badging— the use of culturally-generated external signals of group membership… [These] might include particular styles of dress or ornamentation, the creation of elaborate hair designs, tattooing, etc… Badging allows individuals who belong to the same community to be marked and more easily identified (p. 201-202).” Thus within an ethnic community, specific items of apparel, religious insignia, speech patterns and behaviors may be emphasized and expected in order to create and maintain a consciousness of kind supplementing the physical cues already present.

However, as Dunbar (1999) also notes, such external badges may be imitated by those who desire access to community resources and support, but are not actually community members—the so-called ‘free-loading’ problem (see Boyd and Richerson 2005). In this case, attempts by physically differentiable individuals to mimic (i.e., assimilate to) the ethnic badges of European-Americans may be viewed by some European-Americans as attempts to ‘poach’ their group’s resources. Unless a non-European-American is so physically similar to members of the European-American group that s/he can effectively ‘pass’ (Harper 1998; Wald 2000) and be publicly viewed as European-American, the use of badge products will likely not enable him/her to fully escape discrimination in the marketplace. We propose that because ethnic differences in physical appearance are the most indelible, they are likely therefore to be those most widely recognized and used for making judgments of ethnic membership and lead to discriminatory behaviors. Indeed, the more closely an individual matches the most commonly encountered exemplars or category prototype of his/her ethnic group, the more likely s/he is to be perceived as and responded to as a member of that group.

If our reasoning is correct, then discriminatory practices will most likely be directed toward members of minority ethnic groups who are most consistent in physical appearance—and probably also in modes of apparel, hair style, adornment and dialect—to the cultural prototype for their own group. This would mean that in Anglo-dominant US culture, ethnic minority group members who looked (and sounded, dressed, etc.) leaht like European-Americans and most like members of their own ethnic group would be those most probable of being treated in discriminatory ways, and indeed, this is what the sociological literature has shown (Dixon and Maddox 2005; Klang and Takeuchi 2009; Maddox 2004; Blair, Judd, and Sandler 2002).

Similarly, ethnic minority group members whose physical features, as well as accent, apparel, hairstyle, etc., most closely mimicked those of the European-American cultural prototype, would be the least likely to receive mistreatment in the marketplace, except perhaps in cases where the marketing agent viewed the consumer as trying to ‘pass’ as a European-American. In the latter instance, if the European-American marketing agent feels tricked or deceived, s/he may respond with hostility in order to put the interloper in his/her ‘place’.

Policy Recommendations

The Harris et al (2005, p. 163) article drew attention to the fact that “differential treatment of consumers in the marketplace based on ethnicity... continues to occur” in hotels, restaurants, gas stations, retail stores, grocery stores, home improvement stores” and includes African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, Arab Americans. They recommend increasing diversity training for service personnel in public access retail facilities and educating consumers, themselves, about legal avenues for reporting and challenging discriminatory marketplace practices.

These are also termed “Lamarckian” ethnic markers because they are acquired socially, rather than biologically.
We endorse their suggestions, but believe that the review of the lengthy history of ethnic discrimination illustrates that more aggressive approaches are also appropriate. This is especially probable, since markers of ethnic identity, such as physical appearance, language, and religious practices, are likely to increase in visibility as American culture becomes more diverse. We would recommend the following:

1. That notices of existing state and federal civil rights laws, discrimination reporting procedures and contact information be posted in publicly accessible areas of all retail establishments. Currently many retailers—from hotels to gas stations—have no such notices on display.

2. That service personnel be specifically trained in non-discriminatory interaction techniques and be thoroughly informed of anti-discrimination regulations and reporting procedures.

3. “Testers” and “ghost shoppers” of various ethnicities should be sent periodically to retail settings to see if discrimination is encountered. If it is, reports should be filed with the state and federal civil rights divisions and the marketplace vendor be given a set period of time to (re)-train personnel. If continued violations occurred, the marketer should be publicly censured, much as the Federal Trade Commission and Food and Drug Administration are charged with monitoring and enforcing marketing communications and food and drug safety through periodic audits.

4. It would also be useful for professional organizations to hold annual workshops for managers to discuss the importance of embracing non-discrimination practices in their businesses. Not only customers, but also many employees, are now drawn from a multicultural background. Marketing managers, of necessity as well as ethically, need to be prepared to act in ways that respect the consumer’s ethnic heritage.

In closing, based on the historical and sociological evidence available, the tendency toward discrimination based on physical appearance, dialect and language, and religious traditions may be a part of the human make-up. We may ultimately be found to have innate predispositions to favor those who most resemble ourselves. But as socially malleable and moral beings, we should be able to learn to ‘get along.’

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

When cosmopolitan tastes have been paid attention in consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould & Thompson 2005), the methodological focus has been on polarized class dispositions and predominantly American consumers (Holt 1997, 1998; Allen 2001; Thompson & Tambyah 1999). This investigation was designed to compensate for such shortcomings by contributing a multi-sited interpretation of cosmopolitan middle-class tastes in home aesthetics to CCT. It goes inside the private homes of consumers in Sweden, Turkey and USA, where results present three salient and commonly shared discursive themes of good taste, but reveal clearly local, material interpretations of the same.

“Those people going to IKEA they don’t tread, they don’t travel, they are simply uninspired….They are not...beautiful, if you know what I mean?” Vickie, 35, in Baltimore

In the interdisciplinary research tradition of consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould & Thompson 2004) there is a relatively strong consensus that consumers' tastes are the cultural embodiments and expressions of high or low social status dispositions—a stance which has been empirically supported by research conducted among consumers holding relatively polarized class dispositions, predominantly in America (e.g. Allen 2002; Holt, 1997, 1998; Holt & Thompson 2004; Kozinets 2002) or among American cosmopolitan expatriates abroad (Thompson & Tambyah 1999). However, given that the cultural orientation of cosmopolitanism (Lash & Urry 1994), one of the most salient high culture capital features in consumer culture (Holt 1997; 1998; Thompson & Tambyah 1999) has been absorbed by the middle-classes, and taken on global dimensions, this has created an increasingly complex stage for consumers to give their taste performances. How are dominant tastes in contemporary middle-class cosmopolitan consumer culture transformed or maintained in local arenas, and what do these tastes consist of? These were the main questions guiding this investigation into consumers’ homes in Turkey, USA and Sweden.

CONSUMERS, COSMOPOLITANS AND TASTE

More than a decade ago Holt (1997) positioned his investigation about consumer tastes and lifestyles in postmodernity as a necessary reaction against what he saw as a decreasing interest (since the 1970’s) in social classification within marketing and consumer research. Leaning upon Bourdieu’s (1984) sociocultural class theory, one of Holt’s (1997) main points was that “consumption is socially patterned because people who share similar social conditions acquire similar tastes that organize their consumer actions” (ibid., p.343). Through a poststructural analysis he then showed that consumption patterns are structured by contextualized cultural frameworks of tastes. Bourdieu’s (1984) class theory was then also the theoretical fundament in Holt’s (1998) interpretive study of the structuring power of one of Bourdieu’s social class dimensions, namely “cultural capital,” among American consumers. Holt’s attempt was again to see if and how social class is reproduced within the site of consumption. He demonstrated how American consumers with high and low cultural capital respectively talked about their tastes in highly different manners, and identified six dimensions of tastes that varied according to the low or high cultural capital resources of the respondents. He concluded that aspiring for higher status in consumption is predominantly done through materialist practices among the lower classes (low cultural capital) and through anti-materialist and decommodified practices in the higher classes (high cultural capital).

Although other CCT investigations refer to Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital when interpreting differences in cultural orientations among consumers—e.g. in fashion discourses (Thompson and Haytko 1997), cosmopolitanism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), desire (Belk, Ger and, Askegaard 2003), heroic masculinity (Holt and Thompson 2004), in the rules of ranking within in-group status hierarchies of different consumption subcultures (Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Holt 1995; Belk and Costa 1998; Kozinets 2001; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Ostberg 2007); in food culture (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard 2007) and in the choice of education (Allen 2002) or in responses to e.g. marketing messages (Wallendorf 2001)—Holt’s (1998) cultural capital investigation still offers one of the richest interpretations of consumer tastes in CCT, by going into detail regarding some specific taste boundaries at work when people from lower or higher social status positions talk about consumption practices and taste. However, as he suggests himself, his investigation needs extensions where new research should go across sociohistorical settings and focus on the middle classes given that it is the most growing and dynamic stratum in the late capitalist world (ibid.). Whereas one of the dimensions in his definition of high cultural capital consumption was cosmopolitanism (vs local identity), such cultural orientation can today be said to be adopted and taken on by a wider middle-class. That is, Lash and Urry’s (1994) given components of cosmopolitanism; curiosity and openness towards other cultures, global citizenship, willingness to understand and enter unconventional settings etc—are today rather rules than exceptions, at least discursively, when asking middle-class consumers about their interests in life. Given this, the cosmopolitan middle-class would be an appropriate focus for an extension of Holt’s taste study.

Also, instead of looking at how consumers’ tastes differ across polarized class positions, looking at the way consumers subjectively experience their status universe should be an interesting complement. That is, instead of trying to prove that there is a difference in consumption between high and low status groups based on cultural capital, I will here investigate middle-class consumers’ own subjective structuring of tastes in different socio-historical settings. Hence, the aim of this investigation is to contribute, to CCT, more insights regarding potentially global taste discourses and local taste interpretations among an “ordinary” urban middle-class.

METHOD

In CCT, cross-cultural research in terms of nationalities has, just as in its informing cultural research domains (cultural sociology, anthropology, and ethnology), generally gone from being called “cross-cultural” (Belk 1996; Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 1997; Djursaa and Kragh 1999; Ger and Belk 1996; Ger and Belk 1999; Wallendorf and Arnold 1988), to “ multisited” (Belk, Ger, and, Askegaard 2003; Kjeldgaard, Csaba, and Ger 2006). This derives from a general anti-essentialist thesis and is particularly inspired by Marcus (1995) conception of “ multi-sited ethnography” where processes, things and flows are followed by the researcher across sites instead of hitting down on specific “static” sites. Observing and interviewing consumers in historically different geographical
settings, distant enough from each other so to expect some sort of tension in the material, could at first glance be considered a rather traditional set-up of static sites. However, trying to “trace” the macro discourses luring behind consumers’ use of taste themes in itself implies a flow to be followed, if only conceptually and historically. Hence, instead of taking interest in local consumer tastes in order to appoint certain differences and similarities in-between national cultures, this investigation aims to empirically use three different national settings in order to explore possible media- and marketing-carried discourses to see how these are interpreted materially and conceptually in different sociohistorical contexts.

The data for this study were collected over a three-year period starting in the United States and Turkey in 2005 and ending in Sweden 2007. Phenomenological (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989), long (McCracken 1986) and ethnographic (Holt 1997; 1998) interviews, served as the model for the data collection procedure. Participant observation and interviews were conducted both inside people’s homes and during activities chosen by the consumers. The fieldwork took place with 30 participants in three cities (Malmö, Istanbul, Philadelphia). Despite that, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper, CCT research on taste so far has been focused almost exclusively on American consumers, I still found it important to use the United States as the departure point in order to be able to juxtapose the findings in Sweden and Turkey with data from the United States collected with the same methods. Apart from that, the choice of the specific countries were a result from seeking tension in my material and drew from the idea of historically different social orders and cultural forms where I let Mary Douglas’s (1996) map of four types of culture, originally based on Douglas & Isherwood’s (1979) grid-group diagram, inspire my three choices. Ideal-typically Sweden represented a “dissident enclave.” Turkey a mixture between a “conservative hierarchy” and “backwater isolation,” and the United States a “meritocracy.” By combining these ideal types of sociocultural orders in one and the same investigation a possible dominance of certain discursive themes would bear witness of a higher degree of global flows of tastes than if the sites were more sociohistorically homogeneous.

The participants also differed in-between each other in terms of age and sex, but were similar in that they all belonged to a broad urban middle-class by living in cities, having attended college, earning middle-class wages (relative national standards), and predominantly working in professional occupations (see participants’ profiles, Appendix 1). Last but not least, they all expressed a cosmopolitan orientation as defined by Lash and Urry (1994).

Participants were told that the study concerned their experiences of home. Every interview began with a “grand tour” (McCracken 1989) regarding participants’ social and personal backgrounds, routines, aspirations, life goals and then came to focus upon their experiences of their homes and consumption of home aesthetics, including planned prompts such as looking at magazine images and photographs of other peoples’ home decoration. Every interview ended with a tour of the home. The interviews were recorded on iPod and later transcribed into approximately 900 A4 pages of text. Photographs and fieldnotes supplemented the interview transcripts.

The consumers’ real names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

LOCAL MATERIALIZATIONS OF GLOBAL DISCOURSES

It became obvious after several listenings and readings of my interviews that the emotional intensity with which people talked about preferred or not preferred tastes in home aesthetics overlapped with how they evaluated people’s imagined social status. Respondents displayed frustration—sometimes, even disgust—in relation to certain aesthetic choices, and leaning upon Mary Doug-
“fluffy” were examples of such references to “narrow-minded” working-class people without an education or world knowledge. In general, homes that were stereotyped by my respondents as drowning in large wooden veneer cupboards, kitsch sofas in pink plush or mint green leather, an abundance of ornaments, over-dimensioned technology and industrial carpets, were also spontaneously emphasized by references to manual rather than intellectual labor, and to provincial rather than cosmopolitan identity. The body language and the expressions of my respondents when describing these styles were often so explicit and intense that it seemed as if they were reacting to an acutely bad smell.

In addition, crowded spaces are described as cramped and suffocating. The air has been forced out, and nothing is left. Just a chaos of things that have taken over the home and left the owner out of breath and out of control. Empty spaces are cherished for their inherent good quality, and therefore, spaces must be protected, as in kept free, or as Göran, 35, a consultant, expresses it: “I am just going to let it breathe. In a way I believe it’s important to surround oneself with cubic meters. The “air” that the cubic meters provide the homeowner with is hence precious, as if it were equivalent to actual oxygen. Moreover, things are perceived as more cluttered when there are ornaments and little extras attached to things. The serenity and modesty of modern functionalism has been violated: “Like this very Scandinavian, stylishly pure. And I hate fringes and frills and frlous and pears and stuff. None of that I want! Doilies and no, no, and…” Here, Cecilia, 35, a media consultant, makes it very clear that she strongly dislikes some unnecessary ornamentation. However, Göliz Ger’s (2005) notion of cultural “warming” helps to understand why some people prefer old, nostalgic aesthetics, laces, and doilies. They are used, according to Ger, “to warm valued, but cold objects from the market” (Ger 2005, p. 21).

Yet, while most of my Swedish and American respondents found it important to fight the powers of the market to some extent, by mixing their new furniture (market) with old handmade furniture (non-market), they usually would not go as far as to use frills, doilies and lace. It seemed that such specific ornaments still belonged to a undeserving, unworlly and narrow-minded working-class, hence, people that my cosmopolitan middle-class consumers had no intention to imitate.

**Authenticity-travelling in History**

Authenticity and progression were history-related themes that were oppositional at the same time as they were not mutually exclusive, depending on sociohistorical context. That is, these were both privileged, but by different people in different ways. The nature of authenticity decided when progress was seen as good or bad, and was in turn determined by the nature of the progress.

Among my respondents the exemplification of lack of enlightenment or progress was often made through distinctions between institutional urban enlightenment and rural disenlightenment. The physical disgust which worked to distinguish “us” from “them,” and “high” from “low,” is often considered to be intensified the closer one is to the objects in spatial and historical terms (Bourdieu 1984; Lawler 2005; Miller and Glassner 1997; Skeggs 2004). In Turkey, continuous provocation was caused by what commonly was referred to as the unworlly (non-cosmopolitan) “village style.” This style was explained to me as a very dark, wooden-based style with lots of hand-woven carpets and natural materials decorating walls, furniture and floors. Also, the richness of ornamentation associated with these village house decorations provoked utterances and grimaces of abomination as for Didem, 31, in Istanbul, a housewife married to a rich businessman “Horrible! Horrible! Horrible! I just can’t look at it”.

Also in Sweden the proximity to an uneducated, unworlly, agrarian society, in both geographical and generational terms (the parents of the workers at the beginning of the twentieth century were part of the “rural proletariat”) has historically created a distaste for the working-class living conditions amongst the middle class. This distaste, too, expressed as “bourgeois disgust and sexual anxiety” (Frykmam, 1977, p. 146), through the structure of dirt and cleanliness. Paradoxically, Americans and Swedes talked about the clean “fine rooms” that “some people” used to have in the past, where children were seldom allowed to enter. These rooms oozed of normality and awoke a sense of fear of doing something wrong. The Swedes often referred to heavy, dark, furniture as characteristic of such “fine rooms”, and should therefore be avoided in contemporary proper homes. In contrast, the American respondents were absolutely delighted by dark wood where it was considered to be “authentic” in that it contains mystery and projections of images creating anticipations of excitement. The dark wood offers an infinite landscape of possible life stories, mix-ups, heart-breaks, wars and joyful unions. Dark wood, then, is not perceived as dirty, but wears a thick film of credibility, and an abundance of fantasy and adventure. It provides escape from threatening and uncomfortable connotations of the profane society’s crude status games, and yet provides the means to compete in the status game of good aesthetic taste, through its connotations of upper class “British Men’s clubs” (Mathilda, 42, an intellectual, ex-model’s expression) and elevation above the “common” masses’ involvement in the modern styles of the market. Hence, the dark wood meant dirt to some and genuinely high status to others. But it was at all times associated with the process of ageing, something becoming old. In turn, “old” meant just as different things to some compared to others as did the conception of “dark:”

If you allow me to be a little bit elitist and confess a thing or two about taste? If there’s a group of people sharing the same interest, then it is always wrong to go and buy things new! This counts for almost all cliques. (Göran, 39)

In contrast to:

S: I don’t like old things.
I: Old style?
S: Even maybe antiques. I don’t like it.
I: In this little cupboard here…with the glass…you have antique silver, I think. Is that true?
S: They are not antique…they are new.
I: OK. What is it that you find disturbing about old antiques?
S: I feel it’s dirty [laughter]. They have not became clean…they clean it but I don’t like it. (Selin, 38)

In sum, in their quest for authenticity and uniqueness the American respondents distinguished themselves more than the Swedish and Turkish by strongly emphasizing the virtue of old age in furniture. In America especially old, dark wood was considered to be a prime specimen, with maximized inherent history. This differed from the Swedish respondents who, even if they also celebrated the “old” and “slow”, were much more open to and appreciative of light woods and modern styles. Paradoxically, American respondents were continuously making European references to explain their love for dark, old wooden furniture with a strong sense of nostalgia and romanticism, whereas the Turkish respondents associated the new styles—that is, the modernistic, light, Scandinavian, and less crowded—with necessary progress. Perhaps due to loyalty towards their nation’s design tradition and heritage, Swedish respondents talked highly of Danish, Swedish, and Northern European functionalistic and modernistic design in...
general. This design itself was seen as carrying an analogous patina as the dark and old wood did to the Americans, that is, the same ideas about heritage and authenticity, but vastly different designs.

**Individuality—the Lone Ranger**

Not surprisingly, the virtue of “individuality” emerged as a privileged theme among the taste structures in this investigation. Being unique and different from the mass was a very dominant normative. Its opposition to epidemic style imitation marked the difference between common people who epidemiologically conform, and less common people who dare to oppose on one hand or mix and invent new, undiscovered ways to live and decorate on the other. Vickie, 35, in Baltimore, refers to “the commons” as “I guess a collection of people who do not think about what they put in their homes. Who rather would have someone who does it for them and does not mind prefabricating.” Hence, The market’s prefabricated home styles offered by American and Swedish retailers such as Pottery Barn, Bombay Company, Mio, and IKEA, are considered by the Swedish and American respondents to be inauthentic, fake, and for people without the enlightenment or self-sought inspiration to understand that they live in a time and culture that celebrates individuality and authenticity (Postrel 2003; Holt 1998). Some, like Mathilda, 42, in Baltimore, even go as far as to “worshipping” things that are handmade: “I worship anything that is hand-made just because someone had the inspiration and discipline to make—to create their vision that they had in their mind. And it says so much more about an individual to see things that they made, and to read the titles of the books in the bookshelves, than it is for me to walk into a house and say ‘Oh! Everything in here came from the Bombay Company!’ Even if it all looks nice and it flows very well together and there’s unity and harmony.”

Ultimately, the market’s affordable mass offers have changed something fundamental in society when it comes to aesthetics. That is, design has become available to “the masses” and thereby raises the demands on aesthetics for it to be counted as admired aesthetics. Consumers have found ways to break traditionally unitary styles to create their own “unique” style expression—not least through the practice of eclecticism, like Cecilia, 35, in Malmö, who decorates her home with a mixture of exclusive modern design classics from the 1920’s and more affordable, contemporary modern, mass produced furniture from IKEA: “you know I like this mix between old and new—I mean heirlooms that have patina, a history with, still, a little bit better looking modern stuff that, you know…” Hence, as soon as the choice is a clear imitation—no matter how stylish or expensive—it loses its autonomy and begins to ooze insecurity and dullness. This can be illustrated by a quote from Görän, 40, the Swedish engineer, who looks for unique modern design classics on global auctions sometimes for years before he finds them and then gets them delivered to Sweden. He has a clear impression of how Swedish urban middle-class consumers without imagination decorate their homes today: “It’s like, if you are young, successful, and aware, then you have a Sjuan or Myran and you have of course an Ellips table. It looks the same everywhere! It looks the same everywhere.”

In the framework of the Turkish republic’s heritage and nationalism, the modern, relative the Ottoman style, salon style that once represented radical transformation does not symbolize that anymore for these informants. If the salon was an Ataturkish icon of Westernization it has now lost its symbolic power and prepared the way to move on into “serious” Western Modernity. However, the salon is hard to get rid of. My respondents refer to “other” Turks than themselves as responsible for this, and to structures of society as the reason for the seemingly eternal life of the salon. Umut tells me how a “proper salon” should look. Turkish people prefer two couches, two or three. They also want to buy single armchairs. I don’t know why they prefer that. Look, we don’t have that. But in most of the living-rooms in Turkey you will find these, single ones, one or two. And also, a typical piece of furniture is a garderobe something like this [drawing a garderobe]. A big piece with doors on it, some shelves and they put a lot of money on that. And they think that if there’s not a piece of furniture like this in the living-room, the living-room will be empty [laughter]! This is a must for them [laughter]! I don’t know why they prefer it. They put all the stuff in it. Cups, mugs, I don’t know all the stuff they put in there [laughter]! So they buy something like this, it’s a must, it’s a must! This is Turkish culture, I can say that. (Umut, 31)

Applications of modern “fast-style”, for example to be found in IKEA showrooms, were perceived by the Swedish and American respondents as sick symptoms of a moral and cultural lack of aesthetic imagination and interest. However, to the Turkish respondents the modern fast-style meant something completely different. To the young, well-educated, middle-class Turks in my investigation, modern fast-style constituted a break with one of many other strong norms and traditions of their parents’ generation. There was an almost overwhelming consensus that “all” Turkish homes look the same, especially in the salons. But buying a complete modern set also meant that you could afford to buy everything all at once, as for Umut, 31, an engineer in Istanbul: “There is a harmony here…the colors…the furniture…they are all the same style. I have some friends…they don’t have the same style. They brought together different furniture…you see the difference. I bought them all at once. Not everyone has the same possibility.” To Umut, buying the same style furniture at once is seen as a privilege and not as an uninspired imitation as our Swedish and American respondents put it. Rather, it is a marker of financial possibility, personal independency and cultural courage.

Trying to understand the national patterning regarding the privileging of individuality seen here, we can turn to Douglas Holt’s (1998) findings. He argued that what cultural historians and critics have formerly said regarding consumer individuality—that the pursuit of individuality is a central characteristic only in advanced capitalist/consumer societies—is not necessarily true. Rather, it is, in Holt’s view, consumers’ cultural capital that dictates if they celebrate individuality or communality. Yet, in my investigation, the meanings of individuality differed between the Turkish consumers on one hand and the Swedish and American consumers on the other, despite their similar “levels” of cultural capital. Although the Turkish respondents often had somewhat longer educations than the Swedish and American respondents (and therefore in combination with parents’ and grandparents education, would technically have been seen as having higher cultural capital), they very much appreciated the modern mass produced “fast styles” and saw it more as a privilege, than as a sign of unsupervised low class, to have the opportunity to buy such styles. Hence, these findings would at first glance contradict Holt’s view that the celebration of individuality is more a matter of cultural capital than a sign of living in a late-capitalist society. However, this depends on what one means by individuality. In terms of cultural “details” emphasized by Mary Douglas (1996), the cultural difference lay in whom to consider an authority—whom to rebel against—and the (global) similar meaning of individuality was the rebelling per se. The Turkish respondents’ individuality was symbolized by something completely different from style eclecticism. Their war against conformity was not against uniform styles presented in showrooms and furniture bought in bulk. Their war was in the first place against family influence, a much more urgent matter—without a war against them, no individuality per se. Thus, having the courage and ability to choose a modern fast-style at all was a sign of heroic individuality.
Summary

This investigation aimed to explore the taste discourses used by middle-class consumers with a cosmopolitan orientation towards life and consumption in Sweden, Turkey and USA. Three discursive themes on home aesthetics emerged as producing high status: authenticity-travelling in history, individuality-the lone ranger, and simplicity-learning to be unfuzzy. As illustrated in the previous chapter, these discourses were commonly celebrated in argumentation and talk, but their material interpretations revealed completely different things, especially when looking at national belonging (despite anti-essentialist aims on part of the researcher). For instance, when speaking of authenticity as in historical origins and genuinity, the Swedish respondents discarded robust, heavy and dark 19th century handicraft, but embraced early 20th century functional modernism as it could be traced to specific, celebrated designers. In contrast, the American respondents embraced everything heavy, dark and robust from 19th-20th century handicraft and rejected “cold” modernism as it, to them, signaled mass production and industrialism—that is, the opposite of the Swedes. Another example could be the Swedish and American rejection of buying mass-modern furniture in unitary styles on the basis of it being seen as a sign of lack of individuality. In contrast, in Turkey the respondents were talking of individuality as equally important but materialized it precisely in the way that the Swedish and American respondents would have called bulk imitations. This in the light of the rebellious symbolism of daring to break with the “salon hegemony” in Turkey.

Hence, we see cosmopolitans from different sites talking in a similar manner about good and bad taste. But we see completely different expressions of the same. How can we interpret this? Richard Wilk’s (1995) theory on “global form and common differences” apparently comes to mind as a way to understand this. The global form of taste discourse—authenticity, simplicity and individuality—should then in no way be seen as generic but as cultural norms spread on a global arena. Then, on the local arenas, this form of good taste is filled with local content.

Another way to understand this is to look at the discursive themes as components of a global status hierarchy, spread and produced by the global market system. However, when in one’s immediate local surroundings, the local community’s hierarchies, similar to Warner’s (1954), Jonesville, come to set the rules for how the cosmopolitan status markers may be carried out in practice. Here, the global discourses serve as guidelines for how to talk and legitimize one’s choices, whereas the material embodiment is defined by local codes.

We can then draw the conclusion that there is a lived experience of a global, albeit rather traditionally defined (rather than postmodern), status hierarchy taken into consideration by the cosmopolitan middle-class consumer. However, this order and its rules only reach so far as to the formulation and discursive negotiation of taste. In the material interpretation of the same, hierarchies grounded in local history set the ground rules for how the cosmopolitan orientation and status markers may be played out, and ultimately lived. Hence, the cosmopolitan, in general, needs as Hannertz (1996) posed, the locals, and the middle-class cosmopolitan, in particular, needs the local rules to set the structure for the undefined.

REFERENCES


Douglas, Mary (19962002), Purity and Danger, New York: Routledge Classics.


## APPENDIX

### PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Mathilda</td>
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<td>Mustafa</td>
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<td>Tr</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Serdar</td>
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The Country of Origin Effect and the Role of Moral Emotions
Silvia Grappi, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

ABSTRACT
The aim of the research is to analyze the role of three specific moral emotions (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) in explaining the country of origin (CO) effect on consumer buying behavior. The methodological approach involves the use of an experimental design. We follow the procedures suggested by Muller and colleagues (2005) in order to examine the role of moral emotions. The results show that gratitude, disgust, and contempt mediate the relationship between CO information—considering country of design (CD) and country of manufacture (CM) elements—and consumer buying behaviors. In addition, the results prove the moderating effect of consumer ethnocentrism.

INTRODUCTION
The literature concerning the Country of Origin (CO) effect suggests that consumers’ perceptions about products and their attributes are affected by the CO: favorable or unfavorable evaluations of a country may lead to corresponding favorable or unfavorable evaluations of products associated with that country (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a; 2000b; Maheswaran and Chen 2006). Several factors have been demonstrated to moderate the CO effect, among which is ethnocentrism: the CO may lead to favorable perceptions regardless of the product quality for ethnocentric consumers (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a). The CO may activate various ethnocentric beliefs of consumers, which subsequently affect the interpretation and evaluation of product attributes. Recent research has opened up a new stream of analysis centered on the role of emotions in explaining the CO effect (Maheswaran and Chen 2006). Despite the importance of this topic, the role of emotions is still not systematized and, until now, has been more or less completely neglected in the CO literature. Several important questions, such as the role of emotions in explaining the CO effect, have not been investigated. This research is mainly designed to investigate these issues. In particular, the aim is to analyze the role of three specific moral emotions (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) in explaining the influence of CO information on consumer buying behavior. We propose that these emotions, moderated by ethnocentrism, mediate the relationship between the CO—considering both country of design (CD) and country of manufacture (CM) elements—and consumer intention to buy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
The Country of Origin Effect
The CO effect is a complex phenomenon that refers to the extent to which the place of origin influences consumer product evaluations (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a, 2000b; Verlegh, Steenkamp, and Meulenberg 2005). The literature on the CO effect suggests that favorable country perceptions lead to favorable inferences about products associated with the country and subsequent favorable evaluations. In general, in the absence of information about tangible traits of products, consumers tend to rely on extrinsic cues such as the CO—as indirect indicators of quality and risk (Maheswaran 1994; Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993). Hence, the CO cannot be considered merely a cognitive cue, but is also an affective one with symbolic and emotional meanings. The global nature of businesses further complicates the assessment of the CO effect on product evaluations, and a distinction between the country of design (CD) and country of manufacture (CM) is critical (Ahmed and d’Astous 2008). Indeed, the CO is not always an unequivocal concept (Chao 1998; Thakor and Lavak 2003): in an increasingly global economy, products may be designed in one country and manufactured or assembled in another, thus the CD and CM are two important dimensions in the perception of the CO. Several studies have found that consumers do indeed distinguish between the CD and CM and take both types of information into account when making product evaluations (see, e.g., Ahmed and d’Astous 2002; Chao 1993; Insch and McBride 2004; Thakor and Lavak 2003). The preceding arguments imply that the CM and CD are two important elements of the general concept of the CO of a product.

Consumer Ethnocentrism
The extent to which a product’s country of origin cue is utilized may depend on several factors—e.g., consumer involvement (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a), cultural orientation (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000b), and consumer animosity (Russell and Russell 2006). In particular, the literature has demonstrated the influence of consumer ethnocentrism on the use of CO information (Shimp and Sharma 1987). Consumer ethnocentrism is defined as the belief about the appropriateness, or rather morality, of purchasing foreign-made products instead of locally-made products (Shimp and Sharma 1987). In general, ethnocentrism reflects the view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything (i.e. the home country can be considered the group to which the consumer belongs) and all other groups (i.e. other countries) are rated with reference to it. Therefore, consumer ethnocentrism can be seen as the tendency to overestimate the overall quality of domestic products (Sharma, Shimp, and Shin 1995; Shimp and Sharma 1987) and to favor products that originate from one’s own country, rejecting imported products (Ouellet 2007).

Moral Emotions
Maheswaran and Chen (2006) focus their attention on the impact of incidental emotions on the CO effect. They demonstrate that CO perceptions transcend product-specific characteristics and may have origins in social circumstances. They concentrate the attention on three emotions (anger, sadness, and frustration), showing the incidental effects of specific emotions on the use of CO information in consumer evaluations. Consistent with this stream of research, we recognize the central role of emotions in describing consumers’ consumption experiences (Babin, Darden, and Babin 1998; Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999; Izard 1977; 2009; Laros and Steenkamp 2005; Richins 1997; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O’Connor 1987) and we hypothesize that emotions are also important in explaining the impact of the CO of a product on consumers’ evaluations and behaviors. We expect that the influences of the CM and CD on consumers can be traced back to the role played by specific emotions aroused by the CM and CD information.

We define emotion as a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts. It has a phenomenological tone and is accompanied by physiological processes; it is often expressed physically and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion (Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999). Emotions, organized into generic representations, play an important part in an individual’s life and interactions. In particular, moral emotions may play a crucial role in interpreting people’s reactions. Moral emotions are the emotions that respond to moral violations or that motivate moral behavior. Morality can be defined as judgments that “must bear on the interest or welfare either of...
society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent” (Gewirth 1984, p. 978). Moral emotions are therefore connected to the interests of others (Haidt 2003). In order to identify moral emotions, the concepts of disinterested elicitors and pro-social action tendencies are used: the more an emotion tends to be triggered by disinterested elicitors and motivates a pro-social action tendency, the more it can be considered a prototypical moral emotion (Haidt 2003). Following this classification, we can identify four prototypical moral emotions: elevation, compassion, anger, and guilt—followed by other moral emotions that are distinct from the first four because of their lower level of pro-social action tendency and/or disinterested elicitors—gratitude, shame, embarrassment, contempt, and disgust.

At the lower level of pro-social action tendency and/or disinterested elicitors we can find the emotions of fear, pride, sadness, happiness, DAAD (distress at another’s distress), and schadenfreude (i.e., the joy that is elicited by the misfortunes of others) (Haidt 2003).

**RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

We expect that the CO of a product is able to give rise to moral emotions because it relates to the sense of belonging of respondents to their country and, therefore, to behaviors they consider correct and fair in the interest of their home country. Given the objective of this research, we are primarily interested in the role played by emotions arising from the behaviors of others (therefore excluding all the emotions arising as a consequence of the behaviors of the elicitor) we aim to analyze whether the choice of a company to design and manufacture its product in different countries is able to generate different emotions in consumers and, therefore, to influence their behaviors. In other words, we aim to identify the moral emotions connected with different CMs and CDs of a product, and their role in mediating this information on consumer behaviors.

On the basis of these implications and suggestions, we select a set of moral emotions that we think are able to cover the range of the most important emotions that a consumer can feel in different CO contexts. These emotions are: contempt, disgust, and gratitude. We expect that these emotions are able to affect the connection between CO information and consumer behaviors.

In particular, we hypothesize that these moral emotions play a different role depending on the CO information processed by consumers. When consumers are evaluating a product characterized by favorable CM and CD information, gratitude is expected to play a central role in mediating this information on the consumer intention to buy the product. On the contrary, when the CM and CD are unfavorable, disgust and contempt are expected to mediate this information on consumer behaviors. In hybrid situations (favorable CM and unfavorable CD; unfavorable CM and favorable CD), we hypothesize the simultaneous effects of negative and positive emotions. We also hypothesize a moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism in each CO context (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2004).

**METHOD**

The methodological approach for testing the hypotheses involves the use of an experimental design. Several pretests were conducted to select both the product and the countries for the experiment.

**Pretest.** In the first pretest, subjects rated their overall level of knowledge about three different products: a digital camera, sunglasses, and ceramic tiles. These three products were selected to cover a wide range of different options: an electronic product (the digital camera), a fashion product (the sunglasses), and a technical product (the ceramic tiles). In each pretest, performed separately for each product, the subjects rated their level of knowledge of the product on a seven-point scale: sunglasses (n=30; M=4.00, std=0.95); digital camera (n=30; M=3.57, std=1.19); ceramic tiles (n=30; M=3.23; std=0.94). We selected sunglasses, which are the product with the highest level of knowledge among the respondents. In order to select the countries, we asked the respondents to evaluate, on a seven-point scale, the ability of eleven different countries (Australia, Belgium, China, France, Japan, the UK, Italy, Morocco, Russia, Spain, and the USA) as the manufacturer and, separately, as the designer of the product (n=30). Morocco (M=2.03, std=1.10) was considered to be the least able manufacturer, as well as the least able designer (M=1.33, std=0.61), of the product. In contrast, Italy proved to be considered the most able manufacturer (M=6.20; std=1.27) and designer (M=6.43, std=1.07) of sunglasses.

**Subjects.** In a 2 (CD: Italy or Morocco) x 2 (CM: Italy or Morocco) between-subjects design, 269 Italian consumers were randomly assigned to conditions. We also collected 70 questionnaires for the control condition (without information on the CD and CM of the product). Of the interviewees, 50.4% were female and 49.6% were male. The mean age of the participants was 39. Graduate or higher educated respondents accounted for 39% of the sample, followed by respondents with a high school education (47%) or less (14%). The statistics showed that 53.3% of total respondents were from the center-south of Italy, while 46.7% were from the north of Italy.

**Procedure.** The subjects were told that a company wants to market a new line of sunglasses and that they would read some information about this new line. The subjects were also told the CM and CM of the product in the manipulated conditions. Then, the participants proceeded to complete the dependent measures and, at the end of the questionnaire, they were debriefed.

**Independent Variables.** The cover page of the questionnaire manipulated the CO information by varying the country of manufacture and the country of design of the product. The participants learned the same information about the product, and different CMs and CDs, as they were randomly assigned to different experimental conditions. There were four experimental conditions: CM Italy and CD Italy; CM Italy and CD Morocco; CM Morocco and CD Italy; CM Morocco and CD Morocco. In the control group, the subjects learned the same information about the product without cues about the country of manufacture and design.

**Dependent Variables.** All the dependent variables were assessed using scales anchored by 1 and 7. First, the subjects expressed the degree to which they felt different emotions based on the information they had just read. Then, they gave their intention to buy the product. Afterwards, the level of ethnocentrism of the respondents...
was measured. At the end, the subjects responded to manipulation check questions and age and gender were indicated.

**Moral Emotions.** The subjects were given a list of emotions and were asked to express the degree to which they felt each of these emotions on the basis of the information they had just read. Measures of emotions were selected from the literature (Haidt 2003; Lasors and Steenkamp 2005; Richins 1997; Shaver et al. 1987). For disgust the items are a feeling of distaste and a feeling of revulsion (r=0.96), for contempt they are contemptuous and scornful (r=0.97), and for gratitude they are thankful and a feeling of appreciation (r=0.78). The items measuring the same emotions were averaged to form the emotions indexes.

**Consumers’ Intention to Buy.** The subjects were asked to express their degree of agreement with different statements, aimed at measuring their intention to buy the featured product: “I am willing to purchase this product the next time I need sunglasses,” “I like the idea that I can buy and use this product,” and “I probably will try this product when it is available” (a=0.74).

**Ethnocentrism.** Ethnocentrism was measured using four items (Ouellet 2007) selected from the CETscale (Shimp and Sharma 1987): “A good citizen does not buy foreign products,” “It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts us out of jobs,” “We should purchase products manufactured in our country instead of letting other countries get rich off us,” and “We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country” (a=0.93).

**Manipulation Checks.** The CM and CD of the product were checked in the final section of the questionnaire, which asked the respondents to remember and write down in which country the product was designed and in which it was manufactured, then rate the ability of the countries as the manufacturer/designer of the product. At the end, the subjects assessed the importance of the CM and CD in their buying choices.

## RESULTS

The experimental groups were contrasted with the control groups (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a). No systematic effects were observed with gender and age as covariates.

**Manipulation Checks.** An ANOVA on the CM and CD revealed the main effects of the two elements. The participants remembered correctly the CD and the CM in each experimental condition, and reported correctly the expected level of ability of the countries to design/manufacture the product (Table 1). ANOVAs on the importance of CM and CD information in consumers’ evaluation and purchase of the product revealed no significant differences among the experimental conditions.

**Intention to Buy.** First of all, we tested the relevance of the CO information to consumers’ evaluations by comparing two groups: one group corresponds exclusively to the control condition (without information on the CO of the product) and the other group includes all the other conditions. A t-test on the intention to buy index yielded a significant effect of CO information (t=5.67, P<.005), showing that the CO influences consumers’ intention to buy the product. Moreover, an ANOVA on the intention to buy index performed among the experimental sets confirmed the influences of the CM and CD on intention to buy (F(4,334)=49.13, P <.005).

In order to test the research hypotheses, we analyzed the role of moral emotions in affecting the “CO information–intention to buy” relation. The means and standard deviations of the dependent variable and of moral emotions, for each experimental condition, are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

In order to detect the role of moral emotions in explaining consumers’ behaviors within the experimental sets, we followed the approach of Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt (2005) in analyzing the moderated mediation and mediated moderation processes. The relevant variables are: (1) the manipulated independent variable, X (country of origin), indicating the different experimental conditions; (2) the outcome variable, Y (intention to buy), which is the measured response of the participants presumed to be affected by the treatment; (3) the mediating variables, Me (moral emotions), which are response variables also expected to be affected by the treatment; (4) the moderating variable, Mo (ethnocentrism), which is an individual difference variable, continuously measured, assumed not to be affected by the treatment.

The **mediated moderation** process can happen only when moderation occurs: the magnitude of the overall treatment effect on the outcome depends on an individual difference (in this case, ethnocentrism), then the moderated moderation question is concerned with the mediating process that is responsible for that moderation. The **moderated mediation** process happens if the mediating process that is responsible for producing the effect of the treatment on the outcome depends on the value of the moderator variable. Given that the moderator is an individual difference variable (ethnocentrism), then it would mean that the mediating process that intervenes between the treatment and the outcome is different for people who differ on that individual difference.

There are three fundamental models that underlie both these processes (Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt 2005). The first model assesses the moderation of the overall treatment effect:

\[
Y = b_{10} + b_{11}X + b_{12}Mo + b_{13}XMo + e_i
\]  

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CD Italy</th>
<th>CD Morocco</th>
<th>t; p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CM Ability</strong></td>
<td>6.32 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.99 (1.14)</td>
<td>1.68; 0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CD Ability</strong></td>
<td>5.76 (1.50)</td>
<td>3.39 (1.62)</td>
<td>8.59; 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CM Ability</strong></td>
<td>2.93 (1.54)</td>
<td>2.40 (1.43)</td>
<td>2.10; 0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CD Ability</strong></td>
<td>5.89 (1.26)</td>
<td>2.77 (1.30)</td>
<td>14.42; 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CM Ability</strong></td>
<td>13.92; 0.00</td>
<td>16.44; 0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CD Ability</strong></td>
<td>-0.50; 0.61</td>
<td>2.48; 0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note–cell size ranges from n=59 to n=70
The second model allows the treatment effect on the mediator to be moderated:

\[ M_e = b_{20} + b_{21}X + b_{22}Mo + b_{23}XMo + e_2 \]  

(2)

The third model allows both the mediator’s (partial) effect on the outcome and the residual effect of the treatment on the outcome, controlling for the mediator, to be moderated:

\[ Y = b_{30} + b_{31}X + b_{32}Mo + b_{33}XMo + b_{34}Me + b_{35}MeMo + e_3 \]  

(3)

In all three models, \( X \) and \( Mo \) are uncorrelated and all the variables are centered at their mean, with the exception of the outcome (Muller et al. 2005). In distinct analyses for each moral emotion (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) we estimated models 1 through 3 to demonstrate mediated moderation and moderated mediation processes.

**Mediated Moderation.** In model 1, we would expect \( b_{13} \) to be significant, indicating overall treatment moderation; in models 2 and 3, either (or both) of two patterns should exist: both \( b_{23} \) and \( b_{34} \) are significant and/or both \( b_{21} \) and \( b_{35} \) are significant. Moreover, the moderation of the residual treatment effect, \( b_{33} \), should be reduced in magnitude compared with the moderation of the overall treatment effect. In order to understand the mediated moderation effect, it is useful to calculate:

- The simple effects of treatment on emotion at values of one standard deviation above and below the moderator (ethnocentrism) mean score: \( b_{31} + (b_{33} \cdot \pm Mo_{ad}) \)  

(4)

- The total indirect effects through the mediator (emotion), taking the product of the two simple effects (4) and (5) for each of the two values of ethnocentrism.

**Moderated Mediation.** In model 1, we would expect \( b_{11} \) to be significantly different from zero, while \( b_{13} \) is not. In models 2 and 3, either (or both) of two patterns should exist: both \( b_{23} \) and \( b_{34} \) are significant and/or both \( b_{21} \) and \( b_{35} \) are significant. A consequence is that the residual treatment effect should now be moderated, that is, \( b_{33} \) may be significant, but this is not a necessary condition for establishing moderated mediation (Muller et al. 2005). It is also useful to calculate:

- The simple effects of the manipulation on the emotion at one standard deviation above and below the moderator mean using the following equation: \( b_{31} + (b_{33} \cdot \pm Mo_{ad}) \)  

(4)

- The simple effect of the mediator on intention at values of one standard deviation above and below the ethnocentrism mean score: \( b_{34} + (b_{35} \cdot \pm Mo_{ad}) \)  

(5)

- The total indirect effects through the mediator, taking the product of the two simple effects (4) and (5) for each of the two values of ethnocentrism.

- The total residual treatment effects at the two levels of ethnocentrism: \( b_{31} + (b_{33} \cdot \pm Mo_{ad}) \)  

(6)

The results, illustrated in Tables 4 and 5, show the mediating role of moral emotions, supporting H1, and the moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism, supporting H2.

The findings show that in the first set (CM Italy and CD Italy) the moral emotion of gratitude is able to affect the intention to buy...
### TABLE 4
THE MEDIATED MODERATION AND MODERATED MEDIATION PROCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>Contempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 1: CM Italy, CD Italy</td>
<td>Moderated</td>
<td>b₁₁≠0 and b₃₅≠0</td>
<td>No hypothesized effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 2: CM Italy, CD Morocco</td>
<td>Mediated</td>
<td>b₁₁≠0 and b₃₅≠0</td>
<td>No verified effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>b₂₃≠0 and b₄₄≠0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 3: CM Morocco, CD Italy</td>
<td>Mediated</td>
<td>b₁₁≠0 and b₃₅≠0</td>
<td>b₂₃≠0 and b₄₄≠0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b₂₃≠0 and b₄₄≠0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 4: CM Morocco, CD Morocco</td>
<td>Mediated</td>
<td>No hypothesized effect</td>
<td>b₂₃≠0 and b₄₄≠0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 5
SIMPLE AND TOTAL EFFECTS IN MEDIATED MODERATION AND MODERATED MEDIATION PROCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>High Ethnocentrism</th>
<th>Low Ethnocentrism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 1-CM Italy and CD Italy</td>
<td>1.47 + (0.04*1.95)=1.55</td>
<td>1.48 + (0.04*-1.95)=1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>0.33 + (-0.06 * 1.95)=0.21</td>
<td>0.33 + (-0.06 * -1.95)=0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.55 * 0.21=0.33</td>
<td>1.40 * 0.45=0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.29 + (0.10*1.95)=0.49</td>
<td>0.29 + (0.10*-1.95)=0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple residual treatment effect</td>
<td>Simple residual treatment effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-1.36 + (-0.37*1.95)=2.08</td>
<td>-1.36 + (-0.37*-1.95)=0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>0.33 + (-0.06 *1.95)=0.21</td>
<td>0.33 + (-0.06 * -1.95)=0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2.08 * 0.21=-0.44</td>
<td>-0.62 * 0.45=-0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 2-CM Italy and CD Morocco</td>
<td>-0.82 + (-0.43*1.95)=-1.66</td>
<td>-0.82 + (-0.43*-1.95)=0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>0.33 + (-0.06*1.95)=0.21</td>
<td>0.33 + (-0.06 *-1.95)=0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-1.66 * 0.21=-0.35</td>
<td>0.02 * 0.45=0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.33 + (0.50 *1.88)=1.27</td>
<td>1.33 + (0.50 *-1.88)=0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>-0.28 + (0.01*1.88)=-0.26</td>
<td>-0.28 + (0.01 *-1.88)=-0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.27 * -0.26=-0.33</td>
<td>0.39 * -0.30=-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.11 + (0.44 *1.83)=1.92</td>
<td>1.11 + (0.44 *-1.83)=0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.26 + (0.02 * 1.83)=-0.22</td>
<td>-0.26 + (0.02 * -1.83)=-0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.92 * -0.22=-0.42</td>
<td>0.31 * -0.30=-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 3-CM Morocco and CD Italy</td>
<td>1.95 + (0.38 *1.88)=2.66</td>
<td>1.95 + (0.38 *-1.88)=1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>-0.28 + (0.01*1.88)=-0.26</td>
<td>-0.28 + (0.01 *-1.88)=0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.66 * -0.26=-0.69</td>
<td>1.24 * -0.30=-0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
<td>Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
<td>Simple effect of the emotion on intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.76 + (0.35 *1.83)=2.40</td>
<td>1.76 + (0.35 *-1.83)=1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>-0.26 + (0.02 * 1.83)=-0.22</td>
<td>-0.26 + (0.02 * -1.83)=-0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.40 * -0.22=-0.53</td>
<td>1.12 * -0.30=-0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
through a moderated mediation process. Therefore, hypothesis H1a is supported. In this context, the simple effects of the manipulation on the mediator (gratitude) reveal that the manipulation increases the emotion of gratitude (1.55 for high ethnocentrism; 1.40 for low ethnocentrism). We again calculate the simple effects of gratitude on intention to buy (0.21 for high ethnocentrism; 0.45 for low ethnocentrism) and, taking the product of the two simple effects for each of the two values of ethnocentrism, we obtain the total indirect effects through gratitude (for high ethnocentrism 0.33; for low ethnocentrism 0.63). The two simple residual treatment effects are 0.49 for the high ethnocentrism condition and 0.10 for the low ethnocentrism condition. These results show that the indirect effect, via the mediator, is higher when ethnocentrism is low rather than high. This finding is particularly interesting. The experimental treatment, in fact, affects gratitude more in the high than in the low ethnocentrism condition, whereas the effect of gratitude on intention is stronger for those characterized by low ethnocentrism. Given that in the moderated mediation process the effect of the experimental treatment on the dependent variable is mainly based on the mediating variable (in this case, gratitude), the total effect on intention to buy is higher for those characterized by low ethnocentrism, owing to the stronger influence of gratitude on consumers’ intention to buy among this group of respondents.

As regards the second set (CM Italy and CD Morocco), even in this case only the moral emotion of gratitude is able to affect intention to buy but, differently from the first experimental set, through a mediated moderation process. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of gratitude, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.44) rather than low (-0.28). Consistent with this, the results reveal that the residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled. Indeed, the coefficient associated with the manipulation*ethnocentrism interaction has been reduced from -0.52 (in equation 1) to -0.47 (in equation 3).

In the third set (CM Morocco and CD Italy) all the three moral emotions of gratitude, disgust, and contempt are able to affect intention to buy through mediated moderation processes. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of contempt, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.42) rather than low (-0.09). The residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled (it has been reduced from -0.49 to -0.41). The same results are found for the other two emotions. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of disgust, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.33) rather than low (-0.12). The residual effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled: the coefficient has been reduced from -0.49 to -0.37. For those high in ethnocentrism, the manipulation decreases gratitude and the effect on intention to buy is -0.35. For those low in ethnocentrism the manipulation does not decrease gratitude and there is no effect on the outcome (the total indirect effect is 0.01). The results also reveal that the residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled. The manipulation*ethnocentrism coefficient has been reduced from -0.49 to -0.41.

These findings show the important role played by the emotion of gratitude in the hybrid contexts. In the “CM Italy–CD Morocco” set, gratitude is the only emotion able to affect the relation between CO information and intention to buy, whereas the negative emotions of disgust and contempt prove not to have a role in affecting this connection. In the “CM Morocco–CD Italy” context, instead, both gratitude and disgust and contempt are able to affect the “CO information–intention to buy” connection, underlining the presence of a mix of positive and negative emotions in this condition. Therefore, H1b is partially supported.

In the fourth set (CM Morocco and CD Morocco) all the two negative moral emotions of disgust and contempt are able to affect intention to buy through mediated moderation processes, supporting H1c. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of disgust, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.69) rather than low (-0.37). The residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is -0.58, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled (it has been reduced from -0.67). The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of contempt, is stronger in the high ethnocentrism condition (-0.53) than in the low ethnocentrism condition (-0.34). Once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled, the residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is -0.61 (it has been reduced from -0.67).

CONCLUSION

This research adds to the growing body of literature that contends the role of emotions in consumer evaluations and behaviors, extending the analysis of emotions on the CO effect. In particular, the experiment featured in this research details the effects of three specific moral emotions (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) on the use of CO information in consumer buying behavior.

Moral Emotions and the CO Effect

The findings show that specific moral emotions mediate the effect of CO information on consumer intention to buy, and these mediating effects are different depending on the specific CM and CD of the product. In detail, this research shows that the emotions of gratitude, contempt, and disgust mediate the influence of CO information on consumer intention to buy, and this influence is qualified by the moderating role of an individual characteristic: consumer ethnocentrism.

Deepening the role of moral emotions, the results show that their mediating effects are different depending on the CO information processed. It seems that, when the CM information is favorable, regardless of CD, the emotion of gratitude is central: both in “CM Italy–CD Italy” and “CM Italy–CD Morocco” contexts, gratitude is fundamental in explaining the influence of CO information on consumer behavior: in the first context through a moderated mediation process and in the second through a mediated moderation process. Moreover, the negative emotions of disgust and contempt, initially hypothesized as able to influence the CO effect in the “CM Italy–CD Morocco” experimental set, are shown not to play a significant role in this situation, underlining the absence of a mix of positive and negative emotions in this context and, therefore, highlighting the central role of gratitude. It is therefore possible to conclude that, when the CM information is favorable, regardless of the CD, gratitude plays a fundamental role in the “CO information–intention to buy” relation.

When the CM information is unfavorable, regardless of the CD, the negative moral emotions of disgust and contempt are shown to be important in influencing the “CO information–intention to buy” connection. In the “CM Morocco–CD Italy” context, the emotion of gratitude is also shown to play a role side by side with the two negative emotions of contempt and disgust, emphasizing that in this situation a mix of positive and negative emotions affect the “CO information–intention to buy” connection takes place.
To conclude, these findings show the influence of CO information on consumer behavior and the role played by moral emotions. Thus, the results suggest devoting particular attention to CO communication strategies: the delocalization and international sourcing paths followed by an always increasing number of firms highlight the relevance of communications strategies to consumers, which encompass the management of different CO cues that are able to foster different moral emotions and, consequently, affect consumer behaviors. Our findings reveal how the CO content is able to affect the overall evaluation of the product, thus a communications strategy based on the origin of the product has to be carefully managed because if the wrong information is conveyed, negative moral emotions are fostered and the effect on consumer behaviors could be extremely negative.

Limitations and Future Research

Some issues that emerged from this research may merit further investigation. First, this research demonstrates the role of three specific moral emotions in qualifying the CO effect, showing the relevant mediating effect they exert on the “CO information–intention to buy” connection. Further research should examine the role of other moral emotions characterized by different degrees of disinterested elicitors and pro-social action tendencies. It could be of interest to examine the role of moral emotions arising as a consequence of the behaviors of the elicitor. Analyzing, for example, the role of embarrassment or shame (in mediating unfavorable CO information) or pride and happiness (in mediating favorable CO information) on consumer behaviors in a social consumption context should contribute to the knowledge on this topic. Second, our findings suggest that the influence of moral emotions in mediating the CO information on intention to buy depends on the CO information processed by consumers: favorable CO information gives rise to positive emotions; unfavorable CO information gives rise to negative emotions. In hybrid contexts, when CM is unfavorable (Morocco), negative emotions play a relevant role side by side with the emotion of gratitude; when CM is favorable (Italy) only the emotion of gratitude has a role in mediating the “CO information–intention to buy” connection. This means that the CO of a product is able to give rise to positive moral emotions when it confirms the link of respondents to the country they favorably evaluate as the manufacturer, whereas it gives rise to negative emotions when it questions this connection. This relation deserves further research. Third, the findings highlight the moderating role of the individual characteristic of ethnocentrism within the “CO information–moral emotions–intention to buy” connections. This moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism needs to be further analyzed. Finally, different contexts, situations, and motivations may lead consumers to experience emotions with different degrees of intensity, or to experience different emotions. These elements may affect how consumers process information (Jain, Lindsey, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2007) and need to be checked and investigated.

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Minority Religious Rituals in the Post-Colonial World: The Case of Ramadan in France

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ABSTRACT

Minority ethnic groups have been extensively studied in the North American context (see e.g., Cui 2001 for a review). Similarly, rituals have been the focus of intensive investigation by consumer researchers, usually within the confines of North America (see e.g., Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry 1989; Rook 1986). Yet, as has been well-documented in the past decade, the North American template is not always appropriate for comprehending ethnicity or ritual in other countries or cultures (Erdem and Schmidt 2008). In the present study we investigate a particular minority ethnic group—Muslims from North Africa now living in France. Our focus is upon the ritual manifestations of Islamic religious practices during the holy month of Ramadan in this diasporic setting. Findings suggest that Ramadan in France is focused upon the seeking of self-purification, the reinvigorating of familial and Muslim community bonds, and the activation of a sense of charity and concern for others.

Islamic consumer behavior has recently received attention from a small set of researchers (see e.g., Ger and Sandikci 2001; 2003; 2009; Ustuner and Holt 2007) who have contributed valuable knowledge to our understanding of this global religious affiliation. Though Islam is the largest of the world’s religions and has adherents on every continent, it has been given markedly less study by Western academicians than have Christianity and Judaism. Further, the few studies conducted on Islamic consumer behavior have almost always been conducted in settings in which Islam is the majority religious tradition, for example, Turkey and Tunisia (Ger and Sandikci 2001; 2003; Touzani and Hirschman 2008; Ustuner and Holt 2007). However, there are now significant diasporic Muslim communities in several predominantly Christian countries—for example, Britain, Canada, the United States and France (Cesari 2002; Sabdikci and Ger 2009; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Roded 2008).

The French context is especially interesting, because many of the Muslim residents of modern-day France are the direct product of French colonial expansionism into Africa during the 1800s and 1900s (Cesari 2002; Beji-Becheur, Oztaglar-Toulouse, Zouaghi 2007). During the colonial period, a substantial portion of North Africa, from Morocco to Tunisia, was brought under French military and cultural control. The French withdrew from Morocco in 1956, from Algeria in 1962, and from Tunisia in 1956. However, as a legacy of the colonial period, citizens of these former colonies may legally immigrate to France. This region of North Africa, termed the Maghreb, has sent 4,000,000 persons to live in France since the 1960s. There are now Muslim émigrés in France from the first, second and even third generations of this in-migration. Approximately half are native born in France and hence hold full-citizenship (Cesari 2002)

In general, these Franco-Maghrebis have not been well received by the French government or French citizenry (Cesari 2002; Gross, McMurray, and Swedenborg 2002)). Most of the Islamic population is housed in large high-rise apartment buildings and segregated from the rest of French society (Cesari 2002; Gross et al. 2002). Currently some of these communities have youth unemployment rates of 70% (Cesari 2002; Gross et al. 2002). Franco-Maghrebis are regarded by many French as racially, as well as religiously, distinctive and viewed with many of the same prejudices that Americans of African descent experience in the United States (Cesari 2002; Gross et al. 2002). Upon occasion, this has resulted in social protest on the part of the Franco-Maghrebi community, with riots occurring in 1990 and again in 2005 (Cesari 2002; Beji-Becheur et al. 2007). This social unrest has resulted in acts of ethnic hostility by some in the surrounding French society; for example, during Fall 2008, several French mosques were desecrated with swastikas.

Prior research has indicated that Islamic religious rituals may play varied roles in French-Maghrebi efforts to negotiate their cultural identities as a large, but stigmatized and economically disadvantaged, ethnic population (Beji Becheur et al. 2007; Gross et al. 2002). In the present study we focus on the role which consumption rituals during the most important religious festival in the Islamic calendar—the month of Ramadan—play in Franco-Maghrebi attempts to structure a place for themselves in a predominantly Christian, European and affluent society.

RELIGION AS A CULTURAL STRUCTURE

Religious rituals are an important aspect of almost any culture, even those that consider themselves secularized and scientific (Hirschman 1985; Kozinets 2001; O’Guinn and Belk 1989). Religion can provide belief systems that enable individuals to bond with each other, as well as to create, maintain and reinforce interpersonal links in a given community (Durkheim 1912; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Roded 2008). In order to establish and maintain cohesion, immigrant religious groups often bring with them ritual practices from their country-of-origin (Mehta and Belk 1991; Penaloza 1994; Sekhon and Szmugin 2005). However, once in the host country, such religious traditions may be stigmatized and pointed out as an impediment to the immigrants’ integration and well-being in the hosting country (Penaloza 1994; Roded 2008; Sekhon and Szmugin 2005; Gross et al. 2002). For example, in France the speaking of Arabic, wearing of headscarves (hijab) by women, and ritual slaughtering of meat animals (e.g., chickens, goats) have created social problems for Muslim Maghrebi residents (Cesari 2002; Gross et al. 2002). The objective of this paper is to explore the enactment and evolution of this ethnic group’s Ramadan religious rituals and to highlight the syncretic transformations these rituals may undergo at the consumption level.

RITUALS: DEFINITION, CLASSIFICATION AND ROLE IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

From an academic perspective, rituals can be found everyday and everywhere (Rook 1986). “Society is intrinsically ritualistic” (Lardellier 2003, p.16). In many contexts, e.g., birthday parties, funerals, weddings, and retirement, consumers participate in predefined ritual scenarios. These scenarios usually involve artifacts, a specified order of performance and several contributing actors (see e.g., Rook 1986). According to Maisonneuve (1995), rituals may serve three major functions: 1. Mediation with divine, occult or idealized forces and values. This function requires the use of certain symbols or a symbol set that enables a relationship to be made or maintained with the divine. An example would be the case of Muslims’ ritual slaughter in which the meat animal is slain in a specified and painless manner, that is, following halal practice. 2. Communication and Regulation. Rituals may act to create and consolidate social links and enforce social norms among community members. Typically, this type of ritual requires social visits, meetings, and gatherings that assert the group’s common values; they often promote a “consciousness of kind.” For instance, certain Islamic greetings (e.g., salam alechem), religious feasts, e.g., the Eid, and the care given to certain articles of clothing (e.g., the hijab) perform this function.
Rituals may allow persons to control emotions such as fear and anxiety, and to feel in control of space and time. This function is illustrated by rituals linked to the individual’s age (such as birthday parties, circumcision at age 13 for Muslim boys), prayers seeking forgiveness of one’s sins and protection from evil, and funeral ceremonies with burial in sanctified ground (see e.g., Caseneuve 1999; Haddad and Esposito 1998). This function is a response to the distress, the indetermination, and the insecurity generated by daily political or social life.

RITUALS AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Acts of consumption are present to some degree in virtually all forms of ritual (Caseneuve 1999; Durkheim 1912). These can consist of buying specific objects to help implement the ritual, for example specific articles of food, clothing or décor (see e.g., Rook 1985). In some cases, for example, gift giving, the consumption act itself is a ritual and has distinguishing features (Sherry and McGrath 1989).

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: RAMADAN IN FRANCE

As already noted, France is the primary Muslim Maghrebi immigrant destination in Europe (Cesari 2002), yet North African Muslims are not the only persons practicing Islam in France. Three primary Islamic minority groups can be found in France: North Africans, Sub-Saharan Africans, and most recently Central Asians (e.g., Turks and Pakistanis). Still, immigrants coming from the Maghreb constitute the largest Muslim population in France, totaling around 6% of the total French population and 40% of all French immigrants. The North African immigrant group is composed of approximately 46% Moroccans, 40% Algerians, and 14% Tunisians.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is a very special period of the year for Muslims all over the world, a period that is supposed to be devoted to spiritual meditation, reverence toward God, and self-discipline (see e.g., Touzani and Hirschman 2008). Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam. It consists of refraining from eating, drinking, smoking and having sexual intercourse from dawn to twilight. But beyond mere abstinence, the essence of Ramadan lies in individuals’ struggling against their own internal desires. Thus, it is aimed toward fulfilling Durkheim’s (1912) sacrificial function of ritual.

Despite this spiritual purpose, however, Ramadan today is often celebrated as a consumption festival, a festival that mobilizes Muslims around the world for an entire month. Thus theologically, although Muslim consumers are supposed to control and master their carnal desires during Ramadan, in practice it is often possible to observe acts of over-consumption, especially of food, clothes, and recreational activities. In predominantly Muslim countries during Ramadan, the commercial and media landscapes are dramatically altered and there is a great effort by marketers to encourage consumption (Sandikci and Omerak 2007; Touzani and Hirschman 2008). Conversely, in France, Muslims are an ethnic minority group and have to celebrate Ramadan within a surrounding Christian context; they may therefore encounter obstacles because the consumption environment is not adapted to their worshiping practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study aims to identify and interpret rituals as they are actually practiced during the month of Ramadan by the North-African Muslim community in France. Because so very few prior studies have examined Islamic behavior in a minority setting, an exploratory study such as the present one seems most appropriate (see e.g., Gross et al. 2002; Beji-Becheur 2007). This choice can be justified by the nature of the data we collected, which is interpretive, and also by our desire to examine the largest number of consumer behavior elements occurring during Ramadan. In-depth interviews were carried out to access behaviors, representations, and interpretations of the observances lived by these Maghrebi consumers in France.

The 29 interviews were conducted by the primary researcher (who is of Maghrebi ethnicity and was educated in France) using methodology drawn from Kaufmann’s (2006) comprehensive interview guide. This approach is based on the theoretical stance that individuals are not simply agents responding to external cultural structures, but rather are active producers of the social system in which they reside, and therefore possess important interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge that the researcher must access (Kaufmann 2006).

Our informants’ demographic characteristics are described in Table 1. The informants were chosen in order to create diversity of their immigration status, e.g., first, second, third generation, and thus provide more varied and rich information (Pires et al. 2003). In order to identify the central meanings of Ramadan for these informants, the interview transcripts were read multiple times and key ideas were identified. Informants’ testimonies were then translated from Arabic or French into English for use in the present paper. When the words or expressions have no equivalent in English or when they have connotations not covered appropriately by an English word or phrase, the original Arabic or French expressions are maintained and approximate translations are inserted between brackets.

FINDINGS

Consistent with prior findings in Muslim-dominant countries (see e.g., Ger and Sandikci 2007; Touzani and Hirschman 2008), our interviewees stated that their lifestyle was significantly altered during Ramadan and most (but not all, especially the younger informants, adopted behaviors more in conformity with the senior members of their family, as well as those of the French Muslim community as a whole, during this time period. Most of our informants reported that they suppressed their individuality during Ramadan and attempted to more closely bind their behavior to the norms of Islamic law and custom. (Again, there were generational differences noted, with younger Maghrebis being somewhat less inclined to observe Ramadan strictly).

In keeping with the findings of other studies (e.g., Cesari 2002; Gross et al. 2002), consumption patterns during this religious period seemed to be characterized by a stronger perceived ethnicity (Zmude et Arce 1992). For example, the personal pronoun “I” was often replaced by “on” (indefinite French subject pronoun) or “we,” which are more general references and there was also increased usage of verbal expressions such as “the people,” “the community” or “the Muslims of France.” This change in expressive language underlines the communal dimension of Ramadan and its centrality to informants’ behaviors and attitudes. The presence of rituals was clearly mentioned by the interviewees, whether directly by the use of the words “rite” or “ritual,” or indirectly through statements describing them:

Ramadan is a major event for us, and all the Muslims [of France] celebrate together, whether they are French [born] or foreigners [i.e., immigrants], whether they are practicing [Muslims] or not. It is a magical month during which Muslims from the whole world find themselves united by similar behaviors and common traditions.
Below we discuss three distinct kinds of rituals identified in the interview set: the practice of fasting, the social rituals involving individuals’ family and social surroundings, and finally, food preparation and dining rituals specific to the month of Ramadan.

Self-denial as a Ritual

During the entire month of Ramadan, observant individuals are obliged to refrain from drinking, eating, and smoking “from dawn to sunset.” Contrasting with these restricted hours, the arrival of night is welcomed with the breaking of all interdicts and henceforward acquires a festive dimension. As such, all the distinctive attributes of a self-denial ritual can be found in this activity of Ramadan, i.e., the presence of forbidden practices in conjunction with religious beliefs based on the segregation of the sacred and the profane, the presence of strong theological symbols (the sun and the moon) and the juxtaposition of hunger and satiation. The self-denial ritual is believed conducive to increasing one’s faith and bringing participants closer to God and Islam.

Ramadan is a month of spirituality and the regaining of religion. Whether we are in France or elsewhere, everybody listens to more Koran and has the emotion of being more in contact with God. It is also a month of reflection and meditation, and, given the obligations and the duties it involves, we have to confront all our human desires and all the temptations… It is a month of community fervor and solidarity, but also a month of personal self-control.

Additionally, the fasting ritual is intended to serve two main objectives: on one hand, it allows individuals to become self-disciplined and practice self-control; on the other, it helps them to mimic and empathize with poverty-stricken people by living an experience similar to theirs.

Fasting as a purification ritual. This theme emerged consistently among our informants: fasting helps one attain a state of physical purity. The interviewees declared having a stronger feeling of purity, because of the removal of “junk” food, smoking, alcohol, make-up and perfume from their lives. These marketplace products were viewed as contributing to profane feelings and a sense of self-corruption.

It is a month during which I feel healthier and purer. First, fasting helps me move away from all the junk food I am used to gulping down. And beyond this physical purification, the month of Ramadan also liberates me from the burden of my sins.

This idea echoes the ascetic ideal in which all consumption linked to the body is seen as impure, and individuals are believed to be in continuous need of restoring the body’s original purity to achieve spiritual elevation (Jacobsen 1996). Fasting during Ramadan seems to be a unique, annual opportunity to reach this objective; by cleansing one’s body, one cleanses the soul. As researchers have noted, the house is the “body” of the family, and so efforts are made to purify it, as well.

To welcome Ramadan, all the family launches into a big operation of hygiene and cleanliness. We do a spring cleaning, and then we redecorate the entire house. Every other year, we change the wallpaper. We pull out from the cupboard the most beautiful carpets that we brought from the Bled (country-of-origin).

Additional research could focus on whether the use of ancestral products helps these immigrant consumers achieve a higher state of ritual purity; are the temptations of the marketplace in their new country seen as temptations to turn them away from their faith (e.g., Haddad and Esposito 1998; Mehta and Belk 1991). Several allusions also were made to the fact that one’s behaviors should be re-directed toward honesty, solidarity, generosity, morality and coming closer to God. It is also possible to guess, through the interviewees’ words, that there is also a parallel between the inside/outside dichotomy and the pure/impure one. When returning home each day, all the domestic ritualistic practices seem to converge to liberate individuals from the impurity of the external, profane environment.

The upheaval of daily behaviors. Daily life is usually disrupted during the Ramadan period. While in Muslim countries, the entire society adjusts itself to the fasting time, this is not the case in Christian France. Echoing earlier research studies on consumption behaviors in ethnic communities (e.g., Penaloz and Gilly 1999), all the informants spoke of their difficulty adhering to Ramadan rituals in France:

As French citizens, we are not as lucky as people living in the Arab countries…. My boss lets me have some time to break my fast and to eat something rapidly, and he lets me take a day off to celebrate the end of the month of Ramadan. However, several of my friends do not even have this chance and have to hide in order to nibble something. You know, it’s not always easy!

Beyond the difficulties related to the observance of worshiping practices, a strong feeling of nostalgia also emerges from the informants’ testimonies:

In the districts in which you find a majority of North Africans or in the mosques, the atmosphere is warm and convivial; once outside, however, you find yourself alone in the streets of Paris, and you can’t but experience isolation. In spite of all the efforts we vainly make, Ramadan cannot have the same taste as in our home-countries.

In order to overcome this difficulty in fulfilling the rituals and achieving the desired frame of mind, the majority of informants asserted that they strive harder than ever to create or recreate Ramadan’s atmosphere at home, through the foods eaten, the TV programs watched, and the decoration of the house.

Ramadan is undoubtedly the period of the year during which we are most connected to our country-of-origin, even if we have never left France. Our daily behaviors are really different. While on the surface nothing seems to be different during the day, by night everything changes: the tv programs we watch, the meals we prepare, the clothes we wear, the friends we see, and the places we go…

This seems to suggest the Maghrebis might see the daylight hours, spent outside the home and community, as “belonging to France,” whereas the evening hours, spent in the home with family, “belong to Islam.” This may also connect to deeper tensions for these diasporic Muslims; they must hide their “true” identities from the surrounding culture; conversely, the French, themselves, may view this shift in night time behavior as a suspicious example of Muslim subterfuge.

Social Rituals

The Ramadan period seems to be an occasion for enhancing social bonds of all kinds. Gatherings with family, friends or colleagues are characterized by conviviality, humor, a strong sense of
community, an aversion to formal authority and a festive atmosphere that gives them the essential attributes of intensification rituals (see e.g., Belk and Costa 1998). We believe that these in-gathering efforts are used to overcome the sense of separation from one’s ethnic origins and subsequent cultural isolation among the French Maghrebis. Examples are described below.

Gatherings with family and friends. In the evening, religious observance is enacted by family gathering and sharing. It becomes essential that everyone meets with each other, shows solidarity, and that all family members, and also friends, have the opportunity to keep close and strengthen the emotions existing between them. Evening relaxation and support is all the more important, because the days are difficult. The informants emphasized the fact that during Ramadan, interpersonal connections inside the community are considered extremely important and reinforced.

Even if it is not always easy to do because we are dispersed in the four corners of Paris, we try to see each other as often as possible. Actually, there’s an ascending movement: the family links strengthen more and more with the passage of Ramadan, with upbeat during week-ends, and the peak is the Eid day where all the family members gather in my elder brother’s house.

Ramadan gatherings can be simple opportunities for reunions or gatherings where verbal exchanges are numerous and discussions are animated (Chouikha 1994). They also have a festive character:

Ramadan is a month of cheerful atmosphere and conviviality. As soon as night falls, several families gather around a royal dinner, with a sentiment of human warmth we hardly achieve during the rest of the year. Respectful of the tradition, women assemble some time before dinner to cook together, and in the evening, it’s really the feast! It is also the opportunity to see other Moroccan friends, Algerian friends, Tunisians, Egyptians, Middle-easterners, but also West Indians, from the Reunion Madagascar, Mauritius, and West Africa. It is rare, but we sometimes also invite non-Muslim friends to make them discover the atmosphere.

Words such as “magic,” “marvelous,” “extraordinary,” “warmth,” “conviviality,” and “love” are frequently mentioned regarding these family gatherings. These associations bring to mind Durkheim’s (1912) “sociability miracle as a source of the sacred;” interpersonal relations contribute to the creation of an aura of spirituality which further reinforces solidarity. A feeling of community and concern for others emerges in such circumstances (Durkheim 1912).

Notable also in the informant’s statement is reference to the Oblative Rituals. The whole month of Ramadan in France is marked with a feeling of pronounced generosity (tzadaka). For instance, a sense of hospitality, charity toward people in need and the desire to help others seem to become essential. This generosity reaches its peak at the approach of the Eid-day (the celebration of the end of Ramadan). During this period, gift rituals become numerous and take several different forms. For example, one of the key baking rituals performed by the women of the household is preparing sweet cakes which metaphorically represent the arrival of the Eid. Among the Maghrebi women, this has become an opportunity for both sharing and competing.

In our [Maghrebi] quarter, it became a tradition to offer dishes and pastries [to the neighbors]. Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian specialties being different, we began the habit of making sure everybody tasted the various specialties, each of us claiming that hers are better than the others.

Those who do not know how to prepare these cakes, as well as those who do not have the time, reported being willing to spend a lot of money in order to avoid breaking the tradition by buying them at Maghrebi bakeries. Notably, pastries and cakes from traditional French bakeries were not substituted, as this would have been viewed as inconsistent with the religious solidarity of the occasion.

We found that children actually benefit the most from the Sadaka rituals. The Eid-al-fit (the original religious designation) is now being called “Eid-Essaghir” which means “the little feast,” in opposition not only to the big feast of the ritual sheep sacrifice, but also in reference to children, i.e., “sighar,” by all the respondents. Everybody tries to pamper children during this time: “We offer them beautiful clothes, beautiful toys and we take them to [French] Disney World … We indulge all their whims.”

In this aspect of Ramadan in France, the celebrants are perhaps better equipped to provide festive events outside the home for their children than Muslims living in the Maghreb, because they are in a country (France) that is oriented toward tourism and modern materialism, though some may see this as leading to an increasingly “inauthentic” Ramadan (see, for example, Sandikci and Ger 2002).

Food Preparation and Dining Rituals

Meals. During Ramadan consumption usually must be very conformist in order to become authentically ritualized. The women of the house (again, following traditional gender roles) prepare exceptional meals made of ingredients typically Arabic: “Noor dates, breeks (traditional fritter ingredient), elben (curdled milk), chorb (traditional pasta) and spices brought from the country [of origin] ...” As the month goes by expectations of elaborate meal preparation and deliciousness intensify. Ingredients are selected with care and should imperatively be “Hallal.” The preparation must start early and the table be presented with care.

We respect the horary distributed in the mosque or in the Halal butchers. And the fact that we break the fast at exactly the same time with thousands of other people is really a magical act that strengthens our feeling of belonging to the French Muslim community.

Thus, the ritual of dining together, of breaking the fast in the company of family, possesses a communal and very symbolic dimension in which fraternity and solidarity are crucial principles. The consumption act, itself, becomes a privileged way of generating a feeling of collectivity (Holt 1995). It consists of consuming products specific to that religious event and to avoid buying products that are not in conformity with the tradition. Sacrifice and regulation gives potency to the ritual.

Ironically, however, the required emphasis on self-denial creates a corresponding desire to break out of the boundaries. Ramadan is
characterized by the omnipresence of food in peoples’ consciousness. During the day, most of the conversations are directly or indirectly linked to meals. The importance given to food reaches its peak at fast breaking: then, the table is full and constitutes a real festival for the senses:

The most delicious dishes are presented: harira, tagines, poultries and meat served with dried fruits, salads, and traditional pastries.

Just before breaking fast, magical smells bewitch us, so different from the daily ones, the ones from McDonald’s and Company.

The presentation of the table becomes an artistic creation, capable of reviving all the senses. How to resist?

The intensity of this sensory stimulation resonates with the strong emotional feeling of community, the depth of spiritual commitment, and meets at the same time hedonic, obblative, and self-expressive needs. It also resonates with the excessiveness exhibited by several acts during Ramadan. This excessiveness can, on the affective level, be positive or negative. But it is much more the way people live the rituals that determines whether the outcome is positive or negative. Some people use the enhanced reality to create spiritual elevation and joyful times for themselves and for others. Others abuse themselves and feel guilty, envious, and frustrated. Each consumer lives these excesses in his/her own way:

Just recently [French] supermarkets have started taking Ramadan into account. We can now find ingredients to prepare “boreks,” “chorba,” etc. It is also possible to buy Halal raviolis, “Hachis Parmentier” (stew in which the meat is covered with mashed potatoes), quenelles, and even Halal sauerkraut and sausages. As a consequence, and in order to satisfy everyone’s tastes, we sometimes buy and eat these items. French fries and pizzas are also sometimes eaten, because children can’t imagine a whole month without them.

These behaviors are similar to those already highlighted by several researchers dealing with the acculturation and consumption behaviors of ethnic minorities (e.g., Gronhaug et al. 2008; Penaloza 1994). They are also another example of the cultural alternation or culture swapping (Oswald 1999) lived by immigrants (Visconti 2008). They illustrate the syncretic flexibility that characterizes rituals and gives them a stronger role in modern culture, without forcing adherents to abandon their connection to tradition (Segalen 1998).

Disguising rituals. Several of our interviewees revealed that they did not wish to proclaim publicly that they were Muslims observing Ramadan. For some of them, this is a matter of privacy and intimacy, in which outsiders should not interfere. However, other Maghrebis do not want to become the object of curiosity and do not wish to draw attention to themselves or undergo questions about their religion, or have to justify their behaviors. When tackling these questions during the interviews, the testimonies were characterized by several hesitations and pauses revealing the embarrassment experienced. Several reported that they resorted to deceptive strategies:

When it’s time to break the fast, I isolate myself in a corner, out of sight. Then I drink rapidly a mouthful of water and I eat what I have at hand, then, as if nothing happened, I go back to work.

This year, in order to vanish without undergoing questioning, I told my colleagues that my husband was sick and that I had to go and see him at lunch time. During this time, I would go shopping in the mall or read a book in a quiet place.

However, deception could also take another form in which Maghrebis decide not to fast and do not wish their family, neighbors, and the Muslim community to be aware of their nonobservance of Ramadan tradition. Beyond the informants who asserted they did not have sufficient religious faith to observe Ramadan, there were also young children, the elderly, sick people, and pregnant or breast-feeding women who are permitted by tradition to not fast. However, despite the clarity of the rules on this point, some individuals belonging to these special groups revealed that they felt shame or guilt.

It is always a problem to eat or drink something during Ramadan. First, we have to move away from our [ethnic] quarter, find a restaurant that is hidden and where there aren’t other Muslims, and be sure that no one sees you when you go in. And if you eat or smoke inside the house, you have to make sure that the smells do not reach the neighbors’ noses. It is the only way to avoid disagreeable comments and disapproving looks.

During this month, great efforts are made to create no external signs suggesting that someone is not fasting or that he/she is disrespectful of the Ramadan ritual requirements. As a consequence, cosmetics and perfumes are temporarily put aside and conspicuous products are avoided; apparel is also more modest.

Consumption Frames of Reference

Maghrebi Muslims living in France are confronted with a more difficult cultural structure for observing their religion than those living in a Muslim country. Yet, concurrently, the frames of reference used to describe their consumption practices and experiences are more rich and varied than those typical in a Muslim-dominant country, due to greater uniformity in the latter (see e.g., Touzani and Hirschman 2008). For example, our participants made comparisons between Christmas in France and Ramadan observance in Muslim countries, and also Ramadan in the “good old days,” that is earlier time periods in their ancestral homelands.

When a parallel is drawn with Christmas, it was usually in terms of buying toys and games for children to celebrate the end of Ramadan (see Ger and Omeraki 2007). The Christmas analogy was also cited when some other activities were discussed: for example, the decoration of the house, family dinners and the festive character of the month. One informant even talked about the “Ramadan spirit.” Thus we see that a new frame of reference can be invoked by ethnic immigrants.

The discussion of ancestral Ramadan celebrations in the Maghreb usually is accompanied by a certain feeling of nostalgia. Families, and also single persons, make elaborate efforts to recreate an atmosphere close to the one lived (or imagined) in the country-of-origin: the ambiance inside the house, the television programs, the foods prepared—all are aimed toward recreating the past. And in spite of the present obstacles, all the informants seemed to place a crucial importance on Ramadan observance. For the most elderly informants, however, the present celebration was but a mere “ghost” when compared with “yesterday’s Ramadan.” For them, even if today it is possible to buy in France the items needed to fulfill their earlier Ramadan practices, the spirit is not the same. They particularly deplore their family’s dispersal, the younger generation’s breaking away from rituals and traditions, as well as the rapidity of modern culture which makes it harder to live Ramadan serenely.
CONCLUSION

The month of Ramadan primarily is characterized by the increased strength of rituals marking a return to Islamic religious values, as well as the conscious desire to live an exceptional life during this period, a period “set apart” from the rest of the year. French retailers hoping to attract the Maghrebi community during this time period could better meet this goal by creating an appropriate sensorial atmosphere in their stores evoking Ramadan in the Maghreb. This might be accomplished by thematizing stores through music selection and appropriate decoration (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) and would help contribute to the Maghrebs’ feeling of belonging within French society.

Ramadan is characterized by the upheaval of French Maghrebs’ daily life—an upheaval largely not supported by the surrounding French commercial and social system. In spite of the obstacles, several rituals characterize this period of the year for North African Muslims in France. Religious rituals are certainly the most marked and the most anchored in the informants’ Muslim subculture. They are accompanied by acts of faith, efforts of self-purification at the physical and spiritual level, and a revision of consumption habits at the daily-life level. Social interactions also have a ritual dimension during this month: relationships with family and friends acquire an increased importance, transforming them from the familiar to the sacred. Oblative rituals also are numerous during Ramadan, made corporeal by invitations to visit, donations to charity, and multiple gifts to family and friend. Meals and dining habits are other aspects of Islamic ritual that the Ramadan period revives from year to year, as if by magic.

The main limitation of this present research study is due to the presence of taboos, attitudes and behaviors related to religion being considered by several informants as personal and confidential. In particular, we found that informants were very reluctant to speak about discrimination against them within the surrounding culture and the pressures they felt to disguise or hide their Islamic religious observances. Despite this, however, we believe that this study opens the way to future research endeavors. The findings suggest differences between young and older individuals in the way they engage in their ritual practices. This can lead to the crucial exploration of a possible generational shift which has been noted in other studies of Muslim immigrants (e.g., Beji-Becheur et al. 2007; Cesari 2002; Gross et al. 2002). In particular, the younger generation seems to be much more integrated with external Christian French society and would help contribute to the Maghrebs’ feeling of belonging within French society.

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The Little Red Book: Risk and Trust in Chinese Internet Banking, a Gendered Perspective
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ABSTRACT
Internet banking services (IBS) in China’s are a strategically important, though under researched, market. Our research seeks to explore the potential influence of gender within China’s IBS. This is done qualitatively by examining the notions of perceived risk and trust. Six focus groups were implemented. Generally, IBS adoption is seen as ‘risky’. However, gender differences are identified. In particular, a unique contribution to the literature—the concept of female secrecy and privacy through “a little red book”—is established. Finally, marketing implications and future research are discussed.

Introduction
The Internet plays a significant role in China’s banking sector. For banks, many potential benefits emerge such as cost reduction, new product development and cross-selling opportunities. However, in order to allow banks to fully achieve these benefits, technology must be adopted by their customers (Mols 1999). From the customer’s point of view, the Internet may seem an advanced, yet risky, mechanism for personal banking and financial services provision (Laforet and Li 2005).

Furthermore, gender differences exist in terms of their attitudes and behaviour towards Internet usage. In general, females tend to use the Internet as a tool for communication but not for shopping (Garbarino and Straehilevitz 2004). They are more concerned about personal information, privacy and online payment security; they are more cautious about unsolicited emails or spam messages and appear to be more sceptical regarding online shopping. These gender differences seemed to be narrowing in some Western markets such as the USA (Yang and Lester 2005). However, there is no current information on whether gender has an impact on Chinese consumers’ Internet banking services (IBS) adoption. Moreover, there are extremely few studies that offer empirical evidence about China’s IBS market.

This research adds to the existing literature in a number of ways. It explores major barriers that discourage Chinese consumers from IBS adoption and investigates potential gender influences within the context. In doing this, it delves into the market and provides insights. These are particularly useful when developing effective marketing strategies within the current context.

The issue of customer adoption is just as critical in the Chinese context. Overall, the future of China’s IBS market appears to be promising in terms of the increasing number of users. Over 59 million Internet users had used IBS by July 2008, accounting for 23.4% of total Internet users in China (CNNIC July 2008). This shows a growth of 4.2% in just 6 months. However, not all Chinese consumers are ready to accept more sophisticated banking technologies such as IBS or mobile phone banking (Laforet and Li 2005). This clearly does not match banks’ expectations and creates challenges. Thus, before appropriate marketing strategies can be developed, banks must carefully study why many Chinese consumers, particularly existing Internet users, are not ready to adopt IBS.

One way to scrutinise this is to adopt perceived-risk as a critical lens. Perceived risk is a crucial factor that needs to be empirically explored within China’s IBS market (Laforet and Li 2005). Our research takes this suggestion further by exploring perceived risk and trust in the current context and considering this within a gendered framework. Both risk and trust are crucial to (re)build the banking sector, especially in the present climate after the financial crisis and within the economic slowdown. Such integration will help us uncover some of the underlying issues that are critical to the adoption of IBS, but that are not well explored by the existing literature.

Literature Review
Both perceived risk and trust are multi-faceted constructs and context-dependent (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995; Mitchell 1999). Within the Internet context, the relationship between both constructs is not always straightforward (Lim 2003). There are three approaches evident in the literature. Firstly, perceived risk and trust are studied separately (Aldas-Manzano et al. 2009; Chen, Chang, and Chang 2005; Cunningham, Gerlach, and Harper 2005; Featherman and Pavlou 2003; Lu, Hsu, and Hsu 2005; Peñamn 2007; Rotchanakitumnuai and Specce 2003; Suh and Han 2002). Secondly, some researchers consider perceived risk to be a dimension of trust within IBS settings (Kassim and Abdulla 2006; Mukherjee and Nath 2003). In our view, such a perspective is problematic as the two constructs are conceptually distinct. Thirdly, several studies have integrated these constructs simultaneously. However, they lack empirical evidence testing the proposed framework (Kim and Prabhakar 2000; Yousafzai, Pallister, and Foxall 2003) or the constructs are only measured on a uni-dimensional scale, i.e. the constructs are not divided into detailed dimensions (Grabner-Krauter and Faullant 2008; Pavlou 2003).

The complex relationship between perceived risk and trust is well documented in the literature, especially in relation to the Internet, which is considered a high-risk, low-trust banking channel (Yousafzai et al. 2003). Mayer et al. (1995:711) suggest that “the need for trust only arises in a risky situation”. Grabner-Krauter and Faullant (2008:488) concur that “trust would not be needed if actions could be undertaken with complete certainty and no risk”. A purchase situation with absolute certainty and no, or little, risk may be ideal for consumers. However, such ‘perfection’ is rare in consumers’ daily consumption (Cunningham 1967) and even more unlikely when considering Internet banking.

This implies that from a customer’s point of view, 100% certainty in relation to IBS is highly unlikely. Even when the objective risk is zero, consumers may still perceive subjective risk (Mitchell 1999). The nature of the technology may contribute to this ‘imperfection’, as consumers have to deal with intangibility and physical separation from the product/service provider. Consumers often worry that their bank accounts may be breached by unauthorised parties, the accounts may be abused, financial losses may occur, and, that personal details can be manipulated or handled unethically (Gerrard and Cunningham 2003; Polatoglu and Ekin 2001; Sathye 1999). If these worries cannot be alleviated by appropriate marketing practices, such as after-sale service support and a transparent data handling processes, consumers’ risk perceptions are likely to be augmented, particularly in the case of those who have not experienced IBS before.

In addition, an old stereotype suggests that males and females not only view risk differently, but also respond in different ways to risk (Schubert 2006). In general, females perceive greater risk and are less inclined to take risks than males. The literature suggests...
that men and women hold different attitudes in terms of managing their finances (Lim and Teo 1997). Females are more anxious and risk-averse when dealing with money. Furthermore, males tend to hold more positive attitudes towards money and are more confident in making decisions (Stinerock, Stern, and Solomon 1991). This manifests itself in a number of ways, e.g. men are prone to adopt new technology, such as using the Internet for shopping (Donthu and Garcia 1999) or banking (Mols 1999). Garbarino and Strailevitz (2004) show that gender differences also exist in terms of attitudes to the Internet e.g. whether to recommend a particular website to peers/friends and in terms of usage intention. Such patterns can be seen in Hong Kong, where women consider the Internet as a more risky channel than men (Sin and Tse 2002). However, whether such patterns exist in an IBS context in mainland China is yet unknown, thus, the current research seeks to explore this area.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
As there is little in the literature that is of direct assistance, a qualitative approach (focus group interviews) is adopted. The approach enables us to explore Chinese males’ and females’ risk perceptions of IBS and the possible impact of trust, thus helping to identify gender differences. The qualitative approach helps develop tentative propositions for future research examination.

We focus on young Chinese Internet users aged 18-25 as they are the majority of Internet users in China (approximately 30% of the total) (CNNIC July 2008). In addition, when IBS was introduced in the West, banks also primarily targeted those who were computer-literate and familiar with the Internet because they would be more likely to adopt the ‘product’ (Mols 1999).

A convenience sample of university students was applied. Students were invited to join focus group interviews. In total, 27 respondents took part in six group interviews conducted by a well-trained researcher (3 groups of males and 3 groups of females, each group approximately has 4-5 respondents) and each interview lasted approximately 50-90 minutes. The interviews were recorded, initially transcribed in Chinese and then translated into English. Guided by the available literature, the respondents were encouraged to discuss their reasons for not yet using IBS and to indicate their concerns in terms of China’s IBS development. They were also probed to discuss their views of the opposite gender’s IBS adoption behaviour.

Data Analysis
The data was analysed through several steps, including categorisation, data rearrangement and reduction, relationship recognition and additional categories formation (Rudestam and Newton 2001; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2003).

Categorisation—to understand the statements and establish meanings within the current context. This is important to generate the meanings based on the purpose of this research. The literature was used as the guide to categorise themes; additional labels or phrases emerged from the data were identified.

Data rearrangement and reduction—guided by the literature and the purpose of the research, to identify related ideas or discussions for broad themes development. Data was reduced into a more manageable form.

Recognising relationships and forming additional categories—to analyse the reorganised data and to generate key themes, patterns, or relationships. Moreover, themes were compared to identify differences. If additional meanings were observed, the broad themes were specified. The analysis process was determined to be complete when no further themes were generated.

Research Findings
The discussions on perceived risk, trust and their roles in IBS adoption revealed several themes offering insight into the market. Firstly, in comparison to males, females are more concerned about financial loss when using IBS. In particular, the concept of the little red book emerged when exploring the females’ attitudes towards money. Secondly, the females generally distrust banks as an institution and it is thus not surprising that they are very reluctant to trust the technology adopted by banks. In contrast, males are more optimistic and open to the idea of IBS. Finally, most of the respondents felt that marketing communications from the bank were ineffective.

Gender Attitude Towards Money
Although males and females consider IBS risky, there are differences in their risk perceptions. For example, financial loss appears to be overwhelmingly important, but the female respondents were in particular very anxious about suffering this type of loss:

“I feel it [IBS] is unreliable. I worry that my account number and password would be stolen…. I also fear that if my account and password are stolen, then the amount of money in my account would be stolen.” (Female Group 3)

“One of the worst outcomes is money loss. The transactions are made through computers.” (Female Group 1)

The male respondents expressed a different perspective:

“I think if account information is stolen/hacked into, the cost of losing personal information will be a lot bigger than the loss of money.” (Male Group 1)

“If your personal information is stolen, you would be concerned about how your information would be treated by the stolen party. They can use your information to do illegal things.” (Male Group 1)

“You personal details are closely related to your life. Financial loss, you could earn back later.” (Male Group 1)

This suggests that males and females have different attitudes towards money. The female respondents for instance think that as women, they will take more responsibility for their family’s money as, traditionally, women are given a ‘household’ budget by their husbands.

“In China, many women control family finance, therefore, they have the responsibility to manage the money well. If any loss occurs when they use IBS, this then can result in financial loss to a family. This is problematic and [women] have to be careful when taking actions.” (Female Group 1)

“[When we are married,] a more secure management [for finance] is needed. We do not want to take risks as they may lead to any financial loss for our family.”(Female Group 1)

It is thus not surprising that females are far more reluctant to adopt IBS. The woman risks losing face to family members and others when she fails to care for the ‘family budget’. Perhaps to them, the risks of not using IBS therefore strongly outweigh the possible advantages.
“Trust in bank” and “Trust in IBS Competence”: A Gendered Perspective

Generally there is a lack of trust in banks. Two concepts in relation to trust are identified; “trust in bank” and “trust in IBS competence”. In principle, males appeared to be more concerned about trust in IBS competence; whereas the female respondents oriented their discussion more towards trust in the bank (trust in IBS competence was discussed, but less frequently and in limited detail). It is noted that trust in the bank is surprisingly low, especially for the female respondents who had negative experiences with banks and their staff. In particular, unethical practices were of concern to the female respondents.

“Once, I went to my bank and withdrew some cash and I was given a counterfeit note by staff over the counter! As I was withdrawing quite a lot of money so it was impossible for me to examine the notes individually in public. When I got home, I found a fake note!” (Female Group 3)

Another one echoed,

“I didn’t have this experience [i.e. receiving counterfeit notes inside the bank] but I once had a fake note via an ATM. I suspect that the bank staff did it [i.e. put the note knowingly into the ATM].” (Female Group 3)

The message emerging here is that the banks are not perceived as honest or reliable. Suspicion is created through personal or others’ experiences. Further, there is a great concern in adequately predicting banks’ behaviour as the respondents have little faith in the bank fairness or ethics:

“I stand by my comments on the ethics of the bank staff. I don’t trust them much.” (Female Group 3)

“I worry that bank insiders would take my information to do other things. As I suppose this could happen, you know, your data may be taken by bank staff. Outcomes can be very serious.” (Female Group 3)

Thus, effective methods to manage consumers’ risk perception are vital. A critical element is consumers’ trust, including trust in the bank and the technology (Yousafzai et al. 2003). Trust in the technology is important but insufficient to overcome IBS risk perceptions. Here, the issue of physical separation plays an important role as consumers will have no interaction with bank staff when they use IBS. When consumers have no direct control over the bank’s action, it is difficult to convince them that the bank’s behaviour will be predictable and consumers’ interests will not be sacrificed over the bank’s own benefits (Mayer et al. 1995). To overcome this potential difficulty the bank must be perceived as reliable, honest and capable of conducting its business appropriately (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Therefore, a fundamental issue is whether consumers have built sufficient trust in the bank and are willing to transfer this positive belief to the bank’s IBS operation channel, i.e. the Internet (Rotchanakitumnuai and Speece 2003), thus helping them reduce perceived risk and facilitating IBS use.

The female respondents further explained these concerns by revealing another aspect of distrust in banks:

“I guess banks usually would look after themselves first. They prioritise their interest over their customers’. They neglect account holders’ loss … They would promise you everything before you join their services/buy products. But as long as they have you, they would never keep their promise.” (Female Group 2)

This shows that the trust in IBS competence has not been established within these potential female customers. Many male respondents were aware that IBS involves risk with regards to the technology.

“[IBS is] not perfectly reliable. Nowadays the Internet develops so fast. You [i.e. banks] must constantly improve your system to provide your customers with greater safety/security.” (Male Group 1)

“I don’t worry too much about my bank. Because if you use it [i.e. IBS], you need to trust it. If you worry too much then you don’t trust it, so you will not use its services at all.” (Male Group 3)

Whilst the males’ discussion seemed to be reasonably optimistic, the females were far more conservative in expressing their views on trust in IBS competence. In particular, the ability to ‘witness’ is a key barrier and this needs to be overcome to decrease the lack of trust in IBS.

“[I have] No trust in the IBS system, as there may be some hackers who attack others’ accounts.” (Female Group 1)

“[There is] an old saying in Chinese, “Seeing is believing”. Only visible things are believable. … [I would ask myself questions like] have I made any mistake? I can’t see it [i.e. the transaction].” (Female Group 2)

Ineffective IBS Marketing

This research found that respondents had a low awareness of IBS, e.g. few effective IBS advertisements or promotions were noticed and the bank staff rarely communicated new product information to customers.

“Bank staff do not take an active part in telling you anything about the new banking services, especially after you open accounts with them. We are not interested in finding out about any new service anyway.” (Female Group 1)

“The bank staff themselves seem to show little care/interest about IBS.” (Female Group 2)

To sum up, the above findings lead us to develop the following tentative propositions:

Proposition 1: Male consumers’ IBS risk perception has less negative influence on their usage intention than does that of females.

Proposition 2: Male consumers’ trust in the bank has a less effect on their risk perception than it does in females.

Proposition 3: Male consumers’ trust in the bank reduces more risk perception than it does in females.

Proposition 4: Male consumers’ trust in the bank has a more positive effect on their trust in IBS competence than it does in females.

Proposition 5: Male consumers’ trust in IBS competence has a more positive effect on their IBS usage intention than it does in females.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our research begins to explore China’s IBS market and has found that perceived risk and trust in money related issues are critical—not only when considering whether or not to adopt IBS but also in the current situation of financial instability and economic crisis. As reported earlier, both constructs influence males and females differently. Female’s risk perception is an important barrier to overcome, as they trust banks less. Their unpleasant personal experiences and negative word-of-mouth has contributed to this. The interviews have also shown a low level of awareness of systems and safeguards and this gives support to Laforet and Li’s (2005) conclusions. Another factor contributing to these low levels of trust for females is their attitude towards money. Exploring Chinese women’s relationship to money and particularly its management within the family context is a difficult task given the sensitivity of the topic. This may help explain why although concerns regarding privacy have been highlighted in previous research, the reasons for this ‘privacy reservation’ have not been previously identified. However, given the centrality of the female role in daily household financial management it is worth further exploring as it will be a critical aspect in the formation of women’s attitude to the adoption of banking innovations—including IBS.

In a collectivist culture, traditionally every member is expected to share everything within a family. However, many married Chinese women often create a personal financial reserve—sometimes referred to as ‘the red book’ or ‘little golden box’. This is enacted through savings created in household management and deposited in a ‘secret’ personal bank account. The existence of such accounts is not divulged to their husbands, and exists as a ‘bank book’ which is kept secretly. These accounts are used to supplement the family in times of financial hardship, or to provide for some of ‘life’s little luxuries’—they also serve to provide housewives with a degree of financial autonomy. Theoretically, the risk of exposing such secret money to the family would be against the collectivistic concept of harmony (e.g. by demonstrating that you were not willing to share your money with other family members, it might also lead to a loss of face and respect from your family and others, in the worst scenario the wife could lose social support from the broader community). This leads to a range of possible additional IBS risks for these women. Should a woman decide to use IBS to manage such secret money, she would be confronted by both privacy and financial loss concerns. By using IBS she would expose herself, as others might be able to ‘view’ and potentially access her account. Here ‘others’ could equally apply to potential criminals, but also to other members of the family or community. Moreover, if she needs technical advice or support, she would need to again ‘expose’ the existence of her secret reserves to a traditionally male dominated bank environment.

Furthermore, the female respondents also felt that within a family, if the husband was more likely to adopt IBS the wife might follow his lead. When probed in our qualitative research to explore why they thought this would be the case, the women suggested that it is related to “Chinese culture. Well, men are responsible for external stuff and women care about internal stuff.” The view that choices related to the external aspects of family life are driven by the male partner echoes earlier research which suggests that “the husband sings and the wife hums along” in the Chinese context (Schutte and Ciarlante 1998:51).

In addition, this research highlights that marketing communications from the bank with regards to IBS were ineffective and bank staff had little motivation to promote the product. One possible reason is that bank staff are still experiencing changes from a state-owned status to a more customer-centred marketing environment, which will take time. In order to convince more Chinese consumers to adopt IBS, our study found that different marketing approaches may be needed for males and females. Given the fact that the female respondents have particular concerns about money, banks should enhance female customers’ trust in the institution and more importantly the confidence in frontline staff. In particular, attention should be given to their attitudes towards secrecy and privacy as these create uncertainty and conflicts. When targeting males, banks should firstly communicate their integrity and secondly emphasise their competence in the technology. Once males have taken the lead of adoption, females are more likely to follow. Unless appropriate actions are taken in relation to all discussed issues, it will be challenging for banks to convince more Chinese consumers to adopt IBS.

It is clear that both perceived risk and trust are two inseparable constructs to study electronic environments such as shopping and banking. These two constructs are particularly important to understand those who have the potential to adopt these online activities but do not commit to them yet. More recent research has started to give attention to investigate consumers’ adoption behaviour by integrating the two constructs in relation to online transactions (e.g. Aldas-Manzano et al. 2009; Pavlou 2003) and yet solid evidence from China’s IBS market is still needed. Indeed the barriers may have been too high for consumers to overcome and thus understanding how these constructs influence consumers’ adoption intention is highly critical to develop meaningful and effective marketing strategies to this dynamic market.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We suggest that research combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is ideal to generate greater insight into this dynamic market. The qualitative approach would help enrich the quantitative findings. In particular, more research attention may be allocated to explore the meanings and implications of the ‘secret personal bank accounts’. As our research did not separate those who had a personal secret account from those who did not, future research may consider separating focus groups into women with a personal financial reserve and women without; and investigating women’s different perceptions on managing their personal financial reserve. This may bring relevant insights to consumer behaviour (e.g. contrasting private and collective consumption, comparing motivations to save and spend between women who keep this account and those who do not). Another interesting direction is to explore whether men would have their personal financial reserve as well and how they view these reserves in contrast to the females.

Our propositions should be verified in future quantitative research approaches by using some advanced statistical techniques such as multi-group analysis in structural equation modelling which may enable researchers to examine the underlying relationships between perceived risk, trust and behavioural intention for males and females. Finally, the use of a convenience sampling limits the representativeness of our findings. Future research may consider exploring other groups of consumers—who whilst slower to adopt will nonetheless form important groups within the overall market.

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Cyberspace, as an alternate space for human existence and consumption, is increasingly becoming a container and enactor of our existence; boundaries between real world and cyberspace are diffusing. Libraries and collections, music and art, pictures and videos, news and history, knowledge and education, justice as well as crime, economy as well as technology, media as well as entertainment, business and commerce, pleasure and retreat, consumer activism and communities are increasingly structured around elements which sometimes exist solely and entirely in cyberspace.

In 1998 Alladi Venkatesh, Laurie Meamber and Fuat Firat questioned if cyberspace was to become the new marketing frontier? In their thesis (Venkatesh, Meamber and Firat 1998) they explicated the ontology of cyberspace in terms of post-modern simulacrum. They viewed cyberspace as a social space, and argued that this social space accorded consumers the ultimate freedom. They acknowledged that the paradox of identity construction–identity concealment on the internet was a post-modern disjunction, and that cyber-identities were constructions aimed at a virtual cyberexistence. Noting that eighty percent of the Internet is occupied by the marketers, they feared that marketers were ‘gradually moving into this social space and redefining the notions of consumer choice and freedom’ (p. 319).

Examples of social/interactive behaviour would be studies on chatting (Kwak, Zinkhan and Pitt 2001; Zinkhan, Kwak, Morrison, and Peters 2003), privacy in online relationships (Franzak, Pitta, and Fritsche 2001), presentation and multiplicity of self in the cyberspace (Gould 2000). Some later literature has linked existing psychological/sociological/consumption theories to the internet, such as flow in goal directed and experiential activities (Novak, Hoffman, and Duhacheck 2003), affect of physiological factors on consumption in Cyberspace (Rosa and Malter 2003), the internet paradox of ‘desocialization’ (Kraut et al. 1998), effects of language and culture on consumption in cyberspace (Luna, Peracchio, and de Juan 2003), virtual communities of consumption (Kozinets 1999; 2002), identity construction by using brands in cyberspace (Schau and Gilly 2003), self realization by creation of an alternate self (Hemetsberger 2005), self-extension through simulated possessions (Siddiqui and Turley 2005) and file-sharing as gift-giving (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003).

Consumption as a post-modern narrative is a dialectic involving congruencies and tensions between subject, object and the audience. Post-modern orientations into the study of consumption in cyberspace assert that cyberspace dematerializes the object, decentralizes the subject and geographically disperses the audience. Alladi Venkatesh (along with Lauri Meamber and Fuat Firat) has been instrumental in consumer research in establishing links between postmodernity and cyberspace. Venkatesh, Meamber and Firat (1998) asserted that ‘cyberspaces as (are) site of fragmented virtuality, highly individualized, decentralized spaces of human subjectivity and ‘cyberspaces as (are) subversive and transgressive of many of our established norms and expectations of behaviour’ (p.303). Furthering the post-modern agenda, and by using cyberspace as their proving ground, Giesler and Pohlmann (2003) proposed the idea of a social form of emancipation, which they theorized existed as a window onto an imagined world, and often considered consumption in cyberspace as a form of libidary experimentation (Rhinegold 1993; Dibble 1995). Many such early views and characterisations were based on the belief that because cyberspace has the capacity to engage at both sensorial and emotional levels, it provides immersion and flow that can detach individuals from their immediate surroundings (Hoffman and Novak 1997; Gould and Lerman 1998).

After the initial quantitative examinations of the internet as an alternate shopping channel (Bits v/s byte), academic literature over the last fifteen years on the subject has gradually developed along two distinct themes: First, the exploration of consumption of the internet as a commodity per se, and second the examination of an individual’s social/interactive behaviour in cyberspace.


Existing Notions of Consumption in Cyberspace

Early depictions of cyberspace as a consumption space characterized it as a window onto an imagined world, and often considered...
in ‘an operationally closed, self-referential and consumption-related social system’ which the consumers used to create a distinction between self and environment. Venkatesh (1998b) also took the view that consumers are constantly in need of new spaces to exercise their freedoms and establish their identities. He asserted that there are ‘no behavioural norms’ (1998, p.672) in cyberspace and thus there is unlimited consumer freedom. Such freedom is supposedly exhibited by the creation of parallel cyber identities, which is a post-modern disjuncture in terms of consumption.

Disjunction of identity: In early literature there is a common belief that Internet chat rooms are spaces where individuals experiment with identity through textual social encounters. It is also argued that such experimentation—which often exhibits a deviation from social and cultural norms—is facilitated because individuals believe that their real identities are not disclosed. In cyberspace there is no wall between public and private, and so individuals tend to separate their real identities from the virtual, leaving their real identity behind, and by assuming an entirely new one. Early literature on gender blending (Turkle 1995; Hegland and Nelson 2002) and multiple identities (Hamman 1999; Gould and Lerman 1998; Rosen 2000) suggested that individuals consider their virtual identities dispensable and easily replaceable, while at the same time valuing their real identities as precious and irreplaceable.

Cyberspace and presentation of self: Kenneth Gergen (1988) argues that while medieval and modern periods were about an enlightenment which was based upon morality and unification, postmodernism is fascinated with the fetishism of creation and presentation of self. Sherry Turkle (1995, 1997) argues that Windows environment is an example of contemporary fragmentation of the self. Computer users have learnt to ‘multi-task’ by opening several windows on their screen at any given time. Each screen acts as the space in which one task is performed and may represent a component of self. Together, the many screens may represent the sum-total of the user, whose attention and interests are malleable and keep shifting between windows. Turkle (1997) calls this spectacle a ‘self distributed in windows’. Schau and Gilly (2003) find that consumers create their cyberspatial identities using imagined or aspired components, which they would generally not use to create their real life identities. In general, post-modern orientation in cyberspatial consumption argues for the presence of an artificially created identity which may be an important component of the self, but has little resemblance with the real life identity.

METHODOLOGY

Social networking sites have emerged as the prime non-economic consumption platforms on the internet. Active consumer participation on SNS’s has been credited to the free nature of such sites; in general most such sites do not have a monetary cost to either join, or to participate in any activities. One of the reasons why such sites are ‘free’ is because many of them are created by consumers themselves. Such active participation in creating SNS’s is especially evident in special-interest forums, where knowledge and information is shared. Some of the earliest examples of social networking on the Internet were technical sites where anything from debugging a car problem to diagnosing faults in the launch sequences of missiles was freely discussed among amateur as well as professional members. Contemporary SNS’s are the popular sites run by commercial interests, but are open to all consumers free of charge. Such SNS’s can be dedicated to a variety of activities. These sites have been evolving (coming and going) over the years—Napster, Geocities, Kazaa, Bebo, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook are a few examples of SNS’s which have gained popularity in the recent past. The changing faces of these SNS’s is perhaps indicative of the marketplace / social-space discourse of power and control between marketers and consumers, as well as of consumers’ attempts to assert their authority on such social sites.

This research adopted a multi-sited, evolving multi-method approach which is very similar to the one used by Schau and Gilly (2003) and in line with the Orgard’s (2005) suggestion to create an online-offline bridge between data by gaining trust of the online respondents to become offline participants, and vice-versa. At a theoretical level, the research is adapted to reflect the new emphasis on ‘sharing’ as a mode of consumption, by focusing on the sharing aspect of participation on such sites.

The data for this research were collected over a period of one year. Initially thirty one university students were drafted for a one hour session at different times of day in a computer lab. Groups of students numbering between five and seven were given the freedom to perform any task on computer. They were advised to perform the tasks that they would normally perform outside of their learning environment. Their online activities were passively observed and notes were taken. At the end of the session students were asked a set of simple questions about their online activities during the session. These questions were framed during the observation session and were aimed at gaining clarity and establishing context. Seven of these students volunteered to undergo in-depth interviews and were explored further.

It became apparent after the initial explorations that the bulk of non-task orientated computer usage was aimed at social networking. From our original sample, only three respondents had worked on some sort of result orientated task, but all had accessed emails, and twenty seven students had accessed a SNS site. A list of respondent activities on such SNS site was prepared, a sample of which can be gleaned in table 1. At this time the research aim was redirected to explore the meanings associated with social networking in cyberspace. Facebook emerged as the most popular social networking platform, and was thus chosen as the prime target for the next phase of research. Thirteen respondents volunteered to accept the first author as a friend on Facebook. These respondents were also instrumental in persuading many other potential respondents from within their cyber-social circle.

In the second phase of data collection, sixty seven respondents were contacted using various means. All these respondents were from within the social network of the original seven respondents who had agreed to extensive participation in the research. This yielded extensive textual data which were analyzed using an interpretive methodology similar to that used by Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1990). Consumers’ cyberspatial existences were considered a unique lived experience, and congruencies and crossovers with their offline lives were also examined in detail, tying the existentially local to a phenomenologically global. This iterative process yielded two very strong themes; the significance of consumers’ cyberspatial identities in their everyday lives, and sharing as a prime motive for participation in SNS’s.

FINDDINGS

The core activity on many social networking sites is befriending—consumers have a means to acquire new friends who become visible to each other and can share and view each others’ contribution to their own pages. The primary reason to join SNSs is to make oneself visible to others in cyberspace. In this way contemporary SNSs are public areas of one’s life and not back stage areas. Many consumers realize that SNSs’ internal roles are inadequate to support a total replacement of an ordinary everyday social life, and so in many cases SNS’s work at the level of extending or supporting existing social life. Matt was one respondent who was a relative
new comer to the SNS, but proudly claimed to have 121 friends. He spent several hours daily on the internet and contributed to his Facebook page on a regular basis. Matt explained his reasons for this activity:

My Facebook is my regular contact with all my friends – now that everyone is on Facebook, it’s a common thing that you use to connect with all your friends at once, I mean it is not a private chat with your girlfriend, but things in your life that you want everyone to know about – where you have been, how you have been doing, sharing exciting things, and may be not so exciting things that may mean something to your friends. (Matt 28)

Matt’s response clearly identifies the underlying meanings of social networking in his life, where the social is known as well as ratified. To him his SNS activities are part of a one-to-many dialogue that is generally not possible in real life. The notion of ‘connecting with all your friends at once’ is perhaps the reason for success of SNSs. Networking sites have thus become privately owned public billboards, where individuals have the authority to publish aspects of their lives that they want all to know.

Poster (1995) asserts that the internet’s ability to act as a publishing house for the proletariat has eroded the distinction and authority, traditionally accorded to certain status defined roles, to prepare and publish text for common consumption. It has been said that cyberspace blurs the distinction between oral and written by recording and publishing the kind of private information that used to be exchanged around the village well (or water cooler in the office).

Self expression, communication and interactions on SNS may take place in textual or pictorial form. These textual / pictorial interactions in cyberspace have captured the imagination of both consumers and researchers. The naïve narrativity and experimentation with linguistic rules in digital texts make them immensely pleasurable to interactants. Marie-Laure Ryan (2005) however argues that digital textuality suffers from a certain split condition, in that although there are elements of artistic expression in digital texts, its readership is limited to interactants alone. She holds that digital texts are not as much aimed at readers as much they are at fellow interactants.

It became obvious early on in the research that the questions concerning multiple identities on the internet were not so valid in the case of many of these new SNS. Most respondents had only one account per site, which they valued greatly. None of the respondents were interested in creating a pseudo-identity on social networking sites, as Jenny explained;

But why? I mean lie (frowns)? I know there are wierdo’s out there who have nothing better to do in life. I mean you hear about it on the tele, but no one I know does such a thing – at least not that I know of – I mean I find it difficult as it is to keep up posting pictures and comments, and looking at my friends pictures, and connecting on a daily basis. It takes time – you know, Facebook takes time, to connect with real people that I already know – so I don’t know why you would go out and create a new you, to make friends with people you don’t know anything about and – they would have to lie all the time, wouldn’t they… (Jenny 24)

It is very obvious from Jenny’s response that to her (as it was to most other respondents) the idea of fuzzed cyber-identity is bizarre. She finds the emotional investment into sharing her real self through SNS taxing; desirable outcomes of this activity ‘take time’. To her, identity concealment, and creation of a unique cyber-identity, borders on the limits of her morality. The issue of maintaining multiple ‘faces’ on SNS’s becomes very complicated as it appears that multiple identities on the internet have slowly gone out of fashion. In its place has emerged the practice of ‘controlled exposure’, whereby consumers allow varying degree of access to their online ‘profile’ to various ‘friends’. It is not uncommon to find young adults hiding certain aspects of their profile from their elders, or from friends that they do not want all of their ‘self’ revealed to. This creates a certain anxiety and friction in the use of SNS, which may be one reason why Jenny thought that emotional and temporal investment in creating of a public self was high.

On the other hand, one of my younger respondents, Mike, was at ease not revealing it all on the SNS;

Well, I won’t say it is cheezy, smart may be – (laughs), but I do consider what to post and what not– I mean my mom can see that, and pictures from the aftermath of a bar hopping scene on a good weekend are not really going to cheer her up… (Mike 19)

Mike’s response is indicative of the crossovers between the virtual and the real; both these worlds no longer exist independent of each other. In the embodied world there are irreducible hierarchies built into social structures. Cyberspace appears to inculcate a diminution of prevailing hierarchies of race, gender, class, age and social status. This creates asymmetries in empowered positions between cyberspace and embodied world, as a result of which the relationship between cyberspace and material world is one of rupture and challenge. In this context it is evident that teenagers and young adults can assume an empowered position in cyberspatial social structures by gaining a mastery of technology. They tend to have a better knowledge of how these sites work, have accounts on multiple platforms, participate more actively online, and generally tend to have a much larger cyber-social circle than their adult counterparts. Such an empowerment can challenge traditional social structures and could possibly create a rupture. However, the discretion applied by Mike is representative of a sensitivity that is instrumental in maintaining a somewhat harmonious relationship between the embodied world and the cyberspace.

Behaviour in cyberspace is defined and constrained by language and the tools used for communication of the language (web browser, chat forum). The linguistic resources of cyberspace are always emergent in nature; cyber-communities continually adapt, modify and create newer forms of expressions (Cicognani 1998). Ryan (2005) lists four modes of contemporary narrative. These are: Diegetic mode, telling someone that something happened, usually in the past (story); Mimetic mode, enacting a story in the present by impersonating a character and mimicking action, (drama); Participatory mode, creating a story in real time by playing a role; and Simulative mode, creating a story in real time by designing an engine that will implement a sequence of events on the basis of internal rules and inputs to the system.

The following table lists the most popular consumer activities on Facebook and highlights the different modes of narrative creation.

**THE SELF PRESENTATION DYNAMIC–FACE IN FACEBOOK**

It may only be a coincidence that Facebook appears as a direct application of Irving Goffman’s face construct. However, any discussion on creation and maintenance of identity cannot be complete perhaps without some reference to Goffman’s face construct. Irving Goffman, a symbolic interactionist of the Chicago School, made a significant contribution to the study of self-presentation. His work
is significant because he was the first theorist to place an emphasis on qualitative analysis of the component parts of the interactive process in understanding individuals’ interactions. His explorations of individual identity, group relations and meaning in interactions use a ‘dramaturgical’ metaphor. His book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) uses this metaphor to provide a detailed description and analysis of process and meaning in everyday mundane interactions. It is astonishing how valid his assertions can be in the context of the study of SNSs.

Goffman puts forward the construct of ‘dramatic realization’ which is defined and described in terms of what an individual wants to achieve through social interaction. This dramatic realization, (which is represented in table 1 through narrative analysis) is a process and a set of linked activities that constructs a complete, role appropriate ‘impression’ that fits well with the audience and their social contexts. He considers the individual as an actor, and her interactions as performances, in broad social contexts shaped by both environment and the audience. He argues that ‘performances’ are constructions that provide others with ‘impressions’ to achieve desired goals of the actor. Building onto his pataphor, he argues that social identity is closely related to the concept of ‘face’ (Goffman 1967) or ‘front’, which he describes as the part of a performance that regulates and defines the situation for the audience. This front can be applied directly to Facebook by considering all individual member profiles as fronts for these individuals. He also defines group dynamics in terms of ritualized, symbolic actions, and argues that a group interaction is a role defined, rehearsed and choreographed drama, and that it is necessary for each individual to maintain his or her face and deliver a performance in order to achieve collective goals. This ritualized symbolic action is amply captured on Facebook through the interactive drama of sharing photos or thoughts, and posting comments on others’ thoughts and photos.

Goffman also maintains that individuals, like actors in a theatre, need backstage areas where they can let down their public masks, tell dirty jokes, collect themselves and relieve the tensions that are an inevitable part of any public performance. Arguing that uninhibited behaviour boosts creativity and brings out the true self, some communication theorists have extended Goffman’s thesis by characterizing cyberspace as a backstage of the real world, and cyberspatial identities as true selves in these backstage areas. It is significant to note that in comparison to the social chameleon, bricoleur, or pastiche identity characterizations of post-modern theorists, characterizations drawn on Goffman’s thesis proclaim fuzzed cyber-identities as real reflections of true selves. If we write ourselves in cyberspace, and try to live the self we write, we are trying to achieve congruence between our true (cyber) self and our ‘face’. Goffman’s themes of dramatization, role-play and re-creation, contrast well with enactment of the real. They also appear to have much in common with post-modern themes of hyperreality and simulacra, and thus fit many scenarios in cyberspace.

The non-economic paradigm of Sharing: Belk (2010) suggests that ‘because contemporary consumer behaviour has been characterised as being tied to marketplace exchanges, the possibility of non-exchange based sharing as a common, if not dominant mode of consumption challenges existing thought in the field’. There is no denying that sharing as a mode of consumption has been neglected by consumer researchers. In the context of cyberspatial consumption, a good example of this neglect could be Geisler and Pohlmann’s (2003) work on music file sharing, which they chose to study under the gift giving framework. However, we cannot be overly critical of such neglect, as up to now, a proper theoretical framework on sharing as a mode of consumption had not been put forth.

Within our study of SNS, sharing emerged as the most prominent mode of consumption. Respondent after respondent, narrative after narrative the word sharing kept reappearing with increasing intensity. Even the headline banners and logos on many such SNSs were claiming that they were the ideal place for ‘sharing’ (Fig. 1). One way or the other, all consumer activities on Facebook, Bebo, Flickr, Youtube and Twitter were about sharing thoughts, feelings, emotions and lives with the significant others.

One respondent Daria was an avid Facebook and Twitter user. She spent several hours every day connecting to her friends on SNSs. To her, Facebook and Twitter were sharing platforms which enabled her to reach out to the world and share all the ‘good’ in her life. She explained;

‘…..I think this is why I put my pictures up on Facebook—I mean if I feel happy, I want to share my happiness with my friends…and if it puts a smile on their faces then that makes

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**TABLE 1**

**Digital Narrativity of Facebook through typical Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities on Facebook</th>
<th>Consumer Desired Effect</th>
<th>Narrative Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Update status</td>
<td>Sharing events in real life</td>
<td>Diegetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game update (Farmville, Fishville, Lucky Chips Casino, Crazy Cabbie, Mafia Wars)</td>
<td>Sharing online gaming passion</td>
<td>Simulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment (political / social event, new product launch, celebrity news, status)</td>
<td>Share thoughts, emotions, feelings</td>
<td>Participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo (add, view, tag, upload)</td>
<td>Share events in real life</td>
<td>Diegetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘—Are now friends’ updates</td>
<td>Announce new social connections</td>
<td>Mimetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add friends (invite, request)</td>
<td>Expand social network</td>
<td>Simulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a fan</td>
<td>Strengthen social connection</td>
<td>Mimetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment using Instant Messaging</td>
<td>Share private thoughts</td>
<td>Participatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*European Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 9) / 131*
me even more happy … you see what I mean? I mean yeah, you could argue that I want my happiness more than anybody elses, but sharing a good thought, a good feeling, a laugh, a joke is better than passively browsing. (Daria 23)

Here Daria highlights her mode of sharing, which is purely non-reciprocal in nature. She is not satisfied with passive browsing, which may mean sharing things from others, but is content only after extending her own share of good fortune. Such a sharing is non-reciprocal socialization which contrasts well with the mode of sharing Giesler and Pohlmann (2003) explored. Daria lists a number of thoughts and feelings she likes to share with her friends, but such non-economic exchanges do not end there. For example in the case of Facebook, the non-economic exchanges involve sharing friends, sharing resources, sharing hints, tips and links, audio and video files among many others. In case of Youtube, the whole idea behind the site is to create a common shared platform where non-economic, yet valuable resources are placed in common public access. Such a non-economic resource sharing can perhaps be equated with a marketplace in which economic exchanges were replaced by shared resources.

Belk (2010) argues that sharing tends to be a communal act that is instrumental in creating social networks. Using public libraries as an example, Varian (2000) proposes that in certain circumstances social institutions may form around the need and practice of sharing resources. The notions of sharing on the internet can perhaps be traced back to its formative years, when system developers worked in large, geographically dispersed teams that needed free access to resources in order to create a common good. Such a sharing is enacted through a self-selecting community of common interest. True to Venkatesh, Firat and Meamber’s prophesy, we have seen that marketers inevitably invade such non-economic platforms by commercializing them. There is, however, ample evidence of consumer resistance in this marketplace / social space discourse of power, where consumers have always favoured the non-economic (free) SNSs over the subscribed (for fee) ones.

Our respondent James, who had been on social sharing and networking sites for more than a decade expressed his thoughts;

I remember when Napster was around, CD’s were expensive and online downloads were iffy, and it was difficult for an average Joe like me to pay for stuff online, so we uploaded and downloaded tracks (music)—then it was (Napster) banned, so we found other websites doing the same, like Kazaa, then Kazaa started charging, so we went underground, but file sharing was going on all the time… you cant’ stop people from sharing the things they love, music is more than money, well it is money to the big recording companies, but for listeners it is the music that they want to share—so what if someone cant’ pay for it, there will always be people who would share a good track. (James 32)

Kent (1993) argues that most anthropologists link sharing to economics because sharing reduces the risk of return variations. She proposes that whereas sharing reduces variation, economic systems are built upon scarcity of commodity (price mechanisms and market systems). Economic systems create stratifications in societies. Sharing systems act as levellers as they are built upon non economic gains. James’s verbatim highlights the non-economic paradigm of sharing in a world governed by economic systems. To James good music is worth sharing, even if illegal, and consumers like James always find avenues to share the things that they love. Cyberspace has thus become a great leveller where consumer resistance to external economic control results in restructuring and renegotiation of social and economic hierarchical structures.
However, even the non-economic paradigm of sharing in cyberspace is not void of boundaries and hierarchies—consumers tend to control the exposure and restrict the sharing to chosen ones. This is exemplified by allowing, or disallowing individuals to access their private quarters in cyberspace. Most of our respondents had chosen to keep their public profile restricted by making it visible only to their friends.

**NON-ECONOMIC PARADIGM OF CONSUMPTION: A COMMENTARY**

The study of consumer research from a marketplace perspective has resulted in researchers largely ignoring non-economic consumption. It appears that such activities have almost been considered non-purposeful. However, we propose a fresh look at some existing consumption characterizations which, along with sharing (Belk 2010), can be used to create a better understanding of the non-economic paradigm of consumption.

“You can’t play if you don’t share”; Twitter, Bebo and Facebook are cyber-destinations aimed at fun and pleasure—they are like little playgrounds where consumers meet to play enjoyable games of social networking. Firat and Venkatesh (1997) equate such consumption with play, and the consumer with a child who uses consumption as a comfort zone full of warm feelings, pleasurable thoughts and experiences. Renowned textual theorist, Roland Barthes, in his book ‘Pleasures of the Text’, (1973) posits that text can provide two kinds of pleasures, both to the writer and reader: a physical pleasure operating beyond culture and ideology; and a culturally conformed, mundane pleasure he calls plaisir. Some of the earlier forms of interaction in CME, and all their resultant functions and gratifications, were based entirely on asynchronous transmission of text. For instance Gould and Coyle’s (2000) study of narratives in cyberspace indicates that the consumption gratifications from cyber-text can both be Jouissance and plaisir. In a similar way consumers on social networking sites achieve both Jouissance and plaisir through their textural interactions.

Firat and Venkatesh (1997) also argue that the history and concept of play is neither distant nor different from that of consumption, and that ‘play’—which is synonymous with ‘fun’ and ‘enjoyment’—highlights the separation between public and private. Play resonates with thoughts of pleasurable experiences, and projects the image of joy, abandon and sweet satisfaction. Holt (1997) argues that contemporary consumption is characterized by consumption patterns that are structured by contextual cultural frameworks and that the reason ‘why one consumes what he consumes’ lies in cultural predisposition. He also proposes that ‘in terms of purpose, consumers’ actions can be both ends in themselves (autotelic actions) and means to some further ends (instrumental actions)’ (1995, p.2), he organizes his ontology of consumption around four thematic dimensions or metaphor; consuming as experience, consuming as integration, consuming as classification and consuming as play.

Holt posits that consuming as experience refers to methods used by consumers to make sense of, and respond to, the consumable. Enacted in progressive stages of accounting, evaluating and appreciating, the experience of consumption is structured by the interpretive framework consumers apply to engage with the consumable. Consuming as integration metaphor references the methods consumers use to relate to, and integrate, the consumable into their self-concept. This process is sequentially enacted through the stages of assimilation, production and personalization. Consuming as play metaphor references the use of consumption as an end in itself such that consumer-object-consumer interactions do not have an ulterior end. In the context of this research, we found that our respondents consumed SNSs as experience, as integration, and as play.

It can be questioned why one type of consumption (consumption site) could be connected to, and defined by three diverse dimensions. Fiske (1987) asserts that the multiplicity of needs and desires that people bring to the media results in diverse forms of pleasure and meanings created in the process of consumption. For him, such consumption is everything but work, because seeking pleasure in mediated digital environments is similar to other leisure activities, in that it is an effort to produce meanings of self that the world of work denies.

Consumer actions in cyberspace are not unique, in that they do not exist independent of embodied world, but are perhaps only extensions of real-world discourses. Events in embodied world, such as Burning man festival (Kozinets, 2002), are representations of similar Marketplace / social-space discourses of power. Such discourses may be more evident in cyberspace, but they are certainly not unique to it. Articulating the importance of internet in the marketplace / social-space discourse of power, Miller and Slater (2000) argue that the internet is a commodity, and as a continuous medium it is embedded in geographically defined social spaces, such that internet users ‘cannot escape into a self-enclosed cyberian apartness’. To them, the internet (rather than cyberspace) is embedded in societies that exist in a particular place, and can be understood on the following basis: dynamics of objectification—people engage with the internet as an instance of material culture and use it as an object in the process of self and social identification; dynamics of mediation—people engage with the media as media, they frame and make use of its features and potentials according to their own social and cultural norms; dynamics of normative freedom—people adapt to the new ways in which freedom and normativity is linked to the internet without surrendering their local context; and dynamics of positioning—that people use creative strategies to adapt to the fluidity of cultural, political and economic flows that the internet offers and reposition their senses of self and social.

Social Networking sites, as new playgrounds for the consumers, perhaps represent only the contemporary battle fields in a continual marketplace / social space discourse of power. Devoid of economic gains or leverages, Social networking sites in cyberspace replace economic system with a non-economic paradigm of sharing. To consumers social networking is all about sharing, and social networking sites are places where they can exercise this sharing outside of any economic paradigm. Consumer freedom is directly linked to consumer authority—and non-economic allocation of resources on the basis of sharing perhaps provides the consumers with ultimate authority in these cyber-social spaces.

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Brand Gender and Its Dimensions
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ABSTRACT
This paper investigates consumer perception of brand gender and its dimensions. An exploratory study reveals this concept salience and the existence of its six dimensions: 1) the gender of the typical brand user, 2) gendered brand personality traits, 3) gendered attributes of brand communication, 4) the grammatical gender of the brand name, 5) gendered attributes of the logo, and 6) gendered attributes and benefits of the products. Leaning on gender theories in psychology, our results suggest a classification of brand gender in three groups: masculine, feminine, low masculine/feminine, with no brand in the high masculine/feminine brand gender position. (Key words: Brand gender, gender, brand extension, brand personality)

INTRODUCTION
Do Brands, Like Human Beings, Have Gender Identities?
Gender takes into account the social and cultural difference between femininity and masculinity and has also been a key symbolic processing variable in our thinking system since Antiquity (Héritier 1996). The male/female categorization process is still one of the first classification systems learnt by children (Powlishta et al., 2001) and is continuously used by adults without full awareness they are doing so (Schneider 2004).

Gender is deeply rooted in many languages, with gendered nouns. In French, the “sea” is grammatically feminine, and the “ocean” is masculine. Many languages have two grammatical genders (feminine, masculine) or three (feminine, masculine and neuter).

Is Gillette still perceived as masculine and Lancôme as feminine? These brands used to target men or women only, then started to extend across genders with the launch of Gillette razors “Venus for Women” or “Lancôme for Men” skincare products.

This has been scarcely studied in the literature. Researchers often suggest that brands possess gendered images (Aaker 1997; Fournier 1998; Keller 1993; McCracken 1993) but the concept of brand gender has not been investigated. How can brand gender be defined? Which dimensions constitute brand gender? If gender and masculine/feminine categorization is central to the way we see the world, it may impact our perception of brands. The objective of this study is to explore consumer perception of the brand gender concept and its dimensions.

BACKGROUND
The Central Role of Gender in Civilization
The biological term sex defines men and women by their physical characteristics, their genital organs and their chromosomes. Gender is a social sex, representing the set of characteristics and behaviours that a given society associate and ascribe differently to women and men: it is our notion of femininity and masculinity (Burr 1998). Despite societal moves in the egalitarian direction, gender norms are still alive and well. Childcare continues to be a feminine role with limited intervention from men (Abbot and Wallace 2003). Gendered differentiation in upbringing persists with families encouraging boys to behave in a manly way and girls to behave in a womanly way (Dafflon-Novelle 2006) In experiments, adults tend to give masculine toys to boys, but allow girls to choose neutral or even masculine toys (Wood et al. 2002). In parallel, anthropologists have shown how gender is a key structuring variable of civilizations. Each culture develops a set of masculine and feminine gender identities, which can differ totally from one tribe to the other (Godelier 1982; Mead 1928). Yet, each one is built upon the allocation of distinct social roles to men and women (Bourdieu 1998; Mead 1928; Lévi-Strauss 1979). Héritier (1996) reveals how differences between male/female bodies organize thinking processes. Most civilizations structure thoughts on the basis of couples of opposites derived from sexual bodily features. Thanks to their body and hair, women are associated with curved/soft/feminine versus men with straight/stiff/hard. This was institutionalized long ago in most cultures via myths or legends. Hence gender seems to act as a major symbolic processing variable in perception. Does it impact the perception of products and brands?

Gendered Perception of Products
Studies have shown that consumers have gendered perception of product categories: some were seen as highly masculine, some highly feminine and others moderately masculine and feminine (Allison et al. 1980). Their masculinity/femininity seemed linked to the gender of the stereotyped user of the product category. Allison et al. (1980) concluded that products did have a gender, demonstrating the existence of two separate constructs: product masculinity and product femininity. More recent studies suggest that objects generate gendered associations. Products are classified as masculine or feminine according to their shape and colours (Tissier-Desbordes and Kimmel 2002). Small products with light, pastel and soft shades are associated with women, while large dark-coloured items are associated with men (Kirkham 1996).

Researchers have shown that round shapes generate ideas like harmony, compromise, and friendship. Conversely, angular shapes lead to masculine attributes: energy, strength, robustness (Berlyne 1976). Both men and women can decode shapes ascribed to their gender: facing four unmarked perfume bottles, men choose those with masculine shapes, and women those with feminine shapes (Schmitt, Leclerc, and Dubé-Riouxs 1988).

Gendered Perception of Brands
Consumer perception of brand gender is referred to indirectly in the marketing literature. The phenomenon of humanizing brands is not new: Martineau (1958) and Levy (1959) observed the human dimension of brands fifty years ago. For Levy, brand personality included characteristics such as personality traits, age, and gender. Some researchers have suggested that brands possess feminine/masculine dimensions (Aaker 1997; Alreck et al., 1982; Fournier 1998; Keller 1993; McCracken, 1993). The feminine or masculine image of the brand comes from the gender of the main user associated with that brand (Keller 1993). Moreover, people transfer to a brand the specific personality traits of its stereotyped consumer (Mc Cracken 1986). Recently, Yorkston and De Mello (2005) show that Spanish consumers spontaneously use gendered associations of brand names, then evaluate more favourably brands whose grammatical gender name is in line with the gender of the typical brand user.

Yet little research has been focused directly on the gendered perception of brands. Early studies revealed congruency between the masculine/feminine personality of individuals and their preference for brands with masculine/feminine images (Alreck et al. 1982; Fry...
Brand gender has recently regained attention from researchers analyzing a growing managerial practice: cross-gender brand extension (Grohmann 2009; Jung and Lee 2006; Veg 2008). Grohmann (2009) shows that consumers associate brands with feminine/masculine personalities and successfully develops two scales to measure these two dimensions. However, we have found no conceptual definition of brand gender, nor any description of its components, in the existing literature. Brands can convey masculine or feminine personality traits, as proved by Grohmann (2009) and generate gendered associations through the grammatical gender of the brand name (Yorkston and De Mello 2005). Brand gender is therefore a multidimensional concept that we will strive to define via its dimensions.

**Brand Gender: Towards a Multidimensional Concept**

Brands can be considered as a set of associations held in the memory (Keller 1993). Most authors agree on this conception, although they may differ in their approach to the nature and the number of these associations (Aaker 1991; Keller 1993). Given the central role of gender in our thinking processes, the gender of brands could be made of all the gendered associations of the brand, as perceived and memorized by consumers. In socio-psychology, gender is predominantly considered as a multidimensional concept, encompassing the various categories of attributes, attitudes and behaviours that empirically distinguish men from women in a given culture (Ashmore 1990; Spence 1993). Also, marketing literature has defined brand personality as “the set of human personality traits associated with a brand by consumers” (Aaker 1997). We thus propose to transfer the multidimensional vision of gender to brand gender with the following definition: brand gender is the set of gendered brand and product characteristics, attributes and personality traits associated with that brand by consumers.

What are the possible attributes that make up brand gender? Brand perception or brand image is defined by Aaker (1991) as a prism with ten dimensions (Figure 1).

For brand gender, we retain only the dimensions which, based on our literature analysis, could have gendered associations (underlined in Figure 1). This led us to exclude for instance dimensions such as price. Capitalizing on previous research on the gender of brand names (Yorkston and De Mello 2005), we propose to add a dimension consisting of the brand name and logo. Moreover, since brand advertising can also be perceived as masculine or feminine (Alreck et al., 1982; Till and Priluck 2001), via colors or sounds (Wolin 2003) or spokespersons (Debevec and Iyer 1986), we add a further dimension: communication attributes. Finally, we propose a concept of brand gender with seven dimensions (Figure 2).

Exploratory depth interviews were conducted with 35 French individuals to let the respondents openly express all the brand associations that came to mind. Our semi-structured guide was organized by themes, from the general to the specific, beginning with perception of product categories, the overall perception of the brand tested in the interview and the potential dimensions of brand gender. We presented various stimuli to consumers (the brand name, the brand logo, a major product of the brand, brand advertising) to generate richer vocabulary, then asked again about the overall perception, without mentioning our focus on gender. To maximize generalization of results, we selected four product categories (mineral water, coffee, razors, skincare), either utilitarian or symbolic and with different genders according to previous literature: masculine and feminine.

---

1. Interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 3 hours.
2. The question was as follows: “What are the impressions, images, words that come to mind about this brand?”
(razors), feminine (skincare), or mixed due to mixed usage (coffee, mineral water). We also chose ten well-known brands, potentially possessing a masculine or feminine image.

The respondents consisted of 20 male/15 female users of these product categories, who were familiar with the tested brand and varied in age, social group, occupation, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, and place of residence. Each brand was tested by five participants.

The interviews were analyzed in a two-stage methodology. A traditional content analysis was conducted, following Denzin and Lincoln (1994) principles. A lexical analysis was run using the Alceste software, to reveal the classification of textual data without any pre-conception of themes or interpretation by the researcher (Helme-Guizon and Gavard-Perret 2004).

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

**Brand Gender as a Salient Concept and a Categorization Tool for Consumers**

Half of our respondents spontaneously referred to gendered brands at the beginning of the interviews (25 references). Contrex was quoted 10 times (feminine), Taillifine 3 (feminine), Mercedes 3 (masculine), Sveltesse 2 (feminine), Castorama, Nordauto, Marlboro, Hépar, Surfouf, Peugeot 106, Aston Martin (one each).

Furthermore, our content analysis reveals that brand gender is a salient and relevant concept, emerging from the outset for many brands. From the first associations, brand gender is quoted for five of our brands by all respondents, whatever their sex, age, and sexual orientation. For example, one male respondent stated that “Lancôme is sophisticated, feminine, discreet, seductive, French.” Another woman commented: “Lancôme is luxury, feminine, not the modern woman, sophisticated and sensual”. Dior is also perceived feminine from the first associations: “Dior equals prestige, quality, aesthetic, graceful: simply feminine,” or “For me it’s luxury, femininity, Haute Couture, for women only, essentially feminine” from another individual. Contrex appears feminine just the same, illustrated by these two participants: “it’s femininity, about being slim” and “it’s slimness and a mineral water for women, feminine and light.” Both Gillette and Nickel appear masculine: “Gillette is about perfection for men, the idea of performance, it’s about masculinity, for virile men,” which echoes these words: “Macho advertising, technical and high-performing, very masculine” from a female respondent. And a last quote for Nickel: “a masculine brand, intended for men only, selling masculine products in masculine packs that have automobile connotation.”

Importantly, we can see from these first associations that all consumers mentioned the gender of the typical brand user for these five brands, with the words “for man/masculine” or “for women/feminine.” Other categories of associations emerge, such as product attributes, brand personality traits or communication attributes: some of them are gendered associations that we will further analyse in this paper. Conversely, some of the other brands do not immediately lead to gendered associations (Jacques Vabre, Grand-Mère, Badoit, Bic): respondents concluded that these brands are neutral, without gender, unisex. Biotherm appears with low masculinity and low femininity for three respondents out of five.

Thus, our set of brands can be classified as feminine (high femininity/low masculinity–Contrex, Lancôme, Dior), masculine (high masculinity/low femininity–Gillette, Nickel), and neutral or genderless (low femininity/low masculinity–Badoit, Jacques Vabre, Grand-Mère, Bic, and Biotherm at a lesser extent). These results reflect the gender theories on masculine and feminine traits, classifying people in four groups: 1) masculine, 2) feminine, 3) undifferentiated, and 4) androgynous (masculine+feminine) (Bem 1981; Spence and Helmreich 1980). Drawing on these theories, we arrive at Figure 3. Yet, none of our brands was perceived as both strongly masculine and strongly feminine, duplicating the results of Grohmann (2009) on the gendered dimensions of brand personality.

In parallel, the lexical analysis with Alceste revealed four groups of words, or four universes in the consumers’ discourse on their overall perception of brands: 1) a masculine universe containing textual data on the Gillette, Nickel and Bic brands, 2) a feminine universe associated with the text on skincare brands and Contrex, 3) a theme focussing on coffee and family, and 4) a more minor theme concerning youth and water.

This lexical analysis covered 51% of the “u.c.e”, which is satisfactory, and results in a classification in which a vocabulary class associated with masculinity contrasts with a class on femininity/sophistication. It shows that consumers tend to classify some brands in masculine/feminine categories that extend beyond traditional product categories. Thus, class 1 (masculine universe)

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4These are answers to the first question of the interview concerning perception of product categories.

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5U.c.e are “units of elementary text” in the Alceste software. To be statistically significant, this percentage should exceed 50%.

---
brand literature (Keller 1993). The gender of these brands appears to be associated with the gender of the typical brand user, independently of the gender of the product category of the brand. For example, a man (P.) perceives the skincare category as feminine and the Nickel brand as masculine, because of its stereotyped user (Table 2). The gender of the typical user associated with the brand can be considered as a main dimension of brand gender. In contrast, the gender of the brand’s product category was never mentioned as a component of the brand gender and thus does not appear as one of its key component.

2. Gendered Personality Traits of the Brand.

From the first associations, a majority of respondents expressed gender associations qualifying the feminine or masculine personality of the brand. These attributes are for instance "discreet, seductive, sophisticated, soft, tender, cheerful" versus "assertive, forceful, technical, high-performing, competitive, aggressive" (for the Lancôme, Dior, Contrex brands versus Nickel, Gillette). To illustrate, one respondent quotes on Lancôme: "For women, ultra feminine, images of advertising, a sophisticated, soft, refined, tender brand, sensual and graceful." Globally these attributes contain the textual data relative to razors brands and Nickel (skincare) while class 2 (feminine universe) consists of the textual data for the other skin-care brands and Contrex water. The strength of masculine associations is evidenced by the repeated use of words like masculine, masculinity, men, he, macho in class 1, combined with instrumental personality traits (realize, dynamic, performing). Regarding feminine associations, there are many occurrences of the words woman/feminine/femininity, in addition to expressive traits (soft, discreet) and archetypal attributes of femininity (sophisticated, elegant, aesthetic).

The Six Dimensions of Brand Gender

Our content analysis reveals six dimensions of brand gender.

1. The Gender of the Typical User of the Brand. From the first associations for Lancôme, Dior, Contrex, Nickel and Gillette, all consumers mentioned the gender of the typical brand user, as says individual L.: "Dior evokes star system, it’s for women, fashion-addicts and trendy women." This replicates previous research about the gender of products (Allison et al. 1980) and is in line with the brand literature (Keller 1993). The gender of these brands appears to be associated with the gender of the typical brand user, independently of the gender of the product category of the brand. For example, a man (P.) perceives the skincare category as feminine and the Nickel brand as masculine, because of its stereotyped user (Table 2). The gender of the typical user associated with the brand can be considered as a main dimension of brand gender. In contrast, the gender of the brand’s product category was never mentioned as a component of the brand gender and thus does not appear as one of its key component.

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### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine Universe</th>
<th>Feminine Universe</th>
<th>Coffee Universe</th>
<th>Water Universe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38% of u.c.e</td>
<td>20% of u.c.e</td>
<td>29% of u.c.e</td>
<td>13% of u.c.e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine (13/19)*</td>
<td>Sophistication (6/25)</td>
<td>Coffee (23/64)</td>
<td>Water (6/28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He (29/10)</td>
<td>Woman (10/11)</td>
<td>Family (4/10)</td>
<td>Young (9/9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovate (8/9)</td>
<td>Feminine (6/8)</td>
<td>Quality (5/7)</td>
<td>Sparkling (3/21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic (8/3)</td>
<td>Elegant (5/5)</td>
<td>Old (4/4)</td>
<td>Green (5/35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing (3/2)</td>
<td>Soft (3/3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive (3/2)</td>
<td>Discreet (3/3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(n / m): occurrence frequency of the word / associated/ Khi2.

### TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Interviewee (Sex)</th>
<th>Gender of the Brand’s Product Categories</th>
<th>Perceived Brand Gender</th>
<th>Gender of the Typical User</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nickel</td>
<td>P. (Man)</td>
<td>&quot;Skincare: more feminine than&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;For men, with an original vision, scientific, masculine&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Young men&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. (Woman)</td>
<td>&quot;Skincare: more masculine and feminine, was feminine only&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Masculine brand, thinks about men only&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Elegant and masculine men&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancôme</td>
<td>M. (Man)</td>
<td>&quot;Skincare: now mixed&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Sophisticated, feminine,&quot; discreet, seductive</td>
<td>&quot;Women&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. (Woman)</td>
<td>&quot;Make-up: feminine market&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;For all women, elegant, fashionable and trendy&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Women&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrex</td>
<td>K. (Man)</td>
<td>&quot;Mineral water: undifferentiated, no gender&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Old brand, institution, feminine, helps in slimming&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Women&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M. (Woman)</td>
<td>&quot;Mineral water: no gender, for everybody&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Slimness, a mineral water for women, feminine and light&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Women&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Instrumental and expressive traits refer to Parsons and Bales theory (1955), which indicated that men are characterized by instrumental attributes and women by expressive attributes.
TABLE 3
Gendered Attributes of Brand Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gendered Attributes</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Examples of Brand Associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects and Symbols</td>
<td>Lancôme</td>
<td>“The rose on the ad : it’s the feminine side” (F), “You get this feeling of being in a comforting universe, everybody is tender, kind, beautiful, it’s ultra feminine” (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in the Ad</td>
<td>Contrex</td>
<td>“Always women in the ad” (B) “The ads show virile men” (G), “Ads with macho men” (K)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokesperson</td>
<td>Dior</td>
<td>“Sharon Stone cream” (L), “Dior and Brigitte Bardot, Emmanuelle Béart in the ad” (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>Gillette</td>
<td>“The base line of the ad : the best a man can get” (G)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The names Contrex and Dior have masculine connotations for our French consumers, yet they are perceived globally as feminine. The Gillette name has feminine connotations for French speakers, but the brand is seen as masculine. The gender of the brand name helps to convey masculinity or femininity to the brand, yet other dimensions make greater contributions to the overall perception of the brand gender.

5. The Gendered Attributes of the Logo. Occasionally, a few interviewees mentioned the gender of the brand logo. Its colours, shapes, symbols appear to have masculine or feminine connotations: “The Biotherm logo is red and grey, no special design for the B, just a solid letter: it looks masculine” (F) or “I recall the rose, the flower on the Lancôme logo, it looks feminine” (A), or “Gillette is a neutral and basic logo: I remember Wilkinson looks more masculine, because of the two swords” (J). This is in line with past literature (Kirkham 1996). Yet this dimension appears less contributive to the brand gender than previous dimensions, generating fewer spontaneous associations.

6. The Gendered Attributes and Benefits of Brand Products. For some brands such as Dior or Nickel, gendered associations concerning product attributes are expressed by a majority of consumers. Products are perceived as masculine or feminine due to their colours and shapes, as previously shown in the literature (Kirkham 1996), and due to the materials used or the sophistication and subtlety of the design. Hence this comment on Dior: “Magnificent packagings, such quality in the materials they use, the product textures : a feminine universe.” Or another respondent on Nickel: “I remember the shape looks like a petrol can, so masculine, straight, abrupt shapes.” Product benefits are also referred to as gender-specific: for Contrex, the benefit of being slim is seen as feminine. For the other brands, all consumers express similar comments on gendered product attributes after being shown the brand products at the end of the interview, as shown on Lancôme: “a precious cream jar, looks like a treasure, pearly material at the top of the pack and its curved shape look so feminine.”

DISCUSSION
This research aimed to understand brand gender and its components. Our results show that brand gender is a salient and relevant concept, coming first when we ask consumers to talk about brands. Using a lexical analysis, we found that brand gender is a key factor to categorize brands, which seems to overtake the product categories. Moreover, this study enabled us to define the components of brand gender, which is a multidimensional concept. We identified six dimensions (Figure 4): 1) the gender of the brand’s main users,
the dimension that makes the greatest contribution, 2) gendered personality traits of the brand, 3) gendered attributes of brand communication, 4) the gender of the brand name, 5) gendered attributes of the logo, and 6) gendered attributes and benefits of the products.

If we consider that there are potentially four possible brand genders—1) masculine, 2) feminine, 3) slightly masculine and feminine, 4) strongly masculine and feminine—trying to adapt the theories of gender to brand gender (Bem 1981; Spence and Helmreich 1980), we found brands in all the first three categories but not the last. These results are congruent with the quantitative research by Grohmann (2009) on gendered brand personality, who found a similar mapping pattern for brands according to their degree of masculine or feminine personality, but could not identify a brand with a strongly masculine/feminine (androgynous) personality. The possibility of finding androgynous brands, and how consumers would react to them, could be addressed by future research. This study also provides support for the importance of brand gender as a distinct concept from brand personality concept (Aaker 1997) and from masculine/feminine brand personality by Grohmann (2009). Finally, our findings have managerial implications for marketers considering extensions to the opposite gender. If a brand has a gender, and if this gender is mainly created by the gender of the typical brand user, how can firms extend a brand with a perceived strong feminine gender to men? Conversely, how do we extend a perceived strongly masculine brand to women? Understanding the gender of brand and its components could help to avoid marketing mistakes.

However, there are some limitations to this research. We examined ten brands from four product categories, varying in gender and in their symbolic/utilitarian dimension. It would be interesting to analyze the gender of other categories of brands: fashion, distribution, services, high tech brands. For instance, does Apple have a gender? In addition, we identified some dimensions of brand gender for French consumers, but it would be useful to measure more accurately the gender of brands and the influence of each dimension. Another avenue for future research concerns the effect of consumer gender identity on the perception of the brand gender. Is there a link between the consumer’s gender identity or gender ideology and the perceived gender? Is it possible to buy a feminine brand if you are strongly masculine? Is perception of brand gender homogeneous, or affected by certain characteristics of the interviewees? Just as age has an effect on an individual’s sex role perceptions, it may also affect perception of brand gender. Specific research could also focus on children and explore their perception of the masculinity and femininity of brands. Finally, further consumer research could be conducted to investigate conditions for successful cross-gender brand extensions, capitalizing on the recent work by Jung & Lee (2006) or Veg (2008).

REFERENCES


## APPENDIX

Description of the Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Soc. Gp</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Marital Status Details</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lancôme</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Computer technician</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Tours</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Cleaning lady</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Montreuil</td>
<td>Cohabitating, 1 child</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Financial manager</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotherm</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Angers</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bi-sexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Angers</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Concarneau</td>
<td>Married, 3 children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Married, 3 children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dior</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Marketing director</td>
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<td>Boulogne</td>
<td>Married, 3 children</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Le Mans</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Sales director</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Neuilly</td>
<td>Married, 2 children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Communication clerk</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickel</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Recruiting assistant</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Carrièr/seine</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Sales consultant</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Make-up artist</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Widow, 3 children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then Badoit</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Youth leader</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Amiens</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Distribution manager</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating, 1 child</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(or the reverse)</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Economist</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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How Schema Incongruity Influences Consumer Responses: Exploring the Degree of Incongruity for Different Sources of Discrepancy
Georgios Halkias, Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece
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ABSTRACT
The present research investigates how consumers respond to advertisements that vary in the degree of incongruity with established brand schemata. Two experimental studies were conducted in which the degree of incongruity was manipulated through the verbal (Study 1) and the pictorial component (Study 2) of a print ad. As expected, results in the second study supported an inverted-U relationship between the degree of incongruity and consumer responses, with moderately incongruent advertisements producing more ad processing, better memory, and more favorable attitudes. However, the first study provided mixed results, indicating that verbal-based discrepancies might moderate the effects of schema incongruity.

INTRODUCTION
Schema theory in cognitive psychology suggests that people tend to simplify reality by organizing and storing all available knowledge and experience about their social environment in memory-based cognitive structures, called schemata (Fiske and Taylor 1991). The cognitive schemata that we develop over time guide the perception of information, provide cognitive economy, and determine our expectations about the nature of the social phenomena encountered (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Sujan and Bettman 1989). Given that consumers’ knowledge about the market can also be perceived through relevant cognitive structures, such as the product, the brand, or the ad schemata, schema theory has been applied in the marketing research, revealing that schematic knowledge greatly affects how consumers process and respond to marketing communications (Sujan and Bettman 1989; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Goodeen 1993). In a highly competitive market environment, overpopulated by brand messages, consumers use their schemata to integrate incoming with existing data, retrieve information from memory, draw inferences, and facilitate purchase decisions (Sujan and Bettman 1989).

Advertising and consumer researchers have long been interested in creating a link between brands and consumers that would lead to effective communication. Most of the models of persuasive communications were developed upon the proposition that the transmitted message should correspond to consumers’ perceptions and experiences in order to be more relevant, more comprehensible, and more appealing (Rossiter, Percy, and Donovan 1991; Vaughn 1980; Ratchford 1987; Keller 1991; Petty and Wegener 1998). In other words, research on advertising and persuasive communication up to now has been based on the matching hypothesis between consumers’ cognitive schemata and the content of communication. Establishing consistency and relevancy when communicating brand meaning to consumers is a widely held conception in the marketing literature (Rossiter, Percy and Donovan 1991; Keller 2003; Percy and Elliott 2005).

However, directly matching the brand message to consumers’ mind may not always be the most effective strategy. Findings from cognitive psychology challenge the matching hypothesis and point toward a different perspective, according to which schema incongruent stimuli may lead to more favorable results once the incongruities are resolved (Mandler 1982). Previous studies have examined several different aspects of information incongruity, such as incongruity with the product category schema (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989), ad (a)typicality (Goodstein 1993), or usage schema incongruity (Wansink and Ray 1996), and have provided several insightful findings. However, results are in many cases inconclusive (Goodstein 1993; Lee and Mason 1999). Besides, only a limited number of studies have examined schema incongruity at the brand level (e.g., Lange and Dahlén 2003; Dahlén et al. 2005) and an integrated framework on the role of schema incongruity in marketing is yet to be established. Drawing from Mandler’s (1982) theory, the present paper contributes to the relevant literature by exploring the effects of advertising information that varies in its degree of incongruity with consumer’s brand schemata.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Incongruity research deals with the effects of information that is incompatible with existing knowledge and do not conform to some presumably predefined pattern (Stayman, Alden and Smith 1992). Schema incongruity is defined as the extent to which semantic correspondence is achieved between the attributes of a stimulus object and the attributes specified by its relevant schema (Areri and Cox 1994). Heckler and Childers (1992) argue that schema incongruity can be approached as a two-dimensional concept, where the relevancy and the expectancy of information determine the overall degree of incongruity. Relevancy refers to the degree to which a piece of information is useful to produce meaning and contributes to the identification of the intended message. Expectancy, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which a piece of information conforms to expectations and falls into some predefined pattern evoked by the stimulus object (Heckler and Childers 1992; Lee and Mason 1999). In this line, schema congruity in this paper is represented by a match, in terms of relevancy and expectancy, between the content of a stimulus object (i.e., an advertisement) and the content of its associated schema (i.e., the schema for the advertised brand), whereas schema incongruity involves some degree of mismatch (Sujan 1985; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). The degree of incongruity is determined by how irrelevant and unexpected the informational content is and how easily the recipient can satisfactorily reconcile discrepancies within their existing cognitive structure (Mandler 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Heckler and Childers 1992).

One of the most commonly applied paradigms to study information incongruity has been developed by George Mandler (1982), who focuses on the cognitive elaboration and the affective outcomes produced by different levels of schema incongruity. The basic premise of his theory is that increases in the level of incongruity between a stimulus and an existing schema lead to heightened cognitive arousal, which consequently increases the extremity of evaluations. Whether an evaluation becomes relatively more or less favorable depends on how easily incongruities can be successfully resolved. In more detail, according to Mandler, congruent information is easily processed and predictable. It does not generate additional arousal and results to mild responses, equal to a basic sense of liking. In contrast, schema incongruent stimuli attract attention and increase people’s cognitive arousal as they attempt to resolve inconsistencies (Heckler and Childers 1992). When incongruity is moderate, the psychological reward produced by successfully resolving inconsistencies results in more favorable responses. However, when incongruity becomes severe people are most likely not willing to
invest the significant amount of psychological resources necessary to accommodate the extremely inconsistent pieces of information. Reluctance or inability to spend time and effort on the processing of the incoming data and the revision of the existing knowledge obstruct people from interpreting information and finally reduces the favorability of evaluations.

Previous studies have demonstrated that schema incongruent information attracts consumer attention and leads to increased processing elaboration (Goodstein 1993; Ozzane, Brucks, and Grewal 1992). For instance, Goodstein (1993) has shown that atypical ads induce more consumer attention, in terms of longer viewing time than typical ads. At the product category level, Sujan (1985) found that consumers exposed to product propositions that do not match with a predefined category schema expend more time to form product judgments than consumers in a matching condition, while, following a threefold operationalization of incongruity, Meyers-Levy and Tybout (1989) found that products moderately incongruent with their associated category induce the highest level of processing elaboration. Along these lines, a non-monotonic relationship between the degree of incongruity and consumers’ ad processing is anticipated. Consumers are expected to invest more time trying to reconcile incongruent, compared to congruent, brand information. However, as incongruity increases, consumers might become unwilling to invest the additional cognitive resources necessary to accommodate extreme incongruities, thereby neglecting incompatible information and discounting the total amount of processing. It is predicted that:

H1: Advertisements that are moderately incongruent with the brand schema result in more ad processing, compared to advertisements that are either congruent or extremely incongruent with the brand schema.

Increased cognitive activity also implies enhanced memory performance (Hastie 1980; Friedman 1979). Items that conform to one’s expectations are only superficially encoded, since they can be immediately integrated into existing knowledge (Heckler and Childers 1992). However, the cognitive arousal generated by schema incongruity stimulates detailed encoding that may lead to the formation of a larger number of associative linkages between the stimulus and the knowledge stored in memory (Hastie 1980; Srull and Wyer 1989). The additional pathways generated will make stimulus information become more retrievable and easier to recall (Heckler and Childers 1992; Areni and Cox 1994; Lange and Dahlén 2003). An inverted-U pattern is again predicted. Under moderate incongruity, successfully linking the discrepant information to an activated schema in order to resolve incongruity increases the likelihood that the stimulus’ content will be recalled. Severe incongruity, on the other hand, is not expected to have the same effect. Extremely incongruent pieces of information discourage processing, since incoming data are especially difficult to be successfully linked to a coherent memory structure. As a consequence, the efficiency of retrieval processes is hindered and recall of the information presented is reduced. The following hypothesis is examined:

H2: Advertisements that are moderately incongruent with the brand schema result in better recall of the ad content, compared to advertisements that are either congruent or extremely incongruent with the brand schema.

Mandler’s theory suggests that the process of resolving incongruity is rewarding and may thus lead to more favorable responses. The positive effect of schema incongruity has been tested by a number of consumer studies that however provide inconclusive results (Goodstein 1993; Lee and Mason 1999). In particular, not distinguishing between moderate and extreme incongruity, Goodstein (1993) revealed that ads that do not match the typical ad schema result to a lower brand attitude than schema congruent ads, while Lange and Dahlén (2003) generally found no significant differences in attitude toward the brand between congruent and incongruent with the brand schema ads (cf., Dahlén et al. 2005). Using Mandler’s conceptualization of schema incongruity, Lee and Mason (1999) found no significant differences in brand evaluations between congruent and moderately incongruent product information. Nonetheless, a series of studies has provided considerable evidence for Mandler’s proposition, supporting a non-monotonic, inverted-U relationship between the degree of incongruity and consumer evaluations (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Meyers-Levy, Louie, and Curren 1994; Heckler and Childers 1992; Peracchio and Tybout 1996). We expect the same pattern to hold true for the brand attitude change process, with the most favorable effects resulting when ads contain moderately incongruent brand information. Extremely incongruent ads are not predicted to favorably affect attitudes as a result of consumers’ expectations disconfirmation and inability to accommodate inconsistencies (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Stayman, Alden, and Smith 1992). In summary, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Advertisements that are moderately incongruent with the brand schema result in more favorable attitude change, compared to advertisements that are either congruent or extremely incongruent with the brand schema

**STUDY 1: EFFECTS OF VERBAL-BASED SCHEMA INCONGRUITY**

**Method**

A sample of 66 undergraduate business students participated in the first study in exchange for extra course credit. The hypothesized relationships were tested using one-way ANOVA and polynomial trend analysis in a single factor, between-subjects design. In particular, three levels of (in)congruity (i.e., congruity, moderate incongruity, extreme incongruity) with the schema for a real brand were examined. The degree of schema incongruity was manipulated through the verbal component of a print ad by means of information expectancy and relevancy with the associated schema (Heckler and Childers 1992). The ad format and pictorial elements were held constant across conditions. Print advertisements are reader-paced, allowing for differences in processing and attention among participants and are therefore appropriate for the research purposes (Lange and Dahlén 2003).

**Pretest**

A focus group session (n=9) with consumer interviews was carried out to decide on the product category from which the final brand would be selected. The product category of “Jeans” appeared to be sufficiently familiar and relevant to the sample population and was thus chosen for the main study. Following, two pretests were conducted to identify consumers’ brand schemata within the selected product category. In the first pretest (n=34), participants were asked to indicate their level of knowledge (1=not knowledgeable at all, 7=very knowledgeable) for a series of jeans brands (Sujan and Bettman 1989) as well as to list all the associations they held for each brand (cf., Aaker and Keller 1990; Ratneshwar and Shocker 1991). The brand that met the requirements of the research was “Levi’s Jeans.” Brand awareness was 100% and participants were knowledgeable enough (M=4.15, SD=1.62) to have
formed a discrete schema for the brand. A frequency analysis of participants’ associations was realized to reveal the most typical attributes of the brand. Individual brand associations representing the same concept (e.g., fashionable and stylish) were collapsed under a specific schema attribute, while idiosyncratic associations, i.e., associations listed by only one participant that could not be collapsed, were eliminated. Two independent coders categorized the same consumer associations to ensure reliability (intercoder reliability above 80%). The most frequently mentioned brand associations, listed by at least 34% of respondents, pertained to the attributes of classic, original, and simple.

The second pretest used a different sample (n=49) and was carried out to confirm the configuration of the Levi’s Jeans schema. The three most typical brand attributes identified in pretest 1 were quantified using nine-point, Likert-type scales. Subjects were asked to indicate how representative each attribute is with regard to their impression of the brand. The scale was anchored by 1 (not representative at all) and 9 (very representative). Attributes not mentioned to be part of the brand schema were used as control attributes. According to the results, schema attributes received consistently higher scores (ratings ranged from 6.43 to 7.35) than did control attributes (ratings ranged from 4.26 to 5.08). The least possible difference between schema and control attributes was highly significant (t(49)=3.80, p<.001), therefore the brand schema was confirmed.

**Stimulus Development**

The findings above were used to develop the stimulus material. In particular, nine ad versions were created that varied in terms of incongruity with the Levi’s brand schema. An advertising agency was utilized to ensure that the experimental ads approximate real commercial print advertisements. In a third pretest (n=17) respondents were asked to rate each ad in terms of relevancy and expectancy with regard to their impression of the brand (Heckler and Childers 1992) using a nine-point scale anchored by irrelevant/unexpected and relevant/expected. The order of the ads was counterbalanced to avoid possible carryover effects. Based on the mean ratings, the three ad versions that seemed to best represent each of the three levels of incongruity were selected. These were submitted to separate one-way ANOVAs with relevancy and expectancy being operationalized as within-subjects variables, respectively. The results showed a significant effect of the ad version on the level of relevancy (F(2, 32)=11.97, p<.001) and expectancy (F(2, 32)=123, p<.001) therefore, each stimulus ad corresponded to a different degree of schema incongruity. Mean scores for the congruent version were $M_{\text{relevancy}}=7.05$ and $M_{\text{expectancy}}=6.88$, for the moderately incongruent version were $M_{\text{relevancy}}=6.17$ and $M_{\text{expectancy}}=6.00$, and for the extremely incongruent version were $M_{\text{relevancy}}=3.47$ and $M_{\text{expectancy}}=3.06$ (mean differences were all significant at the .01 level).

**Dependent Variables**

**Ad Processing.** The time spent watching the ad was used to indicate the amount of ad processing (Goodstein 1993). A timer running on a computer screen was set at the beginning of each exposure. Participants were instructed to watch the ad at their own pace and record the number appearing on the screen after they had formed their overall impression.

**Recall.** Recall was measured with an open-ended question asking participants to write down as many of the features they could remember from the ad within a two-minute time limit. Recall protocols were coded so that each correct mention of a distinct ad item represented a hit. The total number of hits was summed up to form the overall recall score for each respondent.

**Attitude Change.** The difference between brand evaluations after and prior to the exposure was used to indicate the amount and direction of brand attitude change. Brand attitudes were measured on five, nine-point semantic differential scales anchored by good and bad, likable and disliked, favorable and unfavorable, positive and negative, and desirable and undesirable. The five items were averaged to form the overall attitude score. The coefficient alpha was .97 for brand attitudes both prior and after the exposure.

**Experimental Procedure**

The study took place in a laboratory setting. Upon arrival, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions and were given a questionnaire that contained all the necessary manipulations and dependent measures. Initially, subjects provided their evaluations for several brands in the category to familiarize themselves with the answering process. Evaluations for the Levi’s jeans were also included to measure attitude toward the brand prior to exposure. Following, participants were told a brief cover story about the purposes of the study and were given additional guidelines on how to proceed. Immediately after, participants were exposed to the stimulus ad. When finished, they completed the brand evaluation scales and the manipulation checks. A 15-minute filler task followed to clear short-term memory and then participants completed the recall task. After completing a short section of demographic questions, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

**RESULTS**

**Manipulation Check**

The effectiveness of the manipulation was checked using the same statements reported for the stimulus pretest. A single factor, between-subjects design was utilized. The average ratings for relevancy and expectancy were analyzed with a one-way ANOVA, which revealed a statistically significant main effect of the degree of incongruity on both relevancy ($F(2,63)=10.18, \ p<.001$) and expectancy ($F(2,63)=17.87, \ p<.001$). Mean ratings (see Table 1) differed significantly across the three experimental conditions, indicating that the manipulation of schema incongruity worked as intended.

**Hypotheses Testing**

A summary of results is provided in Table 1. Results reveal a significant main effect of schema incongruity on processing time ($F(2,63)=9.99, \ p<.001$). Participants in the congruity condition spent significantly less time processing the ad compared to both incongruity conditions (mean difference of -10.68 seconds and -13.58 seconds for moderate and extreme incongruity, respectively). However, the hypothesized non-monotonic relationship was not supported. In contrast to predictions, participants in the extreme incongruity condition spent relatively more time processing the ad than in the moderate incongruity condition (mean difference=2.90, NS). Consistent with predictions, a significant main effect ($F(2,63)=3.65, \ p<.05$) supported the anticipated effect on recall. Participants recalled significantly more ad features in the moderate incongruity condition than in the congruity and the extreme incongruity condition. Trend analysis showed that the mean values for recall do follow an inverted-U pattern (quadratic component; $F(1,63)=7.24, p<.01$). Finally, as expected, consumers’ attitudes were enhanced in the congruent ($M=31, SD=1.01$) and moderately incongruent condition ($M=.34, SD=.82$). Extreme schema incongruity had a negative impact on attitude change ($M=-.20, SD=.79$). Post hoc comparisons between the extreme and the moderate incongruity condition revealed that attitude change is significantly attenuated when inconsistencies are extremely dif-
ficult to accommodate (mean difference = -5.5, p < .05). However, the statistical significance of the main effect was marginally not supported (F(2, 63) = 2.63, p = .08), while the non-monotonic pattern failed to occur (quadratic component; F(1, 63) = 1.22, NS).

In summary, the results provide partial support to the proposed hypotheses. The directionality of the dependent measures is generally supported yet, specific significance tests show mixed results. Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Schema incongruity had a significant effect on the amount of ad processing however, no significant differences between moderate and extreme schema incongruity occurred. The time consumers spent watching the ads was found to follow a linear trend across the degrees of incongruity (linear component; F(1, 63) = 17.85, p < .001).

Following, hypothesis 2 was fully supported, while the effects on consumers’ brand attitude failed to occur. Further analysis of consumers’ recall responses revealed that the manipulation of incongruity (i.e., manipulating incongruity through the ad copy) might be largely responsible for the weak results. More specifically, even though the textual elements were primed in the stimulus ads, they seem to be approached by respondents as supporting features and thus, might have been less effective in producing the predicted effects. Given that, a replicate study was designed that devised a different manipulation and stimulus material.

**STUDY 2: EFFECTS OF IMAGE-BASED SCHEMA INCONGRUITY**

In the second study the degree of schema incongruity was determined by variations in the level of relevancy and expectancy of the pictorial elements used in the ads. Previous studies have demonstrated that the image is the component that is initially processed in print ads (Heckler and Childers 1992) and that it generates the initial impression and the expectations upon which the rest of the ad will be processed (Houston, Childers, and Heckler 1987). In general, the superiority of the pictorial over the verbal stimuli has been quite evident in the context of persuasive communication (Minnard et al. 1991; Arena and Cox 1994). Given that, for image-based schema incongruity we expect results to follow more closely the predicted relationships.

**Method**

Sixty-one students participated in the second study that was identical to the previous one the only difference being that schema incongruity was manipulated through the pictorial component of a print ad. The verbal elements and ad format remained the same. The same hypotheses between the degree of schema incongruity and the dependent variables were examined. The experimental design and the procedure adopted were similar to that of Study 1.

**Stimulus Development and Dependent Measures**

Based on the most typical attributes of Levi’s brand schema a new set of stimulus ads was developed. Each ad was intended to represent a different degree of schema incongruity by using images that were more or less relevant and expected with consumers’ schema for the stimulus brand. As in the previous study, a new pretest was conducted (n = 15). Out of the nine ad versions initially created we selected the final three based on respondents’ ratings in terms of relevancy and expectancy. Repeated measures analysis of variance revealed a significant effect of the three ad version on relevancy (F(2, 28) = 73.46, p < .001) and expectancy (F(2, 28) = 97.03, p < .001) therefore, the ads were found to correspond to a different degree of incongruity. Mean scores for the congruent version were M_relevancy = 7.13 and M_expectancy = 7.27, for the moderately incongruent version were M_relevancy = 6.53 and M_expectancy = 6.47, and for the extremely incongruent version were M_relevancy = 3.87 and M_expectancy = 3.67 (mean differences were all significant at the .01 level). The dependent variables and measurement method employed were similar to the first study. The Cronbach’s α coefficient for the averaged index of brand evaluations prior and after the exposure was .98 and .97, respectively.

**RESULTS**

**Manipulation Check**

The manipulation of schema incongruity was tested in the main study through between-subjects ANOVAs with the degree of incongruity being the independent factor and relevancy and expectancy the dependent measures, respectively. Results provided significant main effects on both relevancy (F(2, 58) = 13.99, p < .001) and expectancy (F(2, 58) = 16.67, p < .001). Mean ratings differed significantly across the experimental conditions (p < .01) therefore, the manipulation was successful.
Hypotheses Testing

In contrast to the previous study the results provide full support to hypothesis 1. The degree of schema incongruity had a significant main effect on ad processing (F(2,58)=4.97, p<.01) and mean values were found to follow a non-monotonic pattern (quadratic component; F(1,58)=9.87, p<.01). Post-hoc comparisons revealed that participants spent significantly more time watching the moderately incongruent ad than the congruent (mean difference=6.58, p<.01) or the extremely incongruent ad (mean difference=5.74, p<.05). The mean values for recall and attitude change were also proven to follow the inverted-U relationship and ANOVA main effects were in both cases significant (p<.001). In more detail, participants’ recall for the content of the moderately incongruent ad version was significantly better than for the congruent (mean difference=2.35, p<.001) or the extremely incongruent version (mean difference=1.47, p<.001). Moreover, moderate schema incongruity had the most favorable effect on brand attitude change (M=83, SD=1.36). Attitudes in the congruity condition remained the same before and after the exposure (mean difference=-.08, t(18)=-.49, p>.05), while extreme schema incongruity negatively influenced attitude change (mean difference=-.70, t(18)=-2.61, p<.05). Brand attitude change scores between moderate incongruity and the two other experimental conditions were found to be statistically significant (p=0.01 for congruity and p<.001 for extreme incongruity).

Overall, image-based schema incongruity produced a more concrete pattern of results with regard to the proposed hypotheses, providing support to all the predicted relationships. Table 2 provides an overview of the findings produced in the study.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present findings generally provide support to Mandler’s (1982) schema incongruity theory in the context of brand communication and contribute to the relevant literature by distinguishing between moderate and extreme levels of brand information incongruity (cf., Lange and Dahlén 2003; Dahlén et al. 2005). In contrast to the widely held conception of developing consistent and relevant communication over time in order to enhance consumers’ perceptions and attitudes toward the brand (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Keller 2003; Percy and Elliott 2005), we found evidence for a favorable effect of moderately discrepant brand communication on consumer responses. Schema incongruent brand information was found to stimulate consumer attention and the extent of information processing. However, the inverted-U pattern was evident only when discrepancies derived from the pictorial elements of the ad. Contrary to our predictions, the first study revealed a linear trend for ad processing with verbal-based incongruities appearing to absorb increasingly more time across the degrees of incongruity. A possible explanation for this may lie in consumers’ belief that meaning construction through words, compared to images, is generally a more straightforward task. Rejecting verbal information as not comprehensible is not a choice taken lightly. Inability to derive meaning from words can be quite discomforting for consumers that might have spent additional time under the assumption that meticulously analyzing each individual word’s meaning will finally lead to incongruity resolution.

As far as memory is concerned, consumer recall was consistently better for the moderately incongruent ads, compared to the congruent and the extremely incongruent ads. Congruent information is immediately integrated into existing knowledge and needs no further encoding, while extremely incompatible pieces of information cannot be successfully linked to the activated schema. In both cases no additional associative cues that would facilitate retrieval processes are created. On the other hand, the increased effort to successfully link moderately discrepant data into a coherent memory structure to resolve incongruities, seems to result in a more elaborate and efficient network of associations between stimulus and memory information that in turn makes the ad content easier to recall.

Consistent with Mandler’s (1982) proposition, the most favorable effect on consumers’ brand attitudes was found in response to moderate schema incongruity. Successfully resolving incongruity seems to provide consumers with a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment that is intuitively transferred to their evaluations. The findings imply that attitudes generated through more effortful and cognitively challenging processes appear to be stronger and more favorable. Even though not directly tested, research data also suggest that verbal-based discrepancies might moderate the effects of schema incongruity and might be less effective per se to provoke the predicted behavior. Future research would greatly benefit by examining more directly the relationship between verbal-based and image-based schema incongruity.

### Table 2

| Manipulation Check | Degree of Schema Incongruity | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | Congruity | Moderate Incongruity | Extreme Incongruity | | | |
| Relevancy | 6.84 (1.80) | 5.71 (1.48) | 4.00 (1.84) | | 13.99*** |
| Expectancy | 7.05 (1.74) | 5.57 (1.36) | 4.00 (1.87) | | 16.67*** |
| Ad Processing | 16.15 (6.14) | 22.73 (7.92) | 16.99 (7.53) | | 4.97** |
| Recall | 3.31 (1.15) | 5.66 (1.15) | 4.19 (1.08) | | 22.29*** |
| Attitude Change | -.08 (.74) | .83 (1.36) | -.70 (1.23) | | 9.42*** |

**p<.01, ***p<.001  
Note: Standard Deviations (in parentheses)
The present findings imply that establishing consistency in brand communications may not always be the most effective strategy. Advertising managers may use incongruity-based tactics to make their ads stand out from the clutter, engage consumers with the brand message, increase ad memorability, and refresh the brand’s position within consumers’ mind. Yet, great caution is required in manipulating information incongruity, since non-resolvable discrepancies may have adverse effects, such as to reduce the intended communication, lead consumers to confusion and frustration, and make them question their beliefs about the brand. Marketing managers should greatly consider the context in which brand communication appears, because depending on a different context consumers might be more or less willing to invest time on the processing of a single message. Ensuring that consumers will have the ability and opportunity to process a message of this kind is critical, since both situational and individual factors might interfere with the information processing process, influence the perception of incongruity and moderate its effects (MacInnis and Jaworski 1989; Lee and Mason 1999; Meyers-Levy 1988; Sujan 1985). For example, would the resolution of incongruity be equally beneficial under high, compared to low, involvement conditions, where people are already willing to invest time and effort on the processing of the relevant data, or when consumers have a high, compared to a low, degree of brand loyalty and probably be less susceptible to the effects of incongruity? Similarly, would schema incongruent advertising be equally effective when consumers have limited processing opportunities, such as when viewing television commercials, or when the advertised brand is associated with a different purchase motivation (informational vs. transformational)? With reference to the present research, for instance, we would suggest that verbal-based schema incongruity (Study 1) might have been more effective for a distinctly informational product, since it would have been more likely that consumers will attend and rely on the textual information and the claims directly stated by the ad. Such questions are yet to be explored and future research would contribute considerably to the relevant literature by investigating the role of potential moderating factors.

REFERENCES


Conceptualising and Measuring Online Switching Costs
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David Arnott, Warwick Business School, UK
Dilip Mutum, Warwick Business School, UK

ABSTRACT
In this paper, we explore the conceptualisation and measurement of perceived online switching costs. Through a combination of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, the measurement items of each construct were submitted to tests evaluating dimensionality, convergent validity, reliability and discriminant validity. The results indicate five distinctive dimensions: namely, artificial cost, learning cost, uncertainty cost, search and evaluation cost and brand relationship cost. The measurement purification and validation processes were carried out using two samples from the same population comprising internet purchasers in the UK.

Retail customers’ tendency to switch or not to switch has been extensively examined in the traditional (offline) context, both conceptually and empirically, and in the fields of marketing, economics and psychology. However, research into online retail switching tendency is a fairly recent development and is comparatively limited, with little empirical work examining the presence, frequency or impact of switching costs, especially in an online retail context. There is some research that suggests that it is both crucial and more difficult to manage customer retention online. The reasons posited for this difference include: low to non-existent switching costs; low search costs; the availability of online alternatives; the advent of shopbots; etc. However, there is empirical evidence to suggest that there is a stickiness to online consumers and that they do less comparative shopping than might be expected.

Fornell (1992) describes switching costs as “all costs (financial, psychological, learning, etc.) associated with deserting one supplier in favour of another”. He contends that switching costs may include search costs, transaction costs, learning costs, cognitive effort, emotional costs, loyalty discounts, customer habit and the financial, social and psychological risks experienced by the customer when deciding to change provider. These costs can be real or perceived and monetary or non-monetary (Gremler 1995). The discussion of switching costs in this research refers to perceived switching costs.

CATEGORISATION OF PERCEIVED SWITCHING COSTS
Artificial switching costs are defined as the costs that arise due to actions initiated by a supplier in order to retain customers and make it more costly to switch suppliers (Klepperer 1987). Gremler (1995) terms it as contractual cost and divides it into two categories: 1) costs incurred due to loyalty programmes (e.g. frequent flyer programmes points accumulation, rewards and discounts); 2) costs arising due to a penalty or the forfeit of a deposit. Artificial cost is also equivalent to Burnham et al.’s (2003) financial dimension and Jones et al.’s (2002) ‘loss benefit cost’ dimension. They are the perceived costs relating to a potential loss of special discounts or unique benefits incurred through switching providers. In the online context, the closest examples are frequent flyer programmes and repeat purchase discounts. Switching suppliers means that customers will lose these loyalty rewards.

Uncertainty costs are the customer’s perception of the costs or potential losses associated with the negative outcomes of switching to an untested provider (Colgate & Lang 2001; Guitlinan 1989; Klepperer 1995). This construct is equivalent to Burnham et al.’s (2003) “economic risk costs”. Risk and uncertainty are higher online because there is a lack of face-to-face interaction. Thus, uncertainty costs should be more important in online services, where security, privacy and delivery issues are important. As Balabanis et al. (2006) have pointed out: the reasons preventing online customers from re-registering with too many websites are not only due to the hassle factor but also due to security and privacy risk issues.

The third cost is identified as the feeling of loss due to leaving a brand, as a relational cost that can stop customers from defecting to a competitor, called the brand relationship loss cost. Based on Porter’s (1980) work, inter alia, Burnham (1998) refers to this cost as “…psychological losses associated with breaking the bonds of identification that have been formed with the brand or company with which the customer has associated…”

Johnson et al. (2003) identified two types of search costs as the potential reason for customer lock-in: namely, physical search cost and cognitive search cost. Physical search cost refers to the perceived time and effort spent seeking the information necessary to make an informed switching decision, while cognitive search cost refers to the perception of time and effort expended in making sense of information sources and analysing the information that has been collected (Johnson et al. 2003; Payne, Bettman, & Johnson 1993). Some researchers call this the evaluation cost (Burnham et al. 2003; Jones et al. 2002). It requires more time and effort for customers to search for viable alternatives in the offline market as compared to the online environment, where product information acquisition is much easier. Shopbots and search engines have also made information searching and comparisons simpler and quicker for customers. However, as Johnson et al. (2004) demonstrated, ease of search on the internet does not lead to more searching. In fact, online customers engage in fewer comparisons and tend to remain attached to a few websites with which they are familiar (Smith 2002). According to a study on lock-in, online customers display a short-term orientation that leads them to select a favourite site to use repeatedly, even though this choice may not result in the lowest price for the sought product (Johnson et al. 2003). Even if the overall level of the physical search cost is reduced, a previously used website still holds a relative cost advantage that influences switching behaviour (Zauberman 2003). This brings us to the second type of search cost, the cognitive search cost.

The low entry barrier to firms operating online produces huge amounts of information that challenges one’s brain capacity to process. Balabanis et al. (2006) also described a cognitive search cost as a cost that is related to the perception of time and effort needed to analyse and verify the credibility of large quantities of online consumer reports, reviews and forums that may sometimes be inconsistent, or to comprehend the technical specifications or jargon in the absence of expert advice. New information is processed only when it is felt to be significant and/or relevant (Lee, Kim, & Moon 2000) in coping with the problem of information overload (Johnson et al. 2004; Reichheld and Scheffer 2000).

Another form of perceived switching cost is the learning cost which is defined by the “expenditure of time and effort to learn, understand or use the new service effectively” (Burnham 1998). Klepperer (1987) describes learning costs as any costs (including time) that are needed in “learning to use” one firm’s product line or brand (Guitlinan 1989). We argue that this will also include all of the costs associated with customers having to adapt to and familiarise themselves with conducting transactions on an unfamiliar website, such as the time and effort expended in acquiring customer know-how as customers adapt to the new provider (Burnham et al. 2003;
Jones et al. (2002). According to Johnson et al. (2003), customers stay with a website to avoid the inconvenience and hassle of learning to navigate a new one. Having learnt to use a website increases the attractiveness of that website and thus raises the perceived cost of switching to another one. The more experience the customer gains with a site over time, the stronger will be the ‘cognitive lock-in’ of that customer (Johnson et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2004). Just as an offline firm can lock in a customer with a high physical cost, in the offline market, an online firm can lock in customers with a high cognitive cost.

**METHODOLOGY**

In this research, we proposed to develop a scale measuring the different dimensions of online switching costs that is tested in terms of their unidimensionality, reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. The first step involved the generation of a pool of measurements (largely from the offline context of switching barriers literature), constructed to reflect agreement and disagreement on a seven-point Likert-type scale. 39 items were generated and judged for face validity and consistency with the conceptual definition. Interviews were conducted with ten doctoral researchers at a business school to further confirm the face validity and suitability of the measures. After a number of suggested amendments (largely to the item wording), the modified survey instrument was pretested with a convenience sample of 51 undergraduate and postgraduate students. This resulted in the rewording and replacement of several items judged to be inadequate, leaving a total of 28 items.

**SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION**

The survey was conducted using online and paper-based questionnaires. A sample of 3000 potential respondents was purchased from Experian, a reputable research and prospect locator agency, from its pre-existing database of frequent online shoppers in the UK. Postgraduate students from a university in the UK were also invited via email to participate in the survey. In the questionnaire, the procedure applied is similar to that followed by Mano and Oliver (1993) and Balabanis et al. (2006); that is, the respondents were asked to indicate an online retailer that they used frequently and most of the subsequent questions were based on the specified online retailer. However, the main focus of the current research is to study the online switching costs relating to purely online firms. Therefore, out of the 799 completed questionnaires received, 591 responses fall into this category and thus were used in this research. An inspection of the independent t-test results between the responses of early and late respondents and between the online and paper-based respondents revealed that there were no significant differences (p<.01) among any of the dimensions used in the analysis (Armstrong & Overton 1977).

From the total sample, the gender split was equally divided between males and females (53.9 males). Just under half of the respondents have a personal income of at least £20,000 per year (47%). The majority of the respondents made between 3 and 5 purchases from the retailer’s website per year (82.9%), spent at least £16 per transaction on the retailer’s website (75.4%) and visited the retailer’s website at least once or twice a month (70.3%). More than half of the respondents purchased at least once every three months from the retailer’s website (63.9%). Half of the respondents have been a customer of the retailer’s website for more than 3 years (51.3%).

Zhang and Prybutok (2006) highlighted the fact that students are the main users of the Internet and provide a strong basis for the pragmatic and realistic grounds in understanding online consumer behaviour.

The product categories purchased online include books (49%), music CDs (19%), air tickets (5%), electrical goods (5%), computer equipment (4%), clothing (7%), and games (3%). The respondents use four main online outlets: Amazon (72%), Play.com (71%), ASOS (2.5%) and Ebuyer (1%). Other e-stores include Ryanair, Expedia, Flybe, Lastminute, Pixmania, Abel and Cole, Virgin wine, etc.

**ASSESSMENT OF THE MEASUREMENT MODEL FOR SWITCHING COSTS ITEMS**

For the purpose of cross-validating the results (Anderson & Gerbing 1988), the data was randomly split into two: A (n=295) and B (n=296). For the Sample A, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was first performed on the 28 items measuring switching costs, and a five-factor structure was identified (see Table 1). The values observed for Bartlett’s test of sphericity (p=0.000) and the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.878) are strong and significant. Both the eigenvalues and the scree plot information indicates the retaining of five factors, accounting for the total variance explained of 64.3% which is acceptable in social sciences research (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson 2010). Using a communality cut-off point of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010), ARC7, UC4, UC6 and SEC2 were removed. The rest of the items were loaded significantly onto their respective factors, with the lowest loading observed for ARC6 (.582). The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient suggested that all items should be retained.

Taking into consideration the previous studies by Burnham et al. (2003) and Jones et al. (1998), and the content meaning of the items, Factor 1 was labelled Artificial Costs (AC), which refers to the perceived costs associated with the potential loss of special discounts and unique benefits if a consumer switches retailer (Burnham et al. 2003; Jones 1998), and Factor 2, which broadly refers to the consumers’ perception of time and effort needed to learn the idiosyncrasies of a new online retailer’s website to use it effectively and/or how the transaction process works, and so was labelled Learning Costs (LC) (Gremler 1995). Factor 3 was named Uncertainty Costs (UC) and refers to the customer’s perception of the costs or potential losses associated with accepting the risk of a potential negative outcome when switching to an untested provider about which the consumer has insufficient information (Colgate et al. 2001; Guilittin 1989; Klemperer 1995). Factor 4, named Search and Evaluation Costs (SEC), refers to consumer perceptions of the time and effort involved in gathering and evaluating information prior to switching (Jones et al. 2002). Factor 5, Brand Relationship Costs (BRC), is the consumers’ perception of the psychological and emotional discomfort arising from changing retailer due to the retailer’s image or brand name.

As shown in Table 1, the alpha coefficients are above the Nunnally’s (1978) 0.7 threshold, suggesting acceptable reliability. However, while Nunnally (1978) suggested that a 0.7 or higher reliability implies convergent validity, measurement with reliabilities above .85 can still have more than 50% error variance (Ping, 2004); hence, the need for model assessment via confirmatory factors. Confirmatory factor analysis (via AMOS 18) was conducted on Sample B to cross-validate the measurement model and the unidimensionality of the latent variables.

**Sample B: Convergent Validity**

Convergent validity will be supported if the standardised loadings were 0.6 or greater than 0.5, as suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), Hair et al. (2010) and Chin (1998), and if each item loaded significantly onto the respective latent construct. The result shows that all of the standardised factor loadings are within Hair et al.’s (2010) recommendation of 0.50, except for ARC6 (0.48),
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>F1 1</th>
<th>F2 1</th>
<th>F3 1</th>
<th>F4 1</th>
<th>F5 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARC4</td>
<td>Staying loyal gives me discounts and special deals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC3</td>
<td>I will lose the benefits of being a long-term customer if I leave my online retailer&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC2</td>
<td>I receive special rewards and discounts from doing business with this online retailer&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.853</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC5</td>
<td>Staying loyal saves me money&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC1</td>
<td>I hesitate to switch from this online retailer because it offers privileges I would not receive elsewhere&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC6</td>
<td>Switching to another online retailer would probably involve hidden cost/charges&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.582</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC7*</td>
<td>There are several financial costs/charges I would incur if I were to stop doing business with this online retailer&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC7</td>
<td>It takes time/effort to understand how to use other online retailers’ websites</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC3</td>
<td>Switching my shopping activities to another online retailer would require too much learning&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.784</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC5</td>
<td>I am reluctant to change online retailer because I am familiar with “how the system works” on this website&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC4</td>
<td>I feel that the competitors’ websites are difficult to use</td>
<td>.703</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC2c</td>
<td>Getting used to a new website after I switch would be very easy&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC1</td>
<td>Switching means I need to learn new routines and ways of doing things on a new website&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC4*</td>
<td>It would be inconvenient for me to switch to another online retailer&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC2</td>
<td>I worry that switching my shopping activities to another online retailer would result in some unexpected problems&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC5</td>
<td>Switching to another online retailer would be risky, since I wouldn’t know the quality of its products/services&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UC3</td>
<td>If I were to change online retailer, I fear that the service I would receive might deteriorate&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UC1</td>
<td>I am concerned about the security of my personal information when registering on a new website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UC6*</td>
<td>I feel more comfortable shopping on this website than on their competitors’ websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC3</td>
<td>I cannot afford the time/effort to evaluate alternative online retailers fully&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC1</td>
<td>I don’t like spending time searching for a new online retailer&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC4</td>
<td>Comparing the competitors in order to work out which best suits my needs is a time-consuming task&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC5c</td>
<td>I don’t think that the process of evaluating a new online retailer prior to switching would be a hassle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC6*</td>
<td>I dislike spending the time it takes to register with a new online retailer&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRC1</td>
<td>The brand of this retailer plays a major role in my decision to stay&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRC2c</td>
<td>I do not care about the brand/company name of the online retailer that I use to buy this product&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRC3</td>
<td>I stay because I like the public image of the retailer&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC2c*</td>
<td>If I wanted to change online retailer, I would not have to search very hard to find a new one&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variance Explained</th>
<th>17.0</th>
<th>15.4</th>
<th>12.2</th>
<th>11.4</th>
<th>8.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach's Alpha</td>
<td>0.881</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>0.723</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1- All values significant at p<.05; Values <.40 have been suppressed
* - Item removed
RC- Reverse coded
a- Adapted from Jones, Reynolds, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty (2007); b- Adapted from Burnham et al. (2003); c- Adapted from Gremler (1995); d- Adapted from Mathwick (2002); e- Adapted from Kim and Toh (2006); f- Adapted from Balabanis et al. (2006); g- Adapted from Jones et al. (2000)
### Table 2

Confirmatory Factor Analysis—Sample B

| ARC4  | Staying loyal brings me discounts and special deals | .804 | 22.69 |
| ARC3  | I will lose the benefits of being a long-term customer if I leave my online retailer | .755 | 15.48 |
| ARC2  | I receive special rewards and discounts from doing business with this online retailer | .867 | 22.95 |
| ARC5  | Staying loyal saves me money | .617 | 14.48 |
| ARC1  | I hesitate to switch from this online retailer because it offers privileges I would not receive elsewhere | .667 | 17.31 |
| ARC6* | Switching to another online retailer would probably involve hidden cost/charges | | |
| LC7   | It takes time/effort to understand how to use other online retailers’ websites | .743 | 19.63 |
| LC3   | Switching my shopping activities to another online retailer would require too much learning | .853 | 21.95 |
| LC5   | I am reluctant to change online retailer because I am familiar with “how the system works” on this website | .652 | 17.31 |
| LC4   | I feel that the competitors’ websites are difficult to use | .801 | 22.69 |
| LC2r  | Getting used to a new website after I switch would be very easy | .782 | 19.63 |
| LC1   | Switching means I need to learn new routines and way of doing things on a new website | .666 | 12.91 |
| UC2   | I worry that switching my shopping activities to another online retailer would result in some unexpected problems | .824 | 16.28 |
| UC5   | Switching to another online retailer would be risky, since I wouldn’t know the quality of its products/services | .765 | 14.29 |
| UC3   | If I were to change online retailer, I fear that the service I would receive might deteriorate | .745 | 14.13 |
| UC1   | I am concerned about the security of my personal information when registering on a new website | .527 | 14.48 |
| SEC3  | I cannot afford the time/effort to evaluate alternative online retailers fully | .736 | 21.95 |
| SEC1  | I don’t like spending time searching for a new online retailer | .747 | 13.75 |
| SEC4  | Comparing the competitors in order to work out which best suits my needs is a time-consuming task | .676 | 12.08 |
| SEC5r | I don’t think that the process of evaluating a new online retailer prior to switching would be a hassle | .668 | 10.37 |
| BRC1  | The brand of this retailer plays a major role in my decision to stay | .829 | 22.95 |
| BRC2r | I do not care about the brand/company name of the online retailer that I use to buy this product | .568 | 9.41 |
| BRC3  | I stay because I like the public image of the retailer | .704 | 11.81 |

1- All values significant at p<.0001; *- Item removed; RC- Reverse coded

Average Variance Extracted  

Composite Reliability

Goodness of Fit Statistics: $x^2=320.637$, p=0.000, df=205, $x^2$/df=1.564; RMSEA=.044, GFI=.909, CFI=.956, NNFI (TLI)=.950

### Table 3

Assessing Discriminant Validity (Sample B)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Constructs</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Artificial Cost</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Learning Cost</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.327</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Uncertainty Cost</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.279</td>
<td>.595</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Search and Evaluation Cost</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.561</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Brand Relationship Cost</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.375</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.317</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The square root of AVE is shown in bold on the diagonal.
### TABLE 4
Confirmatory Factor Analysis-Sample A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>F1(^1) ARC</th>
<th>F2(^1) LC</th>
<th>F3(^1) UC</th>
<th>F4(^1) SEC</th>
<th>F5(^1) BRC</th>
<th>CR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARC4 Staying loyal brings me discounts and special deals</td>
<td>.886</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC3 I will lose the benefits of being a long-term customer if I leave my online retailer</td>
<td>.853</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC2 I receive special rewards and discounts from doing business with this online retailer</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC5 Staying loyal saves me money</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC1* I hesitate to switch from this online retailer because it offers privileges I would not receive elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC7 It takes time/effort to understand how to use other online retailers’ websites</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC3 Switching my shopping activities to another online retailer would require too much learning</td>
<td>.842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC5 I am reluctant to change online retailer because I am familiar with “how the system works” on this website</td>
<td>.722</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC4 I feel that the competitors’ websites are difficult to use</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC2(^{rc}) Getting used to a new website after I switch would be very easy</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC1* Switching means I need to learn new routines and ways of doing things on a new website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC2 I worry that switching my shopping activities to another online retailer would result in some unexpected problems</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC5 Switching to another online retailer would be risky, since I wouldn’t know the quality of its products/services</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC3 If I were to change online retailer, I fear that the service I would receive might deteriorate</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC1 I am concerned about the security of my personal information when registering on a new website</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC3 I cannot afford the time/effort to evaluate alternative online retailers fully</td>
<td>.781</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC1 I don’t like spending time searching for a new online retailer</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC4 Comparing the competitors in order to work out which best suits my needs is a time-consuming task</td>
<td>.655</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC(^{rc}) I don’t think that the process of evaluating a new online retailer prior to switching would be a hassle</td>
<td>.696</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRC3 I stay because I like the public image of the retailer</td>
<td></td>
<td>.809</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRC1 The brand of this retailer plays a major role in my decision to stay</td>
<td></td>
<td>.716</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRC(^{rc}) I do not care about the brand/company name of the online retailer that I use to buy this product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1- All values significant at p<.05; *- Item removed; RC- Reverse coded
Average Variance Extracted .68 .52 .55 .52 .58
Composite Reliability .893 .842 .827 .787 .736
Goodness Of Fit Statistics: x²=213.561, p=.000, df=144, x²/df=1.483; RMSEA=.044, GFI=.929, CFI=.972, NNFI (TLI)=.966

### TABLE 5
Assessing Discriminant Validity-Sample A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AVE 1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Artificial Cost</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learning Cost</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Uncertainty Cost</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>.456</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Search and Evaluation Cost</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brand Relationship Cost</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.382</td>
<td>.501</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The square root of AVE is depicted in bold on the diagonal.
which was removed (see Table 1). In addition, the t-values (critical ratio) of all indicators are greater than ± 1.96 (Gerbing & Anderson 1988), suggesting evidence of convergent validity. This evidence is reinforced by the good overall fit of the model (see again Table 2) (Steenkamp & van Trijp 1991) and the robust loadings of EFA (see Table 1) i.e. all loadings are larger than 0.5.

Table 2 illustrates sample B’s confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) fit statistics. The model’s chi-square is significant, although this statistic is not particularly helpful in this case, as it is sensitive to sample size. The results are generally good, surpassing their respective recommended values, being equal or greater than 0.9 (Baumgartner & Homburg 1996; Hair et al. 2010) and the RMSEA value represents a good fit as it is within the acceptable threshold of below 0.05.

Sample B: Scale Reliability

Reliability was examined after assessing unidimensionality and convergent validity because a construct can exhibit an acceptable level of reliability even if it does not meet the convergence validity criteria (Steenkamp et al. 1991). As can be observed in Table 2, the composite reliability for each of the components exceeds Bagozzi and Yi’s (1988) 0.6 cut-off, thus providing evidence for the construct’s acceptable reliability. The average variance extracted (see Table 3) is above 0.5 (except for factor SEC (0.48)), thus providing some support for discriminant validity, according to Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion.

The results suggest support for discriminant validity (see Table 3). To begin with, the correlation between the factors did not surpass the .70 cut-off value; hence, there is initial evidence of measure distinctiveness (Ping 2004). In addition, the constructs also meet the more stringent criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981) for discriminant validity, whereby (1) theAVEs must be at least 0.5, evidence that the variance explained of each factor is superior to the variance explained that contributed to the measurement error and (2) the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) must be greater than the correlations between all of the latent constructs in the model (see Table 3).

In order to further reinforce the evidence of the distinct dimensions and validity across the latent variables, CFA was re-executed with sample A (see Table 4).

Sample A: Convergent Validity

Item ARC1 was found to be extremely problematic. Examination of the Modification indices (MIs) table revealed cross-loading between item ARC1 with the latent construct UC and error covariance with item UC2. Furthermore, the inspection of the matrix containing the standardised residual revealed the value of above 2.58 between item ARC1 with the latent construct UC and error covariance of the Modification indices (MIs) table revealed cross-loading of the Modification indices (MIs) table revealed cross-loading.

The fact that each item loaded significantly onto the latent variable, suggests support for convergent validity. This assumption is strengthened by the good overall fit of the model, and also because all of the standardised parameter estimates are larger than 0.5 (Hair et al. 2010).

Sample A: CFA Scale Reliability

As presented in Table 4, composite reliability for each of the components exceeds Bagozzi and Yi’s (1988) 0.6 cut-off, thus providing support for the constructs’ adequate reliability.

Sample A: Discriminant Validity

The results also suggest support for discriminant validity, given that all of the constructs meet Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) more stringent criteria for discriminant validity (see Table 5).

CONCLUSION

In sum, in this research, we have achieved the objective of providing a multi-faceted robust measure of online switching costs. Further research can be done to identify the possible antecedents and consequences of online switching costs. For instance, it would be interesting if the measures were used to observe the interaction between satisfaction and purchase intention or loyalty construct.

Future research should also consider other methods in determining discriminant and convergent validity. For example, a multitrait-multimethod matrix (Campbell & Fiske 1959) can also be used to assess online switching cost convergent and discriminant validity.

In conclusion, we argue that our measure of online switching costs has made a valuable contribution to the literature.

REFERENCES


Conversations of Ethics Between Consumers: A Hermeneutic Study
Dave Bussiere, University of Windsor, Canada

ABSTRACT

There has been a growing body of research on consumer ethics. This body of research includes theoretical work, model and scale development and empirical testing. This literature, however, has been almost exclusively positivistic and quantitative. Through a hermeneutic analysis of actual, naturally-occurring consumer discussions, this present research explains the dynamics of how consumers explain their ethical views, the role of emotions—anger, frustration and humor—in this discussion, and the implications for further research.

INTRODUCTION

“Relatively few studies have examined ethical issues in the marketplace from the perspective of consumer ethics, but consumers are a major participant in the business process and not considering them in ethics research can result in an incomplete understanding of that process. An improved understanding of why some consumers engage in unethical behavior could be helpful in ultimately curtailing many questionable practices.” (Vitell 2003, p. 33)

Consumer ethics is an important, and yet only moderately researched area of marketing. In fact, the list of active consumer ethics researchers is short. Despite this, the past fifteen years has seen a growth of research. As such, a respectable level of understanding is developing through theoretical and empirical efforts.

Empirical studies, however, have been almost exclusively positivistic in nature and quantitative in structure. While this positivistic/quantitative research has provided important insight into the development and use of consumer ethics, it relies largely on questionnaires—and therefore on a consumer’s memory and interpretation.

This paper examines an actual conversation between 62 people about an ethical consumption issue: whether it is acceptable to receive, convert and view satellite service without paying. The conversation was naturally-occurring (on the internet), and not influenced by the researcher. Using hermeneutic methods, the conversation is analyzed, and new insight into consumer ethics is revealed. This method is particularly interesting because of its ability to deal with the multiple participants in the ethical conversation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As several articles note, research on consumer ethics grew largely out of business ethics research, and has grown significantly over the past two decades (e.g., Bagozzi 1995; Swaiden, Vitell, Rose, and Gilbert 2006; Vitell 2003). This research has largely focused on developing and extending consumer ethics scales including a large body of cross international and multi-national studies.

While there are three theoretical models on marketing ethics (Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Hunt and Vitell 1986; Hunt and Vitell 1993; Trevino 1986), the Hunt-Vitell (H-V) model is the most adaptable to consumer ethics and dominates the subsequent literature.

The H-V model suggests that individuals consider the ethics of possible options given a specific problem or opportunity. These options are then subject to deontological or teleological evaluation. Deontological evaluation is based on individuals beliefs—evaluating right from wrong. Teleological evaluations are based on an estimation of the possible good and bad occurring from the option, as a function of the likelihood of the good and bad outcomes occurring (Beauchamp and Bowie 1988). The model acknowledges that both deontological and teleological processing are likely to occur (Hunt and Vitell 1986; Hunt and Vitell 1993).

International studies have examined consumers in the Arab nations (Al-Khatib, Dobie, and Vitell 1995; Al-Khatib, Vitell, and Rawwas 1997; Al-Khatib, Robertson, Al-Habib, and Vitell 2002; Rawwas 2001; Rawwas, Vitell, and Al-Khatib 1994), Asia (Chan, Wong, & Jueng 1998; Rawwas 2001; Singhapakdi, Raswas, Marta, and Ahmed 1999; Thong and Yap 1998), Europe (Polonsky, Brito, Pinto, and Higgs-Kleyn 2001; Rawwas 1996; Rawwas 2001; Raswas, Patzer and Vitell 1998) and Australia (Raswas 2001; Raswas, Patzer, and Vitell 1998).

Methodological Dominance

While the growing understanding of consumer ethics is clearly important, the dominance of positivistic/quantitative analysis is worth noting. Analyzing published articles examined in Vitell’s (2003) synthesis article, for example, highlights the limited diversity in research methods in published consumer ethics research. All used questionnaires to collect data, and data analysis was limited to ANOVA, MANOVA, MANCOVA, regression analysis, conjoint analysis, factor analysis, discriminant analysis and correlation analysis. While this is not a problem, it does leave the door open for a different research perspective.

Taking a phenomenological perspective on the subject allows several issues from past research to be explored, including Vitell’s (2003) call for deeper understanding of the interaction of individuals and the complexities of the deontological and teleological processes. Phenomenological methods are particularly useful in points of interaction between individuals. While previous research has examined internal processing of ethical decisions, an examination of externalized ethical reasoning can provide further insight.

This is consistent with Demuijck’s (2009) call for additional hermeneutic research in ethics. It is also consistent with the consumer ethics research of Shoham et al (2008) in which they combine traditional quantitative survey data with the qualitative analysis of individual ethical views.

METHODOLOGY

While hermeneutics was established as a framework for analyzing the Bible, at a more basic level, hermeneutics is based on the core belief that understanding exists within language. In fact, many of the leading hermeneutic scholars use the analogy of translation in describing the role of hermeneutic analysis. (c.f. Arnold and Fischer 1994; Gadamer 1975; Grondin 1994; Grondin 1995; Descombes 1991; Bleicher 1980). Grondin (1995) concurs: “hermeneutics strives to understand what is said by going back to its motivation, or its context.” (Grondin 1995, p. ix)

Data Collection

This study began with a simple research question: What can the language of consumer conversations and their interaction about the ethics involved in a consumption decision add to our understanding of the consumer ethics?

To answer this question, the internet newsgroups were used. Newsgroups, also called discussion groups or the usenet, are forums where individuals can post questions and comments. Later, other individuals can read the comments and add to the conversation thread. There are thousands of newsgroups covering every conceivable topic.
One of the key benefits of using the newsgroups as a source of data is the fact that Google provides searchable access to a database of billions of messages dating back to 1981. Further, it is possible to follow a conversation with great detail—this includes the speaker’s online identity, the order and structure of discussion, and delays in the discussion. The use of the internet as a source of ethics research data is supported by Chatzidakis and Mitusso (2007).

For this research project, a single conversation was used that began with the basic question: is it worthwhile stealing satellite service? Yet the exact wording of the question was broad enough to spark immediate discussion. This is a naturally occurring question and conversation. The text was not influenced by the researcher—instead it was found after the conversation was complete.

**QUESTION:**
Subject: Stealing Cable or DSS Service- Is It Worth It?

I’ve been reading posts here about stealing DSS and/or cable TV service, dead H cards, etc. Is this really all worth the trouble? I have digital cable from Time Warner, and with all the extra channels, premium channels, etc., I’m subscribing too, it’s added about $30 a month when compared to their standard offerings. $30 is slightly more than what I earn per hour from my employment. But when looking at all the effort people put in to steal service, having to buy equipment that may no longer function as the cable/DSS providers change standards, etc., is all of this worth it? And besides, if everyone decided to steal cable/DSS service, then there soon would be no service left to steal, as all these companies would end up going out of business. For me, it’s just as far, far easier for me to work one hour of overtime per month if my budget was tight, to pay my cable bill, than spending a huge amount of effort each month to steal, lets say, $30-$50 of television programming each month. And it can probably be far cheaper too, if one has to keep replacing equipment needed to steal service, as the DSS/cable companies keep catching up with the people stealing service.

Anyway, I’m not saying anything here against people discussing obtaining descramblers, etc., because that’s their right and I do find those posts interesting, but I wanted to add my 2 cents worth here. Any other comments?

The complete conversation included 165 comments from 62 individuals. The discussion became interesting because the original question was posted in four newsgroups: alt.cable-tv, alt.dss, alt.dss.hack and misc.consumers. While alt.cable-tv and alt.dss are discussion forums for general TV viewership and misc.consumers is a discussion group for do-it-yourselfers, alt.dss.hack is a discussion group specifically for individuals to share ideas on how to steal satellite service.

Beginning with this user-generated question/comment is consistent with Steenhaut and vanKenhow’s (2006) call for consumer ethics research that incorporates unethical behavior and behavioral intentions.

Coding was completed using the software program NVIVO.

**Findings**

The research found support for Hunt & Vitell’s general theory of marketing ethics and previous understanding of deontological and teleological justifications. The unitizing and analyzing stages indicated that deontological and teleological justifications were separate, and rarely over-lapped. So a typical individual used deontological or teleological justifications. Some people, however, were able to use both deontological and teleological justifications.

**European Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 9) / 159**

Past research, however, has been unable to take this analysis a step further and look at the interaction of individuals and their deontological or teleological views. This data set allowed for analysis of teleological (in favor of receiving free satellite service) versus deontological (opposed to receiving free satellite service) discussions, and teleological (in favor of receiving free satellite service) versus deontological (opposed to receiving free satellite service) discussions.

**Teleological (Pro) vs. Teleological (Con)**

Conversations between individuals who disagreed and yet came from the same ideological bent tended to be fairly civil. The discussions were fair. They focused on a cost/benefit analysis, with arguments generally being rational. Typically, issues raised in these discussions focused on monetary issues, quality of service, quality of programming, corporate profits and service sustainability.

These conversations tended to also be fairly polite. While individuals stated their views, there was a common language and common effort to explain their reasoning.

**PRO: IT IS OK TO ‘STEAL’**

The reason I did it is because of the myriad local channels from all over. You can’t just ‘subscribe’ to those. I’m not out to ‘steal’ anything, in fact I subscribe to the service. But they don’t have a local channel package like you can get with the ‘card’. It’s nice after having missed something earlier to be able to catch it on the west coast feed later. Plus you get all the pre game shows for NFL games at the local level.

This is consistent with the findings of Miyazaki (2009), that the imbalance of power between individuals and corporations shifts the ethical landscape.

**CON: IT IS NOT OK TO ‘STEAL’**

If no one pays for the service, what is the incentive for the provider to provide it? If you are stealing it, you are leeching off the honest people who pay for it.

**Teleological (Pro) vs. Deontological (Con)**

The conversations became more interesting, however, when individuals with differing ideological stances interacted. Consider, for example, the following conversation excerpt:

**PRO (TELELOGICAL)**

“It is worth stealing cable or satellite given the costs of paying for it, the impact on cable and satellite companies, and the likelihood of being caught.”

**CON (DEONTOLOGICAL)**

“Stealing is wrong.”

These two statements are, in fact, incompatible. Neither party will convince the other that he is right. Instead, the comments are likely to be ignored or discounted. As such, this sub-conversation and others like it quickly died off.

Consider an additional sub-conversation between individuals from differing ideological perspectives. One of the points of discussion is the fact that many Canadians purchase US satellite dishes, and pay firms in Canada for the converter cards to get ‘free’ access to the US satellite signal. This gray market purchase was not addressed by Canadian law at the time of the discussion.
ARGUMENT AGAINST (DEONTOLOGICAL):
Stealing is as wrong in Canada as it is anywhere else.

ARGUMENT FOR (TELEOLOGICAL):
As far as I know, the Canadian government doesn’t consider it stealing. Why do you?

While both individuals use the word ‘stealing’, they do not place the same meaning in the word. For the deontological thinker, stealing occurs when a service is received without paying the service provider. For the teleological thinker, stealing occurs only when the government says it occurs.

Attempts to justify a particular position, using deontological or teleological reasons did not, in the short-term, seem to bring the two sides closer together. Instead, people who were in favor of receiving satellite service without paying became entrenched, and resorted to insults and swearing.

Consider, for example, the following three comment styles, each by different individuals and each ends a different sub-conversation. Each are representative of a common point of conflict.

One individual was frustrated by moral arguments against stealing satellite service, and did not seem to appreciate the cross-posting nature of the conversation:

“How do you manage to stay away from church long enough to follow a hackers NG [newsgroup]?”

Another included a slight jab while attempting to continue the conversation. This individual highlights one of the common arguments in favor of receiving satellite service without payment—the signals are in the air, so they are public, just like radio signals.

“Hey Genius, please explain to me how I am stealing something that come freely to my yard?”

A final style of comment elicited by frustration is one in which there is no content, no attempt to explain the frustration, and no hesitation. Instead, each of the following examples represent a failed conversation.

“Hey s—head.”

“This is a perfect example of stinky bull S—, you come here talking about morality, and calling everyone that says anything different a s—? what a sarcasm!”

“Now I understand why the society is REALLY f—ed. People who think that have the knowledge of the “perfect” truth or the “perfect morality” just stick to a point don’t matter if it is totally f—ed they just talk shit for ever.”

“I bet that you would just say the same if you go back 100 years and call immoral if a Afro-American use the same bathroom that the white people. Your just FULL OF S—.”

Together these four comment styles demonstrate some of the frustration in dealing with the differing ideology. The first is frustrated more by the venue of the comments than the actual comments. These comments seem to be saying “you can have your views, but don’t invade my space with them”. Time and place seem to matter.

The second is frustrated because his message is not getting through. It is not that he wants to insult someone, but that he does not understand why someone else does not understand. This is a frequent reaction.

The third and fourth comments are representative of utter frustration with the flow of conversation. That frustration turns to anger, and the anger manifests itself in insult and swearing. Communication has ended. Emotion has taken its place.

Individuals who rely on deontological reasons for opposing the free receipt of satellite service are equally open to emotional outbursts. Consider, for example, the following three comments made by individuals who had previously made deontological reasons to avoid receiving free satellite service:

“You’re so full of s— here. You don’t need hackers for technology advancement. Think about it dipshit, this technology was available to the government long before DTV came around.”

“You are obviously very ignorant and I have seen this argument before.”

“Please forgive me. Here’s how it is. If you steal, my opinion of you is s—. Does that help you comprehend? You’re a f—ing idiot.”

Frustration, therefore, is not dependent on deontology or teleology, but rather on the conflict between the two. The arguments between the two perspectives are incompatible, and therefore lead to frustration and anger.

DISCUSSION

To understand the implications of these findings, it is worthwhile returning to the Hunt & Vitell marketing ethics model.

Of special interest are two issues. First, there is no link between the teleological and deontological processes. Second, the model is static—it evaluates the processing of one individual.

Processing: Deontological and Teleological

While the conversation tended to highlight the exchange between deontological and teleological positions on a specific question, the conversation seemed to parallel the internal processing that an individual would experience. Hunt & Vitell acknowledge that an individual can use either or both ideologies. They ignore, however, the interplay between the two.

The conflict that exists between individuals in the conversation may be indicative of the internal conflict that is played out in the mind of an individual facing an ethical dilemma. If individuals are capable of using both ideologies in the Hunt & Vitell model, then they also may experience conflict between the two.

As such, the Hunt & Vitell Model may be strengthened by adding a link between the teleological and deontological processes. As such, future research could focus on the interplay and conflict between deontological and teleological processing. Specific research questions could center on how conflicting or supporting processing influences an individual’s commitment to an ethical decision and the desire to communicate that ethical decision.

Consumer Ethics: A Static or Dynamic Process

One of the key issues of the Hunt & Vitell model is the fact that it is a static model—individuals move through the process on their own. Instead, as evidenced by the conversation, ethical stances are often communicated and justified to others. As such, the Hunt & Vitell model is expanded to include multiple participants (Figure 3).

While individual processing is important, the ability to explain or justify a particular stance is likely equally important. Individuals do not live in silos, so their ethical stands must stand up to contrary views, and can influence the ethical standards of others.
FIGURE 1
The Hunt-Vitell Model

FIGURE 2
An Augmented Hunt-Vitell Model

FIGURE 3
A Multi-Participant Hunt-Vitell Model
As such, additional insight into this interaction would be beneficial. This is, realistically, a call for more observational research. In addition, the influence of others’ ethical views on an individual’s ethical stance bear additional research. This would link consumer ethics research with consumer research in the areas of decision making and word-of-mouth. As such, a wide variety of research methods

These findings have important implications for businesses and government. They imply that messages promoting or discouraging a particular behaviour may not only be unsuccessful with specific individuals, but also may spark anger or frustration. This is particularly interesting for social marketing. The findings also suggest that multiple messages and message styles may be necessary to reach teleological and deontological thinkers (on a specific issue).

While individual processing is important, the ability to explain or justify a particular stance is likely equally important. Individuals do not live in silos, so their ethical stands must stand up to contrary views, and can influence the ethical standards of others. Therefore, the presence of ethical standards is important, but so is the strength of those standards.

As such, additional insight into this interaction would be beneficial. This is, realistically, a call for more observational research. In addition, the influence of others’ ethical views on an individual’s ethical stance bear additional research. This would link consumer ethics research with consumer research in the areas of decision making and word-of-mouth.

Additional research could also focus on developing a better understanding of the movement from unemotional conversation to emotional conversation. This would include a focus on anger and frustration as a reaction to conflicting arguments, as well as a study of humor as a defence against that conflict.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyse two current trends in the fashion market: ethical issues and throwaway fashion, and probe the attitude-behaviour gap between them. Using depth interviews with 10 young urban consumers, findings reveal a clear and large gap between positive attitudes toward ethical fashion but no actual consumption of such fashion. Consumers blamed price, affordability, and a lack of ethical fashion in mainstream markets and media, whilst the rich data revealed a detachment phenomenon where consumers shifted responsibility to third parties. Implications for marketing and consumer behaviour are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years two conflicting trends have emerged in Western culture that have influenced fashion marketing. First, the rise of an ethical movement has been observed, with issues of sustainability placed firmly on the agenda of contemporary society, and forcing a paradigm shift toward ethical and socially responsible marketing (Crane and Matten 2007). Second, a process of individualisation is taking place (Coté & Schwartz 2002; Wallace 1995; Z-Punkt 2007), amplified by phenomena such as de-traditionalisation (Heelas 1996), modernisation or post-modernisation (Inglehart 1997), globalisation (Scholte 2000), and fragmentation (Giddens 1991). Consequently, evidence of individualisation can be seen in facets of society such as flexible short-term work contracts (Doogan 2001; Sennett 1998), the end of the nuclear family (Bengston 2001; Popenoe 1988; 1993), the trend toward many and loose, instead of less and strong, relationships (Z-Punkt 2007), and the creation of micro-segments in marketing. Ethical consumption calls for ethical consciousness and an emphasis on responsibility, sustainability, and long-term benefits for future generations, while the process of individualisation supports short-term, self-experssive consumption.

Clothing and apparel are goods that can be manufactured and marketed from both perspectives: ethical fashion and organic clothing appeal to ethical awareness, whereas cheap, seasonal throwaway clothing can express individualism in the short term and be disposed of easily due to its low price. Recent academic research has investigated ethical and fast or throwaway fashion separately, and has failed to analyse these phenomena together. This research therefore fills a gap in knowledge by analysing both together. Moreover, the marketing literature pertaining to ethical consumption has identified a marked discontinuity between intentions and behaviour, noting, “there appears to be a gap between what consumers say about the importance of ethical issues and what they do at the checkout counter” (Auger and Devinney 2007, p.361). This paper therefore also investigates the attitude-behaviour gap pertaining to fashion consumption.

INDIVIDUALISATION

The phenomenon of individualisation, which is characterised by placing an emphasis on the individual in society, has been subject to academic discussion within the disciplines of sociology and anthropology for many years. Due to the impacts of late modernity or post-modernity, individualisation became “the tendency towards increasingly flexible self-awareness as the individual must make decisions and choose identities from among an increasingly complex range of options” (Wallace 1995, p.13), and can now be defined as “the extent to which people are left by their culture to their own devices in terms of meeting their own survival needs, determining the directions their lives will take, and making myriad choices along the way” (Coté and Schwartz 2002, p.573). Clearly, therefore, individualisation is a complex process and it has been analysed from different theoretical perspectives.

One perspective is Gross’ (1994) multi-optional society, which argues that society has seen a decrease in obligations and an increase in options. These changes signify an increase in personal freedom, thus enabling individuals to have more choice and more personal influence over their own lives. However, such freedom can also be perceived as personal pressure because it demands permanent decision-making and evaluation of possible consequences. Increased choice is also connected with high levels of personal risk (Beck 1992). An example of the binary relatedness of risk and choice is the issue of employment: a young person in today’s society has many more choices, including jobs, apprenticeships, or further education, than someone of the same age had 30 years ago. This freedom however also represents higher levels of perceived risk and uncertainty as jobs are not as secure and long-term-oriented as they were in the past. A logical consequence of increased variety, choice and freedom is also that individual life becomes less comparable or similar to other lives and thus more individualised. Other social developments that favour individualization include the detachment of the individual from firm social concepts in the working environment (Sennett 1998) where employees expect flexibility and mobility from employees, while offering short-term contracts instead of the lifelong-employment of earlier generations (Doogan 2001); de-traditionalisation, which describes an increased detachment of the individual from traditional social institutions such as the church or labour unions (Heelas 1996) and the encouragement of the individual to engage in more but less strong social relationships; and increases in the fragmentation (Giddens 1991) of aspects of life, such as the rise of the patchwork-family at the expense of the traditional nuclear family.

Individualisation as a Dynamic Enforcer of Consumption

Increased freedom of choice results automatically in an increased need to construct self-identity (Giddens 1991) and express individuality. Because individuality is less directed by consistent institutional and traditional guidelines, each individual must create and design his or her own self-identity (Vogt 2002). This process includes the projection of messages to others via the acquisition of goods and lifestyle practices (Dunlap et al. 2002), particularly consumer goods with high levels of self-expression (Belk 1988; Hellmann 2003; Meffert 2002). Indeed, critics argue that some people now perceive others based on their consumption decisions rather than their individual character and behaviour (Klein 2001; Quart 2003). Schulze (1992) also argues that with individualisation comes increased hedonism.

Moreover, in addition to basic and advanced demands, individuals now expect consumption goods to perform transformative functions (“transform me” or “change me”) (Bolz 2002, p.98-99), leading to society being “orientated toward continuous change and progress” (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2006, p.260). Baudrillard (1998, p.100) refers to this self-imposed transformative process from a fashion perspective, noting that the cycle of fashion leads to people changing “their clothes, their belongings, their cars-on a yearly, monthly or seasonal basis.”
ETHICAL ISSUES AND SUSTAINABILITY

A logical consequence of increased consumption is increased disposal of waste, packaging, and often, in today’s “throwaway society” (McCarthy 2004; Morrisson 2007), intact goods for which new replacements have been purchased. The latter point is particularly true for fashion clothing. Indeed, the fashion industry is under a great deal of pressure to adjust goods and services to changing consumer needs (Frings 2002), with some leading high street retailers reaching up to 20 seasons per year (Christopher, Lowson, and Peck 2004). This process of rapid turnover in production and marketing, termed fast fashion, is not solely driven by the fashion industry, but has evolved as a response to increasing diversification of consumer demands that are “moulded by culture …what is happening on the street, in clubs, lifestyle hotspots and fashion flash points, not from a mood board or a trend prediction agency 12 months in advance of a selling season” (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2006, p.261).

Consequently, the solid waste stream comprises more clothes and shoes than any other nondurable goods (MacEachern 2008), being responsible for 1.5-2 million tonnes of waste in the UK each year. Indeed, clothing and textiles account for 5-10% of environmental impacts (Bray 2009; DEFRA 2009).

In addition to issues of waste, and driven by globalisation, “deterritorialization” or “supraterritorialization” has occurred, relating to the situation where many production processes are now outsourced (Scholte 2000, p.46), usually to those countries that offer “the most ‘preferable’ conditions: which often means the lowest level of regulation and social provision for employees” (Cranе and Matten 2007, p.299). In the highly competitive fashion and apparel market, many retailers source their manufacturing in developing countries in order to benefit from a “wage advantage” (Mattila 2002, p.340). Robins and Humphrey (2000) claim that only 1% of the final retail price for a pair of jeans manufactured in Eastern Europe was accounted for in the cost of their production, while a ski jacket produced for 51p in Bangladesh was sold for £100 in the UK.

Increasingly, such facts are widely reported in the media and there is now a greater awareness of and concern with issues such as sustainability and ethical production and trading than ever before in Western culture (Mintel 2009a). The label “Lohas” a descriptor for “lifestyles of health and sustainability,” encompasses everything from energy to fashion and was worth £230 billion by 2000 (Cortese 2002). Environmentally friendly alternatives such as using organic or biodegradable materials that are less harmful to the environment are being presented in the marketplace (Joergens 2006). The emergence of new clothing companies such as American Apparel that are based and positioned on ethical production and business processes and products, as well as the incorporation of ethical brands and products by many major retailers can be observed (Verner 2008). Thus, there is now a choice of ethical fashion, defined as “fashionable clothes that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labour conditions while not harming the environment or workers by using biodegradable and organic cotton” (Joergens 2006, p.361).

However, despite the fact that one third of the adult population in the UK consider themselves to be “strongly ethical” (Nicholls 2002, p.9), and the increase in spend on marketing messages that position ethical fashion as looking good and feeling responsible at the same time, total sales for ethical clothing are currently worth only 0.4% (£175 million) of the total market. Clearly, then, there is a gap between people’s attitudes and behavior. This gap is not limited to the UK, but has also been found in the US (Kilbourne and Polonsky 2005; Roberts 1996). This study aims to better understand the underlying reasons for this attitude-behavior gap within the ethical fashion market, and utilizes a framework of individualization and attitudes toward throwaway and ethical fashion to analyze results.

METHOD

In order to probe this potentially sensitive issue, and given that throwaway fashion and ethical fashion have never before been studied in relation to each other, depth interviews were employed. Participants were drawn from the UK and Germany. Both counties were used as both are examples of developed and growth societies (Baudrillard 1998; UN 2009) that have high levels of fashion consumption. According to Mintel (2009a; 2009b) young urban adults have both the highest levels of awareness of ethical fashion and the highest demand for low-cost fashion. On this basis, city-dwelling adults aged 18-28 were targeted, and, using a snowball technique, several interviewees who claimed to care about ethical issues and several who were self-proclaimed “fashion junkies” were recruited. Semi-structured interviews were designed around initial questions regarding their fashion consumption in general, before probing questions pertaining to fashion and individuality, attitudes toward throwaway and ethical fashion, and finally any gap that emerged between attitudes and behavior. During the interviews follow-up probing allowed further investigation of relevant issues. To prevent burnout or loss of interest by participants, interviews were initially designed to take no longer than 45 minutes. However, some went beyond this length of time, with the full agreement of the interviewee. Sufficient time for critical reflection on a conducted interview and its results was allowed before the next interview was conducted, and interviews continued until the same themes emerged and no new results were being uncovered. These techniques resulted in 10 interviews being conducted over an eight week period.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Only one participant denied that she was fashion conscious. All claimed to go shopping for clothes at least once a month, and several claimed to do so three or four times per month. There were no discernable differences between German and British participants in their responses. The rest of this section analyses results around the four major headings of fashion and individuality, attitudes toward throwaway fashion, attitudes toward ethical fashion, and finally the attitude-behaviour gap. The gender and age of each participant to which individual quotes belong are provided in parenthesis.

Fashion & Individuality

In terms of individuality, several participants referred to their clothes as reflecting their personality, viz:

“It’d say the clothes I wear definitely reflect my personality” (M,26).

“I think clothes are most important when it comes to expressing my personality” (F,25).

Additionally, it was confirmed that fashion and clothing fulfil communicative and self-expressive purposes. One respondent even stated that clothing is:

“The only non-verbal way of showing individuality to the society” (M, 27).

While others noted its importance in presenting the self in different social situations:

“It [clothing] is important in business life as well as in private life” (M27).
All participants but one pointed out that their choice and actual wearing of clothes reflects and communicates both their individuality and their individual lifestyle, summed up by quotes such as:

“I’d say a lot of my clothes are individual” (M, 26).

“I have a few t-shirts with band names on so that’s obviously which band I like, I’ve got customised t-shirts and things so I think they’re quite unique” (M, 26).

“For me it’s important also to express what sort of like other interests you have, for example music or the sort of you know the lifestyle things so I think it’s quite important for me to express this by my clothing” (M, 18).

“I’m not particularly girly, so the clothes that I wear reflect that” (F, 25).

Clearly, by making reference to using clothes to communicate a self-identity such as “not girly” and by wearing fashion to communicate lifestyles and interests, these interviewees confirm previous findings (Belk 1988; Meschnig 2002; Hellmann 2003) that fashion and clothing serve self-expressive functions that reflect taste and interests (Featherstone 1987). Interviews then moved on to ascertain whether or not participants felt the need to constantly consume: as suggested in the literature pertaining to individualisation.

**Attitudes toward Throwaway Fashion**

Many interviewees claimed to shop even when they don’t necessarily need a new item, lending support to Baudrillard’s (1998) contention of a consumer society where consumption per se is a major force in Western cultures. Interestingly, while many denied that they did not buy things they did not need, they were knowledgeable about the concept of a throwaway society. One interviewee even mentioned the term:

“We’re living in a throwaway society; you can buy all sorts for cheap prices…and when you don’t need them anymore people throw them away. Everybody used to buy a TV and that’d be something that’d stay in families like a generation, because once mum and dad were finished…they’d put it down to their kids…It’s not like that anymore because everything is so cheap” (M, 22).

Initially, there was no support for the contention that people now change their wardrobe within a single season and feel pressured into doing so (Baudrillard 1998; Barnes & Lea-Greenwood 2006), as all denied buying things they did not need. Participants argued that when they add to their wardrobe they did not feel they were unduly replacing items. When asked whether or not they visited shops that sell cheap throwaway fashion, however, results revealed a different story:

“I mean, the thing is or the reason why I would say myself or a lot of young people choose to go shopping in these sort of shops is because they can always get really good bargains throughout the whole year. They don’t have to wait for, you know, reductions in the summer or winter” (F, 25).

“I’d go there for bargains like if I needed cheap underwear…or a top…I’d wear as one off items…it’s more about the price when I go to those shops” (M, 26).

As the interviews continued, many participants revealed further knowledge from the media of the criticisms levied at such retailers, including knowledge of such firm’s business strategies and an awareness of poor labour conditions abroad:

“Well obviously there’s quite a lot about Primark [in the media]…and their ethical stance producing in sweatshops” (M, 26).

“I know that Primark don’t really advertise anything. They’ve got that much of a profit and they make lots of their stuff in sweatshops and that, so they can get away with having cheap quality and not great quality” (M, 18).

“They’re so cheap that there is no way on earth that they can be produced by paying a normal wage to the people who produce them. I mean buying a top for like £1.50, that’s unbelievable. That’s a pint of milk” (F, 25).

There was however a broad variety of approaches to the way individuals viewed their own actual behaviour in relation to the problematic situation. One pointed out a relative high level of detachment from the unethical sourcing processes:

Q: “You mentioned child labour. So you’re basically aware of those criticisms?”

A: “Oh yeah…when you think about it like that, … you think ‘Oh that’s not great and they can get away with that’ but then it’s sort of supply and demand on the other hand, isn’t it? I’m a bit cynical about that one. It’s not right but at the end of the day it doesn’t affect me personally. I wouldn’t say I’m not bothered but there’s more important stuff to me” (M, 18).

Another respondent showed higher levels of empathy and stressed political awareness and interest in such issues, but then claimed that financial constraints make it impossible to avoid or boycott throwaway fashion systematically:

“Well, of course I’m aware [of the criticism] because I am politically interested and I am a politically interested person… and I know about the criticisms about these shops. Criticisms that the clothes are produced in third world deprived labour… yes of course I know that. I know of those things”

Q: “Is that a thing that you keep in mind when you’re doing your shopping?”

A: “Yeah I do, I’ve got these things in mind and over the past couple of years I’ve tried to avoid certain shops that are you know well known that have child labour and exploited labour in third world countries and I have tried to avoid them but it’s very difficult if you don’t have a lot of money to avoid these shops” (F, 25).

 Indeed, cheap prices were mentioned time and again, with limited finances and the current recession blamed:

“Yeah, I do feel bad but in a current climate with prices as they are, it’s not really ethical to say but if I needed clothes I’d buy them as cheap as possible” (M, 26).
As these quotes demonstrate, clear evidence of ambivalence began to emerge as the interviews progressed. On the one hand, participants denied that they buy things they do not really need and then readily discard them (throwaway-society). On the other hand, when probed their answers revealed that they do view cheap clothing as one-off or throwaway. In terms of justifying their own consumer behaviour, again there were two types of responses: one type suggested that they are not personally responsible for environmental and social problems caused by this practice, the other blamed retailers for making cheap produce so easily available while making the alternative ethical fashion too expensive.

Attitudes toward Ethical Fashion
All participants had heard of the concept of ethical fashion, and revealed high levels of awareness of brands such as American Apparel and the ethical ranges of mainstream retailers. All were in favour of the concept of ethical fashion and most expressed positive attitudes towards it. However, in terms of actual consumption, cost constraints emerged time and again:

“If I can do my bit even if it’s buying some clothes that are fairly traded or made from sustainable resources then that would definitely be a motivation for me, but at my present time I can’t afford to do that” (M,26).

“...of course I have heard of these things and I would fully support these sorts of things. It’s just that I’m not in the position financially to really be consistent as a consumer and say I am only going to certain shops that I know don’t do child labour and that but I can’t be consistent out of financial reasons” (F,25).

Early in the interviews, many participants had mentioned quality to be just as important as price when purchasing fashion clothing. However, none mentioned quality in relation to ethical fashion, suggesting that either quality is taken for granted with such goods, or that price is actually a more important consideration to them. One interesting point to emerge was that respondents viewed ethical fashion as a special feature, as opposed to a real alternative to cheap fashion. The investigation also revealed a broader social perspective that went beyond price issues and into those of subculture and class:

I would say it appeals only to a certain type of person that would buy only that stuff... like a hippie (M,18).

Q: A hippie? An ethical consumer?

A: Yeah, someone who is more concerned about these things because at the minute unfortunately not everybody is (M,18).

“I think it is an upper and middle class thing to be able to, you know, consume like that. You know conscious of fair trade and conscious of you know working conditions and things like that, You know you have to be in a privileged position in order to do that” (F,25).

Indeed, in comparison to the successful rise of Fair Trade chocolate and coffee (Doherty & Tranchell 2007), many respondents felt that the opportunity to target mass markets with ethical fashion was still in its infancy:

“If you look at some of the stuff years ago Fair Trade coffee and chocolate was not a big deal but now everyone’s heard of it. Not everyone would buy it but a lot more people do buy them and if you give it a few years I imagine that could be like that with clothing” (M,18).

“A few years ago...the whole ethical concept was still quite early doors especially in the mainstream...coffee and chocolate really mainstream and in a few years I believe people will be more ethically conscious and aware. As I said it needs more high street brand to push it [ethical fashion] along” (M,26).

When asked whether fmcgs such as coffee and chocolate had been more successful due to their low prices, one respondent remarked:

“If you look at normal coffee and fair trade coffee and normal clothes and ethical clothes...you are paying a bit more but it’s not that much more. If you look at clothes but you pay more for clothes anyways compared to coffee so it probably just seems to be more expensive” (M,26).

Attitude-behaviour Gap
As expected, when the interviews turned to the gap between the positive attitudes that most expressed, and actual purchase behaviour, price and financial restraints emerged again:

“If I can do my bit even if it’s buying some clothes that are fairly traded or made from sustainable resources then it would definitely be a motivation for me, but at my present time I can’t afford to do that” (M,26).

“I like the idea of ethical clothing but then I did reconsider and I just couldn’t afford it” (F,25).

Comparative perceived value was also an issue:

“The way I would think is: ‘well for the type of this t-shirt which is made of cotton, I could get three t-shirts that are also made of cotton they are not ethically sourced but they are also made of cotton.’ So I would go to the cheaper alternative” (F,25).

An element of scepticism also emerged, with one interviewee commenting:

“They [ethical/sustainable fashion items] are good if they are for real” (M,27),

suggesting that some consumers have noted the recent press regarding green washing (Kärnä et al 2003) or clean washing (Low & Davenport 2005), which are terms used to describe the unfounded use of environmental marketing practices. However, perhaps the most noteworthy finding was that, when probed, interviewees revealed that, contrary to their earlier claims that ethical purchasing is important, they don’t actually care enough about these issues:

Q: “So you’re aware of it but when it actually comes to shopping you don’t really think about it then?”

A: “No” (M,26).

Q: “Have you ever thought about doing it [buying ethical]?”

A: “No... I don’t think about that” (M,18).
“If you look at sweatshops it is not really harming anyone, it is in a way but it doesn’t affect anyone directly so I think the main consumers won’t really push it” (M,26).

“Ahh well if you think like child labour that’s the worst possible thing but like 100 years ago it was pretty much common place in England. These countries Indonesia, India, China… they’re still developing and they’re going through their sort of industrial revolution and maybe in 100 years they will be as developed as us now. I see it sort of like them going through their industrial awakening and revolution in the same way that Britain did” (M,18).

“I don’t want to disillusion anybody but I don’t think that it’s just, well, in general it’s not going to work cos I think as long as there are more substantial problems people won’t really care about ethical clothing” (F,25).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The lack of consumption of ethical fashion items revealed in this study supports previous findings that younger people, despite having the highest levels of awareness of ethical fashion (Mintel 2009a), have been found to consume fewer ethical products than older consumers (Trendbüro 2009). It was clear that these young urban consumers still view fashion from the dominant price-quality continuum (Ulrich and Sarasin 1995) and are yet to perceive ethical clothing as a viable alternative to cheap throwaway fashion. Also, a clear attitude-behaviour gap emerged, where participants demonstrated positive attitudes toward ethical fashion, but failed to consume it. This gap, while never before identified with fashion items, is widely acknowledged for other ethical products (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; Roberts 1996; Simón 1995). This so-called attitude behaviour gap was expected, and a major aim of this study was to analyse it in depth. From a theoretical perspective, it is argued here that individualisation was indeed influential in maintaining that gap. A growing and powerful emphasis on the individual and increasing importance on the design and expression of self-identity (Giddens 1991; Hitzler and Honer 1994) has perhaps put pressure on individuals to place greater importance on the consumption of cheap fashion—which allows for more choice—at the expense of fewer ethically produced items. Perhaps participants in this study have been enunciated into the ideology of consumption, believing that “the more we have, the better off we are” (Kilbourne and Polonsky 2005, p.39).

At the same time, the emphasis on the individual at the expense of collectivism became evident through the levels of detachment from ethical and environmental issues demonstrated by the majority of participants. Thus a clear paradox was identified. These young urban consumers openly criticised fast fashion business practices and yet, when probed, revealed that they do not feel responsible for these practices. From an interpretative point of view this detaching process was underlined by respondents’ tendencies to reply in the third person. Even after being explicitly addressed (“Would you buy them?”) some replied with general answers (“I think people do…”). Consequently, participants shifted responsibility towards third parties, blaming governments, retailers, marketers, the media, and even the levels of development in various countries. There were also a range of practical reasons put forward for the lack of ethical clothing consumption: not least financial. Respondents either stated that ethical fashion is not affordable to them, or that it is relatively too expensive in comparison to alternatives.

From a managerial point of view, the question remains as to whether a significant increase in the consumption levels of more responsible and sustainable fashion among young urban consumers is achievable. Although attitudes toward such fashion are positive, once probed the lack of real concern over sustainability issues means the task of marketing ethical fashion has a steep road ahead. Unless the retail price of ethical clothing can be reduced, the availability of high street ranges increased, and perhaps most importantly and most difficult, the links between the consumption of cheap fashion and current social and environmental problems can be driven home in a convincing way, then ethical fashion may remain a niche market for many years to come.

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A Longitudinal Study of Affect and Satisfaction in a High Emotion Service Context
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ABSTRACT
Emotions have been extensively discussed in models of buyer behaviour and customer satisfaction, but inadequately conceptualised in relation to involvement and motivation. Furthermore, comparatively little longitudinal research has studied the role of affect in this context. This research examines emotions felt by graduates attending a graduation ceremony. Emotions, motivation and involvement were measured before and again after the event, with satisfaction and behavioural intention. Using SEM with a sample of 441 demonstrated that the effect of emotions on recommendation was mediated by behavioural involvement. Personal motives had a direct effect on behavioural intention, and indirect effect mediated through involvement.

INTRODUCTION
The subject of customer satisfaction has been extensively researched with the aim of developing a diagnostic tool which is better able to predict an individual’s level of satisfaction and future purchase behaviours. Traditionally, consumer satisfaction has been measured as a cognitive-state using principally quantitative-techniques, resting on an assumption of the consumer as a rational “elaborator of information” (Legrenzi and Troilo 2005, p.2). This basic cognitive approach has been augmented with approaches that incorporate cognitive recall of consumption and such retrospective evaluations implicitly incorporate measures of affect (Bowen and Clarke 2002; De Rojas and Camarero 2008). More recently, there has been growing recognition of the need to more explicitly incorporate measures of emotions in predictive models of satisfaction, for example it has been noted that cognitive-measures of service quality and relationship strength are poor predictors of future behaviour (Brady and Cronin 2001) while Bigne et al. (2005, p.833) recognized “…the need to incorporate both affective and cognitive components in modelling consumer-satisfaction.”

Although emotions have become popular as a focus for understanding the antecedents and outcomes of customer satisfaction, the concept of emotions is poorly defined and delimited from other proximate constructs. Fehr and Russell noted that “everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked to give a definition” (1984, p.464).

The terms affect and emotions are often used interchangeably, however, it is useful to differentiate between them, and also from the related construct of mood. Affect can be considered as a general category for mental feeling processes and thus as an umbrella term for a set of more specific mental processes which include emotions, and moods (Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999). Emotions can be defined as: “a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes (e.g., in gestures, posture, facial features); and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with emotion, depending on its nature and meaning for the person having it” (Bagozzi et al. 1999, p.184).

Emotions are both antecedent to, and consequent upon a range of other phenomena, notably motivation and involvement, two constructs that have featured extensively in models of buyer behaviour, but not adequately represented in models of customer satisfaction. Furthermore, research into satisfaction and service quality has tended to take measures immediately after consumption. The limited time between the phenomenon being researched, and the reporting by the respondent of that phenomenon implicitly emphasises cognition rather than affect, which many researchers have suggested is associated with attitude adjustment over time (Hausknecht et al. 1998). For an individual’s emotional state to be managerially useful, it is necessary to understand how emotions evoked by an event change over time because it can be argued that an individual’s future behaviour is influenced by their attitude at the time of re-purchase/recommendation, rather than that which prevails immediately following or during consumption of a service. This is consistent with the extensive literature on cognitive dissonance which implies attitude adjustment over time (Festinger 1957; Hausknecht et al. 1998). More research is needed to understand the impact of emotions over time on behavioural intention (Giese and Cote 2000; White 2010). Furthermore, only very few authors have provided empirical evidence, of a link between affective expectations or anticipated emotions and satisfaction (Ladhari 2007; Phillips and Baungartner 2002). It is unclear how positive and negative emotions prior to consumption affect satisfaction and behavioural intention after consumption.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the linkages between emotions, motivation and involvement, and their effects on satisfaction and behavioural intention. Given the effect over time of change in attitude, the study reported in this paper takes a longitudinal perspective in linking these constructs. The paper begins with a brief literature review of the principal constructs of emotions, motivation, involvement and satisfaction. It then describes a longitudinal methodology, which is used to test the hypotheses in a high emotion, high involvement service context-a university graduation ceremony. This is followed by analysis and discussion of the results.

EMOTIONS, MOTIVATION AND INVOLVEMENT
Unfortunately, although emotions are frequently discussed in the field of consumer behaviour, there is no broadly accepted definition of the concept. One school of thought regards emotions as being essentially biologically derived phenomena which are innate and do not rely on learned stimuli, and which can be triggered without any higher cognitive processing (Zajone 1980). Moving on from biological models, appraisal theorists have argued that emotions depend on the conscious or unconscious appraisal of a triggering event and are associated with behavioural responses (Scherer 2005). In operationalising emotions as a behavioural response, researchers have distinguished between basic emotions and more complex secondary emotions (Ekman 1972; Izard 1971; Plutchik 1991). Unfortunately while basic emotions may be capable of observation by bodily reactions, this is much more difficult to achieve for higher order secondary emotions, with the result that their identification invariably relies on self-reporting and is subject to reporting distortion.

One approach which seeks to combine basic emotions with complex secondary emotions is that used by Izard (1977) who conceptualised every emotion as being a subtle combination of several basic emotions. Several researchers have used this approach to assess the consequences of a group of particular and situation specific emotions on a dependent variable, such as satisfaction (Liljander and Strandvik 1997; Oliver 1997). It is now widely accepted that emotions may be one of the core components of the consumer satisfaction construct (Oliver and Westbrook 1993; Stauss and Neuhaus 1997; White and Yu 2005; Zeelenberg and Pieters 2004).

Whilst cognitive expectations are solely based on functional attributes, affective expectations encompass people’s predictions

169 European Advances in Consumer Research Volume 9, © 2011
about how they will feel during consumption (Wilson et al. 1989). Wilson and Klaaren (1992) in their affective expectations model (AEM) posit that people’s predictions about how much they will like a particular experience will have a congruent effect on how much the experience is enjoyed, i.e. affective assimilation effects or arousal congruency. This approach is used in this study. We propose that the emotions evoked before an event have a positive influence on satisfaction after the event (Phillips and Baumgartner 2002).

H1: There is a positive association between anticipated emotions and satisfaction.

Motivation is an implicit component of biologically derived definitions of emotions. It has been noted that emotions arise from a comparison between a desirable or undesirable goal and the extent to which a goal is attained (Zajonc 1980). A range of need-based models of buyer behaviour see an unmet need triggering a motive to satisfy that need. Maslow identified a hierarchy of needs and researchers have noted the differing buying patterns of individuals who are motivated by differing levels of unmet needs. Herzberg’s needs-based model of motivation distinguished among needs which are a basic requirement (a “hygiene factor”) and those which act as positive motivators. A variety of other basic models of motivation have sought to distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic needs, sometimes referred to as a utilitarian motivation and a hedonic motivation (Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Childers et al. 2001). Further discussion has arisen from the distinction between motives that are inner directed and these that are based on the needs of peer group recognition. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined “subjective norm” as a belief that specific referents dictate whether an individual should perform a behaviour or not, leading to a motivation to comply with specific referents.

Motivation has a link to emotions. Appraisal theorists have noted that emotions result from dissonance between a desirable or undesirable goal and the extent to which a goal is attained (Plutchik 1991). The level of motivation that exists with respect to a desired outcome will influence the evaluation of the outcome. Specifically, we propose that where there is a high level of motivation, an individual will record a higher feeling of satisfaction and a higher likelihood of pursuing goal directed behaviour. In the absence of a motive, an outcome will have less salience.

H2: There is a positive association between an individual’s level of motivation and their level of satisfaction.
H2a: There is a positive association between an individual’s level of motivation and their behavioural intention.
H2b: There is a positive association between an individual’s level of motivation and their level of evoked emotions.

The concept of involvement has been widely documented in the field of buyer behaviour, referring to the level of the psychological, physical and financial commitment by an individual to a purchase decision. In the context of an academic environment, Astin (1984, p.297) noted that involvement refers to “…the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience”. There are close links between involvement and motivation, and a number of studies have noted that a highly motivated consumer is likely to feel a heightened sense of involvement with an activity (Pike, Kuh, and Gonyea 2003). As a measure of affect, involvement is likely to be greatest where an emotion is aroused. It has also been suggested that the two constructs of emotion and involvement become indistinguishable when measured using retrospective reporting of attitudes in that a phenomenon that does not evoke emotions is not likely to be associated with involvement. We try to avoid the problem of parallel constructs by focussing instead on behavioural manifestations of involvement.

Considerable research has sought to investigate the link between attitudes and actual behaviour, with mixed evidence of dissonance between the two (Brady and Cronin 2001). We seek to develop a more robust model of the antecedents of satisfaction and behavioural intention by treating emotions and motivation as a self-reported attitude and by treating involvement as a behavioural manifestation. We propose that high levels of involvement are more likely to evoke emotions before the event and lead to higher satisfaction and loyalty after the event.

H3: Behavioural involvement is a predictor of satisfaction.
H3a: Behavioural involvement is a predictor of satisfaction.
H3b: Behavioural involvement in an activity is positively related to the motivation to take part in that activity.
H3c: There is a positive association between an individual’s level of emotion and their level of behavioural involvement.

There is considerable support in the literature for a positive effect of satisfaction on customer loyalty, especially positive word of mouth (Yu and Dean 2001). Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: There is a positive association between satisfaction and behavioural intention.

The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

**METHODOLOGY**

The approach adopted for this study was longitudinal and quantitative. A review of the literature identified numerous scales that had been developed, tested and validated to measure the constructs that form the focal points for this research-emotions, motivation, involvement, satisfaction and behavioural intention. While it is recognised that a phenomenological approach could reveal deeper insights linking emotions, involvements and behaviour, the problem of necessarily small sample sizes would have limited the generalisability of such an approach.

The hypotheses were tested in the context of graduates attending a graduation ceremony at a UK University. A graduation ceremony is an event associated with a high level of emotional involvement, so the findings of this study may not be generalised to relatively low emotion contexts. The longitudinal approach involved inviting everybody who had registered to attend a ceremony to take part in a survey of expectations prior to the event. They were also invited to participate in a follow-up study two weeks after the event. Attitudes and behaviours before were used in a longitudinal model to predict attitudes and behaviour after the event. In the first phase, undertaken online two weeks prior to the event, participants were asked about their expectations for the event, including questions about the emotions that they were currently feeling towards the forthcoming event, their motivations to attend the event as well as their behavioural involvement before the event. After the event, graduates were asked about their satisfaction with the event, their behavioural involvement as well as their intentions to recommend the event to their friends.

**Scale Development**

This study adopted the unipolar approach to emotions based on Izard’s Differential Emotions Scale (DES) (Izard 1977) as this
model has been shown to be applicable in diverse contexts due to its flexibility (Holbrook 1986; Westbrook 1987). There is evidence showing that bipolar approaches of emotions might not be adequate for examining consumption experiences, as respondents are likely to evoke feelings of happiness and sadness at the same time (Babin and Darden 1998; Westbrook 1987). On the basis of interviews with recent graduates who had attended a previous graduation ceremony, and the limited literature on graduation ceremonies, it was decided to restrict analysis to 11 separate emotions: happiness, joy, excitement, pride, gratitude, energy, fear, anger, sadness, shame and envy. The basic emotion items applied in this study were primarily based on Richins' Consumption Emotion Set (1997). This scale was developed to differentiate between a variety of emotions experienced during consumption and includes most emotions which can be elicited. Gratitude (Storm and Storm 1987) and energy (Havlena, Holbrook, and Lehmann 1989) were added to the scale as the interviews conducted showed that these emotions were also particularly relevant in the context of a graduation celebration. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed two distinct dimensions of positive and negative emotions. This is in line with the literature (Chaudhuri 1998; Phillips and Baumgartner 2002). A subsequent analysis of open-ended questions in which respondents were asked to record unprompted expectations of the event suggested that the stated emotions could be accommodated within these headings. Although Izard’s scale measures frequency and degree/intensity of each emotion, in this study, intensity of emotion alone was measured, rated on a scale from 1 (very low), through to 5 (very high).

A number of scales to measure motivation in a consumer context have been developed, tested and validated in recent years (Formica and Murrmann 1998; Mohr et al. 1993). In the case of graduation ceremonies, Nicholson and Pearce (2001) noted the importance of personal and social motivations. Based on this, and exploratory qualitative research, items to measure motivation were adapted from Nicholson and Pearce (2001) and Formica and Murrmann (1998). An exploratory factor analysis confirmed two factors explaining 72.2% which can be interpreted in line with previous research as social motives, which include items such as “I wanted to see the event with my friends” and “I wanted to meet fellow students,” and personal or self-directed motives, such as “Degree ceremony represents the closure of my studies.”

Satisfaction was measured by scale items which recorded respondents’ satisfaction with various aspects of the graduation ceremony. These comprised, for example, the general organisation of the day and waiting time involved during the day. Each item was measured on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The general nature of these scales was replicated from numerous previously reported studies of satisfaction (Oliver 1997), however there were no previously published studies of satisfaction in the context of a graduation ceremony, therefore scales were developed that were specific to this context using insights gained from preliminary qualitative research.

Behavioural involvement was operationalised using self-reported actions symbolic of a high level of involvement prior to attending the graduation ceremony. It was measured using measures of the extent to which respondents had talked with family/friends before the event face-to-face, by phone or using social network sites. These indicators were measured on scales from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very high) and subsequently corroborated with dichotomous measures of other activities undertaken by the respondent which are indicative of a high level of involvement (whether an outfit had been purchased for the event; whether a celebratory meal had been booked and whether a photographer had been booked).

Behavioural intention was assessed on the basis of respondents’ likelihood of recommending to their friends attendance at a future graduation ceremony. There is considerable support for the use of personal recommendation as an important metric of loyalty resulting from satisfaction (Reichheld 2006).

Sample Characteristics

The research focused on students who graduated from a UK University in July 2009. 2,649 out of a total of 3,386 eligible students registered for one of twelve graduation ceremonies. Each ceremony involved students wearing formal gowns and receiving their awards from the University’s Chancellor in front of an audience of about 220 fellow graduates and their friends or family. In addition to the formal proceedings, graduates typically also took part in various social events, including celebration meals and individual and group photographs.

All registered graduates were sent an e-mail two weeks before their ceremony inviting them to take part in a survey of their feelings about their forthcoming ceremony. Those who agreed to take part were asked a series of attitudinal and behavioural questions. They were offered a small prize incentive and invited to take part in a follow-up survey to talk about their recollections of the cer-
enrony two weeks after the event. Of 2,408 students who attended a graduation ceremony, 493 agreed to take part in the first stage of the study prior to the event (a response rate of 20.5%). In the second stage of the survey, 303 responses were received (12.6%). 63% of respondents were female and 37% male. A test for non-response bias was carried out by comparing sample characteristics with the population of all of the university’s new graduates. This showed no significant differences with respect to gender. Graduates achieving a higher degree classification were slightly over-represented in the sample. After the event, most respondents were either very likely (63.3%) or quite likely (30.1%) to recommend a friend to attend a future ceremony. High levels of behavioural involvement were indicated by the observation that 63.2% had booked a photographer and 35.5% a celebration lunch/dinner.

ANALYSIS

The Structure Equation Modelling (SEM) approach was applied using AMOS Version 16. We have followed the two-step procedure of SEM by firstly examining scale validity from the measurement model using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and secondly focusing on testing the proposed hypotheses using the structural model. Measurement reliability and validity of the model containing the multi-item constructs were assessed using CFA.

The analysis reported below is based on 441 fully completed responses for the first stage of the survey. Of these respondents 166 took also part in the second stage of the study and the model was run using Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) to interpolate missing second stage values. It has been shown that MLE is the most effective method for dealing with incomplete data as it produces reliable results in many situations, especially with small samples (Arbuckle 1996).

Items with low loading estimates of below 0.5 were deleted (Bollen 1989). The CFA model achieved an acceptable level of fit, when assessed by a range of commonly used indicators. The chi-squared divided by the degrees of freedom ratio for the measurement model was 2.065 ($\chi^2=344.097, df=167, p<.000$) and thus within the recommended range of 1 to 3 (Carmines and McIver 1981). Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) values were .947, .948 and .927, respectively. The Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value was .049 and thus below .08 indicating an acceptable fit (Bentler and Bonett 1980). Based on these indicators, (shown in Appendix A), the measurement model demonstrated an acceptable fit.

Convergent and discriminant validity were assessed. All factor loading estimates measuring the same constructs for the CFA model were highly significant ($p<.001$) showing that all indicators effectively measure their corresponding construct and support convergent validity. Furthermore, the standardised loadings were all above .5 with the majority being above .7. The variance-extracted estimates exceeded the 50% rule of thumb suggesting that the hypothesised items capture more variance in the underlying construct than that attributable to measurement error. The reliability of the constructs was assessed using the measure of construct reliability (CR), computed from the squared sum of factor loadings and the sum of error variance terms. The CR values ranged from .68 to .79 and can be considered acceptable if other indicators of model fit are good (Hair et al. 2006). Taken together, the evidence supports convergent validity of the measurement model. Discriminant validity was examined by comparing variance extracted measures with the inter-construct squared correlations associated with that factor (Lim and Teo 1997). All variance-extracted estimates were greater than the corresponding inter-construct squared correlation estimates, thus confirming discriminant validity. An inspection of the goodness of fit indicators demonstrated an acceptable fit for the structural model. These are shown in Appendix 1. The structural model achieved an acceptable fit and the parameter estimates are shown in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

The first finding of this study is to confirm previous research that has indicated a positive significant effect of satisfaction on recommendation ($\beta=.378, p\leq.001$) thus supporting Hypothesis 4. The more specific contribution of this research has been to provide more insights to how emotions, motivation and involvement relate to each other, and have an effect over time on satisfaction and behavioral intention.

Only negative emotions have a direct significant effect on satisfaction ($\beta=-.259, p=0.05$). This link is negative meaning that higher negative emotions evoked before the event will lead to greater dissatisfaction after the event. Thus Hypothesis 1 is only partly supported. The explanation for this may be that dissatisfaction is recording measures of cognition rather than affect, and while an individual’s cognition of an event may be satisfactory, emotions may be an independently assessed variable incorporating a deeper set of attitudes than is typically measured by satisfaction.

Emotions were in turn significantly influenced by an individual’s level of motivation, supporting previous research which has suggested that the presence of motivation is a necessary condition for an emotion to have valence. However, although this was true for the component of motivation described as personally focused (positive emotions: $\beta=.557, p<.001$; negative emotions: $\beta=-.331, p<.001$), a significant association was not observed for social motives, for example the motive of respondents to socialise with their friends at the event. Thus Hypothesis 2b is only partly supported. Only an individual’s personal/self-directed motivation to attend the event had a direct effect on their behavioural intention ($\beta=.451, p<.001$). Thus Hypothesis 2a is also only partly supported. There was no significant link between motivations and satisfaction, thus Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Behavioral involvement has no significant effect on satisfaction, thus Hypothesis 3 is not supported. However, behavioral involvement after the event positively affects behavioral intention ($\beta=.275, p<.05$) thus partly confirming Hypothesis 3a. There is support for Hypothesis 3b—an individual’s level of motivation positively affects their level of behavioural involvement. Personal motivations have a stronger influence on behavioral involvement before the event ($\beta=.373, p<.001$) than social motivations ($\beta=.176, p<.05$). Behavioral involvement before the event leads to positive emotions ($\beta=.345, p<.001$) but not negative emotions, suggesting that respondents talk mainly about the positive aspects of the forthcoming event. Furthermore, if positive emotions are evoked before the event, the more likely respondents are to talk about the event afterwards ($\beta=.317, p<.05$), whilst negative emotions before the event do not influence behavioral involvement after the event. Hypothesis 3c is thus partly supported. There is also a positive significant link between behavioral involvement before and after the event ($\beta=.435, p<.001$).

This study has made a number of useful contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it has been unusual by measuring emotions before consumption and relating these to satisfaction afterwards. While many studies have talked generally about the effects of emotions on satisfaction and behaviour, this research has provided insight to the complex path between emotions and behavioural intention. The effect is not direct, but mediated through motivation and behavioural involvement. Positive emotions evoked before an event
lead to consumers becoming actively involved by talking about the event in general and via social media, and this behaviour is associated with a greater likelihood of subsequently recommending the event. One possibility is that by evoking emotions and manifesting these through talking with friends, an individual identifies with the event and is likely to recommend that others become part of this extended social group. One implication is that to improve referral rates, service providers of high-involvement services should actively encourage customers to talk about the service with other consumers before as well as after consumption.

The research context was dominated by positive emotions, but the study found that negative emotions, such as anger and envy, are associated with cognitive aspects of (dis)satisfaction. This implies that if negative emotions are evoked before a service takes place consumers are more likely to be dissatisfied. Communication before the event should therefore focus on messages which evoke positive rather than negative emotions, for example in this context, an unintended consequence of emphasising "the end of your studies" may evoke negative emotions whereas “celebrate your success” would be more likely to evoke positive emotions.

The distinction between social and personal motivations is an interesting one. In this study, personal motives had more effect on involvement and behavioural intention than socially based motives. This would at first appear to be counter-intuitive, if it is considered that an important manifestation of involvement is socially based activities, such as talking to friends, booking a celebratory lunch for friends and family, and having photographs taken to (presumably) share with others. This may raise doubts about models of motivation that have distinguished between social and personal motives, and may reflect the more complex set of individual needs.

Future directions for research should seek to extend this study by tracking participants of the graduation ceremony to investigate changes in emotions over a longer period. It would also be useful to explore whether differences exist for first time graduates compared with second time graduates, or between international and national graduates. Another fruitful avenue for future research would be to investigate the role of specific emotions such as happiness and pride on behavioural intention over time. It would also be useful to investigate other high involvement services such as hospital visits where different emotions will be evoked, as well as low involvement services likely to evoke a different set of emotions.

REFERENCES
### APPENDIX 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>No Items</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>APE</th>
<th>ANE</th>
<th>BIB</th>
<th>BIA</th>
<th>SAT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Motives (PM)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.508</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>0.232</td>
<td>0.108</td>
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<tr>
<td>(closure of studies, formally receive degree)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Motives (SM)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(see event with friends, meet fellow-students, observe other students)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated positive emotions (APE)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>0.165</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Happiness, Joy, Excitement, Pride, Gratitude, Energy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated negative emotions (ANE)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>-0.281</td>
<td>-0.223</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.091</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Anger, Shame, Envy)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Involvement Before (BIB)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>0.632</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.473</td>
<td>0.085</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Talk face-to-face, phone, social network before event)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Involvement After (BIA)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.482</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>0.622</td>
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<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.147</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Talk face-to-face, phone, social network after event)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction (SAT)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.328</td>
<td>0.339</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>-0.301</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>0.383</td>
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<tr>
<td>(registration process, general organization, waiting time involved)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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**Measurement Model Fit Indices:** $\chi^2=344.907$, $df=167$; $p=0.000$, $\chi^2/df=2.065$, CFI=0.947, IFI=0.948, TLI=0.927, RMSEA=0.049

Notes: The squared inter-construct correlation estimates are presented in the lower triangle of the matrix. The average variance extracted is shown in the diagonal (italic). The inter-construct correlation estimates between the measured constructs are shown in the upper triangle of the matrix.

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**Marketing Research-the Panas Scales,** *Journal of Business Research,* 42 (3), 271-85.


make places (Massey 1995). Likewise, the experiences we have in place, and how we construct place, are very much influenced by the social, economic, and political contexts of place (Massey 1995). Hence, place is socially constructed and shaped by its occupants, just as place also shapes its occupants (Massey 1995; Holloway and Hubbard 2001).

**BACKGROUND**

Within the marketing discipline, place has been explored in terms of why consumers patronise particular stores and service locations but not so much in terms of *how* or *why* place provides meaning for people. For instance, the retail literature has tended to focus on place in terms of purchase intentions and buyer behaviour (e.g. Swinyard 1993; Yalch and Spangenberg 2000), and/or why people make repeat visits and form store/location preferences (e.g. Bellenger et al. 1977; Darden and Babin 1994; Lee et al. 2001). In fact one might suggest that retail research has tended to adopt a stimulus-response approach to the retail environment whereby variables, such as atmospherics, are often manipulated to see how consumers will respond to specific changes in the environment. For example, music is changed, store layouts are altered, and lighting is adjusted, and so on to see how this might affect patronage behaviour (c.f. Turley and Milliman 2000). And as Pettigrew (2007) has observed, there has been a tendency to focus on specific consumption behaviours within various consumption sites rather than consumers’ feelings towards the places themselves. And yet, further research is needed if we are to understand how place is incorporated into people's lives, and why they form emotional attachments with servicescapes.

**Social Dimensions**

Despite the fact that disciplines such as sociology, geography and environmental psychology view the retail environment as a haven for social activity (e.g. Relph 1976; Morris 1988; 2001; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998), very few researchers within the area of marketing or retail have investigated the social nature of the retail environment in terms of how retail or servicescapes are consumed within a social context (e.g. Goodwin and Gremler 1994; Price and Arnould 1999; Rosenbaum 2006); how people identify with retail sites and other persons within these sites (e.g. Sirgy, Grewal et al. 2000); the influence that such identifications may have on directing retail patronage choice (e.g. Baker et al. 1994; McGrath and Ottes 1995); or the emotional ties one establishes with place (Borghini and Zagli 2006). And yet, as some sociologists contend, the retail environment is primarily a social environment (Prus and Dawson 1991; Shields 1992; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998). The reasons why people become attached to different locations extend well beyond the location’s physical characteristics, the types of products it sells, and/or the level of service it provides. This has important implications for the marketer because, as it has been suggested conceptually, consumers are forming social links with others through their consumption activities (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999; Cova, 1997). Accordingly, Cova (1997) and Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999) suggest that the link between consumers is perhaps becoming more significant than the actual product. We propose that the environment also facilitates these social links; products may link people to one another via symbolic consumption but place can also link people. Whilst we acknowledge that there has been much research within sociology with respect to the social dimensions of shopping, and the retail
environment (e.g. Shields 1992; Falk and Campbell 1997; Miller 1998; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998), we argue that marketers should take ownership of the “shopping environment” and study it from a place-based perspective. It would, thus, be of interest to learn how the social dimensions of place influence patronage behaviours, and shape consumers’ experiences in the retail environment, and more importantly, how “place” facilitates these social interactions.

Fourthly, a place perspective would benefit retail and marketing literature because human geographers and environmental psychologists have long acknowledged that people and place are connected (e.g. Proshansky 1978; Holloway and Hubbard 2001). One should not study people and place independently of one another because it is the relationship between people and place that make our geographical understanding meaningful (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). Likewise, “place” is a social construct whereby people actively make places (Massey 1995), hence the meanings people attach to place are always changing because it is through our engagement with the world that meaning is constructed. As Gustafson (2001) states, the temporal dimensions of place are important factors to consider because places can and do become connected to the life path of an individual due to important life events, life stages, occupancy, and so on. Hence, meanings attributed to place will also change or evolve over time.

METHOD

The overarching purpose of this study is to explore women’s experiences within the servicescape environment, in order to understand how social experiences and relationships shape one’s identification with a location, and patronage behaviours, which, in turn, gives meaning to place. Place is not only a personal construction, it also arises from the social environment (Proshansky et al. 1983). As Eisenhauer, Kranich and Blaha (2000, p.422) state, “people confer meaning on the environment in ways that reflect their social and cultural experiences.” Accordingly, this study aims to explore the social dimensions of the servicescape, and how place is incorporated into some consumers’ lives.

Since this study was interested in how individuals construct meaning, an interpretivist perspective was adopted, and qualitative methods were used. Using the snowballing technique, whereby each interviewee is asked by the interviewer to recommend other potential participants for the study (Spreen 1997), purposive sampling took place. However, to avoid possible network bias, multiple starting points were used when recruiting participants (McMahon 1995).

A range of women were interviewed, from working mothers with teenage children, stay-at-home mothers with toddlers, single women with no children, divorced women, and retired women, ranging in age from 25 years to 74 years, from different socio-economic backgrounds.

It must be noted that all the participants were of New Zealand European descent, which is perhaps a reflection of the snowballing technique. Consistent with social identity theory, people tend to acquaint themselves with people from similar backgrounds (Tajfel 1978).

Women were chosen for this study because the retail environment in the past has predominantly been viewed as a gendered one (e.g. Jansen-Verbeke 1987; Shields 1992; Woodruffe 1997; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998). Consequently, it was deemed appropriate to investigate the retail environment within this context. However, it would be interesting, at a later date, to explore the retail environment from a male’s perspective. And although recent studies have focused on male shopping behaviours, and their shopping motivations, which has certainly contributed to the theory of shopping, the focus has still primarily been on the “shopping” activity (e.g. Ottes and McGrath 2001; Bakewell and Mitchell 2004). It must also be noted that this study is framed within a Western cultural context. One must acknowledge this because not only does this shape the study itself, and the types of places under investigation, it is also reflective of the participants within this study, and the meanings that they may attribute to place. Western culture is very much defined by its commodities and consumption activities. It is as Slater (1997, p.8) suggests, “a culture of consumption.”

Fifteen participants were provided with disposable cameras before the interview, and were instructed to photograph servicescapes that they visited regularly. The researcher collected each camera at the end of a three-week period, developed the photographs, and then arranged a time to interview each participant individually. Face-to-face audio-recorded interviews took place in participants’ homes, and ranged from 1 to 1 1/2 hours. The interviews were unstructured in nature and photographs (taken by the participant) were referred to throughout the interview. Photo-elicitation techniques were used because images can often evoke deeper meanings among participants (Collier and Collier 1986; Heisley and Levy 1991), and can act as a prompt for a participant who may normally have difficulty articulating her thoughts (Klitzing 2004). A wide variety of places were photographed including corner stores, supermarkets, clothing stores, toy libraries, department stores and malls. The photographic exercise proved to be invaluable because it encouraged participants to think about the places they visited before the interview.

Unfortunately, one of the problems with longitudinal studies is attrition (Olsen 2005) so only eleven of the original fifteen participants were interviewed again one year later to see if there had been any changes in their patronage behaviours. Participants were presented with their photographs and asked to discuss any changes and/or interesting experiences. The interviews ranged in length from 1 to 2 hours. Following phenomenological principles, the data was organised into thematic categories as various themes emerged. The strength of thematic analysis is that it not only involves systematically analysing the text and looking for patterns within the text, it is also an iterative approach, whereby initial categorisation may be changed and moved in relation to other texts (Dittmar and Drury 2000, p119).

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that participants’ servicescape experiences and patronage behaviour were influenced by a number of factors. Depending on the social dimensions of the servicescape, the physical dimensions of the servicescape, and place-based identity considerations, one may either avoid patronising particular servicescapes, or regularly patronise certain servicescapes because of these factors. Due to the paper constraints, only one theme will be discussed: The Social Dimensions of Place, which has been defined in terms of the servicescape’s ability to facilitate consumers’ relationships, and provide people with a sense of connection with others, including family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, retailers, and the community. Accordingly, the social dimensions of place have been broken down into two sub-themes: nurturing non-commercial relationships, and the need for social connection.

Nurturing Non-commercial Relationships

The findings from this study revealed that some patronage behaviours could be attributed to the relationships that consumers have with their family members, friends, and acquaintances. As Sarah’s comments below reflect, place can be used to nurture relationships, and encourage bonding. Sarah, a 22-year old receptionist, loves shopping (browsing and purchasing activities), and so does her mother. The shopping activity and the retail places they
visit together, not only satisfies Sarah’s desire to shop but they also enable her to bond with her mother. The fact that Sarah began sharing the shopping experience with her mother in her twenties, and not earlier, reflects her transitional change from childhood to adulthood (van Gennep 1960), i.e., she has transitioned from having a child-parent relationship to one that could be described as a “friendship.” This is also reflective of the types of places she now visits, and validates Cova’s (1997) claim that the link value is more important than the actual product. In this case, place facilitates this “link” and social connection.  

Interviewer: Did you used to go shopping a lot with your mother when you were younger?  

Sarah: No. No.  

Interviewer: So it only started in your…?  

Sarah: Twenties. Yeah. My mum and I have become quite close so we like to spend a bit of time together and we both like to shop, so that’s good and we’re both getting out as well, that’s quite cool…And shopping is just the added bonus I suppose.  

Trish, on the other hand (refer to her quote below), uses cafés to mark her daughter’s transition from pre-school to primary school. As Manzo (1994, cited in Manzo 2003) suggests, places can become meaningful if they mark a critical time in a person’s life, symbolise a transitional period, or represent a significant relationship. The “fluffy” also marks the daughter’s transition from pre-school to school, highlighted by the fact that the daughter can now be taken to more “adult” servicescapes.  

Trish (37 years): …what I’ve been doing during the couple of months leading up to her starting school…we went down to a café in Birkenhead and we had a fluffy, I didn’t have a fluffy, but Carrie had a fluffy and she thought that was fabulous, she just about sat on top of me. That was our thing to do together…  

However, not only do retail places nurture mother-daughter bonding as indicated by the comments above, it also illustrates how children are socialised by place, e.g., learn how to be young consumers. As Tuan (1977) suggests, place is learnt from a young age because people are socialised by their childhood. Accordingly, socialisation can lead to place identification. For example, children may identify with places that symbolise “family time together”, or places that represent “treats,” or “time-out with mum,” or “grown-up” activity, e.g. the fluffy and coffee.  

Other participants enjoyed regularly visiting servicescapes with their friends because it was an opportunity to socialise with one another; the social connection was more important than the commercial element. And for one participant, a distinction between private space and public space was made. Kate, below, views cafés as a social space, or a public space that is conducive to social interaction, in contrast to her home, which is viewed as private space. She prefers to keep the two separate. What’s more, it is not only the servicescape’s ambiance, such as music and lighting that contributes to her pleasurable servicescape experience, the other patrons are equally important to the overall atmosphere. As Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003) propose, the service experience is not only restricted to external cues, such as atmospherics, but also social factors. And these social factors can either hinder or facilitate the customer’s enjoyment of their service experience.  

Kate (55 years): I think Amy (a friend she regularly meets in cafés) likes her home to be a little haven from the world. So in a sense it’s like we want to keep a wee bit of space to ourselves…going for coffee with other people is like enjoying people’s company in a social environment. It’s nice when lots of other people are around. It’s the buzziness of other people coming and going, and music in the background, and maybe soft lighting and you know enjoying good conversation and good food…I don’t see my home as a social environment. I know some people do but I see outside of the home as social and my home as private.  

Place can also be incorporated into consumers’ consumption rituals. Creating experiences that her children will remember was important to Suzie. And part of this experience included using ritual activities, and “place” to bond with the family and form stronger relationships. It also reflects the sacred nature of consumption spaces. As Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry Jr. (1989) suggest, by according sacred status to commodities, one is able to celebrate their connection to society through one’s consumption activities. However, one could posit that sacred status can also be assigned to retail sites.  

Suzie (early 30s): I’ve been going to Smith & Caugheys since I can remember, buying Christmas presents, just small little things…since I was probably about eight…I used to do that with my nana. It was the shopping excursion thing that you did every year. Go into town and we’d buy one for Uncle Jerry and you know all those people. You only had a few dollars but you had to shop for all your family when you’re kids, you know, you’re buying lollies and soaps and stuff. So it definitely has a nice sentimental value, traditional family tradition as well…which I’m really interested in, trying to make, because it just gives you a sense of security I think which I like. Yeah so I like Smith & Caugheys it’s a lot, it’s a nice place to go.  

Interviewer: So when you say security what do you mean?  

Suzie: I mean it gives the children memories and security and knowing what’s going to happen. It’s like, even if we’re living in a different location, like we might have moved house or something, it’s nice to stay at the same day care and visit the same café and the same place, like Smith & Caugheys we’ll go there every year and we’ll have the photo with Santa and they’ll do this and they’ll have a little Christmas lunch there, you know, get the mince pies and stuff. And we do that with mum and incorporate family into it, so it’s a family thing, take Aunty Moira. I think it is quite important for me to try and develop some traditions.  

Place can represent a significant relationship and a critical time in a person’s life (Manzo 2003) because it can become connected to the life path of an individual (Gustafson 2001). This is certainly evident with Suzie. As an adult and a mother, creating traditions and stability for her family are important to her. This could be due to her nomadic upbringing, which involved moving locations a lot, as well as the frequent uncertainty in her family life. Hence, the affective bond she has formed with the department store represents both tradition and security. It also marks a time in her life when she and her grandmother would spend time together because every Christmas she knew she would visit the department store with her.
grandmother. More importantly, this ritualistic activity provided comfort for her. And accordingly, this tradition has been passed on to her children, hence highlighting how places can remain connected to the life path of the individual. As Lynch (1972) suggests, a sense of continuity is important because people want to preserve what they know, even when change is inevitable. As Suzie’s comments suggest, even though her family may experience change from time to time, patronising the same cafés and the same stores provides security and stability for her children.

Conversely, places may be avoided if they are viewed negatively, or if there is a perception that places affect one’s relationship with others. Rita, a 38-year old teacher and mother of two, recounts the time she and her husband had an unpleasant experience in a café. As she notes, the unpleasant experience was not because the café was at fault but because she and her husband had brought emotional baggage with them to the café. Consequently, she avoids going back to that place because of her strong memories about the café, and her experience in that café. This is an example of how the meanings associated with a place can be stronger than the actual tangible place. As past studies have revealed, mood can influence one’s servicescape experience, in terms of consumers’ perceptions of customer service, product quality, and so on (Bruner II 1990), and in this case, mood has influenced how place has been constructed. Hence, this is an example of how brand image and associations are sometimes beyond the marketer’s control.

Rita (37 years): I remember once that we [husband] went to a very nice café but the conversation was a bit tense between me and him so we didn’t have a good time and we never went back…sometimes I’m a bit superstitious, you know, and I thought “No, not that café again!”

Need for Social Connection
When consumers visit retail stores or retail locations, consumption is not necessarily limited to actual purchases or service experiences. Consumers also consume place in ways that do not necessarily fit with retailers’ expectations (Lewis 1990), i.e., commercial exchange. For some of the participants, the social connection factor was an important aspect when visiting the retail environment, hence supporting sociological and environmental psychology research that suggests that people become attached to locations for the social connection (e.g. Low and Altman 1992). For one participant in particular (refer to Sally’s quote below), the retail environment was viewed as a social haven at a time in her life when she felt isolated and alone. That is, the mall provided her with an opportunity to feel less lonely, hence supporting Shields’ (1992) argument that the market place is an important space because it encourages social connection and provides a sense of belonging. This certainly resonated with some of the participants.

Sally (39 years): So I ended up being in this house, which I had to stay in for three years before the market rose enough and I could sell it. Really not having a lot of money, and I used to do a lot of window-shopping…But I used to go there a lot because I was far away from my circle of family and people that I knew. And I found it, at my age then, that it was very difficult to make new friendships…people were quite wary of new friends. And I went to the gym regularly, but even then it was very difficult. Basically the only people that wanted to get to know you were guys that wanted to get into your pants. And most of them were 40 plus, and you know, I was 23. And it was just not a, I was a very lonely person at that time…so the shopping mall down the road… I’d go down and I’d window shop and I would just be in amongst a crowd of people so that I didn’t feel quite so [pause] alone. And I never could spend a lot of money because I didn’t have it, but I did spend a lot of time just being there and having a look around and maybe bumping into someone that I knew well enough to say “hello how are you going?” for five minutes, you know.

For Kate, the mall is viewed as a social space that reflects the modern community. And although it provides one with a sense of belonging, it also enables one to feel part of a group without having to invest in the relationship or connection.

Kate: Well I sort of see it as the modern day community because it’s not community in terms of, well you don’t know anyone in the mall, and you don’t actually even make contact or get to know any of the people in the shops in the mall like you would have previously but I do see it as the modern day, it’s the modern day equivalent of the small community stores and drapers and chemists and butchers and grocers of years gone by… Now community is all anonymous. But it’s always nicer when there are people around. So you’ve got that company without having to talk to people.

Kate also refers to the malls as being her “community anchors,” hence supporting the idea that retail space and its role in society extends beyond the purely “retail” or “commercial” element, i.e., the sale of goods and services, which has tended to be the focus within marketing literature. Her ‘community anchors’ also reflect routine and familiarity, which are important to one’s sense of place because it contributes to the formation, maintenance, and preservation of a person’s identity. People may also form attachments with places that are not necessarily aesthetically appealing because it provides comfort and familiarity. How a place makes people feel can be equally important because it may provide one with a sense of security, and continuity, which may be used to consciously or unconsciously regulate one’s sense of self (Korpela 1989). Conversely, Oldenburg (1999) refers to certain types of servicescape settings as third places or “great good places.” He suggests that third places provide people with a change of scenery; are a social environment that is far removed from one’s home and work place; and can be a transitional space for people, for example, it provides one with a chance to unwind before returning home. The findings from this study reflect Oldenburg’s (1999) sentiments, as well as Rosenbaum’s (2006) work, as highlighted by Gemma’s quote when she refers to the cafés she regularly visits.

Gemma (early 50s): Cafés, they’re community water holes, that’s what they are, yeah.

Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) and Oldenburg (1999) also argue that a third place encourages (even requires) conversation and interaction, although findings from this research suggest that one does not need to interact directly with others to feel a sense of community, or to feel part of the retail environment’s social fabric. However, some participants found it easier to connect with other people in the retail environment when they were with their children.

Debbie (35 years): If I want to meet, be amongst people, I would go to coffee group, visit family, or to the mall if I need the, not a specific shop, but at the mall because of the play area standing around watching the children I tend to talk to someone. Because it’s easy to start off a conversation.
with “oh is that your child? Oh she’s cute.” Chipmunks has a play area but I wouldn’t talk to other people there because people are there to meet other people so it would be weird if you started talking to someone unless you’re playing, only if you’re playing and there’s another parent playing then you can have a laugh. Umm, at the supermarket I’d talk to people. And at the toy library.

Interestingly, though, as highlighted by Debbie’s comments above, some participants differentiated between places that were specifically designed for family interaction, such as the commercial children’s playscape, versus public places that catered for everyone, such as the mall. This highlights the unspoken norms that exist in certain servicescapes. One could, therefore, suggest that some locations are context specific, and have their own set of norms and rules, whereas other places provide an important community function. And although the main purpose of the retail store is a commercial one, it still fulfils a community role by contributing to “a neighbourhood’s social fabric” (Miller 1999, p.401). The findings from this study would suggest that certain retail environments, such as malls and supermarkets, provide this function. This is interesting given that a commercial children’s playscape is very “targeted” and likely to attract similar people and yet, some would prefer to interact with other people in a more anonymous commercial setting, such as the mall. As Rosenbaum’s (2006, p.59) study revealed, consumers regularly patronised their favourite diner because it not only satisfied their consumption needs but it also satisfied their need for companionship and emotional support. The retail environment provided the interviewed stay-at-home mothers with the opportunity to interact directly or indirectly with other adults, which was particularly important for them because they often had very little adult contact during the day. And although social contact was also important to the other participants in this study, it was extremely important to the stay-at-home mothers because of their newfound circumstances.

Lastly, a sense of familiarity with the servicescape staff provided participants with another opportunity for social contact. Trish in particular, is very loyal to her petrol station, even though she could shop at a petrol station much closer to home. And although, technical (e.g. the quality of the delivery) and functional aspects (e.g. the style of the delivery) of the service encounter are important to consumer loyalty, communal and social aspects are equally important (Goodwin and Gremler 1994). It is that sense of connection, familiarity, and social rapport that makes Trish loyal, in addition to service quality, and the idea that she is supporting the small retailer, which perhaps for her represents the “local community.”

Trish: …to be quite honest I think, “Nah I’m going to support the little guy.” So, I go in there.

Interviewer: Is that why you go to Caltex?

Trish: Yeah. I go to Caltex all the time for my petrol and Barry [husband] says you should be shopping by price. No absolutely not. I pump my own petrol I have no drama with getting out of the car and doing it so I pull up and if no one’s around I get out and do it. The guys always come out and either takeover, and do it for you, or they’re already out there and they’re waiting for you to flick the latch on your car. I’ve got to know, I more or less go in during the week and I more or less have gotten to know the guys’ faces. And we quite often say “Hi how you going, and wasn’t it such and such” and I like that.

CONCLUSIONS

Notwithstanding its limitations, this study, suggests that the servicescape serves a much a wider purpose for its consumers. Although there is a commercial element within this exchange environment, it is not necessarily the primary motive for patronising the location. For some of the participants, the social connection factor was more important, hence supporting sociological and environmental psychology research that suggests that people become attached to locations for the social connection (e.g. Low and Altman 1992). Indeed, for some of the participants, it was the social contact with others that helped to explain why they visited certain retail sites, and, in some cases, it was the sole reason for their visit. Hence, the findings from this research certainly reinforce Oldenburg’s (1999) and Rosenbaum’s (2006) sentiments that certain types of servicescape settings can be viewed as third places, which satisfies one’s need for emotional support and sense of community. One could even suggest that since consumers’ homes are getting smaller, and people’s lives are getting busier people are using servicescapes to connect with others. Accordingly, servicescapes could be viewed as a third place for some consumers because consumers are not necessarily using their homes for socialising.

Secondly, the findings reinforced the concept that one’s relationship with others can also influence patronage behaviours, whether these relationships are with the sales staff, and/or with family members, friends, acquaintances, and/or one’s community. Consumers may, for example, patronise certain retail stores because they like the sales staff, even though a competing store may be cheaper or more convenient. For example, Trish continues to buy her petrol from a certain outlet even though there were competing petrol outlets much closer to home. But she valued her relationship with the staff. And while this does not fit with the rational model of consumer behaviour, it reinforces the influence “other” factors can have on patronage decisions. Conversely, a consumer might patronise retail stores and locations because it fulfils one’s family’s needs, friend’s needs, and/or acquaintance’s needs, as Suzie’s comments indicate. She uses some servicescapes to create traditions for her family because creating a stable environment for her children is important to her. It also highlights how places can become connected to the life path of an individual. And lastly, consumers will patronise certain retail stores/locations because of their emotional attachment to place, or their need to feel a sense of community. As Kate stated, the mall is her anchor to the community, which provides her with a sense of connection.

In conclusion, marketers’ understanding of how servicescapes are consumed has to date been rather limited. The potential contribution of this understanding should not be undervalued because to better manage servicescapes, we need to understand how and why people become attached to locations, identify with locations, and consume these locations. Secondly, few studies within the marketing and retail literature have investigated the social and communal aspects of the servicescape and the influence this may have on patronage decisions. One should view the servicescape within a social context because shopping by its very nature is a social activity, whether one is shopping for oneself, for others, by oneself or with others. To conclude, although there is a commercial element within this environment, it is not necessarily the primary motive for patronage intentions. Consumers’ non-commercial relationships, and their need for social connectedness may be more important than the products available and service attributes. So, as Buttimmer (1980, p.50) states, “planners lacking an integrated understanding of the existential character of urban life cannot be expected to design and organise” the physical environment.
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Creating a Holistic Retailer Image: Institutional Theory, the Jakobsonian Framework and the Consumer View
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ABSTRACT
Retailer image is a complex phenomenon that encompasses the totality of associations with the store. Image is further extended by the interactions of the retailer with their socio-cultural environment and the level of retailer reflection of their environment. Appropriate retail image creation and maintenance is an important avenue for retailer legitimacy and survival and yet the holistic nature of retailer image is not widely acknowledged in the literature. This study explores the complex nature of the interactions between retailer image and their macroenvironment, via the lens of Institutional Theory and using Jakobson’s Communication Framework.

“...researchers should remain mindful that in addition to acquiring goods, many consumers seek to experience a [retail] habitat in many other ways” (Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson 1994, p.39).

A consumer’s behaviour in a retail environment is a response to the goods and services they are exposed to, their interpretation of the collective external attributes of the retailer and their overall impression of the nature, the milieu of the retail environment. This response to the retail macroenvironment (Grossbart, Mittelstaedt, Curtis, and Rogers 1975) can be largely encompassed in retailer image.

Retailer image is a complex phenomenon that encompasses the totality of associations with the store. Physical location, merchandise, staff, customers, symbols and advertising are some of the elements used to define a retailer’s image (Zentes, Morschett, and Schramm-Klein 2007; Martineau 1985), and create a retailer personality providing an overall impression in the consumer’s mind. This personality includes both functional and psychological traits and contributes to the retailer image.

Further to this, the concept of servicescapes explores factors of the store environment, such as ambient conditions (temperature, music, odour), space/function (layout and furnishings) and signs, symbols and artefacts (personal, signage, style of décor) as key dimensions in creating the holistic retail environment which drives store choice and in store behaviour (Bitner 1992; Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, and Voss 2002). Most commonly these studies examine the different behavioural effects that these environmental cues elicit from consumers as well as the meaning and value that the cues themselves elicit (Arnould 2005; Edvardsson, Enquist and Johnston 2005; Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Donovan and Rossier 1982).

Store image can influence perceptions of quality and value which leads to purchase intent (Rao and Monroe 1989; Purohit and Srivastava 2001; Porter and Claycomb 1997; Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman 1994). Studies have explored the differences between retailer and consumer perceptions of store image (Birtwistle, Clarke, and Freathy 1999), detailed the measurement of the concept (Keaveney and Hunt 1992; McDougall and Fry 1974), attempted a definition (Kunkel and Berry 1968; Lindquist 1974) and discussed the personalities and images of the stores themselves (Martineau 1958; Zimmer and Golden 1988).

While definitions of retail image may acknowledge the retail macroenvironment, studies often focus on the microenvironment, considering one or two factors in isolation. However, retailer image is a much more complex phenomenon which is further problematised by the interaction of the retailer with their socio-cultural environment, and the way in which the retailer does or does not reflect the norms of society (Moor 2007; Holt 2004). Since consumers “form definite perceptions of a large, complex macroenvironment” (Grossbart et al. 1975, p.292), the creation and maintenance of an acceptable image within its macroenvironment is important for retailer legitimacy and survival (Deephouse and Carter 2005; Holt 2004; Arnold, Kozinets, and Handelman 2001). As Grossbart et al. (1975) have discovered while some impressions of the retail milieu are constant others differ based on consumer knowledge and experience. Consequently, there is a need to explore what occurs when there are alternative or contradictory perceptions of a retail environment (Grossbart et al. 1975) in order to understand the complex, holistic and interactive nature of retailer image. One theory that can assist in such an explication is Institutional Theory (IT). This study uses IT to examine the creation of retailer image within a retailer’s macroenvironment as deployed in their marketing communications.

The Institutional Environment
Institutional Theory (Di Maggio and Powell 1983; Handelman and Arnold 1999; Meyer and Rowan 1977) explains how the wider macroenvironment both influences and is influenced by an organisation. One key dimension of IT (Handelman and Arnold 1999), acknowledges the meta-narrative of the institutional environment which is defined as containing “taken-for-granted social and cultural meaning systems, or norms, that define social reality” (Di Maggio 1988; Scott 1987; 1994). Once the firm and their macroenvironment interpenetrate, the successful firm will be isomorphic with their macroenvironment, reflecting the norms of the environment into which it is immersed and, as a result, will be perceived to be legitimate (see Figure 1). Legitimation is a “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman 1995, p.574). This legitimising creates institutional isomorphism, where the firm’s actions reflect the economic and cultural-moral norms of its macroenvironment.

Aspects of the Institutional environment are incorporated into organisational structure through four avenues. The first two avenues are through the infusion and imposition of norms onto organisations (Scott 1994). This happens when norms are involuntarily incorporated into the organisation through everyday interactions. External normative pressures and cognitive constraints, such as constitutive and normative rules, dictate the forms and boundaries of appropriate actions for organisations. Regulatory processes also create non-voluntary norms (Scott 1994).

The second avenue for norm incorporation is through explicit incorporation by executives (Scott 1994). By considering the environmental aspects most desirable or pertinent to the organisation, executives build strategies to leverage these chosen norms.

The Transfer and Communication of Institutional Meaning
Organisations communicate incorporated norms to their environment. As the Institutional environment is both symbolic and behavioural, norms can be communicated both symbolically and...
behaviourally (Hughes 1939) through the actions of the organisation. They can also be communicated through symbolic objects (Berger and Luckmann 1966) including physical surroundings and advertisements (Moor 2007).

Examples of this process of communication for a retail setting may include such Economic-Task norms as location, competitive pricing and product range and depth. These norms may be reflected through objective Performative actions such as having competitive prices, convenient locations and a wide range and depth of products. They can also be communicated symbolically through symbolic objects and metaphors, slogans or signs in-store (posters and displays) as well as store advertising (Suchman 1995; Arnold, et al. 2001). For example a shelf display may present the message “super saver” or “bonus buy.”

Cultural-Moral Institutional norms may include beliefs about families and communities, as these are usually associated with the social arenas of everyday life (Hughes 1939). Family norms could be conveyed through an objective Institutional action such as organisational support of a women’s refuge or symbolically through showing families and children in organisational advertising. Lastly, the norm of ‘family’ could also be represented through objects embedded within the advertising content. For example a couch on which a family is represented sitting together might reflect a norm about the symbolic togetherness of the family.

Organisational Isomorphism

Once an organisation conforms to their Institutional environment through both incorporating it into their organisational structure and reflecting it through their Performative and Institutional actions (Moor 2007; Holt 2004), the organisation becomes isomorphic with its environment (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Isomorphism is defined as the mirroring of an organisation’s actions with the environmental norms (Meyer and Rowan 1977) which gains legitimacy for the organisation and ensures its survival. Legitimacy can be defined as the amount to which an organisation “is meeting and adhering to the expectations of a social system’s norms” (Deephouse and Carter 2005, p.331 as developed from Hirsch and Andrews 1984; Parsons 1960). Legitimacy ensures survival because it allows the organisation access to adequate resources such as supplies and distribution channels, and helps the organisation to decouple itself from any negative perceptions of its day-to-day activities. Lastly, legitimacy gains rituals of confidence, support, and good faith from actors in the environment (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

Communication of norms to actors in the Institutional environment allow for continual refinement of and identification with shared norms through the process of creation and internalisation (Hughes 1939; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Scott and Meyer 1983; Scott 1994) as well as in the organisation’s external communications (Moor 2007; Dacin 1997; Handelman and Arnold 1999; Arnold, et al. 2001; Montes and Jover 2004). However these studies, which have acknowledged external actors in the Institutional environment, still do not examine the actors themselves. They have not recognised that actors interpret communicated norms before granting organisations legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

THE STUDY

Marketers can use an Institutional Semiotic (IS) framework (Arnold et al. 2001) to analyse the inherent norms in a firm’s marketing communication. Specifically, the framework is useful for determining a firm’s isomorphic match with the meta-environment and their potential legitimisation by their audience. This framework, derived from Jakobson’s theory of the constitutive Aspects in communication (Jakobson 1985, pp.150-154), analyses the semiotic framing of the sender, the recipient, and the communication text itself. In a full Jakobsonian investigation these aspects would be further analysed by context, code and contact dimensions, and conative, phatic and denotative factors. Arnold, et al.’s (2001) Institutional
Semiotic method merely concentrated on the receiver, sender and content aspects.

This study deployed all of Jakobson’s Aspects of communications to explore consumer views of the retailer’s image as expressed through marketing communications. We have, also discussed the institutional actions and norms of the retailer (performatve and institutional norms are beyond the scope of this paper due to length restrictions). Specifically this study seeks to explore the isomorphism of a large New Zealand (NZ) retailer’s advertising (The Warehouse) with its environment via the use of the Jakobsonian Communication Framework, and to illustrate consumer perceived environmental norms that could be deployed to build positive retailer image.

Method
We adopted a social constructionist approach (Crotty 1998) for this study which acknowledges that knowledge is socially constructed, is informed by the metanarratives inherent in consumer culture, and arises from social interaction with others. Since we employed a thematic analysis methodology which relies on iteration we sited the thematic analysis within the theoretical perspective of hermeneutic interpretivism in order to discover how the “interdependent meaning of parts” forms a hermeneutic circle of meaning (Klein and Myers 1999, p. 73). Thirty-three convenience sample participants viewed a set of three poster advertisements and two television commercials (TVC), filled in a self-administered questionnaire and then participated in focus group discussions of their interpretations of the advertisements.

Posters: The three posters (Figure 2) featured photographs of iconic locations and images from a regional suburb of Auckland (Albany Village) in NZ such as the local retail community, and the local university.

First Television Commercial (TVC): “Family;” The “Family” TVC featured a multi-racial family. It showed a husband and wife with two teenage children. It opened on a family living room that is relatively empty of furnishings apart from a couch, two beanbags and some side tables. The storyline continued with the family purchasing a Sanyo television from the NZ retailer. They are so impressed with it that they also purchase a series of Sanyo products: a DVD-Video player, a digital camera and a cell phone. Next, the family is seen sitting together watching the “Robots” DVD on their new entertainment equipment. We then see them sitting on the couch together taking photographs with their new digital camera. The last seconds of the advertisement features a joke about the reason the mother bought the cell phone, “just in case her agent calls,” to which she replies, “Hey, it could happen.”

Second TVC: “NZ Music Month;” This animated TVC begins with clouds (the Maori name for NZ is Aotearoa—“Land of the Long White Cloud”) forming into the shape of NZ which then morph into a group of sheep. The background soundtrack is a rendition of a Barry Crump (local folk hero) song. The sheep images each morph into a plate of lamb chops, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, which are then covered in tomato sauce which spurts from a plastic, tomato-shaped, sauce bottle (local kitsch object). The animation then shows a body with hairy legs, presumably a male, wearing a black and white striped rugby shirt and black shorts (NZ national rugby team is called the “All Blacks”). This figure kicks a rugby ball over rugby posts and a woman wearing a pink, retro (circa 1950’s) dress runs out behind the posts and catches the ball. The ball morphs into a plate of pink and brown lamingtons (small cakes, a local culinary delicacy), and the plate morphs into a record player. Next, a VW Kombi van (an icon of local youth surf culture and an image of independence), drives past a cabbage...
Participants filled in a self-administered questionnaire and then participated in a group discussion concerning their interpretation of the advertisements. Both questionnaire and discussion sessions explored the full dimensions of Jakobson’s six Aspects of Communication (1985). The three poster advertisements, for the retailer’s Albany store, were screen-projected for participants. Up to 40 minutes was allowed for completion of this section. Once the group had completed this first section, the first TVC (“Family”) was screen-projected three times. Participants then filled out the second section of the questionnaire regarding this advertisement. The same process was completed for the second TVC (“New Zealand Music Month”). The questions asked, which covered the entire Jakobsonian Communication Aspects framework, are shown in Table 1.

### FINDINGS

#### Receiver

As expected, the Receiver was an important Aspect to explore, helping to fully define who the target of the communication was (Arnold et al. 2001). The incorporation of Aspects 2 and 3 (in Table 1) from the full Jakobsonian framework—“who is being excluded from the communication?”, and “what are they being asked to do?”—manifestly helped to create clearer interpretative boundaries for the audience the advertisement was targeting. The addition of the Exclusion question gave greater specificity to the target. The additional discussion of the conative (asked to do) function of the Receiver, more fully identified the actions the retailer was requiring of the participant and the institutional environment in which the retailer was operating. As the retailer was operating in the New Zealand retail environment as opposed to the general New Zealand environment consumers expected that the Economic-Task Norms and Cultural-Moral Norms that were expected of The Warehouse were those that apply, in general, for all retailers in New Zealand. Therefore expectations of The Warehouse included aspects of price, opening hours and quality. They did not include expectations that are more suitable to non-retailing firms, for instance pollution management.

Actions participants felt were sought in the advertisements were based around shopping or buying products from The Warehouse. The reason for this differed by advertisement. Participants perceived that the posters reflected that The Warehouse should be accepted into the community, as it was a community-based store, and should, therefore, be supported through shopping behaviours. The Music TVC’s call for action was perceived as supporting NZ music through purchasing it at The Warehouse. Lastly, the Family TVC was more direct in its sought after action. It asked consumers to shop at The Warehouse in general and to shop for Sanyo products at The Warehouse specifically.

Posters did not feature any pictures of people and so participants felt that every type of person was missing or being excluded. The “Family” TVC featured a multi-cultural nuclear family, which were identified as the Receivers of the communication. Extended family households and single parents as well as single people were excluded. Shared between the “Family” TVC and the “Music” TVC was the feeling that non-Europeans were excluded, and in the “Music” TVC older people and those that may have liked other music genres than were featured in the advertisement were also excluded. For groups to be considered as Receivers of the advertisement, they needed to be explicitly featured in the advertisement.
Sender

Participants identified similar Speakers for each of the advertisements. All of the advertisements were seen as having The Warehouse as a Speaker in some way whether it was the company specifically, the owner, or a representative. The two deviations from this view concerned the consumer as the Speaker in the “Family” TVC and a Kiwi as the Speaker in the “Music” TVC.

Participant’s used their past experiences and expectations of The Warehouse (regarding its state of legitimacy) as cues for interpretation. Speakers portrayed confidence and excitement as well as humour and irony. These emotions were another cue for participants to use in interpretation.

Message

The Message Aspect of Communication was addressed in Arnold et al. (2001) through their exploration of mythologies (also called Messages) in which the Economic-Task and Cultural-Moral Institutional Norms of the environment were taken into account. These norms were seen to be communicated through symbolic Performative and Institutional Actions.

The Cultural-Moral Institutional norms that were identified in our study were Sociologicus, Cultural Values, Unity, Elevation and Utopia. Further, the Economic-Task Norm of Homoeconomicus was also uncovered. Themes such as Discontinuity, Nostalgia, Aspiration and Social Anachronism were seen as general themes shared between all communications.

The “Music” TVC showed Messages of Discontinuity, Social Anachronism and Aspiration. These messages point to an advertisement rich in contrasts and dichotomies, where participants do not always agree on interpretation. This disagreement is in contrast to the other TVC and the other two poster advertisements which produced higher congruence of opinion. No norms were identified in the “Music” TVC. This may be due to the difficulty participants had with explaining the meanings and thus norms behind the NZ icons featured.

Participants found that many of the norms were also portrayed in other organisations’ advertising, implying that the norms were a part of the institutional environment and not just the organisation. Missing aspects of Homoeconomicus and Sociologicus norms further identify the boundaries of these shared norms. The implication for the retailer is shown in participant confusion over these missing aspects which could be detrimental to the perceptions of organisational legitimacy.

Context

The Context of the communication provides the Receiver with the setting of the communication and interpretive clues as to the Messages embedded in the communication. Differing responses to advertiser intention and audience interpretation were clearly apparent in the communication texts. While consumers generally agreed on the Context for both of the TVC’s, with their interpretations matching the intentions of advertising creators, consumer interpretation of the posters varied significantly from their creator’s intentions, as well as between participants. This meant that those that did not understand the Context of the posters, lost an Aspect of the communication that was intended, by the creator, to assist in interpretation.

Code

Code refers to the commonly-held, socio-cultural, spatial and temporal rules by which communication is enabled between Senders and Receivers of texts. Consumers understood that the posters were best interpreted via an Albany Code, i.e., a Code that included rule-based knowledge about Albany township. As most of the consumers did not fully understand the Albany Code they could not interpret the encoding of the posters in the way intended by their creator.

A New Zealand Code or a Global Code were used as a lens of interpretation in both of the television advertisements. A further Code, the Code of Experience with The Warehouse was uncovered for the “Family” TVC as participants used their past experience with the retailer to make sense of the revised quality image The Warehouse was portraying in the TVC. Participants considered that those who had not previously experienced the retailer would not have the requisite knowledge (or Code) to understand the TVC’s re-positioning message.

Contact

Contact examines how the communication text attempts to create a relationship with its Receivers (its phatic role) through starting a conversation. Consumers understood that the ‘Family’ TVC tried to create a relationship through product satisfaction and, therefore, enabled repeat purchasing. In the “Music” TVC Receivers were asked to come and judge the quality of NZ music sold at The Warehouse and then buy their NZ CD’s there.

All of the posters lacked any phatic invitations to the confusion and dismay of the participants.

DISCUSSION

If we recall Grossbart et al.’s (1975) assertions regarding consumer perceptions of the retail macroenvironment and the implications of differing interpretations we found that our study confirms that consumers form an overall interpretation of retailers via their macroenvironment. In the case of The Warehouse, this macroenvironmental interpretation resulted in the organisation being seen as isomorphic with its environment and, therefore, legitimate in the eyes of consumers. We also confirm Grossbart et al.’s (1975) view that while consumers can hold a differing number of individual interpretations of specific aspects of the communication they will opt to use their own knowledge of the retailer’s environment as a final meta-interpretative cue.

By deploying the individual aspects of the Jakobsonian Communication Framework we were able to see the process by which these differing interpretations coalesced to provide an overall perception of the retailer as legitimate within its macroenvironment.

The Jakobsonian Communication Framework utilises six communication aspects which can be used to interpret the communication text and shape the retailer’s image. This study has found that the aspects of Context and Code are critical in aiding interpretation of the Message aspect. Because participants were unable to understand the intended Context and Code of the posters, they found the Message ambiguous. To aid their interpretation of the Message, they used their wider knowledge of The Warehouse from the firm’s macroenvironment (Institutional Environment). The variations in interpretations of the Message illustrated consumers’ differing levels of knowledge and experience of The Warehouse.

The shared consumer perception of The Warehouse within the macroenvironment was that it was isomorphic and legitimate. This supports Grossbart et al.’s (1975) view that despite the implication of differing consumer interpretations of the firm and its communications within the macroenvironment, the firm can still be viewed according to its shared meaning within the wider retail milieu. Consumers retrofitted this shared view of legitimacy, despite differing interpretations, onto the communication texts, and interpreted the communication as isomorphic and maintaining The Warehouse as legitimate in its environment.
The managerial implications of these findings are clear. If an organisation intends a marketing communication (whether it be an advertisement, uniform, store layout, etc) to send a particular Message, they must ensure the Context and Code are understood by consumers. Submitting the intended communication to a full Jakobsonian Communication Framework analysis will reveal the differing levels of consumer interpretation of the communication within its macroenvironment. This supports Grossbart et al.'s (1975) view that a consumer’s behaviour in a retail environment is a response to the goods and services they are exposed to, their interpretation of the collective external attributes of the retailer and their overall impression of the nature, the milieu of the retail environment. It further demonstrates the importance of considering the retail macroenvironment as it effects communication perception and retail image.

Future research on the extent to which consumers will retrofit legitimacy on to communications is needed. How ambiguous can a communication be before a retailer could lose their legitimacy? While performative actions could not be included here due to space restrictions, what are the consequences of including performative actions? And how will findings differ across different types of marketing communications? Study of the retail macroenvironment and a more holistic treatment of retail in general offers many new insights for retailing.

REFERENCES


Voices in Video
Robert Aitken, University of Otago, New Zealand
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ABSTRACT
This empirical paper presents an ethnographic marketing research project that utilizes videography to address the problem of how to represent a sense of place. Using an ethnographic methodology combined with film making, the researchers established a collaborative visual ethnography that we believe has the potential to more genuinely represent what a place means to those who live in it. This paper offers two important contributions for using visual ethnography in marketing research. The first is to demonstrate a method of representation that can lead to a greater sense of empowerment and ownership for participants and to new ways of co-creating for researchers. The second is the development of a Video Analysis Protocol that provides a systematic and cumulative approach to analysing video.

INTRODUCTION
Visual methodologies adopting photography and filmmaking techniques are widely used in social sciences. Visual methodologies produce and use images to understand underlying meanings, attitudes and beliefs by making explicit the processes, interactions and connections that people experience in relation to significant meanings, moments or situations in their lives. Associated with ethnography, the use of visual methodologies can be an effective research technique that involves the research participants in more autonomous and creative ways than is possible with many conventional methods.

The decision to adopt a videographic method, therefore, was based on two major advantages of the technique: first, videography is able to capture processes and reveal hidden meanings that can generate new understanding or insights to existent knowledge about how people perceive their world and the relationship that they have to it. Second, it is a collaborative and co-creative method which is appropriate to the ontological and epistemological nature of the present inquiry. Researchers encouraged and empowered participants to represent their own sense of meaning and reality by giving them digital video cameras and a single question to explore.

The following literature review aims to answer these important questions: What is visual ethnography? Why utilize visual ethnography? What are the issues and challenges involved when analysing the data? How to achieve reflexivity?

The context of this research is presented to provide the reader with an overview of the field where it was conducted, and also to present the epistemological stance that the research adopts. It also provides a brief introduction to the previous stages of this study. Addressing How and Why We Empowered the Participants, we explain the process of creating and collecting the data and how we challenged the participants by asking them to produce a video about their sense of place and how they challenged us to make sense and analyse their films. In the third part of this paper we explain how we developed the Constructivist Film Analysis protocol and provide an example.

We also discuss the importance of videography as a data collection technique that can reveal the unconscious habits and encourage a reflective research process. We suggest that the Constructivist Film Analysis protocol is a useful way to analyse video data that can help to establish rigour, reliability and consistency. Finally, we advocate film making as a means to accommodate or moderate conventional dilemmas related to the emic and etic nature of data collection, analysis and representation. The nature of the co-creative relationship involved in producing film can dissolve the boundaries between culturally-bounded perceptions and externally mediated interpretations. For example, the iterative nature of the post-production process, informed by an understanding of the original ideas and meanings, can enhance the reflexivity of the production to create a more authentic narrative. Thus, in the process of moving from raw footage to edited production it is possible to preserve the authenticity of the original, emic perceptions and to complement them with the etic interpretations of the researchers.

VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY
What is Visual Ethnography?
Visual ethnography embraces a number of visual methods such as photography, film making, drawings and paintings, as well as involving analysis and interpretation of existing material. In addition to such analysis and interpretation, visual ethnography can also reveal the motivations and cognitive and affective experiences that influence representational choices. Visual ethnography, and ethnographic films in particular, encourage cross-cultural understandings (Davies 2008) provided by the alliance of ethnographic goals (for example, a close-up and/or deep understanding of a situation/event) with visual methodologies to allow researchers to comprehend or frame reflections based on representations of others’ experiences (Pink 2007). Visual imagery is a dominant feature of human representational communication (Wright 2008) which, through different media can influence social, political and economic life by creating social facts (Loizos 2006). This paper presents an experience of using videography in an ethnographic research project as part of a process to represent a sense of place and, ultimately, to create a place brand.

An important point needs to be made here of the differences, as we see them, between the terms videography and film making which are often used interchangeably in the production of moving images. Originally, a simple distinction between the terms referred to the nature of the medium, i.e. video records images and sounds using analogue, and increasingly digital formats, while film uses photo light sensitive paper with a synchronised optical, magnetic or digital soundtrack. However, the distinction that we would like to make here is between the different nature and purpose of the media forms. In relation to ethnographic research, we would like to suggest that videography is the appropriate term to use when subjects, ideas, experiences etc. are recorded ‘verbatim’ with little contrivance other than that required in the recording process itself. For example, functional choices based on camera position, shot type, angle and movement are common decisions associated with most recording. The emphasis here is on capturing the moment as it happens as part of a genuine (and often spontaneous) attempt to represent reality as the videographer understands it rather than as part of a pre-determined production. From a practical perspective the expectation would be that recording decisions would be arbitrary and spontaneous. In this respect we suggest that videography be seen as the raw footage of an experience. In contrast, we understand film making as characterised by an emphasis on the planned and deliberate nature of the production and, from the outset, a clearer picture of what the finished product will look and sound like. In practice shots would be planned for particular effect and in accordance with a production and post-production script. Many of the
most important decisions on what to include and how to include it would be made at the editing stage and it is here where the veracity of the original footage may be challenged by the purpose of the final product.

For the purposes of this paper, and for further clarification and development in later ones, it might be useful to see videography as a first stage, that is, as the acquiring of original footage, and film making as the result of the re-drafting of this footage to present a differently constructed narrative.

Why Use Visual Ethnography?

Videography provides the possibilities of capturing perspectives of action (Belk and Kozinets 2005) and perspectives in action (Snow and Leon 1987). In doing so, it allows researchers to not only capture and record people talking about their own behaviour or the transformation of ideas into images, as perspectives of action, but also to record the behaviour itself, which is perspectives in action. The combination of both perspectives offers compelling advantages over extant forms of interpretative (especially ethnographic) research (Kozinets and Belk 2006). Videography and film making can benefit our understanding of how people make sense of their world by making explicit the connections between one action and another. Significant information and meaning resides inside these connections that help to determine the way of doing things. Understanding this process of doing could lead to understanding why doing it in that particular way. The reasons for and meanings of doing things are usually tied strongly to the processes that have been adopted. Shifting the emphasis on meaning to a more unconscious level gives more attention to the construction mechanisms of the process itself and can reveal the underlying reasons that motivate behaviour and establish meaning. Re-viewing the construction process itself, in addition to the production output, can reveal meanings beyond the practices and analysing the perspectives of actions can provide insights into the reasons for the practices. Videography can also provide the opportunity for participants to reflect on their experiences as a way of moving from unconscious ideas and meanings to conscious ones. In our study the process of participants reviewing their videos led to both a clarification and a clearer understanding of why they did things in the way that they did and the meanings that result from doing things in this way. This was particularly true, for example, in relation to revealing unconscious meanings of habitus. Discussions resulting from such reflections between researchers and participants led to a deeper and a more co-creational sense of understanding.

Videography is a collaborative process by nature because in all cases there is an engagement between researcher, participant, location and experience where the video is made. It takes researchers out of their more usual role as etic observers and engages them with their respondents and, at the same time elevates participants to the status of co-authors rather than observed subjects. It places researchers and participants together promoting a collaborative engagement throughout the processes of research, analysis and representation of audiovisual materials (Pink 2008).

What are the Issues and Challenges Involved When Analysing the Data?

Concerns about how to analyse and (re) present the data should be mediated by researchers 1) understanding the limitation of the technique always restricted in space and time (Davies 2008); and, 2) adopting a holistic and hermeneutic approach to creating a deep cultural understanding of the context. Visual data offers compelling advantages over extant forms of interpretative (especially ethnographic) research (Belk and Kozinets 2005) by providing multi-sensory information that is often more easily shared through images. However, such data is not unproblematic given that it is a selected representation of a slice of reality compressed into a fraction of space and time. Indeed, a video, a film or an image is not a literal reproduction of reality but a partial representation of a three-dimensional reality through a two-dimensional technique (Henley 2006). The limitations of the method can be diminished with integration with other types of data creating a transcultural (MacDougall 1998) understanding of the context to “make communication about other people’s experiences possible” (Pink 2008, p.250). A holistic and hermeneutic approach linking a variety of perspectives in and of action and an explicit recognition of the importance of contextualising the images and the circumstances in which the recording is made (Davies 2008), but also the process itself. The researchers’ attention, therefore, should focus both on the data itself and the construction processes that led to the final production. Contextualising the film and connecting the stages and steps of the production process will help to create a more reflexive understanding of the data.

How to Achieve Reflexivity?

A reflexive approach takes the relationship of researchers and respondents as part of the research process. It refers to a bi-directional or circular relationship where the actions of observers in the social system affect the very situations they are observing. In contrast to a realistic approach, reflexivity recognizes the centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher to the production and representation of ethnographic knowledge (Pink 2001). The intention of this explicit reflexivity in relation to the relationship between researcher and respondent is to not only diminish bias, but also to neutralize distortion through the recognition of the process as a collaborative and organic process, where the subjectivities of researcher and respondent will engage and interact to create new understandings.

A reflexive approach also involves consideration of the signs and signifiers that are selected to represent the ideas in the video and the links and relationships between the visual images and sound that contribute to its meaning. Indeed, the structural sequence of images creates meaning both on a meta-narrative level and on sublevels of relationships within the video (Pink 2007). There is a set of relationships inside and outside of ethnographic videos. A number of relationships are intrinsic to the creation of video material and these occur between the images, sounds, combinations and the content inside the film; the interactions between them are significant and contribute substantially to the integrity of the final product. Another set of relationships emerge outside the video and intersect at the points between visualisation, representation and construction, and are fundamental links between the video product and the context. Reflexivity draws attention to the importance of these relationships and the extent to which they might influence the development of insights related to the research experience, theoretical concepts, and analysis (Pink 2001).

THE CONTEXT: THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

The motivation for the research was to provide a basis for developing a place brand for the Chatham Islands, New Zealand. Central to this research was the intention to position the people and place’s identity at the core of the brand to establish ownership, achieve authenticity and promote sustainability. Central to this concern was the need to listen to the voice of the community in order to understand the interactions and relationships between people, landscape and place, and to understand their lifestyle, their habitus,
their sense of place and the possibilities of creating a representation for their sense of place. Therefore, the aims of this research were to understand the constructs that create a sense of place, and to understand how these constructs can be visually represented.

The Chatham Islands are an archipelago of ten islands with an area of 966 square kilometres, located 800 kilometres east of Christchurch, New Zealand. The two main islands, Chatham and Pitt, are inhabited, while the others are uninhabited conservation reserves. The population of the archipelago is 609 (NZ Census 2006). Among the total population, 369 people identify as being of Maori (indigenous people of New Zealand) or Moriori (indigenous people who first lived on the Chatham Islands) descent (King and Morrison 1990). The ethnic history of the Chatham Islands is made up of several layers of immigration. Accordingly, Morioris, Maoris, and Europeans arrived in different periods. The interactions of a variety of ethnicities, such as German, Portuguese, Irish and British with New Zealanders, Maori and Moriori (King 2000) created the roots of all the families on the island, and contributed to the creation of the unique community that exists today.

THE RESEARCH EPISTEMOLOGY

Accepting the existence of multiple realities, the approach in this research takes a relativist position. An ontology is relativist when realities are understood as multiple constructs (Hollinshead 2004) which are localised, co-constructed (Guba 1990; Guba and Lincoln 2008), and enriched by many interpretations (Guba 1990). Therefore, under the constructivist inquiry paradigm, the ontology is relativist with local and specific constructed realities; the epistemology is transactional and subjectivist; and, the methodology is hermeneutical. The nature of knowledge is based on “individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus,” and knowledge accumulation is “more informed and sophisticated reconstructions of vicarious experiences” (Lincoln and Guba 2003, p.259). The relativist ontology recognizes that knowledge claims are viewed as contingent upon particular beliefs, values, and methods (Anderson 1985). Hence, “acting and thinking, practice and theory, are linked in a continuous process of critical reflection and transformation” (Schwandt 2003, p.295). The philosophical stance of this research is underpinned by assumptions of multiple realities, social construction, context, and time-bounded (Bahl and Milne 2006; Tadajewski 2006). Based on the idea that reality is socially constructed, epistemology and methodology are responsive to inter-subjectivity of multiple and fragmented realities. In this ground, lived experience is privileged as a starting place to co-create knowledge that represents the truth of relative realities.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research involved multiple methods of data collection in three field visits including participant observation with tourists and with residents during the first one week field trip (Nov 2007). During the second three week visit (Jan 2008), thirty seven in-depth interviews and five group interviews (3 to 6 participants) with residents were conducted, which represents formally interviewing around 9.4% of the total population of the Islands. Data was also collected through participant observation and informal (not recorded) interviews with tourists and residents. The data was documented using field notes, researcher’s diary and recorded interviews. Validity was addressed through within-method triangulation (Denzin 1970). The two first stages of this research focused on identifying and understanding the elements that contribute to the shaping of a sense of place. The third stage of the research focused on how this sense of place is represented and experienced in the day-to-day life of the people who live in the place.

The final visit was in February 2009 for a period of two weeks when researchers presented the interviewees with the findings from the previous stages of the research and set up the conditions for the fourth stage of the research, which forms the basis for this paper.

HOW AND WHY WE EMPOWERED THE PARTICIPANTS?

Four participants received a video camera, some introductory and elementary technical instruction and were asked to produce a short video exploring the following question: How can you visually represent your sense of place? It was emphasised that there were no representational limitations to their videos and that they should feel entirely free to explore their sense of place, their interactions, their perceptions and their sense of belonging related to their place. Participants were also asked to provide brief notes in a production diary that explained, were possible, the reasons for their choice of representation such as location, image and intention. Participants had the video cameras for a period of 10 days. The participants for the research were selected to represent a diversity of the ethnicity and ancestral heritage of the place. Accordingly, four family groups under the leadership of one member were selected based on their personal ethnic identification: one Moriori, one Maori, one European descendant on Chatham Island, and one European descendant on Pitt Island (there are no Moriori or Maori descendants on Pitt Island).

VIDEO ANALYSIS

The research utilises the principles of critical visual analysis as proposed by Schroeder (2006). Essentially, this is a qualitative approach to understanding advertising images, including films, and “draws on the theory of visual consumption to show how cultural codes and representational conventions inform contemporary marketing images, infusing them with visual, historical and rhetorical presence and power” (Schroeder 2006, p.303). This approach does not rely on a structural understanding of semiotics, but rather provides researchers with an understanding “of how images embody and express cultural values and contradictions” (Schroeder 2006, p.303). According to Schroeder (2006), the appropriate questions for such an approach include: “How do images strategically communicate?” and, “How do images relate to brand meaning?” (p.304). For the purposes of this study, we identified dimensions of questions that would inform and frame subsequent critical visual analysis to answer the research question: How can you visually represent your sense of place? These dimensions were created in order to fulfil the purpose of research (Kassarjian 1977) aiming to understand what and why participants selected particular images and how these images are portrayed (Kassarjian 1977).

To provide a structure for the analysis we propose a four stage process that considers the individual and the cumulative effects of the different components that comprise a film. These stages are denotation, connotation, corroboration and contextualisation. It should be noted, however, that while the following protocol identifies a number of different stages, they should be seen as different focuses of attention and emphasis rather than as discrete or definitive divisions. The first stage is concerned with denotation and identifies and describes the individual elements in the film. While this is potentially a long process it has the advantage of ensuring not only that each ingredient is registered but also that nothing is taken for granted. Also, included in this stage is a description of the stylistic elements such as the position of the camera or the angle of the shot. This stage is intended to be descriptive and while it is recognised that the separation of image from meaning is difficult, the purpose here is provide a list of the literal components. The emphasis on interpretation occurs at stage two where the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video Analysis Protocol–The Chatham Islands Research Project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme: How Can You Represent Your Sense of Place?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 1 -What is portrayed? Literal / Denotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach/ waves/blue sea and sky</td>
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<tr>
<td>On the other side grey weather: grey sea and sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very windy sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign of Moriori tree carvings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush/Herbs/kawakawa</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is it portrayed? Style / Time of story (in the present/before hand)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filmmaker said there is not a particular order in the movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominance of panoramic views and open plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film duration: 6’45”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds of wind/ sea/ music/ conversations recorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No description and no narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time: in the present/ Sense of movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>driving/filming; walking/filming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light: day light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: North and Central Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Shots/ Divided in 8 Slots</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 2 -Why is it portrayed? Connotation/Associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beach / waves/blue sea and sky- Tapuika beach favourite filmmaker’s beach where she used to go when child to gather food (mussels) and where her ancestor’s tribes come from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the other side grey weather: grey sea and sky–weather changes very quick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native bush–Tapuika bush where she used gather firewood to help feed and warm her family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign of Moriori tree carvings- spiritual connection, ancestry, relationships with past generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush–Historical reserve where Moriori tribes used to live.–Ancestry, belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs- kawakawa bush to prepare medicinal balms, jam/chutney/salsa. Abundant free food; gathering; sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees with Morioris’ carvings–each carving represents a particular ancestor. Her ancestors’ tribe (Moriori) used to live in that bush which is close the beach (1st shot).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shore of lagoon–The lagoon is a place to get-together, camp, food gathering, and teeth collecting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos in her body/Moriori carvings and Moriori designs–genealogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moriori artwork with a Whale tooth–she found at the lake a fossilised tooth. Moriori tribe’s leaders used to receive it as a sign of honour.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 3-Corroboration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Corroboration achieved by research diary and by knowledge that informed the context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos in her body/Moriori carvings and Moriori designs–Describing her tattoos she says: “This tattoo acknowledges my hokopapa, my genealogy. It acknowledges all of the connections I have flowing through my veins. I am a Moriori, Maori- Ngati Mutunga, European, Rarotongan, Samoan, Tongan and Chinese! (Interesting to say the last!). I associate closest with Moriori and this is what I have known all my life, but I acknowledge all as that is what makes me...me!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush–Historical reserve where Moriori tribes used to live.–Ancestry, belonging. She says: “walk through the tree with the birdsong I always feel like a cloak is placed over my shoulders and my karapuna(ancestors) are glad I have come”; “immense feeling of love”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs- kawakawa bush good to prepare medicinal balms, jam/chutney and salsa. Abundant free food; gathering; sharing. “I find a way to incorporate food in my healing, Kawakawa grows abundantly on Rekohu, so our people have medicine/food right at our fingertips”</td>
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<th>Stage 4 -Context</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moriori artwork with a Whale tooth–she found at the lake a fossilised tooth. She believes it is a treasure. Moriori tribe’s leaders used to receive it as a sign of honour.–The film maker is an active leader who has been helping the renaissance of Moriori culture researching and learning about their practices, and promulgating their culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main constructs, ideas and/or sense in the film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The predominant ideas and constructs are about connections with people, ancestry, land, nature and food (abundance of food sources in nature).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sense of place takes an individual perspective in terms of representation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main construct is about spiritual connections and relationships,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sense of belonging (place) is represented metaphoric, symbolic and emotional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sense of story is non-linear, spatial, inner-story.</td>
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</table>
explicit connections between image, sound, form and meaning are explored. Central here is the notion of connotation and the connections and associations that are intended between what we see and hear, and the way that we see and hear, and the meanings that they represent. The potentially arbitrary nature of this process is limited by the third stage of the process that looks to find aspects of confirmation and corroboration of the meanings emerging from the first two stages. In practical terms this corroboration can be found in the production diaries that detail the conceptualisation and development of the film and in the personal narratives that may accompany them. The final stage of analysis considers the context of the film and the film maker. This stage asks about the purpose of the film and attempts to situate the process in a wider social, political and cultural context by considering the circumstances and conditions which help to define the communication process. It also makes explicit the role of the researchers in the process and addresses their academic and professional responsibilities. Having completed these stages, we suggest that final interpretations of meaning and intentions can be understood as fully as possible in what is almost always a subjective exercise. It should be noted that in a co-creational relationship much of the video’s meaning will be discussed and shared as the project develops, and, indeed throughout this process a number of implicit meanings may emerge as the result of discussion, but we suggest that the above protocol is a useful way to approach the analysis of the filmic representation of ideas in most contexts.

The following is a summary and an illustrative example of how we applied the protocol in the above research. The first stage asked the questions: 1) *what is portrayed?* Looking to identify literal and denotative images; and, 2) *how is it portrayed?* Aiming to understand the style of the images (type of shots, duration, sounds), the time of the story (planned or present time), and the experience created by the film-makers (attached/detached, showing/sharing, factual/actual). The second stage asked what were the connotations of the sounds and images that were used and why were they portrayed in this way? Looking to understand the connotative aspects of the images and sounds and their intended and explicit meanings. This analysis was then corroborated at stage three by reference, in some cases, to production diaries, and, in others, by accompanying narratives to support and confirm the emerging constructs, ideas and meanings in the film. The fourth and final stage addressed the context for the video, in our case a request for participants to represent their sense of place on film, and included a consideration of the wider social, political and cultural factors that may have influenced the participant. In one case, for example, the desire to represent a local community’s growing sense of pride as part of a blossoming cultural renaissance was a clear example of how a wider understanding of context could inform and enrich a particular interpretation.

This protocol provided a framework to access the denotative and connotative elements portrayed in the films as the basis to develop a critical visual analysis. Triangulation and validity were achieved by consulting participants’ production diaries to explain and confirm participants’ intentions and choices. It is important to note that all choices about what to record and how to record were at the discretion of the participants. All participants had an involvement of family or friends during the process, either discussing the plans for the video or videoing together. The videos not only confirmed the findings that had emerged in the first and second stages of this research, but also revealed new dimensions to them. Food gathering, for example, a common practice on the Islands, is shown in terms of close connection with the surrounding landscape and in terms of freedom and security provided by the same landscape.

Moreover, the cross-analysis of the videos and previous interviews (with different participants) conducted during the early stages of this research explain, contextualize and corroborate the comments of which images and icons would represent the sense of place in a branding exercise.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of empowering the research participants by providing them with video cameras was firstly to create access to their authentic, personal and genuine choices of representation of their place identity with limited directional influence from the researchers; secondly, to develop a method of visually representing the sense of place based on co-creation and thirdly, to present a protocol to assist with the analysis of video data. The empowerment of participants not only provides the possibility for them to create and represent their own place identity, but also provides researchers with a closer understanding of their cultural identity considering that cultural identity is in large measure intertwined with visual representations (Dienderen 2007). When the cameras are given to the participants the researchers lose control of the collection of data and the creation of the representation of the data. As suggested by Pink (2008, p.249), video “can produce empathetic and sensory embodied (emplaced) understandings of another’s experience”. A multisensory experience is created by participants with minimal external influence, and this reinforces the freedom experienced by participants in choosing the symbols, the representations, the rhythm, the lights, the colours and the mood of their videos. Such empowerment goes beyond the process of creation to ideological decisions about how they believe their place should be portrayed. The powerful sense of ownership engendered by this approach to representing a sense of place is an important reminder of the need for inclusivity in the process of place branding and encouraging support for greater participant involvement in academic research.

The final productions in this study were personal, genuine and sincere attempts to understand how they felt about their place and how these feelings could be translated into visual representations. If researchers want to know how someone feels about their place, it might be worth giving them the opportunity to represent it.

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Re-gifting: The Gift You Can’t Wait to Re-give
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ABSTRACT
Re-gifting is the act of receiving a gift, and deciding to give it to someone else with the pretense that the gift is a new one. While re-gifting is a topic that has received considerable popular media attention, there has been no direct academic research on the subject to date. This paper proposes a definition of re-gifting, reviews the key issues involved with gift exchange, and explores why gift-giving might fail, resulting in the need for disposition. We conclude by offering a number of research questions which are outlined to help guide future research in this area.

If you’re going to do it (and it’s more common than you think), please update the wrapping—and remove the old card.—Dunleavey (2007)

INTRODUCTION
The topic of re-gifting is one that has received increasing attention over the past few years; in fact fifty-eight percent of respondents in a recent holiday survey said they re-gift or were considering doing so (Money Management International 2007). Once considered a tacky or taboo practice, articles in the popular press now provide rules for re-gifters, such as do update the wrapping, don’t give hand-me-downs as re-gifts, do keep track of who gave it to you first, as well as providing a list of items not to re-gift—as they would be a giveaway that the gift-giver is re-gifting an unwanted present (Dunleavey 2007). However, despite growing interest in the popular press, there has been no direct academic research on the subject to date. The aim of this paper is to seek to understand why a person, after receiving an unwanted gift, decides that the best disposition strategy for that gift is to give it to someone else and pretend it is a gift conceived originally for that person. To achieve this aim, we propose a definition of re-gifting, outline the phenomenon, and establish the parameters for the act. We then contextualize re-gifting in the overall framework of gift-giving/receiving, allowing us to suggest three key research questions that need to be addressed if we are to begin to understand the motivation of re-gifting.

We define re-gifting as the act of taking a gift which has been received, and deciding to give it to someone else with the pretense that the gift is a new one. It also typically involves not disclosing the re-gifting to the original gift-giver. The gift, therefore, must be unused, and something that can be disposed. With this definition, re-gifting is not the act of donating an unwanted gift to charity, nor is it the act of deciding to sell an unwanted gift. While not explicitly in the definition, we assume that the unwanted gift is received from another person, and is not an item originally bought as a self-gift (Mick and DeMoss 1990). This assumption is made because of the implications for the use of gifts as symbols in relationships, which we address in this conceptualization. Also implicit in the notion is the exclusion of the free gift (i.e., one that does not create connections and obligations between the parties), as the logical progression of a free gift is that you are not re-gifting if there is no symbolic attachment (by giver or receiver) to the original gift (Laidlaw 2000). If the gift is not inalienably connected to the original giver (Belk 2005), the gift becomes a commodity that can be passed on without reference (or guilt). Finally, this definition precludes items that have been received as a gift, have been used, are still usable, and are then passed on. This last point is made because we are not considering the idea of recycling per se, which is typically overt, but rather the covert act of passing off a gift as an original purchase by the original receiver/subsequent giver.

THE PRACTICE OF GIFT-GIVING
Sherry (1983) provides the impetus for much of the gift research in marketing, suggesting a three-stage gift-giving process involving gestation (i.e., gift search and purchase), presentation (i.e., the actual gift exchange), and reformulation (i.e., gift disposition and the realignment of the giver/recipient relationship). Sherry’s (1983) process also incorporates the concept of reciprocity, and the establishment, maintenance, growth, or termination of a relationship. While Giesler (2006) questions the relevance of this process, instead suggesting a societal framework based upon sharing without any reciprocal expectations, there are still two features of gifts that permeate the literature. The first feature is the need for a gift-giver and recipient, although these can be the same person (Mick and DeMoss 1990); the second is the idea that gifts and their exchange are imbued with the symbolism of meaning for a relationship (Belk and Coon 1993; Sherry, McGrath, and Levy 1993).

While festive atmospheres and joyful celebrations surround many gift-giving occasions, Wooten (2000) contends that these special occasions are often a cause of great anxiety for the gift-giver themselves. This occurs because even though gift-givers are highly motivated to provide an appropriate gift, thereby evoking a positive reaction from the recipient, they are often pessimistic about their actual chances of success. The ideal outcome of any gift-giving episode is disposition by incorporation (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy 1992), where the gift exchange is perceived as being successful, and the gift recipient receives and accepts a number of positive messages about the giver and their relationship. If this occurs, there is a sense that the giver cares for and knows about the receiver, due to their ability to meet the unarticulated expectations of the gift recipient. Moreover, the gift becomes a personification of the giver, and is incorporated into the recipient’s life, with the relationship between the two people being further enhanced. For a gift to be perfect, Belk (1996) identifies six criteria—the gift should show true donor sacrifice, the donor’s sole wish should be recipient pleasure, the gift is a luxury, the gift is uniquely appropriate to the recipient, the recipient is surprised by the gift, and the gift succeeds in pleasing the recipient.

With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that many authors have focused on the positive outcomes which can occur as a result of the gift-giving process, such as the memorable experiences associated with giving and receiving gifts (Areni, Kiecker, and Palan 1998). Similarly, Sherry et al. (1993) provides a grid of sentiment and substance, placing recipients and gift types into quadrants, with the aim of identifying the union of the right person and the right object. However, there are circumstances where the process of gift-giving fails to lead to a positive outcome, and this provides the focus for the remainder of this paper. Sherry (1983) argues that it is the reformulation stage which holds the strongest potential attraction for consumer researchers, and we suggest that it is the reformulation stage where an individual may evaluate an unwanted gift as being suitable for the purposes of re-gifting.

WHY DOES GIFT-GIVING GO BAD?
With their ability to inspire joy and communicate various messages, it is no surprise that billions of dollars are spent on gifts
each year (Ruth, Otnes, and Brunel 1999). However, as Larsen and Watson (2001) observe, many consumers find the process of gift-giving difficult, and employ avoidance strategies or purchase generic gifts that serve little purpose. With the cultural expectation of reciprocity, such gift-giving can result in a pot-latch like dynamic—as Godbout (1998, 565) somewhat cuttingly puts it “... illustrated by the innumerable and often useless gifts to children...”.

Gift shopping is often less playful and higher in utilitarian value than personal shopping (Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts 2007), thus providing support for the notion of gift shopping as work (Fischer and Arnold 1990). Indeed, as Belk (1976) points out, gift-giving may be based upon either moral or religious imperatives, a need to recognize and maintain status hierarchies, a need to maintain peaceful relations, or the expectation of reciprocal giving. Such motivations, which are not consistent with purely selfless giving, can become institutionalized to the extent that an individual may feel socially obliged to give (Mauss 1954). These cultural expectations can influence both gift-giving and gift-receiving behaviors, with the giving of gifts allowing participation in celebratory events (McGrath 1995). Because of this, the strongest cultural expectations are typically related to gift-giving, as the presentation of a gift is both a ritual artifact and a requirement for having a participatory role. The gift recipient also fulfills an important function, as the gift-giver needs to give a gift to someone in order to participate in social events.

What might trigger the failure of the gift to appeal? Robben and Verhallen (1994) suggest that gifts evaluated as more costly in terms of time, mental, and physical effort are preferred by the receiver, and yet these are not factors typically taken into account by the giver. Thus, the balanced reciprocity inherent in gift exchange (Belk 1976; Sherry 1983) can become unbalanced. There is also the question of the giver’s motive. If the giver utility is derived from gratitude-elicitation (Stark and Falk 1998) then it may be that in the perceived failure situation the giver is actually seeking to minimize gratitude; in other words, it is a deliberate act to reduce the intensity of the relationship. Alternatively, the giver may resent the obligation to give a gift attached to an occasion (Mauss 1954) creating a disincentive to engage fully with the symbolism of the gift, or with the recipient; in other words, satisfying on the obligation. Lack of awareness in the relationship, not appreciating the receiver’s desires, and just plain getting it wrong, are all non-malicious reasons for a gift being inappropriate, as is the influence of third parties on gift-selection (Lowrey, Otnes, and Ruth 2004).

The role of the recipient in gift failure was explored by Roster (2006), with the author suggesting gift failure can be communicated in three main ways. First, the recipient may use paralinguistic indicators, such as facial expressions, to convey their sense of disappointment with the gift. Second, direct verbal comments may be used, which range from a failure to thank the gift-giver, through to vocal concerns or changes in the tone-of-voice used. Finally, the consumption (or non-consumption) of a gift may communicate failure to the gift-giver. This non-consumption may involve the non-use of the gift, or the gift being disposed of (e.g., exchanging the gift, offering it back to the gift-giver, or giving it away). Although the practice of re-gifting was one of the disposal options found to be used, the exact reasons for a person deciding to dispose of an unwanted gift through re-gifting were not examined, possibly because one of the underlying principles of re-giving is to hide the act from the original gift-giver; thus the receiver is not actually seeking to communicate the gift failure.

Money, of course, is a common gift (Athay 1993; Burgoyne and Routh 1991) which lends itself perfectly to re-gifting as an earlier origin is completely unidentifiable. Pieters and Robben (1999) open their discussion by saying that at first sight, money appears the perfect gift to give and receive, but quickly point out that money is often unacceptable. Burgoyne and Routh (1991) find that the reasons for the non-acceptability of money as a gift can be divided into two categories. First, money has certain economic attributes considered undesirable in a gift—it places an exact monetary value on the relationship between the gift-giver and the recipient, and also has a universalistic nature. Gift cards, by comparison, can better reflect the interests of the recipient, and are positively received—at least by teenagers (Tuten and Kiecker 2009). Second, money lacks the personal attributes required by gifts—it requires little effort to give, it makes it more transparent that the gifts exchanged are not of equal value, and the gift-giver loses identification with the gift due to its less memorable nature.

Evidence has also been found that if a gift sends the wrong message, the outcome is likely to be damaging for the future of the relationship between a gift-giver and the recipient. Men report feeling less similar to a new acquaintance after receiving an undesirable versus desirable gift, whereas women’s perceptions of similarity are relatively unaffected by gift quality (Dunn et al. 2008). When considering romantic partners, the feeling of being less similar to a partner after receiving a bad gift also leads to strong negative perceptions about the future of the relationship itself. These findings lend strong support to the assertions made by Larsen and Watson (2001) that the type of gift given is often a reflection of the type of relationship which exists between the gift-giver and the recipient, where gifts which draw on expressive value (as opposed to economic, functional, or social values) are more likely to be given as a relationship becomes more intimate. Kinship or other social proximity also enables greater understanding of gift matching (Caplow 1982; Komter 1996), with proximity shown to be an important factor, for example, in the type and nature of gifts given to children (Parsons and Ballantine 2008).

Larsen and Watson (2001) contend that gifts can be broadly classified into two main categories—gifts which are given at formal occasions or rituals (e.g., Christmas, Valentine’s Day, weddings, and birthdays), and gifts which are given under spontaneous circumstances. The gift-giving experiences that occur as part of a ritualized event (especially Christmas) are often characterized by a degree of forced involvement. Although many of the gifts given at these types of formal events may be cherished, the obligatory nature of such events often results in a loss of value for the entire gift exchange. In such situations, gifts may be viewed as less meaningful or valuable, as when the gift-giver is forced into the role, gift-giving may become an ordeal which leads to resentment. These arguments find support with the work of Lowrey et al. (2004), in that gift-givers will often engage in apathetic gift-selection activities, if doing so allows the giver to maintain another relationship that is considered more valuable to them. Thus, even though a giver will sometimes repeat dissatisfying exchanges on an ongoing basis with recipients for whom they care little, doing so allows the giver to maintain a participatory role in events, and preserves the sanctity of existing (and more important) relationships within a social group. Gifts can be used to reduce the intensity of, or even terminate a relationship (Belk and Coon 1993). The reaction to this message by the recipient may be a precursor to disapproval through re-gifting. Furthermore, the message sent by the gift-giver attempting to establish or grow a relationship may be rejected by the recipient. In some instances this may involve the refusal or return of a gift, but in others it may also be a precursor to re-gifting, particularly if the original receiver/re-gifter places little value upon the feelings of the original giver.

The difficulty associated with gift-giving when confronted with recipients who are easy and difficult to buy for was examined by
Re-gifting: The Gift You Can’t Wait to Re-give

Ottes, Lowrey, and Kim (1993). While the authors find evidence of six social roles for any gift-giver (pleaser, provider, compensator, socializer, acknowledger, and avoider), it is the role of the acknowledger where most difficulty in the gift section process occurs. When enacting this role, acknowledgers typically engage in obligatory gift selections for recipients who are on the fringes of their social networks (e.g., affinal relatives or acquaintances) or who are closer relatives with whom the gift-giver is experiencing some tension. To illustrate the role of the acknowledger, the authors provide the scenario of a parent buying a gift for their child to give to a teacher, where the object may not resemble a gift at all, but more closely resemble a token offering. Joy (2001) also raises the idea of the token gift used not as a true reflection of a relationship, but almost as a gap-filler while the relationship develops and/or a more suitable gift is found. Less value is attached to such gifts, so the breaking of relationship trust is less meaningful if the gift is then re-gifted. Rynning (1989) discusses this idea of token gifts in the context of giving flowers in Scandinavia as a neutral way of showing appreciation, compassion, or delight (with the exception of red roses with their attached romantic meaning).

The entrapment in ritual is also considered to lead to dissatisfaction with the exchange process (Sherry et al. 1993). The authors propose a 2x2 matrix, where the substance of a gift (i.e., its monetary value; either high or low) and the sentiment attached to it by the receiver (i.e., high or low) lead to four quadrants, with the combination of low substance and low sentiment being the worst. The gifts given under these poor conditions typically include grab-bags or secret Santas, which are often blindly given and blindly received. This lack of personalization also reduces them to generic gifts, with the potential that these gifts have been laterally cycled from former grab-bag events or other disastrous exchanges.

THE DISPOSITION OF THE GIFT AND RE-GIFTING

The preceding section has highlighted some of the reasons why gift-giving can go wrong. We now turn our focus to the disposition literature in order to examine the sometimes resulting practice of re-gifting. In one of the earliest academic articles on disposition, it is argued that a consumer has three general choices when contemplating the disposition of a product: (1) keeping the product, (2) permanently disposing of the product, or (3) temporarily disposing of the product (Jacoby, Berning, and Dietvorst 1977). In the second category, permanent disposal, the authors suggest a person may throw a product away or abandon it, give it away, sell it, or trade it. However, the option of giving a product away does not address one of the fundamental characteristics of re-gifting—that the item to be given away is presented as a new gift within the context of a gift-giving occasion. Since Jacoby et al. (1977), more recent research on disposition has focused on possessions which are considered to be meaningful, such as the disposition of possessions of people who are living with or had died from AIDS (Kates 2001), the disposition of possessions to strangers in garage sales and online auctions (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005), and the role of special possessions and their disposition by older consumers (Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000).

Within the realm of gift-giving, the successful disposition of a gift (i.e., disposition by incorporation) is discussed by Sherry et al. (1992). However, the authors present three other disposition outcomes which are not as positive. The first of these, disposition by lateral cycling, is the process by which the recipient of a gift becomes its donor in another exchange. Similar to the concept of re-gifting, the authors state that “...once sacralized as a gift, even if the object disappoints the recipient, that object retains its status as “gift” and can be passed to another...” (Sherry et al. 1992, p.59). This perspective also suggests that in a society even unappreciated gifts must continue to move, although the gift cycler may choose new victims rather than grateful recipients. Another version of lateral cycling is the unwanted gift taking the form of a discounted handle-down. Thus, since the gift is no longer new, and has already been used as a gift, it is disposed of by being laterally cycled to someone of a lower status, such as a poorer or younger person. This exchange is not expected to be symmetrical, so there is no anxiety that a similarly disliked object of equal value will be returned. The final two disposition alternatives put forward by Sherry et al. (1992) are disposition by destruction and disposition by return.

It is important to note that re-gifting may be viewed as a phenomenon peculiar to a particular culture; in this paper, more westernized cultures such as the United States, parts of Europe, and Australasia. For example, Joy (2001) and Park (1998) discuss the familial and collectivist nature of Asian culture with respect to gift-giving. The implication of their studies for re-gifting is that the sharing of a gift is natural and expected, so the covert nature of our definition of re-gifting could be immaterial in such cultures. While the formal occasion gift, maintaining or enhancing social integrity, in Japanese society may be highly valued for the importance of the exchange (Lotz, Shim, and Gehrt 2003), it may be that the actual item is not valued to the same extent, allowing re-gifting, whereas the informal gift allowing the giver’s self to be expressed may be more highly valued.

Research Questions

Given our discussion, a number of research questions can now be asked to help guide future research on the topic of re-gifting. Belk (1976), building upon Mauss (1954) notes how gift-giving can become an institutionalized process to the extent that an individual may feel socially obliged to give. A gift can also be a requirement for having a participatory role in celebratory events (McGrath 1995). With this sense of obligation, it is no surprise that Larsen and Watson (2001) draw a distinction between two main categories of gift-giving—those gifts given at formal occasions or rituals, and those gifts given in spontaneous circumstances. With the obligatory nature of gift-giving in most formal events, and the possibility that gifts given in these situations may be perceived as less meaningful or valuable, an important question becomes whether or not gifts which have been re-gifted are more likely to have been received in formal gift-giving settings as opposed to spontaneous ones. Thus, the first research question is:

RQ1: Are re-gifted items more likely to have been originally received in formal occasions or rituals, as opposed to more spontaneous gift-giving settings?

The best outcome for a gift-giver is disposition by incorporation on the part of the gift recipient (Sherry et al. 1992). If this occurs, then it is presumed that the recipient has received positive messages about their relationship with the gift-giver, and that the recipient perceives the gift-giver cares for them as a result of having met their unarticulated expectations. However, when a bad gift is received, a recipient may view themselves as being dissimilar to the giver (Dunn et al. 2008). Similarly, as a relationship becomes more intimate, Larsen and Watson (2001) posit that gift-giving becomes more expressive, as opposed to functional. With this, the outcome of a positive gift exchange may be a sense of closeness between the gift-giver and the recipient. Conversely, if a recipient feels disappointment when a bad gift is received, this feeling of disappointment may lead to the recipient perceiving little thought or
effort was given to the gift selection process on the part of the giver, which may in turn lead them to feel less guilty about re-gifting an unwanted gift. Given this discussion, the second research question is:

RQ2: Are re-gifted items more likely to have been originally received in a gift exchange where the recipient felt little thought or effort was given to the gift selection process?

A gift-giver may take an apathetic approach to gift-selection if doing so allows them to maintain a relationship with another, more important person (Lowrey et al. 2004). Similarly, Ottes et al. (1993) note that obligatory gift-selection strategies are more likely to occur for people on the fringes of a gift-givers social network. In terms of the lateral cycling of gifts, Sherry et al. (1992) posit that unwanted gifts are easier to dispose of by giving that gift to a person of lower status. Taken together, while social closeness is a determinant of how much effort is given to the gift-selection process, social closeness also plays a role in deciding who a gift could be laterally cycled to. Thus, the third research question becomes:

RQ3: Are re-gifted items more likely to be given to a gift recipient on the periphery of the gift-givers social network?

Summary

This paper has sought to provide an introduction to re-gifting, so we can understand why a person, after receiving an unwanted gift, decides that the best disposition strategy for that gift is to give it to someone else and pretend it is a gift conceived originally for that person. We have proposed a definition of re-gifting, outlined the phenomenon, and established the parameters for the act. We have also contextualized re-gifting in the overall framework of gift-giving/receiving, allowing us to suggest three key research questions that need to be addressed if we are to begin to understand the motivation of re-gifting. Given the increased attention that has been given to the practice of re-gifting, it is hoped that many of the ideas presented in this paper will provide fruitful direction for researchers interested in further understanding this behavior.

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Implications of the new Darwinism for Consumer Theory and Research
in Relation to the Human Face

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares the resurgence of theory and research on the human face to earlier accounts based on the modern ‘sciences’ of physiognomy and phrenology. The different approaches are compared and contrasted with respect to: innateness; degeneracy versus averageness; particularity versus universalism and stereotyping. These ideas are then critiqued and their potential contribution to consumer research is discussed in relation to assumptions about the social construction of images, stereotyping and tacit processes in image recognition.

INTRODUCTION

The human face has relevance to consumer researchers as it constitutes one of the most ubiquitous images used by marketers and is a major site for scrutiny, anxiety and re-construction by consumers. This origins of this paper lie in a literature search of social and psychological treatments of the face in order to aid the construction of a theoretical framework. In the process of accumulating material it became apparent that a new voice had entered the discourse, that of the new Darwinism represented by developments in evolutionary psychology. While this development is interesting from the perspective of theory building it aroused my concern to understand its relation to and differences from the crude forms of “Spencerism” that underpinned the racist race theories that were propagated in Europe, its colonies and the USA even after World War Two. Pinker (2002) for example suggests that these “race” theories were little more than bowdlerized and bastardized versions of Darwin’s original explanation.

The focus of this paper is to consider neo-Darwinian orientations to the human face including the following questions; How do these explanations differ from earlier those explanations based upon physiognomy and phrenology, which contributed towards that constellation of ideas known as “Spencerism”; How do evolutionary accounts relate to social theories of the face?; To what extent can they be recruited to the cause of consumer research?

This paper first discusses the historical context of theoretical development with respect to facial attractiveness. Finally it draws attention to several important areas for research and debate with respect to consumer research.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: “SPENCERISM”

Written in the years between the demise of “Spencerism” and the birth of Evolutionary psychology, Gombrich noted presciently that; “Evolutionism is dead, but the facts which gave rise to its myth are still stubbornly there to be accounted for” (1972, p.18). The practice of using the face as a signifier on which to base the “signified” of character is arguably universal and ancient. The idea of physiognomy which consists of the attempt to understand a person’s character and personality by evaluating various facial traits has been found among the ancient Greeks, the Chinese and Indians, the Romans, in Arabia and during the European Renaissance. In the period from the late 18th to the early 20th century (see Lavater 1775; Shookman 1994) there was an attempt to elevate physiognomy to the status of science. Hartley (2001) argues that Lavater’s attempts to read the mind using emotional expressions, passed via the Pre-Raphaelites to Spencer and Darwin, ultimately stimulating the latter to investigate the expression of human emotion for himself (Darwin 1872), which proved to be the undoing of Lavater’s ideas.

Through the introduction of the concept of phrenology, the study of the skull to determine a person’s character and mental capacity, Franz-Joseph Gall (1800) added another formidable weapon to the classification of character by appearance. Gall determined that there were twenty-six “organs” on the surface of the brain which could be detected through a surface-examination of the skull. Francis Galton (1864/5), Darwin’s cousin, did much to further the isolation of criminal and ethnic “types” through the development of systems of classification.

EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY & PSYCHOLOGY

Hatfield and Sprecher were somewhat premature when they noted that “Today scholars have admitted defeat in their search for a universal beauty….all their hopes of uncovering such ideals have been smashed.” (1986, p.13). They based their conclusion on anthropological research such as that carried out by Ford & Beach (1951). The challenge to this has come from evolutionary biologists, who like their “Spencerist” forbears, seek to explain the human organism as the outcome of processes of natural selection; the morally indifferent process in which the most effective replications become more prevalent than the alternatives in a population. Pinker describes this as the study of the phylogenetic history and adaptive functions of the mind (2002, p.52). In other words the key concern is to understand the ways in which behaviour represents an adaptation to the environment. Selection between individuals who vary with regard to a particular characteristic is presumed to occur as a result of pressures brought about by the changing environment. Those individuals who have characteristics that are more conducive to survival have a better chance of reaching maturity and therefore of leaving offspring. In this way natural selection acts on existing variation and gradually leads to increases and decreases in certain characteristics in the population. This suggests that components of the face such as the eyes and nose are replicas of those in our ancestors whose design worked better than alternatives, thereby enabling them to become our ancestors.

Psychologists have appropriated elements of the evolutionary biology approach and hitched this to a computational model of the mind in order to better understand the processing of the human face, among other things (see Bruce et al., 1998; 1996). In this view the modern human face is construed as the product of an adaptive process, for example where eyes are located at the front of the head to enable stereoscopic vision and the computation of depth to enable hunters to locate prey. Humans are construed as problem solvers whereby action is based on the evaluation of initial states and goal states and moderated by feedback. In this respect the process of categorization like the rest of the mind is an adaptation that keeps track of aspects of the world that are relevant to long-term well-being. Categorical stereotypes are not always accurate but neither are they always false. Pinker argues that stereotypes can be inaccurate when a person has no first-hand experience with the stereotyped group, or when it belongs to a group to which the person is hostile. (2002, p.205).

COMPARISON OF SPENCERISM AND MODERN EVOLUTIONARY ACCOUNTS

Within the evolutionary explanation the face is taken ultimately a signifier of the fact that the bearer has “good genes”. Etcoff (1999) suggests that an eye for beauty locks onto faces which show signs
of health and fertility just as one would predict if it had helped the beholder to find the fittest mate. Researchers tend overall to share the assumptions that there is an innate component to face recognition and that this is universalistic. The similarities and differences between early and modern evolutionary accounts are discussed below in relation to innateness, degeneracy and averageness, particularity and universality and stereotyping.

INNATENESS

The process of transforming physiognomy into a “science” in the 18th and 19th centuries took a number of courses, of which the common denominator consisted of the construction of a system of classification. During this transformation, the subject of physiognomy began to change from an emphasis on the identification of characteristics to signify personages of rank and status towards the identification of those of degeneracy, and “socio-biological decline” (Pick 1993). Wells (1871) focused on analogies of the resemblance of human to animal faces in attributing “asinine,” “hoggish” and “leonine” characteristics to their owners. On the other hand Spark (1891) and Stocker (1900) developed quasi-phenological schemes each of which divided the face and into a set of relevant zones for the analysis of character. This led to the development of racist schemes, whereby authors would map the various “links” on the “great chain of being” (as in “from fish to men,” William 1929). A favorite pursuit for nineteenth-century writers was to locate one aspect of the face and to take this as a metonym from which to project the entire character of those races which were higher and lower on the chain of being. Beddoe (1862), the first president of the Anthropological Institute, emphasized the vast difference in character between those who possessed a prognathous jaw (protruding) jaw and those who had an (orthognathous) jaw. He linked the former to the “Celtic race,” including the Irish and Welsh, in addition to the lower-classes, whereas (Anglo-Saxon) men of genius were described as having an orthognathous jaw.

Rather than assuming that differences between groups of people are innate, current research has attempted to locate, and explain, universally innate processes of face recognition. One study showed that people have the ability to contrive the pattern of a “real” face in a moving configuration of lights (Bassili 1978). Research on human infants suggests that face learning is guided by some innate specifications of what a face looks like (Goren et al. 1975; Johnson, Dzurawiec, Ellis, & Morton 1991), although, in line with universalist principles, much of the research is based on animals. The likely process involved is based on Johnson et al.’s (1985) study of imprinting in young chicks which concluded that two processes are responsible for young birds’ ability to recognize their mother. The first is an initial representation of the visual characteristics of mother birds in general is built into the nervous system in some way that does not require the experience of a mother bird. Secondly, exposure to one particular bird causes this representation to be refined, so that details of a young bird’s own mother as distinct from others are incorporated. Further research by Johnson and Horn (1988) suggests that birds tend to recognize a hen specifically on the basis of the configuration of the head and neck region. On the basis of such research authors such as Bruce et al. (1994) suggest that while human infants have innate knowledge of “faceness” and of certain facial gestures, other face-processing abilities appear to be learned. That certain features of face recognition are innate is supported by Gong et al. (2000). It is also argued that facial attractiveness serves a deeper purpose than aesthetic value in communicating that its owner has “good genes.” Why otherwise is it that babies who are “cute” receive more attention than others (Hildebrandt & Fitzgerald 1983) or that in studies of art portraiture the more attractive the sitter, the more a painting is liked (Zaidel & Fitzgerald 1994)?

FROM PARTICULARITY TO UNIVERSALITY

As mentioned above (Pick 1993), physiognomists and phrenologists were concerned with the particular, through identifying and isolating the “degenerate” in their midst. As explained above in the section on innate-ness, modern researchers have abandoned the humanist standpoint in order to embrace a universalist approach by extrapolating from animal to human patterns of behaviour. For example Ekman (1982) supports two of the claims made by Darwin (1872), that evolution played a role in the human expression of emotion and that all humans groups have diverged from a common ancestor. While this has recently been the subject of some debate between Russell (1994) and Ekman (1994), Bruce et al. (1996) argue that there is some degree of universality in judging posed emotional expressions to one of a few fairly broad categories. This is supported by Perrett et al. (1994) who found agreement between Western and Japanese subjects about which faces were considered most attractive but who argued also that there was a strong learned component to this. Chen et al. (1996) study a by Buss (1988) who found facial attractiveness (expressed in terms of symmetry, an absence of deformities, unblemished skin, clear eyes and intact teeth) to be universal across thirty seven cultures. While the shift towards the idea of a common humanity or ‘human-kind’ rules out the logic of eugenics which was based on the flawed interpretation of Darwin’s theory, new evolutionary theories which have caste aside humanist principles, detect little that is special in the “human animal” (Pinker 2002).

FROM “DEGENERACY” TO AVERAGENESS

The fear of degeneracy led early “scientific” research to focus on the identification of normal and abnormal faces. In the wake of the publication of Darwin’s major work in the late 1850s, there emerged a debate concerning the relations between “averageness” and “normality” engaged in by Galton (1864/5) and Quetelet (see Horvath, 1973). Galton, Darwin’s cousin held that human evolution was subject to natural selection and the law of error and as a result that exceptional ability was the norm only a few families. Quetelet, no doubt inspired by Phidias’s notion of the Golden Section, on the other hand reasoned that those observations found in the middle of the bell curve as being “normal” or “average” would in turn be thought to be most socially desirable. Galton agreed with Quetelet that “normal” could be equated with the idea of, “average”, but that this should be linked in turn to “mediocrity”. Galton’s subsequent development of eugenics (based on his observations of the development of sweet peas) is based on the idea that over time, exceptional characteristics tend to revert to the average. In order to arrest this decline, he recommended that on the one hand the birthrate of the unfit be monitored and checked, and on the other the “fittest” should be improved by early marriages (Galton op.cit.). Such ideas became popular throughout Europe, its colonies and in the USA, leading to forced sterilization of ‘feeble-minded’ and sexual deviants and contributing to the notorious Nazi programme of sterilization first started in 1934 and culminating in the attempted mass genocide of “inferior” groups.

Modern researchers shifted the focus of study from that “degeneracy” to “averageness” in relation to the study of human facial attractiveness. They have been aided in their investigations through the use of composites first developed by Francis Galton (1878). Burt & Perrett (1995) employed digital techniques to “morph” faces by calculating the average position for 208 predefined points on each face, while also averaging its colour. They claim
that this significantly reduces the blurring effects experienced by Galton who computed an average face by centering on the eyes. The theory which underpins this research is that selection pressures will operate against extreme genotypes thus leading to the hypothesis that attractiveness will be based on the “average” face (See Symons 1979;—the underlying assumption is similar to the position adopted by Quetelet against Galton op. cit.). This hypothesis was supported in a number of experiments where composite faces with average features were judged as being more attractive than the individual faces from which they are constructed (Langlois & Roggman 1990; Grammar & Thornhill 1994). Perrett et al. (1994) challenged the claim that attractiveness is averageness. They felt that the idea that “averageness=beauty” was wrong because it would tend to favour what in biological terms is known as a “stabilizing” selection, rather than one which is the result of a “directional” selection. This is because a “stabilizing” selection would lead to in-breeding while “directional” selection would lead to selection of more extreme characteristics and out-breeding, which had been an observed characteristic in other species. Perrett et al’s study supported this hypothesis by finding that people tend to prefer a highly attractive over an average face shape. In line with the idea of selective out-breeding, they also hypothesized that face shapes of men and women whose secondary sexual characteristics were exaggerated (i.e. those faces which are rendered “dimorphic” by exaggerating features to heighten “masculinity,” through the development of more bone around the chin and forehead and “femininity,” through the development of a “baby-face” with larger eyes, higher eyebrows and smaller chins) would be preferred to average shapes. This reasoning behind this hypothesis is that the development of such secondary characteristics signifies that the bearer has a higher than average quality immune system (testosterone decreases the effectiveness of the immune system and so only those who own high-quality immune systems can afford to develop such secondary characteristics). They argued that other studies of non-human species supported this hypothesis and in a separate paper, Little and Perrett (2002), that survey evidence shows that male teenagers with “masculinised” faces were preferred over an average face in the male subjects. Perrett et al (1994) discussed their finding that subjects rate both men and women with “baby-like” faces as being more sincere and more naïve as reflecting reality by arguing that in simulated trials the “baby-faced” are less likely to be found guilty of charges involving intentional criminal behaviour and are given lighter sentences. They also report that the more “baby-faced” a man is, the more likely he is to perceive himself as being approachable, warm and less aggressive. They further argue that there is evidence that those who are rated as being “less honest” were more likely to volunteer in experiments that involved them in deception than people who were judged to be more honest. Little & Perrett (ibid.) themselves tested two ads, one featuring a “dominant” male featuring a masculine male face; the other a “caring” male featuring feminine-faced male. They argue that results confirm the existence of the stereotypes.

**DISCUSSION**

Even during their re-formulation as sciences in the early modern period, physiognomy and phrenology came under serious criticism. The philosopher Hegel referred to their scientific pretensions as nothing more than “empty subjective opinion,” refuting the idea “that the reality of a man is his face” and insisting that this is rather the deed (1800 orig. 193). Subsequent works that purport to be more scientific than Lavater are read nowadays with incredulity that the author ever believed they were anything other than the expression of the rudest prejudice (see Stocker 1900 as an example). Where the approach has actually conformed to the norms of natural science authors have been challenged on more prosaic grounds. Stigler (1986) has argued that Galton’s analogy between the normal distribution of physical characteristics, such as height and mental characteristics, such as ability was highly questionable. At the very least one would assume that it would be scientifically naïve to seek to link differences in “ability” directly to presumed “innate” characteristics supposedly linked to ethnicity and race without controlling for environmental factors. The Victorian task of classifying individual faces in terms of groups or types is explained by current social science as a means of justifying imperialism, for assessing strangers in rapidly developing cities (Sekkula 1989) or, when coupled with the “anthropometric” system developed by Bertillon, as a means of exerting disciplinary power over the masses (Tagg 1988). It is unsurprising given the grim legacy of the period up to and including World War II that those theories which provided an inspiration for genocide went into decline.

Contemporary evolutionary theorists claim that their approach is more truly Darwinian, arguing that earlier theories are not ex-

**STEREOTYPES**

As physiognomy and phrenology are intimately bound up with the classification of people into groups there are obvious links with stereotyping. Pinker (1997; 2002) argues that, in contradistinction to the conventional wisdom which regards stereotypes to be generalized fictions based on irrational social constructions, the process of categorizing which results in the creation of stereotypes is a valuable aspect of human processing ability. He further argues for the centrality of stereotypes (based on an admixture of first-order “fuzzy” processing and second-order “crisp” processing) in an evolutionary explanation. More controversially he claims that many stereotypes are statistically accurate, quoting research that teachers impressions of their individual students are not contaminated by stereotypes of race, gender or socioeconomic status but rather “accurately reflects the pupil’s performance as measured by objective tests” (2002, p.204; see Jussim et al. 1995; Jussim & Eccles 1995). He says that the partial accuracy of many stereotypes does not mean that racism, sexism etc. are acceptable but that many stereotypes can be inaccurate when a person has no first-hand experience with the stereotyped group, or when it belongs to a group to which the person is hostile (2002, p.205). Several authors support the view that stereotypes appear to reflect reality. For example Little and Perrett (2002) discuss their finding that subjects rate both men and women with “baby-like” faces as being more sincere and more naïve as reflecting reality by arguing that in simulated trials the “baby-faced” are less likely to be found guilty of charges involving intentional criminal behaviour and are given lighter sentences. They also report that the more “baby-faced” a man is, the more likely he is to perceive himself as being approachable, warm and less aggressive. They further argue that there is evidence that those who are rated as being “less honest” were more likely to volunteer in experiments that involved them in deception than people who were judged to be more honest. Little & Perrett (ibid.) themselves tested two ads, one featuring a “dominant” male featuring a masculine male face; the other a “caring” male featuring feminine-faced male. They argue that results confirm the existence of the stereotypes.
implicable according to Darwin’s logic. For example Pinker (2002) says that earlier explanations of Darwin’s theory of evolution as an explanation of moral and intellectual progress is a misinterpretation rather than as an explanation of how living things adapt to an ecological niche. In this view Galton’s idea that one could intervene in evolution discouraging the ‘less-fit’ from breeding is fallacious. These bold new Darwinians also seek to root their arguments in scientific soil. Biological explanations and methods have found a perch in the mainstream psychological tradition which holds fast to the individual as the locus for explanation; to a “Humean” conception of cause and effect; and to the (inappropriate) use of statistical methods in seeking to advance knowledge (see Harré 2002). Thus in relation to researching the human face the assumption is made that ‘attractiveness-recognition’ operates as a property of individuals and functions as a partially innate “good-gene-detection mechanism” and that this relation is demonstrable through the use of experimental designs incorporating the use of statistics. The focus on the individual may prematurely close off the possibility that interpersonal factors might have a role to play in relation to facial attractiveness (see Dixon 1996). One might also question the extent to which these studies focus on cause and effect to the exclusion of conventions and meaning. Harré (2002, p.617) argues that the end-result of statistical analysis in such situations simply shunts the focus from psychology as the science of individuals, to another track, that of demography. Evolutionary psychologists tend to regard the faces which they present to subjects as being “real” as opposed to 2D representations. Scott (1994, p.261) draws attention to the ways in which images produced by cameras render an image according to Western rules of perspective which adopt a single point of view which is stationary and where the field of vision which cannot be narrowed to see what humans see. Furthermore even when pictorial images are confronted as being realistic, the image is seen as being “real” but at the same time “we” (Westerners) know that it is not, because we have learned to overlook the unrealistic effect of transmuting three-dimensional information into a two-dimensional space. Scott argues that the implication of this is that there is a tendency towards universalism (in terms of the universalizing of “Western” constructions of images) and consequently of ethnocentrism in relation to the assumption that a photographic representation of an image such as a face is natural.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

How does the revised evolutionary approach sit against current theory in consumer research? One line of theory follows what Popper (Gombrich 1972, p.18), refers to as the “bucket theory” of the mind. For example the “copy theory” of image formation proposes that advertising and other images are simple representations of reality which are injected into the minds of passive consumers (Scott 1994). Scott shares with Pinker (2002) a concern to contest the bucket theory of the mind, which Pinker refers to as “Blank Slate.” However while Scott argues that the “copy theory” is ethnocentric in that it seeks to universalize and naturalize what are essentially learned processes which vary between cultures, Pinker draws the radically different conclusions that almost all human behaviour, including image processing, is to a large extent universal and that it is underpinned by innate mechanisms. These explanations may not be so theoretically at odds with one another as to rule out any commonality; for example each to an extent subscribes to a form of “computational theory of the mind;” however Scott’s insistence that pictures represent culturally constructed symbols is a long way from Pinker’s argument for the existence of a innate mechanisms which are universal across cultures.

A second and related area where such ideas will have an impact on consumer research is with respect to stereotyping. Over the years a number of social researchers have drawn attention to the pernicious effects of stereotypes and the ways in which these are communicated through mass media such as art and advertising (see for example Wortzel & Frisbie 1974; Goffman 1976; Pollock 1988a; 1988b; Chaplin 1994; Borgerson & Schroeder 2002). Evolutionary psychology arrives at stereotypes from the other direction; the need for the individual to categorize and to make sense of the world. On this basis they argue that stereotypes must have some validity in the world. Research evidence continues to provide support for the existence of one pervasive stereotype, that people continue to take external cues such as facial attractiveness as indicative of a person’s internal characteristics. Does this mean that these stereotypes contain more than a grain of truth, or should we regard them as being potentially perverse? If there is a core of truth to such stereotypes then following Dion, Berscheid, & Walster (1972) one would argue that a beautiful face signifies that the person is also a morally good person, because that is how they are viewed by others; that more attractive children are also more intelligent than others, because their teachers presume them to be so (Clifford & Walster 1973) and that more attractive candidates will be better managers, because they tend to be more favoured at interview (Bull & Rumsey 1988). The downside for those considered unattractive is not only that they may be discriminated against at school and in the workplace but also are likely be treated more aggressively by others (Alcock et al. 1998). An evident difficulty in terms of gauging the relative “truth” of such stereotypes is the variety of findings between studies. Frieze, Olson, & Russell (1991) seem to contradict Bull & Rumsey (op. cit.) by finding that attractive males and unattractive females are thought to be the best managers. Despite these reservations it is clear that evolutionary psychologists believe that the creation of stereotypes is an essential feature of the human processing apparatus and that they are pragmatic devices which hold some “truth” about the world. Consumer researchers who may disagree with this should look to their funding.

A third area is in relation to the explanation of gender differences in face recognition. Social research has tended to focus on the ways in which the mass media reproduce power inequalities through the portrayal of gender in advertising. Evolutionary biologists on the other hand seek to explain differences in the way in which the faces of men and women are read (see Zaidel, et al. 1994). A kind of “middle” stance is taken by Brophy (1982) who discusses gender differences in relation from an information processing perspective. Fourthly, an area where perhaps a fruitful exchange of ideas may take place is in relation to “visual rhetoric” (Scott 1994) or ‘tacit’ information processing (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002); the mechanisms by which consumers process faces when these are used as advertising symbols. As with the issue of stereotypes, evolutionary psychologists tend to work from the “inside-out” by focusing on how individuals process images; whereas there is a tendency in consumer research to focus from the “outside-in”, from the ad to the person. To illustrate the former, Young & Bruce (1991) have found that within the specific domain of human face processing, the visual and cognitive system still seems to keep separate the perception of facial expressions and other facial gestures from the perception of facial identity; that is, we can “recognize” a face but not know who it is. Zaidel, Chen, & German (1994) found that in reading 2-D images, both men and women tend to focus on the right hand side of a woman’s face in judging facial beauty but that this does not hold for a man’s face. In a further study Chen, German, and Zaidel (1996) explored whether this asymmetry was due to the physiognomy of the face of the observed or a property of perception of the observer, concluding that this is due to the physiognomy
of the face itself. Their reasoning for this finding is that; “Facial beauty is anchored in biology and survival of the species because it relays signals about reproduction and internal health more so than facial identity” (1996, p.475). On the other hand consumer researchers such as Schroeder and Borgerson (2002) recall the work of Archer (1983) who coined the term “face-ism” to describe the phenomenon whereby perceived intellectual and other qualities may be significantly affected by something as simple as the relative prominence of a person’s face in a photographic image. This research found that males are portrayed with more prominent faces in media images; a significant finding given that in a subsequent study it was found that that both men and women rated both sexes as being less intelligent, ambitious and attractive when portrayed with less relative facial prominence.

Finally there is the issue of the desire to be “average,” or “normal.” Evolutionary psychologists assert that there is an innate mechanism whereby those who possess more average faces will be perceived to be more successful by others. On the basis of this account some might be tempted to explain the current growth of plastic surgery procedures, such as rhinoplasty, as rational means employed by the bearers of abnormal noses to make these more average so as to increase their perceived evolutionary fitness. This would be to ignore the historical dimension, whereby the forebears of today’s evolutionary biologists instituted a biopolitical scheme of power that merged disciplinary and regularizing forms of control in the creation of a hierarchy of races, with some described as being good and others inferior (Foucault 1997, pp.254-5). The current demand for skin-lightening, leg-lengthening and for “European” noses appears to go much further than is suggested by evolutionary psychology and warrants further investigation.

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Acculturation and Body Image: A Cross-Cultural, Inter-G generational, Qualitative Study of Filipino- and Indian-Australians

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ABSTRACT

Prior research investigating the relationship between acculturation and body image has largely been quantitative. This qualitative study investigates how and why the process of change in values, attitudes, and standards when moving cultures (i.e., acculturation) that is experienced by two under-researched immigrant communities in multicultural Australia, namely, Filipino-Australians and Indian-Australians, might influence their body image perceptions. Two generations of these immigrant groups were compared with Anglo-Australians. The immigrant groups were found to be more relaxed than the Anglo groups with respect to their body image, which was indirectly impacted by the factors that shaped their acculturation experience.

INTRODUCTION

Body image has become the biggest worry for young people in Australia (Lunn 2007). Australia is a country that has become increasingly culturally diverse as evidenced by the increase in the number of countries from which people migrated in 1949 compared with 2009, namely, 35 compared with 185 countries (http://www.citizenship.gov.au/learn/facts-and-stats/). The number of overseas-born Australians is continually increasing and figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on 30 June 2009 indicate that nearly one in four Australians was born overseas. This research on body image investigates how and why the acculturation experience of two under-researched immigrant communities in Australia, namely, Filipino-Australians and Indian-Australians, might impact or influence their body image perceptions. Acculturation is defined as the process of change an individual experiences when they move from one culture to another. Values, attitudes, and societal standards can be adopted throughout this process (Berry 1990). Body image is viewed as being characterised by perceptions of, attitudes toward, and values about the body (Cash and Brown 1989).

Many cross-cultural body image research studies (e.g., Abrams and Stormer 2002; Ogden and Elder 1998; Pompper and Koenig 2004; Sheffield, Tse, and Sofronoff 2005) have involved ethnic participants who either reside in a Western country or have had significant exposure to Western values and attitudes. Some researchers like Soh, Touyz, and Surgenor (2006) believe that the results of these studies are restricted because they do not consider the possible influence of acculturation to the Western society on their participants’ body image perceptions. Consequently, this study aims to further cross-cultural body image research by examining the possible effect of acculturation on body image perceptions of Filipino-Australians and Indian-Australians; two immigrant communities that are typically under-researched even though they have grown in number in approximately the last two decades (Filipino-120,533; Indian-147,101), and are larger than most other immigrant groups listed in the top 50 except those from the UK (1,038,156), New Zealand (389,464), China (206,590), Italy (199,132), and Vietnam (159,894) (ABS, 2006 Census). Further, in order to clearly assess the role of acculturation and examine cross-cultural similarities and/or differences, body image perceptions of Anglo-Australians were researched. Specifically, the objectives of this research were to: (1) understand the impact that socio-cultural influences of media, peers, and family, might have on an individual’s perception of body image; (2) investigate any generational differences in body image perceptions; (3) identify any ethnic variations in body image perceptions across three cultures; and (4) investigate the factors that shape the acculturation experience and the impact they might have on an individual’s body image perceptions.

BACKGROUND

Body Image

Body image is an area of study that has evolved dramatically through time. It first originated from neurological roots in the early 20th century, where body image was primarily investigated to evaluate the effects of brain damage on distorted body perceptions. Not until the research of Paul Schilder (1950) did the study of body image perceptions extend beyond the effects of brain damage. He was the first to acknowledge the “fluidity” of body image and its application to not only the effects of neurological damage but also experiences of everyday life. Since Schilder’s time, the field of body image has experienced tremendous growth, particularly in the last two decades (Thompson 2004), where body image research has proliferated in divergent areas of research, ranging from the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences whilst still expanding its roots within the area of neurology and the medical sciences.

As the understanding of the construct of body image has evolved so too has the definition. Schilder (1950, p.11) first defined body image as “the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves.” Since that time, body image scholars have realised that it is far more complex than a static “image” which individuals form in their mind. Rather it is a “multidimensional construct characterised by perceptions of, attitudes toward, and values about the body” (Cash 2004, p.216) which is the definition that has been adopted for this research study.

Ethnicity and Body Image

Extensive research has been conducted in the area of ethnicity and body image, ranging from the effects of exposure to Western media (e.g., Pompper and Koenig 2004) to the impact of sociocultural influences (e.g., Abrams and Stormer 2002), to comparative studies of general body dissatisfaction across cultures (e.g., Ogden and Elder 1998; Sheffield et al. 2005). Studies have found that many cultures value body image in quite distinct and contrasting ways. It has been found that many non-Western cultures value larger body shapes and sizes in comparison to the Western slim ideal. For example, a qualitative study conducted by Farrales and Chapman (1997) explored the understandings and cultural meanings of body size, food and eating, and health amongst the Filipino women living in Canada. They found that Canadian beliefs promoted the desirability to be thin which demonstrated “being and feeling healthy.” Conversely, the Filipino informants valued “fatness,” which to them demonstrated that the individual “ate properly and was healthy.”

Acculturation

Berry (1990) defines acculturation as the process of change an individual experiences when they are in continuous contact with
another culture. Values, attitudes, and society standards are adopted within this process, impacting upon the individual’s development of ethnic identity. In past literature, acculturation was seen as a uni-dimensional (Spindler and Spindler 1967) and uni-directional (Graves 1967) process, involving an individual to gain the host culture’s values, attitudes, and behaviours, whilst concurrently relinquishing their native ethnic cultures’ values, attitudes, and behaviours. However, many contemporary researchers have come to view acculturation as a much more complex multidimensional process (Persky and Birman 2005). Berry (1990) identified four dimensions in which individuals experience the process of acculturation, namely, separation, assimilation, integration, and marginalisation. These four dimensions are based upon the degree to which the individual maintains his or her native cultural identity and the degree to which the individual has contact with the host culture.

Separation occurs when an individual wishes to maintain his or her native cultural identity, and does not wish to participate or come in contact with the host culture. In contrast, assimilation occurs when an individual does wish to participate quite regularly with the host culture and adopt its societal values and attitudes, whilst relinquishing his or her native cultural identity. Integration is viewed as the happy medium, whereby an individual wishes to both maintain their native ethnic identity and pursue his or her interest in the host culture with daily interaction. Marginalisation is considered to be the opposite of integration as it involves the individual to both ignore their cultural heritage and wish to have little contact with the host culture. Marginalisation tends to occur in situations of discrimination or social isolation.

Berry (1990) stresses that not every individual will experience the acculturation process in the same manner or to the same degree, and it is the influence of numerous internal and external societal factors which determines the nature or extent of an individual’s acculturation experience. For example, an individual may be experiencing levels of marginalisation in the workplace, while attempting to achieve integration by learning the host culture’s language.

Acculturation and Body Image

Past research that has investigated the relationship between acculturation and body image has largely been quantitative with the perspective that acculturation is a uni-dimensional process (e.g., Ogden and Elder 1998). The measures typically utilised in these research studies included language acquisition, language use and frequency, interpersonal relationships, and adherence to traditional values, which were collectively used to derive an acculturation measure (Cabassa 2003). Other studies have relied on proxy variables such as generational status, age at immigration, duration of time spent in the host country, and place of birth. Through the use of these proxy measures, acculturation is determined by the amount of time and exposure an individual has had with the host culture. These measures fail to capture how the individual balances cultural expectations of the two cultures as they experience acculturation. Measures such as these only attempt to determine where the individual “fits” in the linear continuum of acculturation, where an individual is forced to lose part of one culture to gain another. These measures therefore only provide an incomplete and fragmented picture of the acculturation experience. It is therefore important to build upon previous acculturation research studies and explore the experience that an individual goes through during the acculturation process. It is only then that a deeper understanding of the acculturation experience can be achieved and a fuller picture of the acculturation process can be obtained.

METHODOLOGY

This research study investigates how and why the acculturation experience might impact or influence an individual’s perception of body image. Given the dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of the body image and acculturation constructs, a qualitative focus group study was conducted to allow for a contextual and holistic investigation of the relationship between these two complex constructs.

Sample

The focus group sample consisted of female citizens of Australia from two generations, and with either Anglo, Filipino, or Indian heritages. The rationale for investigating these three groups has been previously provided (see “Introduction”). To recruit participants, we utilised social networks to contact members of each group of interest. The invitation contained details of the criteria we were looking for and requested that if the recipient knew of somebody who did fit the criteria, they should pass the invitation on to them. Incentives, in line with the university’s research ethics guidelines, were small gift vouchers. All participants matched the desired criteria for participation in their group.

Two generations of women participated in the focus groups; one younger (20-25 years approximately) and one older (43-55 years approximately). Both generations either were being educated at university or had graduated from university. The older non-Anglo generations had to be born and educated in the Philippines or India. However, all the younger generations had to be born and educated in Australia. Each focus group had 4-6 participants and was not mixed with participants from different cultures or generations. Thus, the six focus groups comprised of Older Anglo, Older Filipino, Older Indian, Younger Anglo, Younger Filipino, and Younger Indian Australians.

Two generations of women were studied because “generational status” is a common proxy variable used in quantitative acculturation research. It is employed under the premise that later generations experience acculturation at a much faster rate, whilst first generation participants tend to maintain and hold on to their ethnic values and attitudes fervently. First-generation immigrants are those born overseas, second-generation immigrants are those who were born in the host country but their parents were born overseas, and third or greater generation immigrants are those who were born in the host country along with their parents (Valentine 2001). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the acculturation process, generational status was employed in a qualitative manner in this research. This enabled the exploration of how first and second generation immigrants have dealt with the acculturation process and to what extent the adoption of Australian attitudes and values affects the development of body image perceptions across these two generations. Therefore, one of the Filipino-Australian focus groups comprised of first-generation immigrants, and the other, comprised of second-generation immigrants. Similarly, one of the Indian-Australian focus groups comprised of first-generation, and the other, of second-generation immigrants.

One must be wary as to whether any differences that are observed are due to external influences that are not acculturation related. Any differences that are observed might be a result of a generational cohort or developmental effect. A cohort effect is defined as the generational difference caused by the socio-cultural variables unique to their time in which they were raised, i.e., a mother and daughter would have been exposed to different body image ideals during their formative years, particularly with respect to ideas of ideal female body sizes and women’s roles (Forbes et al. 2005). A developmental effect is defined as the expectation that the level of body dissatisfaction differs due to the differences in
body size (Forbes et al. 2005). Therefore, in order to control for this, and ensure that acculturation differences are clearly captured in the Filipino and Indian generations, generational cohort and developmental effects were explored in the Anglo-Australian focus groups. Thus, one Anglo-Australian focus group comprised of women with Generation Y demographic characteristics. The other Anglo-Australian focus group consisted of women from the Baby Boomer Generation. Therefore, all the female participants in the younger focus groups were aged between 20 and 25 years approximately to ensure they fit Generation Y characteristics. Also, all the female participants in the older groups were aged between 43 and 55 years approximately to ensure they held the demographic characteristics of the Baby Boomer generation.

Apart from selecting two different generations, it was a requirement for the older Filipino and older Indian group members to have been born, and spent their formative years in the Philippines, and India, respectively. This was a criterion to ensure that they had thorough exposure to their native culture before migrating to Australia. In addition, all the participants in the six focus groups were required to be either currently attending university or university educated, to ensure that education was not a variable that could have affected results. Finally, in order to prevent the study of body image perceptions from getting distorted by the religious differences (e.g., between Indian Hindus and Indian Muslims) and geographic dispersion (indicated by Fiji Indians and Malay Indians, for example) of the Indian diaspora, the Indian groups were made...
up of only Hindus (pre- and post-marriage), and those in the older group had to be born and spent their formative years in India.

**Focus Group Data Collection**

In order to collect information related to the research objectives, a discussion guide was utilised which primarily consisted of a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) and open-ended questions under specific headings that were categorically linked to the conceptual framework. A flexible approach to moderating the focus groups was taken, as none of the questions were “fixed” but rather utilised as a guide to ensure that all the major themes were covered throughout the duration of the focus groups. Various stimuli (e.g., ads, images) as well as discussion tools and methods (e.g., indirect questioning, projective techniques) were used during the focus groups. All focus groups were audio visually recorded to allow for transcription and annotation to be undertaken for analysis.

**FINDINGS**

The findings of this research study are specifically aligned to the research objectives. Objective (1): Socio-cultural influences of Media, Peers, and Family on Body Image.

**Media**

Amongst all the sociocultural influences, the media was identified as the main influence on body image for the Anglo and Filipino groups. Media enabled these groups to not only gauge societal standards but also compare these standards with their own physical and psychological body image perceptions. Although they did not always aspire to the images in media, they did use them as a point of reference. This was not the case with the Indian groups; in particular, the older Indians were most critical of the media and did not use it as a reference point for themselves. Family, and not media, was the main influence for the Indian groups. These findings are reflected in the following examples of observations or comments:

*Older Anglo:* They were the group that were most aware of Trinny and Susannah (style gurus) and also made reference to other articles in the media. For example, “Did you read that bit in the papers the other day about the Wombatisation of Australians, how we all end up looking like a wombat at a certain age, more like an apple?”

*Younger Anglo:* “It’s a huge thing, when you think of body image these days, like I can tell you on one of the New Idea’s, or TV Week’s or whatever it was, in the supermarket, it had three pictures of like Keira Knightly and two other Hollywood stars, that said “Are they anorexic?”

*Younger Filipino:* “Celebrities, media—anything that sort of, puts someone else in front of you and gives you a comparison, like “do I look like them?”

*Older Indian:* “…the one thing that I do not like about advertising is women being projected as bodies in media….that is demeaning.” (*Another Older Indian agrees.*)

*Older Anglo:* “I think I have always had support and positive feedback from my husband…”

*Younger Indian:* “(When) mum’s dressed up a bit, he’ll (father) be like “oh, you look really nice,” that kind of thing. That positive reinforcement kind of comes back to me as well…”

**Peers**

The younger generation Anglo and Filipino participants also used their peers as a standard for comparison, which affirms the adoption of Social Comparison Theory in past research. The younger generation Indians did not view their peers or media to be as influential as their family (mums, in particular). Older generation Indians did not use their peers as a standard for comparison. As aforementioned, family had a far greater influence on both Indian groups. These findings are reflected in the following examples of observations or comments:

*Older Indian:* “…I guess what I feel different with my colleagues is that we (Indians) don’t watch every little thing we eat in terms of calories, we are not bothered about what it will do to our tummy (laughs), we enjoy life.”

*Younger Filipino:* When questioned as to whether they were influenced by their peers, one of the younger Filipinos responded: “Sometimes I am. Like I’m the fattest out of you guys and I’m always like oh damn, I’ve got to lose weight, got to lose it.”

The younger Anglo women also viewed their peer group as a source of competition. When questioned as to whether men had an impact on their body image, they responded in the negative and that it was the women in their lives that had a greater influence on their personal body image perceptions. For example:

*Younger Anglo 1:* “I was just talking to someone just the other day about how women dress for women; women actually don’t dress for men.”

*Younger Anglo 2:* “I think we compete with women, like you (directed at Younger Anglo 1) were saying we compete with women all the time.”

*Younger Anglo 3:* “Yea that’s true, you walk down the street and I end up checking out other women.”

**Family**

As aforementioned, family had a greater impact for the Indian groups than the Filipino and Anglo groups. The Indian group commented on the important role of husbands in how their daughters (and wives) feel. The Anglo group were far less inclined to see husbands as being anything, other than as partners in their daughters’ self-esteem. For example:

*Younger Indian:* “My dad is always complimenting me, or he’ll be like, oh, you know, you really look nice in that dress or can I take a picture of you? that kind of thing...which I find really comforting.”

*Older Anglo:* “From when they were tiny both my husband and I have made it a strong policy never to comment on their body.”

*Younger Filipino:* “When it comes to my weight...the way my sister views her body and she constantly, you know, saying how fat she is and how she picks at every little thing about her body...I think when I see her do that so much, it makes me look at my body, maybe my legs are getting a bit chunky.”

Overall, the sociocultural influences of media, peers, and family impacted the informants’ perception of body image with ‘family’ and not ‘media’ emerging as influential for the Indian group and...
younger Filipinos have more opportunities and greater affordability

Objective (2): Generational Issues relating to Body Image

Significant generational issues also emerged from the focus groups, particularly between the Anglo-Australian focus groups. From the focus groups it was observed that body image was at the forefront of the younger generations’ everyday concerns, particularly in relation to “getting ahead” and succeeding in their careers. They felt that they needed to fit the mould and suit the Australian corporate identity.

Ambition and success were major concerns for the young Anglo group as most of them were nearing the end of their degrees. All of the girls acknowledged that body image had a huge impact on whether or not they were able to get their “ideal” job, and were ready and willing to use their image to their advantage, as a means of differentiation. For example:

Younger Anglo: “I think dress and how you present yourself is really big thing, because a type of dress presents the type of person you are… if you’re well presented then it creates the impression that you’re going to be a good employee that you’re going to do things properly and professionally…”

Body image, fashion, and general appearance held high significance in achieving personal career aspirations for younger Anglos. In contrast, the older Anglo generation remembered that when they were their age, it was a time when women were not even expected to work or become professionals in the workforce. Women were just expected to “meet a fella and have a family, end of story” as stated by one of the older Anglo women. This finding is somewhat similar to the older Indian group. They felt that they prioritized family rather than themselves (including beauty and appearance) to a greater extent than the younger generation. These findings from the older Anglo and Indian groups are reflected in the following comments:

Older Anglo: “The children have to be all ready for bed and all glowing. And dinner went on the table five minutes after he walked in the door.”

Older Indian 1: “What I feel is that, for us, we are not the priority, like we have not been brought up like that; it’s always been our family, our parents, our brothers, and our sisters (Older Indian 2 nods in agreement). It’s never about us, it’s never about I need this right now, I need to look good…”

Older Indian 2: “...the younger generation is so much more focused in life, and so much more confident, I don’t know whether it is that shift to thinking about yourself and not thinking about the family or striking a balance where you don’t ignore yourself.”

The older Anglo group felt that the younger generation have become more materialistic, more concerned with themselves and their image, and have become somewhat ‘ungrateful’ but that they were just as concerned with their body image when they were their daughter’s age, particularly during their adolescent years in the seventies. This was partially in line with the older Filipino group. They believed that the younger generation are much more materialistic compared to when they were their age and because the younger Filipinos have more opportunities and greater affordability and access to consumer goods, they have become more concerned with appearance, body image, and fashion. From the Indian groups, it appeared that the older Indian generation felt that they were more focused on family rather than themselves (including beauty and appearance) unlike the younger generation who focused on themselves and their family in a more balanced manner and did not give primary importance to just the family. Overall, the findings revealed generational differences among the Anglo, Filipino and Indian groups with the older generation perceiving the younger generation to be more confident or concerned with their appearance including body image.

Objective (3): Ethnic variations in Body Image perceptions

Ethnic variations in body image perceptions were identified between the Anglo and Filipino cultures. It was observed that Filipino-Australian women did not place as much importance on their body image as Anglo-Australian women. This was particularly evident in the younger Filipino group. Similarly, Indian-Australian women, and especially the older group, were far more relaxed with the shape of their body compared to Anglo-Australian women. One older Indian mentions: “...as Indian women we are not obsessed with our body shape (the others nod in agreement), um, I think we are....we enjoy everything (implying all types of food and drink). With respect to the anatomy, it was found that the younger groups with Filipino and Anglo heritages placed high importance on their bust area but the younger Indian group felt that Indian women would tend to focus on their hips and stomach (i.e., abdomen, and not necessarily the waist). The older Anglo group felt that the waist would also typically be a concern for many Anglo women.

Overall, the findings revealed cultural or ethnic differences among the Anglo, Filipino and Indian groups with the Anglo group being more concerned with their body image than either the Filipino or Indian groups, who were a bit more relaxed. Additionally, it was found that when discussing body image with respect to anatomical parts, the Anglo and Filipino groups were concerned with the upper half and the Indian groups with the lower half of the body.

Objective (4): Acculturation experience and Body Image

The acculturation experience presented itself in various forms across the two non-Anglo groups. The issues of homesickness, uncertainty, and loneliness were a few issues that were shared amongst the groups. Homesickness was particularly evident during religious and traditional events of the year. However, it was found that these types of experiences had a direct relationship with time of arrival and whether or not friends or family were in Australia prior to arrival.

With respect to objective 4, it was observed that the acculturation experience impacted the Filipino-Australian participants in various ways. Generational differences were particularly evident, as the younger and older generation had vastly different acculturation experiences. Although there was no direct relationship between the acculturation experience and the individual’s body image perceptions, the younger generation Filipino-Australians did feel discomfort in the discrepancy of “feeling” Australian, but not “looking” Australian. This discrepancy not only impacted on the formation or development of their ethnic identity but also highlighted the interaction and integration of ethnicity, ethnic identity, and appearance (including body image) that acculturating individuals experience.

The issue of acculturation and body image was investigated by questioning the younger Filipino group how a Filipino woman would deal with the issue of body image if she migrated to Australia when she was in her adolescent years. Would her concern with her body image be similar to that of an Anglo-Australian at the age of
This research investigates these issues for two under-researched continually surface in media and the lives of women in most cultures. desirability bias' (Fisher 1993). projective techniques will have minimized the impact of 'social desirability bias.' Participants might have adopted what extrapolations (Patton 2002). Another limitation is the possibility different characteristics. As such, we are limited to making reasonable search study, the findings might not apply to other populations with or fashion/grooming.

The older Indian group identified schools and teachers as factors that contributed somewhat or indirectly to the issue of acculturation and body image for younger Indian-Australian women. For example, one older Indian commented: “...schooling also helps because the teachers are giving you right values….and influence….you, and I’ve seen that in my daughter in school.” Schools were also acknowledged by younger women. The younger Indian group mentioned that simply growing up in Australia meant that they have different views regarding body image. One younger Indian commented: “I think because growing up in Australia, just being in a Western culture, we’re accustomed to a slim looking figure as being the ideal whereas mum’s grown up in India, where traditionally, they are slightly curvier, overweight.” The younger Indian group were very aware of their parent’s efforts to balance the two cultures, and the extent to which the parents had exposure to the Australian way of life as well as the past or present influence of their family back home in India, impacted this balancing act. One younger Indian woman commented regarding her mother: “I think my mum’s taken a more Australian appearance now...her hair’s quite short, which is something that’s...that was outrageous when she went over there (India)...it was definitely something that got my grandma looking at her like what’s going on?...Also, she dresses Australian all the time (over here)...in terms of...she won’t be wearing a salwar kameez or a sari (latter two are traditional garments which often cover the shape of the body).”

The older Indian group were very aware of how hard they make it for their children by holding on to the Indian cultural values. One commented: “children are torn between family values and our thoughts in a way and what they learn in school, the people they interact.” Another commented: “I think they try to fit into the local culture (i.e., Australian) by being like local but I think we don’t or may not approve of everything because our cultural and family values are different, so they try and fit into the house culture as well.”

Based on the foregoing, it is evident that for the two immigrant groups researched, their acculturation experience is shaped by factors such as schools and teachers, growing up in Australia and/or being exposed to the Australian lifestyle as well as the extent to which they held on to the cultural values of their heritage. The impact of these factors on body image appears to be indirect yet reflected in issues of appearance whether it be related to the anatomy or fashion/grooming.

LIMITATIONS

As a relatively small number of people participated in this research study, the findings might not apply to other populations with different characteristics. As such, we are limited to making reasonable extrapolations (Patton 2002). Another limitation is the possibility of 'social desirability bias.' Participants might have adopted what they considered to be the socially “acceptable” stances (Maccoby and Maccoby 1954). However, the use of indirect questioning and projective techniques will have minimized the impact of 'social desirability bias' (Fisher 1993).

CONCLUSION

Body image and issues surrounding it are complex areas that continually surface in media and the lives of women in most cultures. This research investigates these issues for two under-researched immigrant communities in multicultural Australia, namely, Filipino- and Indian- Australians. The role of acculturation and its impact on body image is assessed for these communities who often try to strike a balance between the values of their heritage and those of Australia. It was found that both these immigrant communities are a bit more relaxed when it comes to body image perceptions unlike Anglo-Australians. However, they are not necessarily relaxed when trying to balance the values of their heritage and those of Australia; an area which affects and is affected by their acculturation experience and indirectly impacts their perceptions of body image. This research has only scratched the surface of body image issues for immigrants living in Australia. Future research could investigate body image and acculturation issues for other immigrant communities and examine the relevance or appropriateness of marketing strategies used by corporations providing a variety of beauty, fashion, and other image-enhancing goods and services to multicultural communities.

REFERENCES


Consumer research has sought to challenge and move away from classical models of behaviour by drawing on alternative traditions from across the social sciences which emphasize the cultural, sociological, anthropological, ideological and historical systems of consumer society and the place of the individual within them (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Within this broader socio-cultural paradigm of the consumer there is a growing space for discussion of issues related to the influence of reference groups, competitive consumption, conformity and upward social mobility via status-seeking consumption phenomena. While attention has been given to academics and theorists who have examined the processes of class consumption and social differentiation, such as Pierre Bourdieu (Holt 1998) and Jean Baudrillard, relatively limited detailed attention has been given to Thorstein Veblen’s (1899) The Theory of the Leisure Class, (Hereafter TLC) a foundational and seminal text for these concerns and issues. The TLC is one of the earliest and most complete accounts of the dynamics and structures of early American consumerism. Although many consumer researchers will be aware of some of the terminology popularised from the book—especially the term “conspicuous consumption”—surprisingly little research by marketing theorists and consumer researchers engages with the substance of Veblen’s arguments and observations (Mason 1998). Our paper invites readers to re-examine and re-imagine Veblen in more complete terms, and will show how a Veblenian inspired analysis can be useful and relevant not only in historical and theoretical terms but as a framework for understanding contemporary consumer culture. To achieve this we provide a Veblenian take on the autobiographical and confessional book, The Wolf of Wall Street (2008).

In TLC Veblen explicated how the use of possessions as means of indicating one’s success and prosperity has occurred for centuries and drawing insights from the barbaric stage of human development he described the use and exhibition of trophies, together with women and slaves, as means of fulfilling men’s craving for status. Focusing his analysis on modern industrial and developed societies, Veblen suggested that social status was signified through the possession, accumulation and exhibition of luxurious goods and status symbols which indicated one’s membership in an upper social class. Veblen emphasized that individuals’ motivation to emulate the consumption preferences and cultural practices of the class above played a fundamental role in the formation of social networks, class distinctions and social mobility via wasteful consumption. The primary association of Veblen’s name with the term conspicuous consumption, as a construct referring to the ostentatious economic display of the late 19th century, offers a simplistic and cursory representation of Veblen’s theory by treating his work as an historical account with limited relevance to consumer research of the 21st century. Veblen’s observations on the universality, timelessness and evolution of conspicuous consumption phenomena have substantially contributed to the development and disciplinary expansion of consumer demand theory; by explaining how consumer’s desire to achieve prestige via the exhibition of material possessions derives from irrational impulses and interpersonal relations. The individual’s tendency to seek social differentiation and distinction through consumption practices remain important. The meaning behind the symbolic use of luxury brands (Vigneron and Johnson 2004), cross-cultural studies related to the perception of materialism and conspicuous consumption practices, gender differences and status consumption (O’Cass and McEwen 2004) and the consideration of social class variables (for example income, occupation and education) as indicators of consumer behaviour (Henry and Caldwell 2008) constitute only a small sample of studies related to competitive consumption, emulation, product symbolism and conformity. Clearly postmodern society differs significantly to the patriarchal and strictly social stratified societies Veblen described a century ago. Technology, mass consumption and demand for products together with new forms of media and marketing strategies have substantially altered the patterns and practices by which social status is conveyed and constructed through consumption. One might rightly conclude that the symbolic meaning of luxurious goods and status symbols, described by Veblen in the TLC, has been significantly transformed by marketing technologies into branding strategies (Holt 2004) and studies of the dynamics of sophisticated reference group theories and cultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Escalas and Bettman 2005) have shown that social class comparisons play a negligible role for consumer motivation. In these terms Veblen’s theory has few things to add in a dynamic and extensive field of consumer research.

However, apart from the description of extravagant consumption patterns and the grandiose display of luxury goods, Veblen explored how conspicuousness and social status considerations have been communicated through both sophisticated and aggressive social practices such as violent destruction of goods, the aesthetic role of women, adventurous leisure activities and access to forbidden substances. We illustrate our argument about the relevance of Veblen’s ideas to contemporary CR through a critical review of the bestselling memoir The Wolf of the Wall Street (2007). This book will be employed as a narrative so as to examine and elaborate on how modern representations of the TLC can be found in the consumption habits, caprices and lifestyles of the contemporary New Rich.

**THE WOLF OF WALL STREET**

The Wolf of the Wall Street is the autobiography of Jordan Belfort, a stock market manipulator, founder and managing director of the brokerage firm Stratton Oakmont in the mid-1990s. The book includes a brief mention to Belfort’s upbringing in a middle-class Jewish family in Queens, together with retrospective references throughout the story, and pays attention to few events before his career in Wall Street since 1993. Belfort narrates mainly describing scenes, using dialogues and confessions—the heights of his career as a senior stockbroker who secured immense wealth through a range of illegal financial practices such as tax evasion, money laundering and customer swindling up to his arrest for fraud by FBI agents in 1997. Apart from exposing and demystifying the
“dark side” of illegal stock market activities, the author illustrates how increased wealth and financial success allows immersion in a competitive lifestyle which is increasingly characterised by excess, overspending, illicit consumption of drugs, indulgence in illicit sexual pleasure seeking, risky physical behaviour and trophy wives. Belfort’s book depicts real events and historical accounts but reads like a fiction about a life of unbridled hedonism, unethical behaviour and repentance. Around Belfort’s risk-taking lifestyle, we find depictions about the lifestyles of his wife, employees, friends and relatives. The opening chapters offer some detailed accounts on Belfort’s luxurious and lavishly decorated house followed by the profligate spending activities of his wife, an ex-model. Subsequently, the author provides vivid depictions of the brokers employed in his firm and how their desire for upward social mobility infused a spirit of aggressiveness and antagonism in their professional and social practices. Especially for the young members of the firm, staggering wages and escalating bonuses resulted in growing consumption of status symbols and induced the emulation of the lifestyles those who held senior managerial positions. Belfort’s narrative of a world full of superfluous spending, expensive drugs, luxury prostitution and holidays reaches its climax by describing the leisure activities of his close friends and colleagues: an extended group of newly rich real estate brokers, businessmen and lawyers. The final part of the book focuses on the ethical and psychic decadence of the main protagonist, caused by the destructive outcome of his drug addiction and legal problems, resulting in rehab, arrest, imprisonment and failure of his marriage. In conclusion, Belfort adopts a stance of moral repentance against his excessive and illicit former ways.

Following the tradition of previous studies in marketing and consumer research (for example Holbrook and Grayson 1987; Fitchett 2002) which illustrated and structured interpretive insights of consumption practices through the use of films, popular cultural and fiction, this study aims to rethink Veblen’s observations in the TLC through Belfort’s narratives and accounts about the aggressive social practices and drug lifestyles of a business community. In a comparative manner, Veblen’s descriptions about the socially driven lifestyles of the Leisure Class will stand next to the habits, non-productive consumption of time and consumption practices of Belford together with his business partners and associates. Therefore, we seek to interpret some of the motivations and desires of the characters illustrated in Belfort’s book through Veblenian lens and argue that the TLC can represent a platform for analysis of contemporary status-seeking phenomena and leisure activities.

CONSUMER RESEARCH AND THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS

As a thinker and writer, Veblen possessed a unique skill in synthesizing and discussing diverse academic literatures—with emphasis on economics and anthropology—along with critical observations from everyday life experiences and socially-driven phenomena. His first and foremost book, the TLC, is an exemplar of Veblen’s interdisciplinary background and possibly his humorous comments on the superficial habits of the leisure class contributed to the reception of his theory as a satire and his characterization as a critic of consumer culture. Overall, Veblen’s theory incorporates a generic and incomplete framework as regards the interrelations between individual property, social class distinctions, ostentatious and wasteful economic display, mimetic behaviour, consumer’s dissatisfaction and social status considerations. Veblen suggested that contrary to rational decision making and utilitarian needs, a significant part of our consumption practices is motivated and driven by the need to secure social standing. In the first chapters of the book, he explored how social status considerations have been transmitted and adopted though habits, instincts and propensities from the barbaric stage of human communities to modern industrial societies. Veblen claimed that we can view the symbolic display of luxurious commodities, extravagant spending and organization of lavish parties as modern adaptations and expressions of barbaric traits and practices such as the demonstration of trophies, possession of slaves and antagonistic activities related to hunting and fighting. For Veblen there is a diachronic motive behind these social actions:

“The propensity for achievement and the repugnance to futility remain the underlying motive. The propensity changes only in the form of its expression and in the proximate object to which directs the man’s activity. Under the regime of individual ownership the most available means of visibly achieving a purpose is that afforded by the acquisition and accumulation of wealth.” (Veblen 1899, p.33)

We argue that much of Veblen’s anthropological contribution to the interpretation of consumption phenomena and social practices is still neglected since his work has been primarily associated with hierarchical social structures and the top-down cultural influence of consumption choices. Very briefly, we notice that Packard (1959) elaborated on the increasing importance of cultural symbols, educational and occupational establishments as emerging signs of status and social positioning and Leibenstein (1950) updated Veblen’s theory with the term “bandwagon effect” referring to individual’s need to possess expensive commodities so as to associate his/her lifestyle with a superior status group. The Veblenian descriptions of status-seeking consumers seem to be very close with Riesman’s (1961) “other-directed” individuals, whose consumption habits are governed by luxury fashion and the opinion of peers. Moreover, Veblen can be considered the intellectual ancestor of Galbraith (1984), as an unorthodox economist who attacked the standardized economic assumptions of consumer demand, and the ideas in the TLC have informed Bataille’s (1949/1988) work on excess and waste as outcomes of consumer action. Certainly, Bourdieu’s (1984) theory on class consumption and the diffusion of “tastes” can be viewed as the most thorough update and extension of Veblen’s ideas. Finally, Veblen’s anthropological insights have been revisited by Baudrillard (1981) who explored how the “sign value” of commodities communicates individual’s differentiation and distinction and Douglas and Isherwood (1979) who suggested that the social meaning of possessions plays a fundamental role in the restructuring of status hierarchies. In the following part of this paper, we seek to rethink the insights of TLC by offering a Veblenian analysis behind the dominant consumption patterns of the main protagonists in the Wolf of Wall Street (WoWS henceforth).

A VEBLENIAN ANALYSIS OF WOWS

The ironies and eccentricities in the behaviour of “leisure class” consumers didn’t go unnoticed by Veblen who emphasized that the display of inherited, rather than acquired, wealth truly distinguished and culturally reproduced social barriers between the “old money” families and ambitious status seekers. Following Veblen, the possession of status symbols, pecuniary evidence and emulation of sophisticated and often peculiar behaviours and cultural practices constituted the basic means for middle class status strivers willing to participate in the status game and upgrade their social position. We observe similar desires and ambitions for upward social mobility via the display of wealth, not only in Belfort’s early career but also in the social and consumption practices of his young employees in Stratton Oakmont.
EMULATION, WEALTH AND STATUS SYMBOLS

The opening of the WoWS offers a synoptic outline of Belford’s first-day in the Wall-Street back in 1987, as beginner in a company’s training programme and low level connector between customers and senior stock brokers. Belford names the period as “the era of the yuppies” and recounts his first impression of meeting a senior stockbroker or in his own words a “Master of the Universe.” The Wall Street Journal on the desk, gross income of $600.000, crocodile shoes, a $2000 suit and an uncontrolled coke habit synthesizes and mirrors the image and lifestyle of a successful and promising Wall-Street professional. In the next chapter Belfort moves the plot in 1993, without reference to the intervening years, and gradually discloses that he had already accomplished a great degree of financial success and social recognition. An idyllic morning finds him married with an ex-model, a young daughter, and ten domestic servants in an ultra-expensive villa at the suburbs of New York City. His metamorphosis into a wealthy, upper-class owner of a brokerage firm is manifested through the commodities which surround him and of course his clothes: Chinese silk in the bedroom, a helicopter, Ferrari car, gold Rolex and Bulgari watches, limos and a yacht named after his wife are only few of the honorific symbols that indicate Belfort’s social status and appetite for more. The author acknowledges that the speedy accumulation and consumption of wealth had rapidly elevated his previous standards and offered him the chance to taste new experiences and establish wider social relations.

Yet, ironically, that was exactly what my very life had come to represent. It was all about excess: about crossing over forbidden lines, about doing things you thought you’d never do and associating with people who were even wilder than yourself, so you’d feel that much more normal about your own life” (Belfort 2007, p.33)

Belfort’s upward social mobility, from a middle-income assistant in a brokerage firm to an upper class millionaire stockbroker, was accompanied by the exhibition of material culture but primarily it was driven from an insatiable desire for more excess, wealth, power and risk-seeking activities. According to Veblen, the accumulation of property and wealth enhances the incentive of emulation, generates more insatiable desires and stimulates competition for financial resources and accumulated wealth. The inevitable comparison amongst individuals in modern societies has an enormous impact on their self-perception and subsequently self-esteem leading to the dissatisfaction of the conspicuous consumer. In Veblen’s words:

“…this chronic dissatisfaction will give place to a restless straining to place a wider and ever-widening pecuniary interval between himself and this average standard. The invidious comparison can never become so favourable to the individual making it that would be not gladly rate himself still higher relatively to his competitors in the struggle for pecuniary reputation.” (Veblen 1899, p.20)

Following Veblen, Belfort remains trapped within a continuous cycle of emerging needs and consumption activities related to the maintenance and improvement of his reputation, image and social status. Sitting in the back of his luxurious limo, Belfort outlines his thoughts and feelings about the middle-upper class area where he lives, surrounded by exclusive golf and country clubs and stables where the wives of the businessmen (including his wife) take riding lessons and keep their private horses. In an aggressive and super-ambitious manner, Belfort narrates that his competitiveness, hard work and ambition overshadowed his middle-class background and allowed him not only to achieve but also override the social and economic standards of the small and affluent suburb. Below, he refers to his “old money” WASP neighbours who had been living in the area.

“And while it was true that they still had their little golf clubs and hunting lodges as last bastions against the invading shetl hordes, they were nothing more than twentieth-century Little Big Horns on the verge of being overrun by savage Jews like myself, who’d made fortunes on Wall Street and were willing to spend whatever it took to live where Gatsby lived” (Belfort 2007, p.47).

Belfort adopts a warlike spirit and recognizes his burning desire to surpass his already established and reputable neighbourhoods in terms of social standing and wealth. A century ago, Veblen outlined the process of a competitive status consumption game which took place between middle-income individuals who aspired to emulate and outclass their neighbours in terms of wealth.

“But as fast as a person makes new acquisitions, and becomes accustomed to the resulting new standard of wealth, the new standard forthwith ceases to afford appreciably greater satisfaction than the earlier standard did. The tendency in any case is constantly to make the present pecuniary standard the point of departure for a fresh increase of wealth; and this in turn gives rise to a new pecuniary classification of one’s self as compared with one’s neighbours.” (Veblen 1899, p.20)

Through a close look at the TLC, we can trace Veblen’s concerns about the inherent dynamics of conspicuous consumption practices and social forces which result in individual’s failure to gain more satisfaction from his current social position. In Belfort’s case, the goal of the accumulating and displaying goods is the gratification of securing higher social ranking compared to his neighbours, but unavoidably the dissatisfaction with his current position prompts him to participate again and again in an endless game of status considerations. In the following chapter of the WoWS, Belfort arrives to his company and describes the consumption lifestyles of his successful young sellers and stock-brokers—the Strattonites-whose salary began from $250.000 a year and according to the author their motivation was “fuelled with greed.”

“After all, when you were a Strattonite you were expected to live the Life—driving the fanciest car, eating at the hottest restaurants, giving the biggest tips wearing the finest clothes, and residing in a Mansion in Long Island’s fabulous Gold Coast.” (Belford 2007, p.53)

Belfort refers to the socio-economic background of his employees as middle class kids from the suburbs of New York, whose reputation about their well-paid job spread all over America and attracted a plethora of candidates in Stratton’s interview office. The staggering salaries promised a comfortable and ostentatious way of life and according to Belfort, the wages was doubled by year two and by year three most of stock-brokers could earn a million dollars. The possession of such wealth intensified the lavishness of their consumption lifestyles and stimulated them to strive in order to get the next bonus. We notice that Belfort’s narratives on the ambitions and insatiable desires of young and well-established stock-brokers (himself) can be reconsidered through Veblen’s interpretations about the incentives behind the aspirants to the upper classes.
BARBARISM, EXCESS AND CONSUMPTION

Veblen’s theoretical framework in the TLC embarked upon the on the accumulation of private and symbolic property as means of emulating superior social classes, nonetheless, gradually focused on materialistic excesses and above all wasteful consumption activities. He argued that since a significant number of individuals were capable of displaying and consuming status symbols, in relatively affluent societies, the social function of extravagant and wasteful consumption gained prominence as indicator of social status.

“Throughout the entire evolution of conspicuous expenditure, whether of goods or of services or human life, runs the obvious implication that in order to effectually mend the consumer’s good fame it must be an expenditure of superfluities. In order to be reputable it must be wasteful.” (Veblen 1899, p.96)

Veblen claimed that the practices of conspicuous waste of goods and services in industrial societies proclaimed an aggressive spirit of modern-day barbarism that triumphed during ancient and feudal times. Updating Veblen’s observations, Bataille (1949/1988) noticed that excess, waste and symbolic destruction of wealth has superseded the importance of acquisition and display of commodities in terms of social distinction. Various examples of excessive and wasteful consumption can be found in the WoW in cases where Belfort causes the destruction of his enormous property and ignores the loss. Being high on drugs, Belfort drove his 170-foot motor yacht into a tremendous storm in the middle of the Mediterranean sea. His live recording rescue and the sinking of his boat are narrated as exciting events that added credibility to his fame and reputation of being adventurous. What is more, $700,000 weekly hotel bills, the impulsive and simultaneous purchase of a luxurious Aston Martin and convertible Rolls-Royce as gift to his partner, half-million dollar credit cards from casinos and $10,000 dinner bills conspicuously demonstrate Belfort’s capability and willingness to produce waste. His bachelor party had been a superfluous public performance of wasteful and competitive spending of money which included: hundreds of quests in one of the most expensive casinos of Vegas, huge portions of drugs, prostitutes, bodyguards and million dollar losses at gambling. Similarly, Belfort’s exotic wedding signified excess and waste. From a Veblenian perspective, Belfort, his employees and close associates employ wealth and excess as barriers of a distinctive lifestyle. In line with Veblen, Baudrillard (1981) claims that excessive, artificial and aggressive consumption practices, aiming to indicate prestige, function within the sphere of waste. During the first day as training employee, Belfort quotes the advice of an experienced stock-broker about the nature of their work and its impact on their lifestyle.

“The money is great and everything, but you are not creating anything, you’re not building anything. So after a while it gets kinda monotonous” (Belfort 2007, p.9)

The feelings of monotony, repetition of tasks and long working hours are neutralized and counteracted by the extravagant purchase and display of status symbols, in order to enhance owner’s social position, and also through unlimited resources to pleasures offered by the services of prostitutes. Throughout the book, Belfort highlights how his insatiable sexual appetite has been satisfied through paid sex with numerous “high class” hookers. Even if Veblen didn’t refer to erotic issues and sexual desires, he discussed how members of the leisure class considered the aesthetic and cultural superiority of their wives as a criterion of status. In a more aggressive manner which reminds barbaric traits, Belfort classified prostitutes into three categories-based on their beauty, personality, services and price-and highlighted that his financial strength allowed him to select the most expensive and exclusive women. In the final section, we elaborate on the symbolic role of women, illicit and unproductive consumption of time as discussed both by Veblen and the WoWS.

LEISURE, ILLICIT CONSUMPTION AND MORAL STATEMENTS

In the following section we will refer to some underexplored ideas and areas which can be found in the TLC, mainly the symbolic use of drugs and leisure as emblems of wealth and social standing. Observing the competitive acts of conspicuous waste of members of the leisure class, Veblen had been the first economist who shed some light on the consumption of intoxicating beverages and narcotics as honorific signs of “the superior status of those who are able to afford the indulgence” (Veblen 1899). In a similar manner, Belfort’s book is full of descriptions related to the unlimited consumption of drugs as symbols of distinction during his meteoric rise to fame and success. Vast quantities of cocaine and Quaaludes constituted the most desirable illegal substances for Belfort (almost on a daily basis) and his close associates during extravagant parties and weekends. As one of the fundamental aspects of the uncontrollable desire for illicit consumption, we notice that the high quality and prohibited prices of the specific drugs contributed to their classification as symbols of wealth, distinction and exclusivity for those who could afford to secure unrestricted possession.

The excessive spending of the American rich on unnecessary goods and services was summarized by Veblen with the term conspicuous consumption. However, a significant part of the discussion in the TLC has been devoted to the unproductive consumption of time and leisure activities. Securing enough wealth so as to establish and maintain themselves in the upper social classes, status-strivers began to participate in “competition in conspicuous leisure rather than conspicuous consumption of goods” (Veblen 1899, p.74). Abstention from work and any productive forces is a key feature in Veblen’s theory and the symbolic employment of (unproductive) domestic servants was signifying household’s capability to indulge in luxury and affluence. According to Veblen the maintenance of active and energetic servants suggests the evidence of wealth and status, however, “the maintenance of servants who produce nothing argues still higher wealth and position. Under this principle, there arises a class of servants, the numerous the better, whose sole office is fatuously to wait upon the person of the owner, and so to put in evidence his ability unproductively to consume a large amount of service.” (Veblen 1899, p.63).

The domestic services in Belfort’s house seem to verify and substantiate the contemporary relevance of Veblen’s account. Belfort outlines the synthesis of his diverse, extremely well-paid and mostly unproductive domestic help:

“There were five pleasantly plump, Spanish-speaking maids…a jabbering Jamaican baby nurse, who was running up a thousand-dollar-a-month bill, calling her family in Jamaica; an Israeli electrician..a white-trash handyman, who had all the motivation of a heroine addicted sea slug, my personal maid…the two armed bodyguards, who kept out the thieving multitudes, despite the fact that the last crime in Old Brookville occurred in 1693…five full-time landscapers…two full-time marine biologists…and the limo driver” (Belfort 2007, p.28-29).

Their services facilitate the excessive and unproductive lifestyle of Belfort’s wife, emulating the wives of other successful senior stock-brokers, and their symbolic presence corroborates
her belongingness in a superior social group. In line with Veblen, the increased desire for status and wealth ends up in individual’s “chronic dissatisfaction” with his current state since the social hierarchy always contains a higher step. Similarly, Belfort’s lust for extravagance, social status, power and illicit pleasures has created a vicious cycle of dissatisfactions which triggered a series of unpleasant events such as paranoia, legal problems, failure of his marriage, debts and imprisonment. In the final part of the book, the author adopts an apologetic and moral stance regarding his previous life and suggests that in the long term greed, excess and risk-seeking behaviour will have a destructive outcome on someone’s psychic and physic world. In conclusion, we can draw a parallel between Belfort’s confessions and Veblen’s critical standpoint as regards individual’s dissatisfactions caused by emulation, desire for excess and conformity to extravagant lifestyles.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This relatively short and brief examination has sought to illuminate and remind us of the breadth and depth of Veblen’s seminal work, and to show how the contribution of TLC extends well beyond a simplistic and superficial conspicuous consumption concept which identifies brands and other market/consumption related resources as important markers of social status and symbolic value. A Veblenian analysis offers a powerful method for examining manifestations of the barbarian temperament of some aspects of contemporary consumer culture (Metrovic 1993) and further highlights the necessity for consumer research to engage with notions of excess, waste and destruction in consumption. We have also sought to indicate how a Veblenian approach is well placed to offer relevant and contemporary insights as well as an historical one. While there are obviously many differences between the late Victorian consumption practices of the East Coast New Rich and those we witness today, many of the core structural components remain at least in some way comparable. Excessive sexual pleasure seeking, and rampant drug use did not readily feature in nineteenth century discourse in the same way that they are manifest today. These practices are much more than simple expressions of wealth and display. In a Veblenian sense they represent a statement about the relationship between labour and wealth, and the ways in which powerful and wealthy individuals consume goods and embark on certain types of practices to signify their elevation above the need to work and be productive. Veblen’s TLC can be also read as an invitation to revisit the commodity value of women as possessions for display, for sex and gratification and desire. In the end, after Belfort is convicted for his crimes he sees his wealth, power and status evaporate. He finds himself in drug rehab, divorced from his ‘trophy wife’, and presumably denied access to the prostitutes, luxury goods and servant classes that previously supported his lifestyle. Expelled from the leisure class, he is forced to live once again by his own labour–this time as a writer, and in order to do so much accept sobriety, suppression of sexual desire and a relinquishment of hedonism and excess.

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The sacred, being set apart and krathophanously powerful, must be approached appropriately. Consumer research has suggested that purity is necessary before the sacred can be approached, but has not explained how it can be achieved. Accordingly, I examine purity (a state of non-polluted perfection), and the role of three purification rituals—cleansing, contamination, and sacrifice—in preparing consumers to approach the sacred. I rely on research in Hindu Sociology to interpret interviews with Hindu consumers participating in weddings, funerals, and house-warming ceremonies. I explain how the three processes of purification operate to incrementally purify.

“Fields of purity exist like islands in a sea of impurity [that]... must be artificially created and specially maintained.” Harper (1964, p.193)

Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) describe the sacred as “more significant, powerful and extraordinary than the self” (p.13) and note that it should be set apart to avoid profanation. Although consumer researchers have examined consumers’ experiences at set-apart sacred consumption sites as diverse as Heritage Village (O’Guinn and Belk 1989) and Burning Man (Kozinets 2002), they have not yet examined how consumers prepare to approach and experiencing the set-apart sacred. Belk et al. (1989) suggest that purity is a necessary pre-condition to safely approaching the sacred, but there appears to be no published consumer research that addresses how purity is attained. Previous consumer research does, however, suggest some possible answers. For example, O’Guinn and Belk (1989) suggest contamination may be a possible transformative agent. Kozinets (2002) joined Sherry (1996) in calling for an investigation of sacrifice in consumption of the sacred. The importance placed on cleansing in diverse religions suggests ritual cleansing may also purify. However, previous research has not examined if and how these three mechanisms—cleansing, contamination, and sacrifice—can purify. Furthermore, the inter-relationships of cleansing, contamination, and sacrifice with each other, and with purity, have not been clarified.

Purity and its antithesis, pollution, are key cultural categories in Hindu culture (Das 1982). Consequently, I ground my empirical research in a Hindu context to allow me to more clearly explicate the processes by which consumers can purify themselves. Drawing on research in Hindu sociology (Das 1982; Douglas 1966; Srinivas 1952), I suggest that the processes of purification prepare consumers to approach the sacred. As I shall explain, purity is a state of non-polluted perfection—and purification involves removing or repelling pollution (elements that are incongruent with a pure state). My general purpose is to explicate the processes of purification. More specifically, I aim to: 1) define purity, 2) examine the inter-relationships of purity with the mechanisms of cleansing, contamination and sacrifice, and 3) elucidate how the processes of purification prepare the purified to approach the sacred.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Belk et al. (1989) define the sacred as “more significant, powerful and extraordinary than the self” (p.13). Their seminal work on the sacred, in keeping with Durkeimian tradition, holds that the sacred, being dichotomous from the profane, is in constant danger of profanation (Arnould and Price 2004). Consequently, the sacred must be set apart, and treated differently from the profane, to maintain its sacred status (Belk et al. 1989; Curasi, Price, and Arnold 2004). Belk et al. (1989) also note that because the power of sacred is krathophanous, or capriciously multi-valenced (Fernandez, Veer, and Lastovicka 2006), it should be approached with care.

Belk et al. (1989) state that sacrifice purifies and prepares the sacrificial to approach and commune with the sacred, suggesting to us that purity is a necessary pre-condition to safely approaching the sacred. The view that candidates for Roman Catholic sainthood should have lived a life of chastity, piety, and renunciation of earthly pleasures (Woodward 1990), resonates with the belief that extreme purity is necessary to approach the sacred (Callois 1952; Davis 1997; Harper 1964). However, the extant consumer research does not define purity, nor does it explicate the processes by which it can be achieved.

O’Guinn and Belk (1989) opine that some sort of transformation is needed before secular things can become sacred, and offer the example of contamination (the transfer of essences between two entities) as a possible transformative agent. This suggests to us that an examination of contamination may fruitfully reveal insights into the processes of purification. Kozinets (2002) suggests that sacrifice can effect self-transformations, and joins Sherry (1996) in calling for further investigation of the role played by sacrifice in consumption of the sacred. This research answers their call by considering the role of sacrifice in purificatory processes. Finally, the importance placed on cleanliness and cleansing substances such as water and fire in diverse religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, suggests to us that ritual (leno 1985) cleansing may also be an agent of purification.

In summary, consumer researchers, who have predominantly examined contemporary Western consumers, have not yet specifically focused on the processes by which cleansing, contamination, and sacrifice effect purification. This limits our understanding of how consumers prepare themselves to approach and experience the sacred. Mary Douglas observes “we must recognize our own fundamental assumptions for what they are: the creation of our place and time” (Dumont 1972, p.13) and suggests foreign cultures, particularly Hindu India, as fruitful perspectives from which to challenge contemporary Western culturally bound perceptions. Accordingly, I rely on research in Hindu sociology and participant observation of modern Hindu Indian consumer rituals, to better understand the processes of purification. Grounding this empirical research in an Eastern context where purity is a critical meaning category (Das 1982), permits a clearer explication of the processes by which consumers can purify themselves and their possessions.

Traditional Hindu Perspectives on Purity

Carman (1985) notes that purity, in the Hindu view, requires an absence of pollution which he defines as an element incongruent with the pure, desired state. I define purity more parsimoniously, as a state of non-polluted perfection. Although purity is not the same as authenticity (the perception that something is the “real thing”), the two concepts are related. For example, an authentic new violin for sale in a music store is expected to look perfect (i.e. be pure) and to be without defect (i.e. without pollution). Its authenticity may be judged largely on the basis of its brand, packaging and price. However, an instrument purporting to be a vintage Stradivarius violin may be rejected by a prospective buyer as inauthentic, if it looks too perfect—instead imperfections are considered to be indexical evidence (Grayson and Martinec 2004) of its authenticity.

Attaining and maintaining purity requires ritual purification. In the traditional Hindu view, people, objects, and substances
(“elements”) differ both in their innate state of purity and in their ability to receive and transmit pollution (Bayly 1986). An entity in its ordinary state, termed “normal ritual status” (Srinivas 1952), exists on a continuum between ritual impurity and ritual purity. Contact with less pure, or polluted elements moves that entity along the continuum towards ritual impurity while contact with purer elements moves that entity toward ritual purity. Thus, as our epigraph states, purity must be created and constantly maintained.

The inter-relationships of purity and sacredness that is central to Hindu beliefs (Das 1982) are clearly illustrated Davis’ (1997) account of the manner in which Hindu priests worship an important image of a deity. He explains how Hindu rites of establishment are used to create an image of a deity that is fit enough for the deity to inhabit and act through. This involves a multi-stage process that begins with the selection of “pure and luminous materials that bear an innate resemblance to the deity” before the image of the deity is physically fabricated to ensure the deity is both “visually and symbolically represented” by the image (p.35). After being placed on a pedestal within a sacrificial pavilion, a priest awakens the image by drawing the eyes on the image with a golden needle and rubs the eyes of the idol with ungunteers and displays before it a series of special substances and persons including ghee [clarified butter], honey, grain, mantras [invocations], decorated virgins, and an assembled crowd of devotees. The image is washed and purified and adorned with clean clothes and adorned with suitable ornaments. The process is completed when the priest performs a rite of affusion—a rite that adds power and capacities to the image by pouring substances over it.

The Processes of Purification

Cleansing and Purification. Cleansing connotes removing unwanted substances. Much as consumers groom themselves daily to re-incorporate cultural meanings (Rook 1985), devout Hindus engage in ritual bathing to re-incorporate ritual purity. Although bathing with water is the most widespread method of removing ritual impurity among devout Hindus (Dumont 1972), biological cleanliness is not necessarily identical to ritual cleanliness or ritual purity. For example, ritual purification of the home (Srinivas 1952) can involve the urine and dung of cows, which may be seem polluting from a Western, biological perspective, but is considered pure from a Hindu religious perspective because they emanate from cows which are sacred to Hindus (Korom 2000). Thus practices such as devotees drinking the urine of Hindu priests to partake of its psychogenic properties (Belk 1988) which may seem repugnant from a Western perspective, are not perceived as so, within the culture of the devotees.

Sacrifice and Purification. Sacrifice can involve ‘giving up’ or ‘giving away’ (Sherry 1996)—distancing oneself from pleasurable practices or valued possessions. An obvious example is abstaining from sexual relations in order to maintain chastity or celibacy, which has historically been required of those seeking to commune with God (Brink 1991). Another sacrifice which is common is some religions is to abstain from eating some or all types of meat, either entirely, or at least on holy days. In this sense, sacrifice purifies by avoiding substances and practices that are polluting. However, in another sense, sacrifice can purify because it signifies the ritual death of the polluted entity, permitting a rebirth of a pure entity. For example, Hindu religious ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, and even house-warming rituals, involve the ritual use of fire.

Contamination and Purification. Argo, Dahl and Morales (2006, p.81) define “consumer contamination as contamination from consumer touching.” This definition, while leaving contamination itself undefined, does emphasize the physical nature of contamination. Conversely, although Belk does not appear to explicitly define contamination, he does note that his concern is not with physical contamination but with “symbolic contamination, where a person is involuntarily incorporated into another’s extended self” (1988, p.51). Drawing on these two conceptualisations, Fernandez and Lastovicka (2009) explicitly define contamination as the apparent incorporation of one entity into another entity. Contamination occurs when an entity is in prolonged (physical or otherwise) contact with a different entity, results in a perceived or actual transfer of essences between the two entities. A received essence can be perceived as positive or negative, depending on how the source of contagion is perceived (Argo, Dahl, and Morales 2008).

As I shall demonstrate, purification requires the avoidance and/or removal of negative contaminants, and the approach and/or incorporation of positive contaminants. Hindus have very specific beliefs about which substances have the potential to pollute or negatively contaminate e.g. menstrual blood, and which substances have the potential to purify or positively contaminate e.g. gold. According to ancient Hindu beliefs, gold originated from Agni (the god of fire) and emerged from the breath of the gods (Coomaraswamy 1997) and so is considered eternally pure and incapable of being polluted (Madan 1985). Consequently, purificatory elements in Hindu culture include 22 ct. gold jewellery, and other items that often resemble gold in color—for example, ghee (clarified butter) and turmeric (the golden-colored powdered root of a rhizome related to ginger).

The literature thus reviewed suggests that a person may prepare to approach the sacred by seeking to emulate or resemble the sacred. Since the sacred is not polluted, it is by definition, “pure” and must not be sullied by contamination with the impure. So purification rituals which increase one’s resemblance to the sacred are necessary prior to approaching the sacred. The literature reviewed also suggests that cleansing, sacrifice and contamination can all be used to attain purity. However, previous research has yet not empirically examined how these purification rituals are enacted. This research seeks to contribute by providing such an empirical examination of purification rituals.

METHODOLOGY

I conducted unstructured depth interviews with ten Hindu Indian (“Hindu”) informants regarding their participation in Hindu rituals. The informants, seven of whom were female, ranged in age from 28 to 73. All but one informant had lived the majority of their adult lives in Asia (nine in India, one in Malaysia) but all are now living in Australasia. The informants were interviewed, and in some cases observed, by one or both authors, with regards to wedding, funeral and house-warming rituals. The data-set consisted of interview transcripts, videos, photographs and fieldnotes. I employed the constant comparative method of analysis, engaging in open ended and axial coding (Spiggle 1994) of interview transcripts and fieldnotes to develop my emergent interpretations with the assistance of the relevant literature, as suggested by Venkatesh (1994).

FINDINGS

The Hindu word for major life rituals—samskara—means to “purify” (Inden and Nicholas 1977). In Hindu society, liminal entities, such as an unmarried woman (Kolenda 1984) is seen as polluting (Das 1982) and a threat to the purity of physical and social body (Douglas 1966). Thus, a prospective bride must be purified (Inden and Nicholas 1977), before she can become a worthy and successful carrier of the groom’s family’s biological immortality. Other persons who are liminal (e.g. grooms, new mothers, or the newly bereaved) are also required to purify themselves lest they contaminate others in their circle (Harper 1964).
Cleansing

Much as consumers groom themselves daily to re-incorporate cultural meanings (Rook 1985), our informants told us that devout Hindus engage in ritual bathing to re-incorporate ritual purity before praying each morning. Although bathing with water does effect biological cleansing, it is actually ritual cleansing (removal of polluting elements) that is being sought. This became particularly clear in cases where the cleansing agent was fire, rather than water. Jassie (AF 38) had recently divorced and invited friends and family to a house-warming ceremony for her new apartment. Fieldnotes describe the house-warming ceremony.

“As I entered Jassie’s apartment, I was surprised to see two men [a Hindu priest and his assistant] building a FIRE (emphasis present) in a black cauldron in the middle of her living room. They literally put wood in this cauldron, set it alight, and poured ghee [clarified butter] into it periodically. The entire room was filled with white, sweet-smelling smoke, and I learnt later that the smoke alarm had been disabled. Jassie, and the rest of us (myself, and a dozen of her friends and relatives) were asked to sit around the fire, which I learnt later was called a hawān [sacred fire]. The priest chanted mantras and indicated periodically at the correct ritual moments for Jassie and her two chosen supporters (her best friend and a favorite aunt) to add sandalwood chips and ghee to keep the fire going. I later spoke to the priest who explained that the purpose of the ceremony was to cleanse the home of any bad spirits and bad luck, and to infuse it with auspiciousness. At the end of the ceremony, he put a small part of the cauldron’s contents into an incense burner and directed Jassie to carry through every room of her apartment.”

As evident in the preceding observations, ritual purification involves decontaminating the impure by removing undesirable elements.

Contamination

The aforementioned excerpt from fieldnotes also suggests that cleansing may serve a second function of purifying via contamination by the positive. For instance, Anjali (IF45), one of our informants explained how, for a number of days before a Hindu wedding, she, prospective bride was ritually bathed with water and massaged with turmeric. This golden colored spice, prized for its antiseptic properties in India, is believed to purify the recipient (Srinivas 1952) and is also considered auspicious (Fernandez, Veer, and Lastovicka 2006). It also imparts a much-favored golden-yellow tone to the bride’s skin. Among some ethnic groups, the turmeric is believed to “heat” the bride in order to make her sexually receptive to the groom (Kolenda 1984). Anjali recalled how, every day for a week before her wedding, “my close female relatives and friends prepared me for my wedding by rubbing turmeric paste on me. They rubbed it into large bowl of tumeric [powder mixed with water to form a golden yellow paste] and put the paste on my body. They rubbed it into me to make my skin fairer so… I would be ready for Sham [the groom].” A similar pre-wedding ceremony was observed where Prakash (AM28), dressed in white clothes was rubbed with turmeric by his female relatives, in preparation for his wedding. Fieldnotes noted that at the conclusion of this ceremony, every visible part of Prakash’s body was literally stained bright yellow.

Thus the female relative and friends of the bride and groom ritually purify them in preparation for their marriage. Like the married women of medieval times (Brink 1991), Hindu women act as the guardians, reproducers and transmitters of the sacred. Massaging the prospective bride or groom with turmeric purifies him or her on multiple levels. On a biological level, the turmeric, being an antiseptic, cleanses and removes pollution from his or her skin. Some turmeric remains on the skin, thus forming a barrier against further pollution (Inden and Nicholas 1977). Some turmeric also permeates the skin, and since it is viewed as a pure substance, this contact is believed to make the recipient purer. Finally, turmeric, being an auspicious substance, invites the benevolence of the gods upon the marriage (Inden 1985). The prospective bride and groom are given new clothes to wear, which are traditionally made of “pure” materials such as new, unwashed cotton or silk (Harper 1964). Besides the turmeric mentioned earlier, another such purifying element is the emically termed “pure” gold. (The most prized gold jewelry in India is made from 22 carat gold since chemically pure gold, at 24 carats, is too soft to fashion into jewelry.) Hindus commonly refer to 22ct gold as “pure” gold, even though it is not pure gold in a chemical sense (Fernandez and Veer 2003). The bride is given new and used “pure” gold jewellery from her biological family, in-laws, and friends on the occasion of her wedding (Fernandez and Veer 2003) and this gold positively contaminates her, resulting in ritual purification.

Sacrifice

A final purification process is sacrifice. An obvious example of sacrifice is abstaining from sexual relations in order to maintain chastity or celibacy, which has historically been required of those seeking to commune with God (Brink 1991) or destined to become saints (Woodward 1990). One young couple, explained how they were required to fast, which they explained involved abstaining from meat before their wedding ceremony. Meat is considered polluting in Hindu religion (Douglas 1966) suggesting that purification required avoiding pollution. However, sacrifice can also involve rituals which symbolize death and re-birth. Jassie’s hawān, described earlier, is also a focal point of Hindu wedding ceremonies. The perfumed smoke of the fire, the burning of incense and the chanting of mantras all serve to transport the participants to the liminal zone of the axis mundi (Eliade 1959), the central pillar connecting the heavens, earth and the underworld—where pure humans can transcend the spatio-temporal boundaries (O’Guinn and Belk 1989) to commune with the sacred. The hawān is sacralized by the addition of ghee [clarified butter] which is considered the most distilled essence of the cow which is revered as sacred by Hindus (Korom 2000). The significance of the home-owner and her key supporters, the groom and bride sacralizing the hawān becomes apparent when noting that constructing the fire altar is believed to be “a veiled personal sacrifice. The sacrificer dies [emphasis present] and …reaches heaven…this is only a temporary death” (Coomaraswamy 1997, p.162).

For example, when bride and groom sacralize the hawān, they ascend to the cosmic plane temporarily and descend reborn with the wife being incorporated into the husband as his “half-body” (Inden and Nicholas 1977). The ascension of the bride and groom to the cosmic plane is facilitated by their spatial proximity to the hawān, which signifies the center of the the axis mundi, and hence the portal to the cosmos. By sacralizing the fire, the couple ascends into the cosmos and descends reborn with the wife incorporated into the husband’s body. This is signified in many Hindu marriages by the tying of the Manghal Sutra (sacred golden necklace) around the bride’s neck, and the groom drawing a vermilion line on the center parting of the bride’s hair, signifying the symbolic opening of her womb. Many pure and/or auspicious substances such as ghee, honey, and grain are then ritually offered to the new couple. These
rituals echo the final stages of the rites of establishment described by Davis (1997).

Fire purifies by destroying of the old and re-creating the new. Christian groups who engage in baptism practice this same symbolic death and resurrection; however Christians use the element of water, rather than the element of fire to symbolize sacrifice (O’Guinn and Belk 1989). In both cases, the fire or water serves to symbolically destroy the old, polluted element, and to re-create the new, pure element. Thus, sacrifice can go beyond being a means to avoid pollution. Sacrifice, particularly when fire or water are involved, can also remove pollution by ritually destroying the polluted element, as well as add purity by facilitating physical contact with pure elements. Hence, I believe sacrifice is the ultimate purificatory mechanism that subsumes the processes of cleansing, decontamination by removing the impure, and contamination by incorporating the pure.

Incremental Purification

The three purification processes explicated so far—ritual cleansing, ritual contamination, and ritual sacrifice—may not individually completely achieve a transformation from impure to completely pure. Like the incremental rites of establishment discussed by Davis (1975), these three purification processes appear to act sequentially to achieve incrementally purer states. For example, Preeti’s (AF 75) explained how her late husband’s body was first washed by hospital staff (presumably achieving biological cleanliness). Then, when the body was returned to their home, a priest came to the house to ritually cleanse the body. She noted that he “used just water to pour over the body, but no soap...” clarifying that this was not a mere biological cleansing. The two processes described so far moved the body along the continuum from being polluted to becoming sterile (biologically clean) and then onwards to becoming ritually clean.

Preeti: … the pujari [priest] chanted mantras and burned incense while pouring water over Uncle’s [her late husband] body. Then, he dressed the body with white cotton clothes and with garlands of flowers.

Int: Were the clothes new?

Preeti: No, not new, they were his own clothes, but we washed them so they were clean.

I note that clean white cotton clothes are viewed as “pure” and hence, along with the mantras and incense, were able to contaminate the body with purity. Preeti also told the interviewer, the close family of the deceased fasted in preparation for completing the initial funeral rites. These were completed when the body was placed on a funeral pyre which was lit by Preeti’s son. These initial funeral rites were complete when the skull of the deceased exploded in the heat, an act which Hindus believe permits the deceased’s spirit to leave his body. The ritual burning of the body symbolizes its death and the release of its spirit, subsequent to its re-birth into a new body. Thus sacrifice is a multi-stage process, whereby the ritually clean entity first dies, then is re-born as a new, pure entity.

A person or possession must be purified, before the sacred can be approached without danger of profaning it. As depicted in the Figure, purity can be attained by at least three incremental, sequential processes: ritual cleansing, ritual contamination, and ritual sacrifice.

Ritual cleansing goes beyond biological cleansing in that it decontaminates by removing polluted elements. The process of decontamination by removing polluted elements is mirrored by the process of purifying by contamination from pure elements. This finding underscores the utility of considering the influence of both positively and negatively valenced sources of contaminants in consumer research. Sacrifice is the ultimate act of purification in that it involves cleansing that literally or symbolically destroys the old, impure entity; allowing a new, pure entity to emerge. Furthermore, the three processes of purification can act incrementally to successively move the entity to be purified along a continuum from the polluted, to sterile, to ritually clean, to becoming sanctified, before it is symbolically destroyed before its symbolic rebirth as a new, pure entity.
DISCUSSION

Purity and pollution, and hence the processes of purification, are central to traditional Hindu cultural values and practice, and hence more easily discerned. Given the large numbers of Hindus in the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere, purification is of obvious relevance to consumer research relevant to Hindu consumers. However, the relative prominence of purity for Hindu consumers compared to contemporary Western consumers does not mean that purity is not relevant to the latter group. Western consumers continue to utilize symbols of purity and processes of purification when practicing religious rituals, wedding rituals, and christening rituals. Furthermore, contemporary Western consumers are increasingly concerned with removing pollution from their environment via products such as hand sanitizers (Banotai 2003). Current advertising of sanitizing products usually emphasizes their ability to remove unwanted substances. However, our findings suggest consumers’ perceptions of their efficacy would be increased if advertisers also emphasized how these products added desired substances to the surfaces thus cleansed e.g. “anti-bacterial coating.”

Consumers are also increasingly concerned about the purity of their food and other substances they encounter, as both the growth in demand for organic food (Wiggins 2007) and the increasing rejection of genetically-engineered food (Motion and Weaver 2005) attest to. This demand for purity is also evident in consumers’ increasing responsiveness to marketing claims of “pure” food or drink with no additives, and “100% pure” tourist destinations (Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2002). Marketers of organic or other “pure” products could benefit from the deeper understanding of purification processes provided by our study.

Even more importantly, the processes of purification can theoretically inform consumer research in several respects. First, almost all consumers ritually groom themselves on a daily basis (Rook 1985) to re-create themselves, and some even re-create themselves with more drastic means such as plastic surgery (Schouten 1991). Yet consumer researchers have not taken into account the role played by processes of purification in the rejection of an undesired self, and subsequent (re)creation of a more desirable self. Consumers dealing with involuntary disposition due to moving, bereavement, theft or natural disaster, also need to re-create their personal and physical environment and yet, these issues remain under-researched. I suggest that future research on involuntary disposition utilize the concepts of pollution and purity. Recent consumer research has empirically documented that consumers react negatively to merchandise that are central to traditional Hindu cultural values and practice, and hence more easily discerned. Given the large numbers of Hindus in the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere, purification is of obvious relevance to consumer research relevant to Hindu consumers. However, the relative prominence of purity for Hindu consumers compared to contemporary Western consumers does not mean that purity is not relevant to the latter group. Western consumers continue to utilize symbols of purity and processes of purification when practicing religious rituals, wedding rituals, and christening rituals. Furthermore, contemporary Western consumers are increasingly concerned with removing pollution from their environment via products such as hand sanitizers (Banotai 2003). Current advertising of sanitizing products usually emphasizes their ability to remove unwanted substances. However, our findings suggest consumers’ perceptions of their efficacy would be increased if advertisers also emphasized how these products added desired substances to the surfaces thus cleansed e.g. “anti-bacterial coating.”

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Pet Ownership and Related Consumption Practices: The Role of Moralization
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INTRODUCTION

Insufficient attention has been given to moral issues surrounding consumption (Hilton 2004; Miller 2001). Moreover, in spite of the exhaustive empirical coverage of the moral status of animals, both from a philosophical and political perspective and the belief that “consumption is in essence a moral matter” (Wilk 2001, p.246), very little empirical consideration has been given to the moral issues relating to the consumption practices associated with pet ownership1 (Kwak, Zinkhan and French 2001). In general, studies on morality consider the subject in terms of the rightness or wrongness of an individual’s behavior as guided by a societal code of conduct agreed to by the members of that particular society (Shaw 1991; Wallace and Walker 1970). However, in outlining a sociological view of morality, Caruana’s (2007a, p.295) constructivist perspective suggests a broader, more fluid and subjective interpretation of morality. As this perspective acknowledges the “dialectic relationship between society and the morality of those individuals who constitute it,” Caruana (2007a, p.299) argues further that a constructivist approach may be more “useful in a contemporary society no longer characterized by dominant institutions.”

Sometimes the terms “morality” and “ethics” are used interchangeably, (particularly within the consumer research literature), however we follow Caruana’s (2007a, p.288) distinction that while morality is concerned with defining right and wrong for an individual or community, ethics relates to “the formal rationalization of morality.” Thus, ethics pertains to one’s inner view of what is right and wrong and our mode of action. Morality on the other hand “serves to restrain our purely self-interested desires” so that we can co-operate together (Shaw 1991, p.19). However, since moral interpretations of right and wrong vary between individuals within a society and are moreover continually transforming (see also Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010) we would agree with Caruana (2007a, p.300) that it is necessary to view “morality in consumption as a process of social construction [which] will allow interpretations to absorb the various alternative strands of social meaning that appear relevant in people’s consumption practices.” Therefore, a useful framework to help explore the “process through which individuals or cultures come to view issues or behavior as possessing moral properties” is Lovett and Jordan’s (2010, p.177) model of moralization. Building on Rozin’s (1997) conceptualization of moralization, Lovett and Jordan (2010) advocate a ‘graduation-based’ descriptive model which comprises of four levels of moralization that could take place in any given situation (i.e. Level 0–simple preferences with no moralization, Level 1 preferences moralized for the self, Level 2–preferences moralized for the self and others and Level 3–public expression of moralization). Consequently, we argue that their model offers a constructive and nuanced perspective of moral sensitivity which will help to enrich our understanding of the role of moralization amongst pet owners and their consumption practices.

Although no single theory can “claim to have the dynamics of consumption entirely pinned down” (Caruana 2007b,p. 210), a comprehensive framework that seeks to illuminate consumption from a constructivist perspective is Holt’s (1995) Typology of Consumption Practices. However, comprehensive though the framework is, it does not unequivocally acknowledge the moral dimensions of consumption. We would argue that this may well be a reflection of the fact that few studies focusing on consumption actually consider moral issues unless their focus is disposal and/or ecological behaviors (Caruana 2007a; 2007b; Kwak et al. 2001; Luedicke et al. 2010). If we accept Wilk’s (2001) assertion that consumption is a moral matter, it follows perforce that in order to remain relevant to contemporary analyses of consumption Holt’s (1995) typology might be usefully extended so as to incorporate the moral dimensions of consumption.

Accordingly, this paper examines the social construction of morality in the context of consumption practices associated with pet ownership in the UK. Hence, the contribution of this article is twofold; first, we develop and propose extending Holt’s (1995) typology of consumption practices to help align the fields of morality and consumer behavior research so as to describe consumption practices more fully. Second, we contribute to current knowledge regarding the role of morality and socio-cultural influences in relation to owners and their pets.

IDENTIFYING A PLACE FOR MORALITY IN HOLT’S (1995) TYPOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Rather than reiterate a description of Holt’s (1995) four metaphors and the consumption practices in which they are embedded, the following paragraphs focus on how his typology may be usefully extended so as to incorporate some of the moral dimensions of consumption.

Holt (1995) suggests that consumers’ autotelic subjective emotional experiences of consumption objects are embedded in accounting, evaluating and appreciating practices. He argues that consumers engage in accounting practices when they draw on an institutional framework in order to make sense of their consumption experience and that they engage in evaluating practices when they “apply this framework to pass judgment on the situations, people and actions they encounter” (Holt 1995, p.5). Whilst it would be impossible to list all of the institutional frameworks that pet owners may draw upon, if we take the example of those associated with the Kennel Club (est. 1873), the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (est. 1910) as well as other registered breeding clubs, we would argue that certain evaluating practices may well encourage the treatment of animals as aesthetic objects and ignore the impact of this on animal health (Hirschman 1994). This has led to widespread discussion regarding the morality of humankind’s manipulation of certain pedigrees that are considered acceptable (e.g. Labrador) over others that are considered problematic (e.g. King Charles Spaniels and syringomyelia), the purchasing of mongrels rather than pedigrees and/or the purchase of animals from shelters and rescue homes versus purchasing from animal breeders. Holt

1Note that the conversations surrounding whether or not animals have value, rights or interests are outwith the remit of this paper. However, it is fair to acknowledge at the outset that whilst accepting the blurring of the boundaries between humans and animals (see for example Holbrook et al. 2001), our starting point is that we [and our participants] perceive the keeping of pets as morally acceptable and therefore may be more inclined towards a welfareivist view as opposed to an animal rights stance.
explains that “appreciating taps the full range of emotional responses” (1995, p.5). Indeed, the human-animal literature widely documents owners as having an emotional attachment to their pet (i.e. recognizing the pet as being a friend and/or part of the family). Whilst in itself this does not provoke moral concern it does raise moral questions when the love and attachment to that animal causes harm.

Holt suggests that integrating practices are instrumental bi-directional symbolic acts in that consumers both symbolically draw external objects into their self concept (via producing and personalizing practices) and “reorient their self concept so that it aligns with an institutionally defined identity” (1995, p.6) (via assimilating practices). With regard to pet owners, key facets of assimilation include being able to demonstrate a sufficient “degree of competence”—that is, “thinking like, feeling like…and looking like” a competent pet owner (Holt 1995, p.7). Manifestations of these practices might include owners’ efforts to develop their knowledge relating to their pets’ behavior and welfare, which raises all sorts of moral and ethical dilemmas regarding appropriate diets, grooming regimes (the clipping of cats’ claws) and whether or not to attend training/obedience classes (for dogs).

Classifying practices involve both classifying via an established association with the object itself (i.e. owning a pedigree/mongrel cat or dog) and classifying through actions, where “what matters is how one interacts with the object” (1995, p.11). In the context of pet ownership, examples of classifying practices might include using a dog as a weapon to communicate a masculine image or using a cat or dog as a fashion accessory to communicate status.

Finally, playing is an autotelic interaction and is embedded in both communing practices, which index the mutual experience of consuming and in socializing practices, where “playing often takes on a more performative, reciprocal style” in which consumers use their experiences to “entertain each other” (1995, p.9). There are clearly moral aspects to the socializing practices that revolve around the use of animals for human amusement. Certainly the competitive arena of the cat/dog show and other animal performances (e.g. circus animals) may be perceived by some as exploiting animals and/or treating them in a “grotesque and cruel fashion in order that humans might be amused” (Belk 1996, p.121).

Identifying some of these moral issues within each of Holt’s (1995) metaphors strengthens our rationale for re-working Holt’s typology. Consequently, we propose that these areas may be addressed by adding a new dimension, namely consuming as moralization. As shown in Figure 1 above, we have placed this metaphor at the center of Holt’s (1995) typology, in order to demonstrate that consumer moralization embraces both autotelic and instrumental as well as object and interpersonal actions. This is discussed in more detail in our findings below, but prior to this discussion, the next section describes the methodological approach that we adopted to elicit stories from our participants concerning their cats and dogs.

A PHOTO-ELICITATION APPROACH

Our approach utilizes a technique known as autodriving (Heisley and Levy 1991) which describes a particular photo-elicitation technique whereby visual and/or audio recordings of informants are made by the researcher and then used as projective devices for interviewing (Prosser and Schwartz 1998). Following Zaltman and Coulter (1995) and Holbrook et al. (2001), our participants took their own photographs. We initially contacted four people known to us and via personal referrals, our initial convenience sample of four snowballed to a total of eighteen.² Our interviews followed what Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1989) call the phenomenological interview, with the aim of yielding a conversation. So, with the exception of the opening question, the interview had no a priori questions concerning the topic. With permission from the participants, interviews were audio-taped and lasted from one to three hours. The verbatim transcripts were then independently and collectively reviewed by the two authors to identify broad themes.

²Note that pseudonyms are adopted when referring to participants and their pets throughout the remainder of this paper.
THE MORAL DIMENSIONS OF PET OWNERS’ CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

The photographs played a key role in stimulating participants to tell stories about their pet’s character and behavior and the myriad ways in which their lives are intertwined. A total of fifteen pets (eight cats and seven dogs) were currently owned by participants. Their pets were acquired from public spaces (i.e., strays), rescue shelters, family relations (i.e., gifts) and pedigree breeders. Owner relationships with their pets also ranged from family pet or companion animal (i.e., partner/child substitute) to that of a working relationship (i.e., guide dog trainer/doggie daycare provider).

Moralization and Experiential Practices

Many of our participants own pedigree animals and the acquisition and subsequent sense-making of the role(s) of these animals in the lives of these owners is informed by a variety of values and beliefs. Helen recalls telling her late husband that she wanted “some nice pedigree kittens.” In response he bought her “a little book with all pedigree cats in” and she decided that she liked the Abyssinians because of their pretty faces. Thus, Helen’s evaluation regarding which cat to purchase was primarily aesthetic and indeed this was reinforced and clearly influenced by the fact that her late husband “really wanted to have a show animal.” We will discuss the showing of her Abyssinian cat further in the section on moralization and classification practices; it suffices to say here that in terms of sense-making, Helen viewed Agatha as both a family pet and a show animal, at least for a short time, with no apparent moral concerns. Although Mandy has no inclination to show her English Cocker spaniel, she spoke of her concerns regarding the breeding of pedigrees for the purposes of money-making and therefore not buying her dog “from a puppy farm type place—you know where they just take your order—they are obviously just breeding bitches just to make money… and so we didn’t want that.” Alison is clearly much less interested in physical appearances and is rather more concerned in animals/dogs for their own sake (i.e., the autotelic aspects), thus her evaluation of the Labrador breed as “a good, honest, down to earth dog” is based on temperament and behavior rather than aesthetics and clearly reflects the culturally accepted interpretation of this breed as a good family pet. In comparison to Helen, Alison and Mandy are both rather contemptuous of those who show animals (see later section on moralizing and classification practices). Thus, when Alison discusses Patsy’s role in her life she says “Patsy is just a pet…we’ve got no want or need to show her at all, she is just our family pet.”

The most significant appreciating practices involve feeding, training and caring for their animals. Although these practices themselves do not raise moral questions, they do provoke moral concern if they cause harm to the animal. Notably, none of our participants appear to moralize their preferences for themselves but not for others. However, some participants, including Helen, do not appear to moralize their preferences (i.e., Level 0) with regard to experiential practices at all, although as we shall see in later sections Helen does engage in various levels of moralization in relation to other consumption practices. The fact that none of our participants appear to engage in level 2 moralizing here is perhaps not surprising given that experiential practices relate to their personal, subjective and autotelic experiences of living with their pets. We pick up on the feeding, training and caring practices again from an instrumental perspective in the next section on moralization and integration practices.

Moralization and Integration Practices

With regard to the producing and personalizing practices related to the identity of our participants as pet owners, by far the most common theme was that of the “rescuer.” For example, Judith saw “an advert for a dog that a chap couldn’t keep [and] went to see her…she wasn’t exactly what I thought of as having as a dog. But then once I’d seen her, I felt like she’d kind of chosen me…I would have felt guilty if I hadn’t had her.” Alison rescued both her current dog and her first dog, recounting the story of the latter as follows: “she was an accident…they were going to put her in a bucket, so… I came home with her smuggled under my coat.”

Similar to Holt’s (1995) discussion of assimilating practices, our participants used a variety of techniques in order to become competent participants within the social world of pet ownership, especially with regard to training and feeding. While we recognize that consumers can communicate their identity as competent pet owners by having a well-trained pet, we would argue that there may be moral issues associated with assimilating practices such as intensive training regimes. Perhaps given the more acquisitive nature of dogs compared to cats, training was discussed mainly by our dog owners/trainers. One mode of intensive training perceived to provide a valuable service to society but considered morally questionable as far as the quality of life of the dog is concerned is the training of guide-dogs for the blind. Speaking about her experience of training guide-dogs, Laura felt angered by the fact that some guide-dog owners “perhaps didn’t love dogs quite as much as you wanted and were using it [i.e. the dog] as a tool” rather than a pet. Moreover, she felt that it was more natural for a dog to be used for police work as a police dog is “doing what their nose tells them and everything, whereas guiding…they are not allowed to scavenge and they are not allowed to chase other things and they are not allowed to play when they are in harness. It’s really a lot of training against their instincts.” For our participants, the primary motivation for training their dogs was mainly to protect the safety of their pet and other owner’s pets rather than to produce a super-trained, obedient pet. Here, Claire “had to start from the basics…get him [Angus] to walk to heel…and it’s just taken pretty much all that time to feel confident about going out and letting him be round other dogs.”

As indicated earlier, concerning the feeding of their pets, our participants did not spoil or over-feed their pets. Instead, dietary regimes were often seen as being instrumental in maintaining the health of their pet. For example, Millie states that she buys IAMS, which was “recommended to me by a vet because they said that the biscuits were good for getting rid of plaque on their teeth.” Many of our participants further demonstrated their competence as pet owners by their ability to judge between good and bad kennel or cattery services. Here, Stewart explained that they “had to take them [Agatha and Brady] to another one [cattery] last year, because it was sort of last minute” but that Helen “wouldn’t take them up there again.” Helen elaborated further as to the reasons why; “the enclosures were closed in on all sides, so the cats couldn’t see out…when I went, they looked frightened; they didn’t look comfortable”. Among our participants, we find no evidence of preferences that are not moralized at all (i.e. Level 0) in relation to integrating practices and though it is difficult to measure this as such, it seems that there are more preferences that are moralized for the self (i.e. Level 1) here than there are in relation to experiential practices. However, Laura’s views regarding the use
of guide-dogs points to a higher level of moralizing, namely the moralization of preferences for herself and for others (i.e. Level 2). We would speculate that where consumption practices have an instrumental rather than an autotelic focus, moral issues are more likely to come to the fore.

Moralization and Playing Practices

Both our cat and dog owners engaged in socializing and communing practices although few moral issues arose concerning the practice of communing. One example however, concerns Sheila whose cats helped to facilitate the sharing of cat-owning experiences with her neighbors. Here she felt that it was morally objectionable that cat owners should opt to keep their cats inside—“to me you can’t keep a cat indoors, a cat’s a free spirit you’ve got to let them go out.”

Regarding socializing practices and moral issues, our participants held mixed views towards the competitive arena of pet shows for the purpose of human entertainment. Of those who expressed positive attitudes towards the competitive showing of pets, it was evident that the owners continued to view their animals as pets rather than as objects of avocation. Helen was informed by the breeder that Agatha would make a good show animal and although her and her husband did show Agatha, Helen went on to explain that they stopped attending shows after a while partly because she was not that interested but also because “Agatha didn’t like going.” Thus, in the interests of the cat, she considered it morally inappropriate to continue showing her. Similarly, Sheila felt that Marmelstein’s “markings are perfect [and that] she would actually have done quite well but she’s a pet.” Although not expressing either an anti-pet show or pro-pet show stance, some participants discussed the less serious aspects of pet showing. This was particularly evident amongst pet-owning households with children as they spoke of their experiences at fun dog shows. Here Michelle and Anne talked about Jake’s foray into the waggiest tail and cutest eye competitions and laughed as they recounted his fiasco as a performer in that “when he was doing the waggiest tail—he sat down! And when he was doing the cutest eyes he wouldn’t sit.” In comparison to the positive and more neutral views, other participants were rather contemptuous of those who show animals. Here Laura felt that organizers and judges of competitive pet shows exist “in their own little bubble and they go, isn’t it beautiful and look at its head-look at the size of the head—fantastic.” She then continues to criticize owners who partake in competitive showing by questioning the morality of certain breeders who manipulate certain breeds despite health problems (e.g. manipulating a larger head for the Bulldog breed despite being unable to give birth naturally as a result). This moral issue will be discussed again in the next section on moralizing and classification practices from an instrumental perspective.

None of our participants commented specifically on the morality of animals being utilized solely as performers (e.g. circus animals) but in contrast to the perhaps more exploitative nature of competitive pet shows, agility shows were seen more as playful experiences for both the owner and their pet. For example, Mandy feels that “the agility’s just fun...it’s just like the egg and spoon race for dogs isn’t it?” Laura used to take Fiji to a local dog agility club but despite her enjoyment of performing together as a team in an autotelic way (e.g. “she’s looking at you and there is just the two of you in a partnership”), she felt that after completing the training, the club organizers lay enormous pressure on members to participate in competitions and subsequently she stopped going. Various levels of moralization are exhibited by our participants in relation to playing practices. While Michelle and Anne do not appear to engage in moralizing their preferences at all (i.e. Level 0), a number of participants (e.g. Helen and Sheila) moralized their preferences for themselves but not for others (i.e. Level 1). However, those participants who are strongly against the exploitative nature of both animal shows and agility competitions moralize their preferences both for themselves and others (i.e. Level 2). That we find more evidence of Level 2 moralizing here in comparison to experiential and integrating practices, is perhaps to be expected given that playing practices are interpersonally structured while the previous practices are structured around the relationship between consumers and consumption objects (Holt 1995); here between pet owners and their pets.

Moralization and Classification Practices

None of our participants engaged in classifying practices such as using a dog as a weapon or using a cat or dog as a fashion accessory to communicate status. However, many of our participants spoke of such classifying practices within their respective neighborhoods. Laura was concerned by the rising number of “trophy dogs” in her local area. Wilma also moralizes about this issue and believes it to be a problem with the owner rather than the dog—“they are not exercised and they are stir crazy and then it gives that breed a bad name, when really, most of the time it’s the owner and that they are not exercised enough.”

The classifying practice of using pets as a fashion statement is also considered as morally reprehensible. In particular, Alison questioned such owner’s motives for owning these animals by suggesting that they were not “getting a dog for family reasons...they’re not getting it to enhance their lives in any way...they are just getting it as a fashion accessory.” Also linked to the notion of animals serving as a fashion accessory is the dressing-up of pets. While some participants feel that dressing up pets is cruel and exploitative, others do not object to people who do this but emphasize that they would not do this themselves. For example, Sheila states “no...you couldn’t do that to them—that’s cruel.” Whereas Judith feels that she could “never be someone that would put bows in their hair and put little coats and boots on [but] Poodles...these sort of people might put bows in their hair or carry them in shopping bags.”

In relation to the moral issues surrounding breed manipulation but from an instrumental perspective, none of the participants own a designer breed or hybrid. Of the participants who own a pure-bred pet, animal breed selection tends to be based more on breed characteristics and personal preferences rather than an attempt to “enhance distinction” (Holt 1995, p.10). However, as hinted at above, some participants are clearly uneasy with regard to animal-breeds manipulation. While Helen talked enthusiastically about her preference for the Abyssinian breed, she expressed disapproval of the growing intervention of breeders meddling to produce cats’ faces that were “shoved out or pushed in.” Commenting on the Munchkin cat, Sam and Wilma also feel that such practices are inappropriate—“she [the breeder] deliberately bred cats so that they had little tiny like dwarf legs...for me, that’s wrong.” For the most part, our participants moralized about classifying practices in relation to themselves and others (i.e. Level 2). However, with regard to the dressing-up of animals, some focused only on moral preferences for themselves (i.e. Level 1). Similar to our analysis of integrating practices, there was very little evidence of our participants displaying preferences that are not moralized in relation to classifying practices.

CONSUMING AS MORALIZATION

Various levels of moralization permeate the preferences of our participants in relation to each of Holt’s (1995) ten consumption practices in which the various metaphorical meanings of consump-
tion are embedded. However, in order to integrate the moral aspects of consumption more formally, we propose the addition of a fifth dimension consuming as moralization and that this should be placed at the centre of Holt’s typology (see Figure 1). This central positioning represents the fact that moralization embraces both the autotelic and instrumental aspects of Holt’s (1995) vertical axis (i.e. purpose of action) as well as the object and interpersonal aspects of his horizontal axis (i.e. structure of action). We suggest furthermore that moralization is embedded in two specific consumption practices, namely nurturing and protecting, which we will now discuss in turn.

Our research lends support to McKechnie and Tynan’s (2006) suggestion that nurturing ought to be added to Holt’s framework. While these authors do not address the issue of how nurturing might be incorporated into the typology, we suggest that nurturing is one of the consumption practices within which moralization is embedded. Nurturing practices embrace two aspects of the interrelationship between pet owners and their (animals); namely taking responsibility and educating humans. Nurturing practices are particularly relevant in terms of pet owners taking responsibility for the wellbeing of their animals. For our participants, this aspect of nurturing is primarily autotelic, although for other pet owners it may well serve a more instrumental purpose (i.e. obeying the law on animal welfare; feeding and training in relation to identity, which clearly link with integrating practices). In terms of Holt’s (1995) structure of action, taking responsibility for one’s pet embraces both object actions (between owner and pet) and interpersonal actions (i.e. within the family and in relation to others in the neighborhood). Among our participants, many acknowledged the greater responsibility of looking after a dog compared to a cat and they went to some considerable lengths in order to meet this responsibility. For example Claire moved to the countryside so that her dog Angus would be away from busy roads and Judith identified suitable doggie day care services before she began to look for a dog. Many of our participants clearly construe the notion of taking responsibility not just in terms of their personal responsibility for their respective pets but also at a societal level (i.e. the responsibility of mankind in relation to the practices associated with keeping pets). Hence the level 2 moralizing that was exhibited among our participants in relation to the broader aspects of the pet industry, which they directed towards such practices as intense breeding, competitive showing and the use and treatment of animals as status objects (trophy dogs and fashion accessories).

With regard to the developmental and educational aspects of pet keeping and in support of Hirschman’s (1994, p.623) findings, some families keep pets “to help teach children to be responsible and nurturant.” Here, Sheila believes strongly that keeping pets is important in part “because it teaches them how to look after other things and it also teaches them about life and death.” Similarly, Alison feels that it is “a key part of growing up to role play and take care of animals.” To the extent that pets play an important role in the (moral) development and education of humans, this aspect of nurturing practices serves an instrumental purpose which is interpersonally structured. Moralization is also embedded in a second set of practices, which we term protecting practices. Protecting practices embrace two aspects; safeguarding and insuring. In terms of safeguarding, our participants engage in a host of creative measures designed for the largely autotelic purpose of shielding their pets from harm. For example, the safeguarding of cats around main roads is an issue for Simon who discussed his exit route to prevent DJ from following him to the shops as follows: “what I’ve got to do is give him a fresh bowl of food, quickly put the alarm on and lock the door; run down the back pass and meet Chris, we both can’t go out together because he will follow us.” While these activities focus on

the interactions between our participants and their pets (i.e. object actions) for largely autotelic reasons, they could also be construed instrumentally in the sense that if their animals were to stray onto busy roads and cause a crash their owners would most likely be held accountable. This is mitigated to some extent by insuring practices, which we will discuss shortly. Micro-chipping is another safeguarding practice against pet loss, as Jane suggests; “if anything happened he can be scanned, he’s on a register so they can scan him and find us.” A final safeguarding practice was brought to our attention by Laura, who runs a doggie day care business with her husband. She informed us that she is keen to advise her customers of the benefits of castrating male dogs, as she explains; “if you get a van full of male dogs that are not castrated...we might have trouble. I don’t think they [her customers] realise...but because he smells like an un-castrated dog, they [other dogs] will attack him for it.” As indicated already, for the most part safeguarding practices serve an autotelic purpose, which is structured around the interaction between pet owners and their (precious) animals. However, as with nurturing practices, many of our participants also view protecting at a broader, societal level. In this regard, as discussed in the findings above, a good number of our participants rescued animals that had previously been abandoned. The belief that as a society we ought to protect abandoned animals, if not prevent this from occurring in the first instance, may well explain the Level 2 moralizing, which our participants directed towards those who engage in practices such as the treatment of animals as status objects and fashion accessories. For our participants, the underlying supposition of their moralization here, which was sometimes verbalised and at other times not, seems to be that such practices undermine the welfare of these animals.

In terms of insuring, this also appears to transcend Holt’s (1995) distinction between the autotelic and instrumental purposes of action, as well as his view that actions are either object or interpersonally structured, as the following quotes suggest. For Sheila, a key advantage of having pet insurance for Bryan is simply to mitigate against the fear of losing him—“if it gets lost, they’ll put a photo out and try and help you find your cat.” Claire described her fear of Angus causing an accident and either hurting himself or hurting someone else and therefore she primarily purchased insurance in case of “some liability claim being made.”

As seen above, for the most part our participants engage in moralizing their preferences in relation to nurturing and protecting practices at Levels 1 and 2. Only Laura engages in expressing her moral judgments publicly (i.e. Level 3).

MORALIZATION AND CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

The above findings demonstrate that Holt’s (1995) four metaphors serve to obscure the fact that “consumption is in essence a moral matter” (Wilk 2001, p.246) and therefore, we propose extending Holt’s (1995) framework to include the additional dimension consuming as moralization. As our analysis of the practices in which moralization is embedded demonstrates above, neither nurturing nor protecting practices divide easily into their autotelic and instrumental purposes. Similarly, these two practices often embrace both object actions and interpersonal actions. Therefore, we would argue that the consuming-as-moralization metaphor can only be positioned at the center of Holt’s framework. We accept that no single theory can hope to attend to consumption in its entirety nonetheless we believe that our proposed extensions to Holt’s (1995) typology of consumption practices (i.e. consuming as moralization—embedded in the practices of nurturing and protecting) help to describe consumption practices in the context of the everyday life experi-
In terms of the various levels of moralization identified by Lovett and Jordan (2010), in the context of pet ownership and related consumption practices, the majority of consumers (i.e. pet owners) in this study appear to moralize their preferences at Levels 1 and 2, with only a very small minority engaging in level 3 moralization. With regard to the implications of our findings in this context for future cultural studies of consumption, we would suggest that the consuming-as-moralization metaphor is undoubtedly applicable to other consumption contexts. In fact, given the current concern regarding the levels of alcohol consumption in the UK and in the aftermath of the controversy in global financial markets as well as more general debates on rising materialism within capitalist society, we would expect to see a greater prevalence of level 3 moralizing among consumers in regard to these contexts of consumption than we have seen in our study of pet ownership.

In terms of contributing to current knowledge on the role of morality and socio-cultural influences in relation to owners and their pets, overall, it is evident that our participants hold values with respect to the moral consequences of behavior in relation to pets, over and above simply adhering to the legislative requirements of pet-keeping. Consumer moralization seems to permeate the lived reality of pet ownership, with consumers in this study engaging in moralizing their preferences for themselves (i.e. Level 1) and others (i.e. Level 2). Although many of our participants appreciate that the UK has a more progressive stance towards the welfare of animals in comparison to many other countries there was still a sense for some participants that more needs to be done to protect animals from abandonment, exploitation and harm. If as Ghandi suggests our moral progress as a nation is to be judged by the way our animals are treated, then we clearly still have some way to go.

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Privacy Goals versus Disclosure Goals: Towards an Understanding of the Privacy-Consumption Trade-off
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ABSTRACT
Drawing on image-elicited depth interviews, we investigate how consumers manage the privacy-consumption trade-off. Our findings reveal that consumers’ privacy and disclosure decisions are contingent upon their personal goals and highlight an underlying tension between informants’ privacy goals and disclosure goals. Our analysis identified six privacy goals (safety, sovereignty, freedom, solitude, control, ownership) and four disclosure goals (benefits, interpersonal, altruism, survival). As a result, consumers may engage in one or more coping strategies to reconcile goal tension, which include rationalize, blind faith, defend, and/or off grid. In articulating our findings, we present a goal-directed framework for understanding and managing these trade-offs.

INTRODUCTION
As customer information represents a potential source of competitive advantage (Berry 1995; Mithas, Krishnan, and Fornell 2005; Nowak and Phelps 1997; Reichheld and Sasser 1990; Verhoef 2003), organisations are investing large amounts on the development of increasingly sophisticated customer information management systems (Colley 2007; Lee and Carson 2008). Not surprisingly, improvements in organisations’ capabilities for acquiring, analyzing, cross-referencing and communicating customer information have been met with a concomitant rise in privacy concerns among consumers.

Privacy concerns have been shown to reduce consumers’ willingness to provide personal information to organisations (Bandyopadhyay 2009; Sheehan and Hoy 1999; Wirtz, Lwin, and Williams 2007). However, this unwillingness can be sometimes overcome by offering a suitable incentive in exchange for personal details (Caudill and Murphy 2000; Chellappa and Sin 2005; Hann et al. 2002; Olivero and Lunt 2004; Phelps Nowak, and Ferrell 2000). For example, Sayre and Horne (2000) provided evidence of consumers trading personal information for savings on grocery purchases or bonuses. Personal details may also be exchanged for information-based benefits, such as access to knowledge, or information that is of interest (Sheehan and Hoy 2000). Consumers may also disclose personal information to gain a sense of control and convenience over their transactions, reduce transaction time and search costs when dealing with a particular organisation (Acquisti and Grossklags 2004; Battle 1996; Evans 2003; Hui, Teo, and Lee 2007).

Even when benefits are not sought, the exchange of information, particularly individual-level information on the part of the consumer is often times necessary for purchasing even the most basic items. For example, Edge (2007) provided an account of a purchase situation in which he wanted to order and collect a set of taps from the physical store. In order to do so, he had to provide an address or he could not purchase the taps. Other examples include obtaining a refund or cash rebate, invoking a product warranty or simply making an inquiry at the gym. As such, it can be said that consumers are faced with a ‘catch-22’ situation—in order to be a part of consumer society (i.e., consume), a certain degree of privacy must be relinquished. Therefore, this study seeks to gain a better understanding of how consumers manage the trade-offs between their privacy concerns and the need to disclose for consumption purposes.

Our findings provide insights into this privacy-consumption trade-off by demonstrating that consumers’ privacy and disclosure decisions are contingent upon their personal goals. Our findings also highlight the underlying tension between informants’ privacy goals and their disclosure goals and uncover the strategies consumers use to manage these competing goals. In doing so, we build upon existing literature by expanding the factors involved in consumers’ privacy-consumption trade-off decisions beyond the goal of obtaining benefits (Caudill and Murphy 2000; Chellappa and Sin 2005; Hann et al. 2002; Olivero and Lunt 2004; Phelps et al. 2000) and contribute to growing literature on motivated reasoning and goal-directed consumer behaviours (Emmons 2005; Kunda 1990; Richins 2005; Thompson 2000; van Raaij and Ye 2005). In articulating our findings, we provide a goal-directed framework for understanding the factors involved in consumers’ trade-off decisions, thereby providing a basis through which marketers can address and manage consumer privacy concerns.

To this end, we provide an overview of the research method used for data collection. Subsequently, the findings of this exploratory research are presented. We then conclude with a discussion of the contributions and implications of this study.

METHODS
As this study is exploratory in nature, a qualitative approach was used as it provides informants with the opportunity to communicate insights and details about their privacy-related experiences, personal goals, feelings, thought processes and emotions using their own words and categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Our informants were sourced in-line with theoretical sampling guidelines provided by Corbin and Strauss (2008). To date, our primary data were derived from semi-structured in-depth interviews with 16 informants; nine women and seven men aged between 26 and 60 years of age.

To assist informants in articulating their ideas, feelings and privacy-related experiences, we drew on the photo-elicitation technique (i.e., the use of visual images during the research interview) (Clark-Ibanez 2004). Visual images provide insights into a “different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews” (Harper 2002, 23). They also provide the researchers with a focus in the interviews and facilitate the questions asked in the long interviews. Informants were provided with a brief description of the research topic. This was followed by a formal statement outlining the instructions and details of the research project, and a sketchbook (which also contained instructions for informants). Informants were advised to spend time thinking about the concept of “privacy from a consumers’ perspective” and collect between 12 to 15 visual images and/or objects from a source of their choice that represented their thoughts, feelings and experiences as they related to the research topic. Informants were then instructed to attach the selected visual images, along with any comments about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in the sketchbook provided. In instances where informants were unable to source the appropriate visual images, they were instructed to draw and describe the image in the sketchbook. Each informant was given a minimum of one week to collect the visual images and to contact the researcher to schedule a time and location for the interview to be conducted.
The depth interviews were conducted at informants’ chosen venues (i.e., researchers’ interview room, informants’ workplace). The interviews began with a discussion of the visual images informants brought along to the interview. Of the 16 informants, 13 informants actively engaged in the task of attaching their visual images and associated comments in the sketchbook, resulting in 185 A5-sized pages of readily available images sourced from newspapers, magazines, the internet, and organisational literature (e.g., bank advertisements), hand drawn images, power point “creations” and hand written notes. This translated to an average of 14 pages per informant. Then, informants were given a folder which comprised of around 100 privacy-related images which we compiled based on existing literature (e.g., images of day-to-day life, various facial expressions, reward programs, etc.) and were asked to select the visual images that resonated with them. During this period, informants were left with their own thoughts; while the researcher either made photocopies of the visual images informants brought along to the interview, waited outside the interview room or if not permissible, remained in the room with informants. Once selected, informants were asked to comment on the chosen images. Finally, if time permitted and the informants were not fatigued, they were asked to use any of the photocopies of their own visual images, along with the images provided by the researchers to create a collage that summarized their main thoughts of privacy. They were then asked to comment on this summary image. This optional third activity was only presented to six informants. This resulted in an additional 14 A3-sized pages of visual data and hand written notes. The interviews ranged from one hour to two and a half hours in length, were audio taped and later transcribed; resulting in around 330 pages of text. Interview data were then analyzed in-line with open, axial and selective coding guidelines provided by Corbin and Strauss (2008).

FINDINGS

Preliminary analysis reveal an underlying tension between informants’ privacy goals (i.e., why informants want privacy) and their disclosure goals (i.e., why informants disclose personal information). Our findings also indicate that these competing goals force informants to make trade-offs and consequently, engage in one or more coping strategies. A summary of the findings is provided in Figure 1. To this end, the following section begins with a discussion pertaining to informants’ goals—privacy goals, their disclosure goals and the associated outcomes of having achieved these goals. This is followed by an examination of the various strategies informants use to manage the tensions and trade-offs between their competing goals.

Privacy Goals

Our findings reveal that informants want privacy for several reasons— for safety purposes, to be sovereign, for freedom, to achieve a state of solitude, to achieve a sense of control and to gain a sense of ownership.

Safety. This privacy goal of safety comprises of two elements— financial safety (i.e., identity theft, credit card fraud) and personal/physical safety. For example, while articulating her displeasure for pre-organized forms that “won’t actually let you complete the transaction until you fill it all out,” Jessie (WFmid-30s) expresses her concern about “the idea of people knowing where [she] lives when they don’t need to know.” When asked why, she replied, “For personal security […] The more you give out your details, the more likely it is that someone, for whatever reason, might I don’t know, follow you, or you know?” Analysis suggests that when informants achieve their privacy goal of safety, they gain a sense of confidence (i.e., freedom from worry or doubt), security (i.e., freedom from danger) and ultimately, “peace of mind.”

Sovereignty. Analysis also suggests that informants want privacy as it affords informants with a feeling of sovereignty, where informants are able to do as they please without being subject to external influence and another’s authority (i.e., making decisions without anyone “getting into it,” not “pressed” to consume). Here, informants complain about the constant exposure to marketing messages that “direct [them] to do this. Buy this. Accept this,” preferring instead to be free to “get that service [or product] on [their] own time—when [they] would like to and where [they] would like to.” This goal of sovereignty is emphasized in Bob’s (AM26) passage about marketing communications in general as he states, “Let me
choose myself what I want to purchase, what I want to do, what I like.” Analysis suggests that feelings of sovereignty gives rise to feelings of independence, autonomy, self-sufficiency, which in turn allows informants to believe that they are in control and “in charge” over their purchase and consumption decisions.

**Freedom.** Privacy also enables informants to be free and true to the self in terms of one’s actions, thoughts and expressions (i.e., freedom “to be myself” and freedom of expression). To illustrate this notion of freedom to be true to the self, Gary (WM46) refers to his image of actor Ewan McGregor standing in front of a luscious mountain landscape and with a deep sigh says, “And this, was representing freedom. The freedom that privacy affords you […] Um, freedom to be me. Freedom to be myself. Without you know, if I wanna run around the house wearing a shower cap and nothing else, that’s me.” To Gary, being free to be himself gives him a sense of relief and liberation. This is echoed in Sam’s (WM43) passage as he points to an image of a diary, which to him represented a “repository of inner thoughts.” Sam says, “We need somewhere where we actually are true to ourselves. And that’s what a diary allows you to be, true to yourself. Privacy gives you that comfort that you are true to yourself.” Similarly, Jessie (WFmid-30s) talks about anonymous suggestion boxes that “lets people have the freedom to say what they want […] put forward your ideas and your suggestions and your opinions […] things that I liked or didn’t like that I wouldn’t ordinarily be confident enough to go out and say […] By them allowing me to keep myself private then I felt more comfortable to express myself.” As such, it can be said that in addition to feeling relieved and liberated, the ability to be free to be true to the self and to freely express oneself also results in feelings of comfort.

**Solitude.** Informants also want privacy to achieve a state of solitude, where they are able to avoid unwanted communication and interaction with others, have some peace and quiet and “retreat” from the hustle and bustle of day-to-day life. This is illustrated in Rachel’s (WF40) passage as she refers to an image of a man yelling into a telephone and a “Do Not Disturb” sign commonly found in hotels. “There’s so much going on in your work and life, and in your personal life, and it’s almost, I almost feel like my home is my sanctuary […] away from all the chaos that we know the world to be.” Here, achieving a sense of solitude gives Rachel a sense of serenity. Her home represents a special space where she can “temporarily escape” and similar to Richin’s (2005) concept of spiritual sustenance, provides Rachel with an opportunity to “invigorate” her mind.

**Control.** Analysis also point towards the importance of control as a privacy goal, where informants are able to control the presentation of the self (i.e., in the way in which one is perceived by others). As Janice (AF28) says, “I just don’t like people to know too much about some things about me […] If people look too much about you then their opinion might change […] It’s almost like a fear of you know, like if the other person knows too much or something like that.” This is further highlighted during our conversation with Ken (AMmid-30s), who provided examples of situations where knowledge of one’s sexual orientation, religious beliefs, political affiliations or lifestyle choices could result in discrimination or damage to one’s reputation. Similarly, when talking about organisations that collect consumption-based information, Gary (WM46) says, “You start tracking a pattern of who I am. And do I really, really want people to know who I am? That’s what privacy is all about, you know? […] It’s not just the finances. It’s like the books I like to read. And what I like to do. Those sorts of things. What makes me, me […] I like people to see what I want them to see. Not what, you know, me! I will throw out stuff and go, you know, this is what I want you to see. This is what I want you to think. That’s all I want. Coz the rest of it is private to me.” As such, it can be said that by being able to control what and how much others know, informants then have the “power” to influence the presentation of the self and as a result avoid having assumptions made about them, being judged or discriminated against (i.e., self-preservation).

**Ownership.** Finally, privacy also provides informants with a sense of ownership over personal matters, where they have “something that is [theirs] and [theirs] alone” unless they choose to share it with others. As Jessica (WFmid-30s) states, “Not everyone needs to know every detail about your life.” She goes on to provide an example of a colleague who won several distinguished awards but did not want to spread the good news by posting his achievements on his personal work profile. Instead, “he wanted to keep that to himself” and not be a “show-off,” thereby allowing him experience personal pride and self-worth in private.

**Disclosure Goals**

Key to understanding how informants manage the privacy-consumption trade-off is the distinction between the private realm and the public/consumption realm. Analysis suggests the existence of an invisible line, a boundary separating the private realm from the public/consumption realm, to which informants desire and at times, engage in protection strategies to maintain. However, when informants cross the threshold into the public/consumption realm, they do so with the objective of attaining one or more goals. These have been broadly labelled disclosure goals. The goals underlying informants’ disclosure decisions include obtaining benefits, engaging in or fostering interpersonal relationships, altruism and/or “survival.”

**Benefits.** Analysis revealed that informants disclosed personal information to obtain benefits. These benefits may be of some financial value to informants (e.g., discounts, special offers, competitions). Benefits may also come in the form of convenience (e.g., online banking, online bill paying) or functional benefits (e.g., opening a bank account for a sense of financial security, the ability to purchase items on credit, access to Weight Watchers’ e-tools program). Informants also disclose personal information to obtain information. For example, Charles (WM33) provided an example of having to register his details on a news website to receive “better news.” As he scoffed, he said, “Even if you’re not really buying anything, if you’re using the service, if you, you know these, it’s almost if you wanna look up the news, they offer you a log in because you’re getting better news.” Other information related benefits include gaining access to “free” information online (e.g., postings from MS Excel experts and users). As such, depending on the valence of the benefits on offer, informants may be willing to forgo their privacy goals.

**Interpersonal.** Informants also disclosed personal information for interpersonal reasons (i.e., to “connect” with others). The goal of maintaining and enhancing interpersonal bonds was extremely pertinent in the context of social networking sites. Although most informants began with a discussion about the dangers of engaging in social networking, the majority of our informants admitted to being Facebook, YouTube and/or MySpace users because it allowed them to develop and maintain interpersonal bonds. One informant in particular (Jessica (WF50) was extremely suspicious and concerned about the “invasiveness” of these social networking sites. Commenting on an image with a Facebook logo, she remarks, “As Facebook ends up growing and more and more people are intertwined, then that privacy is going to go.” However, since the depth interview, Jessica is now a member of Facebook and in her own words, “loves it!”.
Strategies to Reconcile Goal Tension

As can be seen in the preceding discussion, consumers are faced with conflicting goals (i.e., privacy goals versus disclosure goals). When informants are faced with the decision of choosing between their privacy goals and their disclosure goals they may engage in one or more of the following coping strategies—rationalize, blind faith, defend and/or off grid.

Rationalize. The first strategy informants engage in is to rationalize. In doing so, informants consider the importance of their disclosure goals (vis-a-vis their privacy goals), the severity of the consequences and the possibility of privacy violations occurring. For example, when deciding to disclose personal information, Janice (AF28) considers the consequences of her disclosure decisions for a loyalty card and gym inquiry. Her thought process is as follows, “If it’s Country Road for example, and they ask for my mobile number, I think I probably would have given it to them. Cos I just think that at least they wouldn’t be trying to sell products like really hard to me. Like they wouldn’t be calling me. They probably would SMS me about special deals. But then like with gyms it’s too personal where they call you and they won’t let you go.” As such, it can be said that informants adopt a “calculative” mentality and rationalize their disclosure decisions in light of who is making the request and what they are likely to do with the information.

Blind Faith. In situations where informants believe they are unable to influence the information request situation, informants may take the “leap of faith.” Gary (WM46), for example, draws parallels between the “leap of faith” and the wildebeest migration in Africa. When deciding to sign on for a credit card, he says, “When they migrate across large planes and rivers, and they get to the river, and the wildebeests will stop […] And it will take one wildebeest to actually do the leap with the alligators, crocodiles, etcetera in the river […]” It takes one person to go across and sort of say, “Oh, I’ve done it. It’s not a problem. And then of course, thousands do. There are fatalities, of course, the crocodiles and alligators are gonna get some […] but a majority went through.” As such, it can be said that informants place “conditional trust” in the organisation, disclose personal information and hope that they do not fall victim to “unscrupulous individuals” and “greedy corporations.”

Defend. In situations in which informants do not trust the organisation (or when trust “gets broken”), they may engage in proactive protection strategies. We have broadly labelled these as defensive strategies. For example, while referring to his hand drawn images of forms, Sam (WM43) says, “If there’s any forms, I’ll actually, physically cross them out, initial them, date them—so it’s actually covered in the law. And I’ll actually get them [sales person] to initial it as well. So that then if they ever come back to me, I say well, give me that piece of paper that we talked about.”

Examples of other strategies include withholding and falsifying personal information, re-routing online purchase delivery addresses, “having a go at the front line and using cash instead of credit.” Thus, it can be seen that informants engage in negative twist behaviours (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2004; Cova-Gamet and Cova 2000) where informants employ creative strategies as acts of resistance against organisations.

Off Grid. Finally, informants may go “off grid,” where they “buy out” of and avoid the system altogether. For example, Sarah (WF40), while referring to herself as the “oddity,” adamantly refuses to engage in any remote banking activities (e.g., ATMs, telephone and internet banking), preferring instead face-to-face interactions when dealing with financial institutions. In her mind, “as crazy as it seems, [she] thinks a person’s gonna remember [her] more than a computer. Computers die or black out.” Similarly, Matt (WM27), who brought along to the interview a hand drawn image of a large “no Face book” sign refuses to sign up for a Face book or MySpace account even though “Everyone’s like, ‘You’re the only person I know without a Face book!’” As such, it can be said that some informants endeavour to “escape” the system while they are still able to.

DISCUSSION

In our quest to gain a better understanding of why consumers continue to readily ‘surrender’ their privacy and disclose personal information in spite of increasing levels of concern for privacy, our findings reveals an underlying tension between consumers’ privacy goals and their disclosure goals (i.e., one can only be achieved at the expense of the other). Our findings highlight the goal-directed nature of consumers’ privacy and disclosure decisions as key to understanding the privacy-consumption trade-off. This contributes to existing literature in two ways. First, literature to date emphasize the nature of benefits consumers are willing to accept in exchange for their personal information (Caudill and Murphy 2000; Chellappa and Sin 2005; Hann et al. 2002; Olivero and Lunt 2004; Phelps et al. 2000). By providing a richer understanding of what this exchange entails (i.e., the various privacy and disclosure goals), we contribute to literature by expanding on the factors involved in consumers’ privacy-consumption trade-off decisions beyond the goal of obtaining benefits.

Second, by approaching consumers’ privacy-consumption trade-off decisions through a goal-directed framework, our findings provide support for the role consumers’ goals play in explaining
consumer behaviour (Pham and Higgins 2005; Richins 2005; Thompson 2000). We also provide insights into the ways in which consumer manage their conflicting goals, especially in situations where one goal may take precedence over another and when both sets of goals are inherently incompatible. Contrary to reports of consumers being “all bark and no bite” (Anderson, Charron, and Cohen 2005), our findings demonstrate that when informants are faced with the decision of choosing between their privacy goals and their disclosure goals, some engage in rational decision making processes and if need be, creative protection strategies to “get around the system.” As such, we highlight that consumers are not passive participants in the marketplace and in doing so, contribute to the literature on how consumers manage goal conflicts and goal complexity (Richins 2005).

Several potential lines of inquiry emerge from our goal-directed framework of the privacy-consumption trade-off. First, as our study is exploratory in nature, it is unlikely that all consumers’ privacy and disclosure goals have been uncovered. Research is therefore needed to expand upon our findings. Second, we believe that a goal-directed framework maybe useful for gaining a better understanding of consumer privacy. In its most fundamental sense, any study on privacy needs to first understand the nature of consumer privacy. We are not contesting the importance of current conceptualizations of consumer privacy as found in marketing literature (i.e., information privacy and interaction privacy) but we believe it is limited in its applicability in its current form and does not fully reflect consumers’ apprehensions. Rather than being a reflection of consumer goals, information privacy and interaction privacy mainly mirrors organisations’ goals of “connecting” with their customers and improving the operational efficiency; and the consumer privacy goal of control. Our findings highlight that in addition to control, consumer privacy is also associated with several other goals (safety, sovereignty, freedom, solitude and ownership). As such, we believe that a fruitful area of investigation would be to explore the goal-directed nature of consumer privacy to gain a better understanding of what privacy is from the consumers’ perspective.

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Do Consumers and Retailers Eat Off the Same Plate When it Comes to Premium House Brands? An Australian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In Australia, two supermarket retailers hold up to eighty percent market share in the grocery industry. This presents a unique situation in comparison to other developed countries where competition is far more diverse. To grow within this limited industry, these retailers have introduced their own Premium House Brands (PHB) in competition with national brands. Similar strategies using price and quality have been successful overseas, but this paper will show that whilst consumers are purchasing the retailers brands, they may not be happy with the increasing lack of choice as supermarkets remove national brands and replace them with their own brands.

INTRODUCTION

In Australia, two supermarket retailers hold up to 80 percent market share in the grocery industry. This presents a unique situation in comparison to other developed countries where competition is far more diverse. Whilst it may be beneficial for these retailers to have such a significant position in terms of market structure, it also makes it difficult for them to grow within the industry. To partly combat this, both retailers have aggressively introduced their own version of Premium House Brands (PHB) to compete for consumer dollars and loyalty.

Previously, Australian supermarkets were a blend of national brands (NB), generic brands (GB), and a smaller range of middle tier products (i.e. they were supermarket brands positioned as better quality than generics, but there was little marketing effort made to communicate any significant benefit to the consumer). However, in mid-2005, this landscape changed dramatically. PHB began to make their presence felt when twenty, mostly canned vegetable products, appeared on the shelves of one of these retailers (Galea 2005). PHB had arrived and were now uncompromisingly challenging traditional market leaders for consumer brand loyalty. Their message to consumers, different from that of generics, offered similar quality to that of NBs but at a lower price. This paper discusses two viewpoints that have emerged as a result of this market change—one from an overview of quantitative results from recent research studies, the second from qualitative discussion boards on the same topic.

THE GROCERY ENVIRONMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Australia is one of the very few countries in the world where the grocery market is dominated by only two key retailers—Woolworths and Coles (owned by Wesfarmers). Whilst both companies are hesitant to openly discuss their market share, it has been suggested that combined, they control nearly 80 percent of the grocery industry (Ferguson 2009). From another perspective, for every $10 spent in Australian shops, $1.25 goes to Woolworths and $1.30 goes to Wesfarmers. This puts them with a higher share of wallet than the worlds number one store chain Wal-Mart ($1.10 for every $USD10 spent) and on par with British retailer Tesco (Lee 2009). This makes them a formidable force and one that manufacturers of national brands must pay attention to, particularly with further expansion into upmarket grocery stores. For example Woolworths has recently launched “Thomas Dux,” a gourmet supermarket that focuses on high quality and organic product ranges (Palmer 2009). If this business thrives, it will give Woolworths even more share and control of the grocery market.

Given the global success of private labels, and more specifically PHB, it was only a matter of time before a similar offering was made in the Australian market. In adopting this strategy, stores can differentiate their private label brands, improve quality image and indeed, capture more of the consumer dollar (IBISWorld 2006). Whilst generic brands have been around for many decades, Woolworths and Coles, have only introduced their own version of PHB: Woolworths “Select” and “You’ll love Coles” relatively recently. With such a concentrated market, this puts the retailers in a very strong position not found elsewhere. If consumers show hesitancy, retailers will simply implement targeted marketing strategies to capture and maintain their interest. This is already happening as Woolworths advertises their lower tier generics in mainstream media whilst Coles undertakes a “Feed your Family for under $10” campaign (the contents of which are based on their own brands) and offer consumers “Coles Gift Cards” as a reward if they purchase certain PHB. The presence of this activity sends a message to the market that these new tier brands are here to stay and they are aiming to use a variety of communication options to capture consumer attention. This was not previously an action undertaken by generic brands which relied on no marketing activity to maintain lower prices.

According to Rogut (2007) the future of the Australian supermarket will include the demise of national brands who do not hold the top two positions in the category, and consumers will be faced by choosing from the market leader, a private label—be that a low generic or premium house brand—and perhaps one other brand. This presents a very different picture to that of the current Australian grocery store.

PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS

There is nothing new in retailer house brands, ranging from lower grade generics, through to premium house brands. In Europe they can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when Sainsbury launched their own brand range of ham (Jeffweiwa 1954, Management Horizons 1985), however it is generally accepted that it was in the 1950’s that retailer own brands became a force, most noticeably in the UK (Lennon 1978). Across the globe, this movement has grown to the extent so that in 2007 retailer own labels accounted for 16.9% of total retail sales in US supermarkets whilst in Europe the share ranges from 32% in Spain and Germany, and 27% in the UK and the Netherlands. These figures are too large to be ignored by manufacturers of national brands who are competing for consumer dollars and devotion.

However gaining market share is not the only end goal for retailers. Less obvious is that whilst manufacturers make profits from their own brands, retailers make profits from the entire category (Sayman et al. 2002) thus resulting in more revenue going to one channel of distribution and giving more control to that same company. To show how this can potentially impact an industry, a recent study has revealed that Australian grocery prices have risen 41.3 per cent since 2000-faster than Britain’s 32.9 per cent or America’s 28.4 per cent (Ja & Godfrey 2009). Numbers such as this indicate that retailers have much to gain in terms of market structure (i.e., price positioning, consumer loyalty) and distribution (i.e. product

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Footnotes:

1Figures from IRI Consumer Network™; 52 weeks ending 9/7/2008; IRI InfoScan.
range, store availability). If this trend continues then another question is raised. What happens to competition if one market player has control over both the “real estate” and product range? Whilst marketing messages may attempt to convince the consumer they will benefit from PHB, it is proposed from the evidence provided that consumers may not be so easily swayed.

At face value, the idea of offering consumers products of similar quality to branded products but at a lower price seems a straightforward premise that fills the gap between “generics” and “national brands.” The success of this strategy has already been seen to work, as Tesco’s in the UK claims up to 50 percent of sales come from it’s own brand (Frew & Lee 2005). Whilst similar numbers have yet to be cited in Australia, there is an expectation that approximately 30 percent of sales could come from PHB (Frew & Lee 2005) thus allowing the two dominant supermarkets to grow within a limited market. This presents a radically different scenario to the one prior to the launch of PHB where generics held less than half this in terms of market share and consumers could choose from a wide variety of different manufacturer brands.

Knowing they cannot compete on price with PHB, manufacturers of national brands are turning their focus to providing clear messages of quality, variety and market leading innovation (Levy 2009) as a point of differentiation. It is reasonable to assume that by maintaining an active in-store presence, consumers will respond positively, however it is yet to be seen how this will impact the profitability of NB if they have to significantly increase their marketing activities. For example, Kraft recently implemented a new range of cream cheeses and included a “free” cookbook2 (available at the point of sale rather than via redemption) as way to reinforce their “Philadelphia” brand in the cheese category. The cost and distribution of these cookbooks for each supermarket would have been considerable as the quality of the book was similar to those sold in a bookstore and it is assumed that significantly more units of product would need to be sold to cover the cost of this.

Yet, this paper will demonstrate that the assumption consumers buy only because of quality and price could be too simplistic. Consumers are not passive buyers within the supermarket (Machleit and Mantel 2001; Spanjaard and Freeman 2008) and when a deeper interrogation of the evidence is undertaken, it questions if this PHB strategy is giving consumers “real choice” in their brands. The resulting outcome tells two different sides of the story—whilst consumers may be buying the brands, their underlying feelings reveal simmering discontent about perceived lack of choice.

Consumer Loyalty

At the heart of this issue is consumer loyalty. Since the early twentieth century (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978), there have been numerous studies as to the facets influencing consumer loyalty from both a behavioural perspective (Ehrenberg 1972; Bass 1974) and an attitudinal perspective (Day 1969). Others have suggested that it is a combination of both attitude and purchasing behaviour which results in brand loyalty (Jacoby and Kyner 1973, Baldinger, Blair et al. 2002; Datta 2003; Gonnaris and Stathakopulos 2004). Aaker (1996) includes loyalty as a source of a value for brand equity, with the belief that loyalty will only develop if the brand fits the personality or self-image of the consumer, or when the brand offers unique benefits sought by the consumer. This has not gone unnoticed by the retailers who also rely upon a form of “retailer loyalty” to maintain their market position, and it is their aim that the introduction of PHB in supermarkets will strengthen this loyalty in one form or another.

Additionally, other research has found that across countries where retailer own labels are readily available, more than 60 percent of all shoppers now say that they purchase store brands frequently increasing the possibility for longer term loyalty for the retailer (Morton and Zettelmeter 2004). To achieve this, PHB are being used as a valuable strategic tool as consumers associate the ‘brand’ to the retailer rather than the in-store product (Davies 1990). The presence and marketing strategies of PHB targets core issues of loyalty: to meet perceived individual consumer needs to such an extent that the brand becomes an integral part of their lives as a “consumer-brand relationship” (Fournier 1998). Theories of consumer-brand relationships recognize greater heterogeneity of consumers and the diversity of interrelations with their brands, the increased number of interactions (Blackston 1993; Fournier 1994), and perceived reciprocity between consumer and brand (Fournier, Dobscha, and Mick 1998). Brands that are successful in attaining this status are more likely achieve longevity in the marketplace and therefore make an attractive strategy for companies seeking longer term growth.

This last point is where PHB can trespass into the domain dominated by NB and where generics would be foolish to go. By implementing communication and marketing strategies with consumers, PHB can portray an image that is complementary to the consumer and thus offers a significant competitive threat to NB. It is well known that generic brands position themselves predominantly via price competitiveness and consumers recognise that this trade-off may be at the expense of quality (Findlay 2004). Yet, it has been established that although consumers consider price as an entry point for brand selection (Spanjaard and Freeman 2008) price alone does not bind them to the product. As interactions increase, then a consumer-brand relationship is the ideal outcome (Fournier 1998). This improves the likelihood of withstanding competitive strategy and reduces the need to rely on price as the point of differentiation. It is postulated that PHB aim to capture the consumer dollar via a sophisticated pricing strategy (i.e. just below NB but higher than generics to suggest “better” quality) followed up with a marketing communications strategy that maintains awareness. Initial reports suggest that 75 percent of Australian consumers who trial a PHB, will repeat the purchase (Corporate Responsibility Report, Woolworths Ltd. 2008). Yet, whilst this number is quantitatively high, it gives little insight into the reasons if and why such consumer behaviour is occurring.

Price versus Quality

As noted previously, past theory suggests that when consumers are grocery shopping they use two aspects—price and quality—to make purchase decisions (Oxoby and Finnigan 2007). These decisions are often influenced by a perceptions and expectations of quality so that quality becomes subjective and determined by the consumer who looks for certain cues to assist in this determination including price range (Rao and Monroe 1989) or via an umbrella brand name (Brucks, Zeithaml, et al. 2000).

Consumers are not passive receivers of information when they are grocery shopping. Research has indicated that despite this action being considered “low involvement” decision-making, consumers activate decision processes that engage aspects of strong brand loyalty as part of relationship building (Fournier 1994), trust (Chaudhuri 2006), familiarity (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995), and emotions (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy 2000). If these factors are considered, there are greater chances for ongoing loyalty for grocery brands (Hess and Story, 2005) and loyal consumers will provide a valuable resource based on constructive relational exchanges (Lau and Lee 1999). This is what the Australian supermarkets are aiming for, beyond market share growth.

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Statement Mean*
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I think Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles brands are quality products 3.5
I think Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles will make shopping easier for me 3.1
I buy Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles because of the price 3.4
Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles are just another way for supermarkets to get money from shoppers 3.5
Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles are reducing the number of brands available for me to choose from 3.0
I buy Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles when there is nothing else suitable for my needs 2.9
Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles are a good thing for shoppers 3.5
---
*Likert Scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
N=4867

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No longer available to buy</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly reduced package size (example shown)</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased it’s price (example given)</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed product quality</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=4867

It is not longer a case of assuming consumers purchase groceries based on price decisions alone (Weekes 2007). Whilst price may entice a consumer to try a product, if it fails to satisfy, then the consumer will not keep buying the product for just this reason (Spanjaard & Freeman 2008). This assumption challenges the notion that grocery buying is all about price and quality.

**Consumer Feedback–empirical Results**

Initial reports have indicated that consumers are taking up premium house brands to such an extent that these (and generics) now have 22 per cent grocery market share in the Australian market, with the greatest increases coming from younger singles and couples (Nielsen 2008) and this growth is now outstripping that of national brands (Knowles 2009). More importantly, consumer trust in these is increasing (Lee 2009) thus suggesting that consumers are willing to include these new brands in their normal buying repertoire. For example the confectionary segment jumped 17 percent during 2008 with new product launches such as “You’ll Love Coles” Chocolate Block in a category historically dominated by NB (Nielsen 2008).

To further assist in understanding the broad issues of this subject, a quantitative study was undertaken to investigate consumers general perception of these new PHB. This was an initial investigation into how consumers distinguish premium home brands coupled with the issue of brand choice. Accordingly, a short questionnaire was distributed to 4867 consumers in a major Australian capital city over a period of three weeks. The survey was designed to gauge their awareness of “Woolworths Select” and “You’ll Love Coles,” their propensity to buy and their overall perception of the brands. Initial findings are discussed below.

At the time, both premium house brands had been on the market for nearly three years albeit at a staggering level of distribution. From an initial twenty “Woolworths Select” brands in 2005 (Galea 2005) to over 1200 in 2009 (Corporate Responsibility Report, Woolworths Ltd. 2008) and Coles currently offering over 1600 products (Weekes 2007), it has been a steady but significant increase. Findings showed that 79 per cent of the sample indicated they were aware of the “Woolworths Select” brand whilst 65 per cent were aware of “You’ll Love Coles.”

Of those who were aware, 65 per cent had bought a Woolworths Select brand in the last 6 months and just over half (53%) had bought “You’ll Love Coles.” These numbers reflect the market share position of these retailers where Woolworths currently holds the dominant position.

The results of this study reflect other similar research that has shown general acceptance of PHB (Nielsen 2008; 2009). It may also be driven by recent economic factors during 2008/09 and the growing presence of these PHB in stores. Further interrogation of the data can be noted in Tables 1 and 2. Using a 5-point likert scale, the results indicate that consumers cluster their responses around the mid point of the scale. This is not unexpected given the topic and timing of the surveys. Although PHB have a market presence, consumers may not yet be fully aware of how these are impacting their shopping patterns. A t-test revealed that all statements showed significance at p=0.05 with the exception of the statement regarding reducing brand availability (Woolworths Select/You’ll Love Coles are reducing the number of brands available for me to choose from). Whilst further investigation is warranted, it could be suggested that issue of declining brand choice is still unclear in the minds of the consumer and so they selected the “safe” mid-point of 3.0.

Of the possible product changes (Table 2), “quality” stands out as the most influential with nearly two thirds of respondents indicating that if there was change to their preferred brand’s quality, they would consider a PHB. This reinforces current retailer marketing strategies that focus on matching quality for a lower price (Levy 2009).

The results of this initial investigation reflect the outcome of other empirical research (Nielsen 2008; 2009, Saymen et al. 2002) and reports (Lee 2009; Palmer 2009). Consumers appear
to be slowly taking up PHB as can be noted by growing market share (Nielsen 2008) and the findings presented here. Yet, it is also suggested that whilst retailers may be focusing their efforts on developing brand strategies, customers may continue to interpret these actions as retailer strategies. That is, any loyalty developed may actually be an increase in “retailer loyalty” and not necessarily brand loyalty (Davies 1990).

With this data alone, there is little evidence as to consumers’ underlying emotions regarding this environmental change. Whilst generalized buying statements were included in the survey, a more detailed questioning about reasons for buying was not deemed appropriate until further insight had been gathered. It is this perspective that will now be discussed in detail.

Consumers Vent Their Feelings

Whilst observed evidence presents a fairly positive picture of how Australian consumers are accepting these new PHB, it is not enough to make too many assumptions based on mostly recall data. Greater understanding can be gained if a more qualitative approach is included. This moves the emphasis away from just measuring purchase patterns and attitudinal aspects and more into an open arena where consumers can vent their feelings without fear of reprisal. By adding this perspective it will provide an understanding of the extent to which retailers have successfully communicated the benefits of PHB to consumers. If the above numerical results were to be taken at face value, then it could be concluded that consumers are not only accepting the presence of PHB, but are also willing to use these as a potential replacement for their existing repertoire. However, in order to further investigate this issue, an archival ethnographic approach was undertaken. Archival ethnography has been expressed as “a form of naturalistic inquiry which positions the researcher within an archival environment to gain the cultural perspective of those responsible for the creation, collection, care, and use of records” (Gracy 2004, p.336). In this instance this was carried out via an interrogation of website blogs (e.g., news.com.au, forums.vogue.com.au, womow.com.au, forum.birth.com.au, heraldsun.com.au blogspot.com, chocablog.com, smh.com.au, yahoo.com) covering a period between 2006 (six months post launch of PHB in Australia) through to 2009.

This is where the differences in consumer feedback become apparent. As it will be shown, it is important to distinguish between the physical delivery experience of the product and the emotional state of the consumer (Wyner 2003) as a way to uncover deeper insights into consumer response to market changes. Whilst quantitative methods can disseminate this into a unit of analysis (e.g. consumer awareness and purchasing), it may not reveal emotive responses. Once a qualitative approach is adopted, it then brings in the influence of product recommendations, group influence, and motivation to buy. Areas which can be hard to collect using traditional statistical measures alone (Lowrey, et al. 2005).

As blog sites and comment forums were cross-examined, a pattern was emerging that differed to that of the quantitative measurements. Whilst consumers are aware of the presence of PHB, they don’t appear to be as accepting of them as was initially indicated. Examples of these comments are noted below.

They have come up with the brilliant tag line “You’ll Love Coles” for this. I can think of a word to describe my feelings for this strategy-it starts with L-O but isn’t love. It’s loathe. Who would have thought a stupid supermarket campaign could get me so irate! (Blogspot.com)

...although the woolies (sic) select stuff is really good quality it seems that they are taking over more and more shelf space. I worry that eventually we wont (sic) have other brands to choose from at the supermarket. I think consumer choice is an important way of showing companies what we want with our food. (forums.vogue.com.au)

The other day I bought some choccies from Coles that are rip offs of milky way’s and maltesers and I’d have to say they are the most disgusting things I’ve ever tasted. A few of my taste buds died because of the horrible taste. There was a special on-$5 for two bags, but trust me if they were free they would still cost too much. Why does Coles tell us that we’ll love it? Is it a suggestion or a command? (Yahoo.com)

These comments show that consumers are purchasing (as also reflected in the quantitative numbers) but satisfaction is not an automatic outcome of this action. There appears to be issues with the quality, choice and even brand name. Nonetheless, not all comments were negative, for example

I was totally going to start a butter thread cos (sic) of this butter! (Woolworths Select). I love it! I’ve been trying a lot of different butters lately and this one rocks!!!!! It’s how I remember butter tasting when I was a kid (forums.vogue.com.au)

I actually think the YLC products are great. They provide a great range of products at a great price. I use to be embarrassed to buy generic supermarket product (eg. Savings and Home brand), but with YLC, that changes all that. If I can save money by buying these products, than I’m all for it. (Blogspot.com)

Even FaceBook has fan clubs for You’ll Love Coles products where consumers can post comments about their favourite house brands. For example:

I love Coles because it says I will. Do not question the brand. ALSO: best goddamn choc chip biscuits EVER, I do believe.

Other FaceBook clubs include: We love “You’ll Love Coles”–You Betcha (and even “I hate You’ll Love Coles” but with a smaller number of members). On the other hand “Woolworths Select” only has one fan club notably targeting one product “Honeycomb Crunch Biscuit.” Whilst the presence of these different avenues could be a topic in itself, the purpose of this paper is not to balance the positive and negative comments but to uncover relatively “honest” feedback about PHB. A common undercurrent to these blogs was the issue of product choice, or the lack thereof, as PHB take up more shelf space in the supermarket and as shown in the following comments:

I have found that the variety of foods available has been getting less and less since they introduced there (sic) Woolworths Select ranges thy (sic) have dropped many other range they used to carry. Can’t even get simple things like Arnotts Glengarry biscuits (womow.com.au)

I kind of feel bad buying the woolworths select brand because it seems like it’s pushing the other brands off the shelves. (forums.vogue.com.au)

I “positively discriminate” towards refusing to buy Coles and Woolies branded food-they are shrinking our choices and rights to choose other brands. Consumers are digging a hole
for themselves in the future, soon there will be only 2 choices of one item—their’s [sic] and a high price variety that nobody likes (Heraldsun.com.au)

Although only a small sample of the comments is presented here, it reveals an important issue. Consumers are accepting the premium house brands at face value—perhaps due to their increasing in-store presence and effective marketing communications, but there is an underlying feeling of hesitancy and cynicism. Given the dominance of two major corporations, there is simmering anger and frustration about the situation. This is demonstrated by the following three comments:

I refuse to buy YLC products, but it seems I won’t have a choice soon... I heard there will be something like 6000 YLC products by the end of 2007 (If sh.s me every time when I go to the supermarket to find I have less and less choice (blogspot.com.au)

Every time I see the slogan, it p...s me off all over again, and if there was another supermarket nearby I would immediately switch…. (blogspot.com.au)

This is so true. It has started to happen already. There is less to choose from in many items and the once “cheap” house brand is steadily but surely creeping up in price. (forums.vogue.com.au)

Consumers aren’t necessarily focusing their opinions on the two areas that have been targeted as the main selling point—quality and price. Whilst these issues appear to some extent, there is greater emphasis on the changing landscape consumers are being presented with and not necessarily in their best interests (in their opinion). However with two supermarkets holding such a dominant position, there may not be any other alternative in the short term and this appears to be frustrating the Australian grocery buyer. Although positive comments were uncovered, the majority express far more negativity. It is this latter issue that retailers and manufacturers of NB should be concentrating on, in particular, looking beyond the more popular “quality versus price” conundrum.

What’s Best for the Consumer?

It is imperative that both manufacturers and the retailers understand how consumers are responding to current changes, and if indeed, the Australian consumer has the potential to become as devoted to PHB as those seen in other international markets. The most significant difference in this situation compared to the experience in other countries is market structure. Ultimately consumers may well become ongoing purchasers of PHB—albeit partly due to lack of real choice. This begs the question, will this potentially dilute loyalty for grocery brands as consumer repeat purchase due to availability rather than true brand devotion (Day 1969). This form of consumer activity makes little contribution to the consumer-brand relationship by not providing consumers with the power to determine which brand is best for them and is generally not considered as beneficial for either party (Tranberg & Hansen 2001). Or will the increasing presence of PHB encourage consumers to become more loyal to NB in defiance to the changes? Will consumers sacrifice price savings in return for support of national brands and higher quality products? This needs further investigation in particular an examination into which categories (if any) are more susceptible to the presence of PHB. As noted by the Nielsen research (2009), retailers are aiming to have a presence in every category rather than those where generics hold a strong market position (e.g., flour, milk, sugar). It is clear that category is not as important to PHB but market penetration is and at the expense of NB and possibly consumer wants.

CONCLUSION

Given the financial commitment made by the supermarkets, research into consumer response to PHB is being closely monitored. Attitudinal and market monitor studies include mostly positive feedback (Nielsen 2008; 2009) but it is yet to be seen if in an “unbiased” environment, such as web forums, the same outcome is achieved. Ongoing research in the form of integrated mixed research methods will assist understanding these conflicting viewpoints. The application of an ethnographic approach to uncover natural buying patterns as to how consumer are truly responding to this considerable market change is the next stage now that a preliminary investigation has been done. As it has been shown here, there is a “gap” between what consumers are doing and how they really feel about the situation. If retailers are hoping to gain loyalty from consumers, then it no longer becomes an issue of a price competitive product. Instead, retailers and manufacturers need to focus on engaging the consumer so that all parties achieve optimal satisfaction.

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Effects of Health Concerns and Adoption of Health-Related Products on Cognitive Age
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ABSTRACT
Cognitive age has become an increasingly important concept when studying the older population. This study seeks to identify additional antecedent variables that may have an effect on cognitive age. The results support the general theory that differences in cognitive age are not merely related to the differences of chronological age, but are also based on health-related concerns people may have and the extent to which they have adopted products related to their health. Directions for future research are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION
Although the concept of cognitive age has increasingly received attention of scholars (e.g., Muthur and Moschis 2005; Wilkes 1992) its antecedents are still not fully understood. Wilkes suggested that there is a need to identify other predictor variables of cognitive age. Many prior attempts to examine predictors of cognitive age were either atheoretical or produced conflicting results (cf., Barak and Stern 1986). For example, Henderson, Goldsmith and Flynn (1995) studied several demographic variables but failed to find any relationship between cognitive age and variables like marital status, education, and income. Similarly, Logan, Ward, and Spitz (1992) found that widowhood and retirement do not provide any additional explanation of cognitive age beyond chronological age.

Systematic research to examine theory-based antecedents of cognitive age is relatively new (e.g., Wilkes 1992; Mathur and Moschis 2005). Wilkes (1992) found that income was a significant predictor of cognitive age. Similarly, Mathur and Moschis (2005) found that age, life stage changes, and biological changes were significant predictors of cognitive age. Considering the inconsistent findings reported by previous researchers and various suggestions for future research (Wilkes 1992; Mathur and Moschis 2005), the present research attempts to identify additional theory-based antecedents of cognitive age with the objective of gaining new insights into the concept of cognitive age.

BACKGROUND
Researchers in the early stages of self-concept research theorized self-concept as a unidimensional affective attribute that is part of the individual (Cooley 1902). More recent investigations on self-concept have supported a context-dependent model of self-concept. This has resulted in a more comprehensive conceptualization of self-concept as a multidimensional construct instead of a unidimensional one (Delugach, et al. 1992; Bracken 1992; Byrne 1984; Marsh 1988; Shavelson et al. 1976). As a multidimensional construct self-concept is conceptualized as a multifaceted structure of thoughts, attitudes, images, schemas, or theories regarding the self as an object (e.g., Cheek and Hogan 1983; Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984; Hoelter 1985; Markus 1983). Since people function within a variety of environments, it is observed that they display numerous context-dependent self-concepts that are related (Delugach, et al. 1992).

Changes in Self-Concept and Cognitive Age
The cognitive age construct is based on self-concept and its development over different stages of life course. Though the degree to which the self changes with age remains uncertain, it is understood how a self-concept develops and changes throughout a life cycle and in turn affects one’s age-related self-concept or cognitive age. As discussed, researchers have different definitions of self-concept. Some view self-concept in cognitive terms (e.g., Schouten 1991), where self-concept is defined as “the cognitive and affective understanding of who and what we are” (p. 412). Others choose to take a behavioral approach (e.g., Bracken 1992) and define self-concept as “a pattern of behavior that is sufficiently unique to an individual to be identified with that individual” (p. 3). Though most people go through life with only minor alterations to their self-concept (Levinson 1978) and may describe themselves in ageless terms (Kauffman 1986), age identity is an important element of one’s self-concept that may or may not change simultaneously with age.

Crain and Bracken (1994) argue that self-concept is a stable behavioral response like most learned behavioral response patterns. However, a gradual change could occur simultaneously with the change in an individual’s environment. In terms of cognitive age, it would mean that while people age chronologically at a steady rate, their cognitive age may not change evenly because environments within which individuals live do not change uniformly. Relatively stable environment may result in a slower rate of change or no change at all in cognitive age.

An individual’s actions might change in response to internal or external cues, which in turn may bring about a change to their self concept. This notion is consistent with the social-breakdown model by Kuyipers and Bengtson (1973). They observed that people go through life and experience several life events or transitions that reflect “changes in status that are discrete and bounded in duration” (George 1993, p. 358) and mark life changes such as role acquisition or role relinquishment (Gierveld and Dykstra 1993). When taking part in certain behaviors that are specific to an environment or to performing various roles, individuals evaluate their actions and behavioral outcome. These evaluations will then affect one’s self-concept (Sirgy 1982). When this same concept is applied to an aging individual, it has been found that changes associated with aging, either due to illness or normal aging, are also associated with changes in self-concept (e.g., McCloskey 1976; McGrath 1988). When applied to biological changes such as menopause or the onset of chronic conditions (arthritis, diabetes), these experiences make people aware of their aging bodies and may cause them to change their age identity to an older status. When applied socially, the events of retirement, grandparenthood, etc. may shift a person’s age identity because they mark a significant transition into roles relevant to older people (Karp 1988; Moschis 1994). Therefore, it can be concluded that cognitive age is expected to change in response to the person’s experiences of, and reactions to, various life-course or age-related changes.

Hypotheses
A model of the effect of health concerns and adoption of health-related products on cognitive age is presented in Figure 1. Hypotheses and their justifications are presented in the following paragraphs.

There is ample evidence to suggest that chronological age is the most important predictor of cognitive age (Barak and Stern 1986; Henderson et al. 1995; Mathur and Moschis 2005; Wilkes 1992). Chronological age represents simple passage of time from birth until one dies. This passage of time by itself could serve as a factor that influences age-related self-concept or cognitive age.
However, social cues and celebrations associated with aging could also serve as important reminders of that passage of time. Annual celebrations of birthdays and various anniversaries serve as markers reminding individuals of the passage of time in their lives. In addition to normal birthdays, a few specific birthdays have additional social meanings that signify eligibility for certain benefits and privileges (Mathur and Moschis 2005). Passage of certain birthdays could also signify membership to certain age-based subcultures contributing to their group consciousness (Karp 1988). In view of the fact that age is a major predictor of cognitive age, it is also important to explicitly incorporate it in any model attempting to identify additional predictors of cognitive age.

H1: Chronological age is positively related to cognitive age.

Previous research has found that biological changes experienced by individuals (e.g., hearing impairment, vision-related problems) are important predictors of cognitive age (Mathur and Moschis 2005). These biological changes are physical transitions that can be noticed and experienced by the individual. On the other hand, cognitive age is an aspect of self-concept that resides in the mind of the individual. Therefore, it is important to understand the cognitive process that mediates the relationship between biological aging and cognitive age. Biological aging includes a decline in the visual and hearing sensory systems as well as chronic conditions such as diabetes and arthritis. However, given the fact that biological changes take place at physical levels and cognitive age is an inner cognitive concept, it is likely that any effect of biological changes on cognitive age is mediated through some mental concept. Health concerns present such a concept. They represent thoughts one has with respect to specific health issues. In a way they represent cognitive internalization of a declining physical body. Although these thoughts can be triggered by health problems faced by the individual, they can also be triggered by similar problems experienced by their other referents. In any case, health concerns present a more proximate antecedent of cognitive age than biological changes. Given this argument, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2: Health concerns are positively related to one’s cognitive age.
Internal and external changes in an individual’s body have an effect on one’s age-related self-concept because one can feel a gradual “slowing down” (Karp 1988). As Becker (1993) noted, “When a profound physical disruption is experienced, the relationships between self, body, environment, and daily life have to be redrawn” (p. 150). Becker also found that elderly who suffered a stroke often experienced an initial loss of self as they questioned whether their old selves still existed. After some time, they were able to reestablish the links between the old (pre-stroke) and the new (post-stroke) self. In terms of age-related self-concept, other experiences of biological change such as menopause and chronic conditions such as arthritis make people more aware of their aging bodies and this may lead to changes in their age identity to that of an older status (Moschis 2000). Consistent with this finding, there has been substantial evidence to suggest that health status is a determinant of cognitive age (cf. Barak and Stern 1986; Logan et al. 1992; Markides and Boldt 1983; Gwinner and Stephens 2001). Mathur and Moschis (2005) found evidence to suggest a positive relationship between biological change and cognitive age. However, as one’s body experiences changes that are natural to an aging self, the use of products to help sustain a healthy body becomes necessary. These products can vary from prescription drugs that are taken to fight off chronic conditions to medical equipment used at home to help maintain a healthy body. While internal bodily changes may serve as internal cues that influence one’s self-concept, the use of products associated with the same bodily changes may serve as external cues that influence one’s self-concept. The daily presence of these reminders that the body increasingly needs assistance only serves to decrease an individual’s perception of his or her self as young and youthful. Therefore, the use of health-related products is likely to influence cognitive age. Given the preceding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There is a positive relationship between the adoption and use of health-related products and cognitive age.

**METHODS**

**Data Collection**

This study is based on the data collected for a large, multi-phase study. Only a part of the data collected for the first phase was used for this study. A national random sample of 10,000 heads of household in the United States was selected from the database of a large mailing list vendor. The sample was deliberately skewed towards older age brackets because the project focused mainly on older adults. Each head of the household was mailed a survey focusing on a number of behaviors and issues concerning older individuals. Respondents were requested to complete the survey and return it in the postage paid envelope provided. They were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and the information they provide would be used only for academic research. A total of 1,958 individuals completed the first phase of the survey and returned it, representing a response rate of 19.5%. However, the present study focused only on individuals 50 years of age or older. Of all the responses received, a total of 1,168 individuals 50 years or older had complete data for study variables and were included in the present study.

**Description of Sample Data**

The sample had a larger proportion of males (65.6%) than females (34.4%). This could be because the database used in the study as a sampling frame had a male member listed as the head of the household more often than a female member. In terms of educational attainment, 9.5% of the respondents had some or no high school education, 26.7% were high school graduates, 31.6% had some college education, 16.2% were college graduates, and 16.0% had obtained a graduate or professional degree. As mentioned earlier, the study focused on older adults, aged 50 to 90 years of age. Although many arguments have been presented in the literature regarding the suitability of any specific cut-off age while studying older adults, in the present study a cut-off limit of 50 years was selected because it was desirable to retain as many responses as possible in the analysis and the subjective age literature suggested that many of the factors included in the study are applicable to those who are of 50 years of age or older (Karp, 1988; Silvers, 1997). Of the sample included in the study, 17.2% were in the 50 to 59 years age group, 45.8% were in the 60 to 69 years age group, 33.5% were in the 70 to 79 years age group, and 3.5% were 80 years of age or older. In terms of income very few respondents reported earning under $10,000 annually (8.0%); 20.4% of the respondents reported earning between $10,000 and $19,999 annually, 32.6% reported earning between $20,000 and $34,000 annually, 17.6% of them reported earning between $35,000 and $49,999 annually, and 13.2% of the respondents reported earning between $50,000 and $74,999 annually. Only 8.2% of the respondents had an annual income of more than $75,000. The employment status of the respondents was divided a little more evenly with 55.9% of the respondents reporting their status as fully retired and 44.1% reporting their status as employed part-time or full-time.

**Measurement of Variables**

Barak and Schifffman’s (1981) original scale was used to measure the cognitive age construct. This scale has been widely used and has been validated by Wilkes (1992) and others (Mathur et al. 2001; Mathur and Moschis 2005). Respondents were asked to identify themselves as members of self referenced age decades by responding to four statements: “I feel as though I am in my…,” “I look as though I am in my…,” “I do most things as though I am in my…,” and “My interests are mostly those of people in their….” Respondents could check any decade starting from teens to 80’s. The alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .87. This reliability is consistent with measures obtained in other studies.

Adoption and use of health-related products was measured by asking respondents to indicate on a 1 to 4 point scale (1=”I never heard of/don’t know”, 2=”I am not interested in having/using”, 3=”I would like to have use”, or 4=”I currently have use”), three health-related products that people may use (“Prescription drug for chronic condition,” “Dietary meal prescription or products for people with certain health/physical requirements,” and “Self-diagnostic medical equipment at home”). Responses to the three statements were summed to create a 3-12 point index. Health concerns were defined as the thoughts individuals have regarding having specific health conditions. They were measured by asking the respondents to indicate on a 3-point scale (1=”I am not concerned at all,” 2=”I am concerned a little,” 3=”I am concerned a lot”) the extent to which they worry about things related to their health. Responses to five statements were used as indicators of the health concerns construct (“Having poor heart condition,” “Having visual problems that cannot be corrected with glasses,” “Having arthritis,” “Having diabetes,” and “Being physically fit to do the required daily chores”). The alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .74.

**Analysis and Results**

Structural equation modeling using LISREL 8 and its associated program PRELIS 2 were used to test the model depicted in Figure 1. Correlation matrix used in the analysis, and means and...
Effects of Health Concerns and Adoption of Health-Related Products on Cognitive Age

Since previous research has shown that chronological age is a major predictor of cognitive age (Wilkes 1992; Mathur and Moschis 2005), confounding effect of chronological age was a major concern. Therefore, to eliminate the confounding effect of chronological age, it was specifically included in the model as an independent variable. In line with the standard deviations are given in Table 1. Since previous research has shown that chronological age is a major predictor of cognitive age (Wilkes 1992; Mathur and Moschis 2005), confounding effect of chronological age was a major concern. Therefore, to eliminate the confounding effect of chronological age, it was specifically included in the model as an independent variable. In line with

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Correlation Table</th>
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<tr>
<td>FEEL</td>
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<td>LOOK</td>
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<td>DIABETES</td>
<td>X5</td>
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<td>CHORES</td>
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<td>ADOPT</td>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Structural Model Parameters</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standardized Estimates (t-value)</td>
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<tr>
<td>( \lambda_{x1} )</td>
<td>1.00*</td>
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<tr>
<td>( \lambda_{x2} )</td>
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<td>( \lambda_{x3} )</td>
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<td>( \lambda_{x4} )</td>
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<td>( \lambda_{x6} )</td>
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<td>( \lambda_{x7} )</td>
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<td>( \lambda_{y1} )</td>
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<td>( \lambda_{y3} )</td>
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<td>( \lambda_{y4} )</td>
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Age \( \rightarrow \) Cognitive age 
| .79 |

Health concerns \( \rightarrow \) Cognitive age 
| 0.07 |

| Health-related product adoption \( \rightarrow \) Cognitive age |
| 0.07 |

| \( \chi^2 \) |
| 130.12 |

| Df |
| 39 |

| Standardized RMR |
| 0.033 |

| GFI |
| 0.98 |

| AGFI |
| 0.97 |

| NFI |
| 0.98 |

| NNFI |
| 0.98 |

Note: Table entries are maximum-likelihood estimates, t-values are in parentheses. 
* parameter fixed
previous research, multiple indicators were used in the evaluation of the model. Although the χ² for the overall model was significant (χ²=130.12, df=39, p=0.00) other indicators suggest acceptable fit of the model (Standardized RMR=.033, GFI=.98, AGFI=.97, NFI=.98, NNFI=.98). Parameter estimates and t-values are presented in Table 2.

Parameters estimates and associated t-values used to test proposed hypotheses are given in Table 2. Chronological age was predicted to be a significant predictor of cognitive age. This hypothesis was supported by the data (maximum likelihood estimate=.79, t-value=25.60). Hypothesis 2 suggested a positive relationship between the use of health concerns and cognitive age. As shown in Table 3, this hypothesis was supported by the data (maximum likelihood estimate=.07, t-value=2.90). Adoption of health-related products was predicted to have a positive relationship to cognitive age in Hypothesis 3. This hypothesis was supported by the data (maximum likelihood estimate=.07, t-value=3.32).

**DISCUSSION**

The present research attempted to identify additional theory-based predictors of cognitive age. Previous research had suggested that biological declines in the body are good predictors of cognitive age (Mathur and Moschis 2005), implying that physical evidence of aging contributes to increasing cognitive age. The present research provides additional insight into the process. Many times when people see their declining health attributed to aging, they first attempt to mentally resist this decline, but when they are forced to consume products that are related to their health they have no alternative except to confront the issue. The adoption of health-related products contributes to an internalization of their aging. A manifestation of such internalization takes place in the form of health-related concerns that people develop. The fact that the adoption of health-related products and health concerns are significant predictors of cognitive age suggests that the change in age-related self concept may be taking place after one internalizes these behaviors and accepts that these behaviors and their underlying reasons represent one’s new reality.

The scientific world believes that an important requirement when conducting research is that the results are repeatable. Popper (1959) stated that “we do not take even our own observations quite seriously, or accept them as scientific observations, until we have repeated and tested them” (p. 45). This research confirmed that chronological age is a very important predictor of cognitive age.

These findings have implications for future theory development. Although this research found significant additional predictors of cognitive age, the quest to understand predictors of cognitive age and the processes underlying their effects is not over. Future research on the topic of cognitive age could delve further to assess the impact of additional variables on age-related self-concept. Although the progression of chronological age is unidirectional, it is not clear if cognitive age is unidirectional or is bidirectional (i.e., it could go down). For example, consider if advances in health care and medical sciences could reverse some of the predictor variables of cognitive age (health events), would an individual reassess his/her age-related self-concept or cognitive age? For example, if a person who has undergone an organ transplant (kidney, liver, heart) and no longer suffers ill effects of the previous damaged organ, should he/she lower his/her cognitive age? Future researchers might examine similar and more complex issues, perhaps using longitudinal data. Also, more objective measures of health should be included, such as, the number of visits to hospital within a given time, and BMI index.

It would also be desirable to research the interaction effects of factors and understand the conditions under which certain events have a positive effect on cognitive age and the conditions under which the same events may not have any effect. An investigation of the moderating effects of important variables would be a logical next step for future researchers. Although cross-sectional studies suggest that a youthful cognitive age becomes more common as people age, only a few studies have focused on the development of cognitive age over time by following the same individuals in a longitudinal study.

**REFERENCES**


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A New Emergent Paradigm in Measuring ‘Satisfaction’: Accessing the Fragmented Nature of Visitors’ Reality Via the Desired Benefit Dis/Confirmation Approach

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Damian Gallagher, Aberystwyth University, UK
Adrian Palmer, Swansea University, UK

ABSTRACT

Purpose—This study explores conceptual frameworks for understanding consumer satisfaction in the substantive domain of a public museum.

Design/Methodology—An inductive approach and a qualitative methodology was employed through theory and data triangulations. 46 semi-structured in-depth interviews with visitors upon exit and a further four with management and staff members aided the comparison of three schools of satisfaction thought feeding into a new theory.

Findings—The results were most congruent with the postmodern and experiential school of satisfaction thought. Conceptually, this reinforced the position of a fragmented and non-totalizing consumer reality, as well as subjective experience. Reciprocally, outcome quality (desired benefits) elucidated most insight on the appreciation of individual satisfied states.

INTRODUCTION

The Tourism industry is one of the largest in the UK and is estimated to be worth approximately £75.1 billion in 2000 and accounting for around 4.8% of the GDP (BTA 2001, in Koenig & Bischoff 2003, p.230) with most major cities having a wide range of attractions to encourage visitors (Hede & Hall 2006). Consequently, the “application of marketing in heritage and cultural tourism is becoming more and more crucial” (Rojas & Camarero 2008, p.525).

Research interest in consumer satisfaction, including its antecedents and consequences, has long been regarded as vital for both industrial and academic marketing thought (Woodruff et al. 1983). However, very little research has focused on the museum sector (Legrenzi & Troilo 2005). The focal point of this research is to explore the consumer satisfaction phenomenon, in a public museum context, so as to uncover the antecedents of satisfaction and identify those most relevant to practice in this context.

Traditionally, consumer satisfaction has been measured using a predominantly positivist approach and quantitative techniques, as a cognitive state that views the consumer as a rational user of information (Filip 2008); to the neglect of inductive and qualitative approaches such as Phenomenology. This paper seeks to critically discuss conceptual frameworks for measuring customer satisfaction in the context of museums and reports on a case study to develop a new framework.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The antecedents of satisfaction have been hitherto subject to many conceptualisations and schools of thought. A review of literature reveals that there are three broad domains in which satisfaction can be identified; i.e. the traditional cognitive, or rational school (Rojas & Camarero 2008), the contemporary school of affective emotions (Bigne & Andreu 2004) and the experiential or postmodern school (Filip 2008).

The Traditional School: Traditionally, consumer satisfaction has been measured as a cognitive state, using predominantly positivist and quantitative techniques (ibid.) and viewing the consumer as a “rational elaborator of information” (Legrenzi & Troilo 2005, p.2) involved in the processes of expectancy dis/confirmation, product quality assessment and future or immediate behavioural intentions (Parasuraman et al. 1988). Dis/confirmation is defined as “a summary psychological state experienced by the consumer when confirmed or disconfirmed expectations exist” (Rust & Oliver 2000, in Bigne et al. 2005) such as the difference between expectations and performance which take place within a consumer’s “zone of tolerance” (Bowen & Clarke 2002) including desired and acceptable expectations (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman 1993). Cognitive quality is related to the positive or negative attributes which are assumed to determine a satisfied state (Bigne et al. 2008), and focus on what and how a service is perceived to have been delivered by post-consumption customer evaluations (Rojas & Camarero 2008).

The Contemporary School: An increased recognition of the “need to incorporate both affective and cognitive components in modelling consumer satisfaction” (Bigne et al. 2005, p.833) has led to the emergence of an affective based approach to satisfaction. This was initiated by Oliver (1993, in ibid.) who noted that “satisfaction was determined directly and independently by both dis/confirmation and affect.” Emotions in satisfaction are conceptualized as a “complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural/hormonal systems, which can give rise to affective experiences” (Dube & Menon 2000, in ibid.). In terms of emotional content, the contemporary school follows the bi-dimensional approach (Russell & Pratt 1980, in Koenig Lewis & Palmer 2008). The measurement of this has two affective-assumptions, of ‘pleasure’ and ‘arousal’.

The Experiential Postmodern School: In recent times, both these traditional and contemporary views have been increasingly criticised by the emergent and developing postmodern based experiential proponents of satisfaction—a predominantly inductive and qualitative research tradition. Many researchers now recognise that consumers are no longer to be presumed as “machine or computer-like information processing decision-makers” (Adlis & Holbrook 2001, p.61). This is in support of Bowen & Clarke (2002, p.300) who state that “one might question the seamless logicality suggested by such research in satisfaction, and query whether consumers really behave in such a rational manner.” This perspective highlights the consideration of subjective contexts when querying satisfaction.

The aim of this research is to explore the consumer satisfaction phenomenon, so as to uncover the antecedents of satisfaction and identify those most relevant in practice. The overall research question is expressed as follows: Is visitor satisfaction—a rational process (as expectancy dis/confirmation, quality, behavioural-intentions, exhibit engagement), an evaluative affective stimuli (disappointed, bored, entertained, delighted etc) or a subjective evaluation (personal subjective faculties, motivations, desires, circumstances)?

METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the research question, an inductive qualitative approach was adopted. The context of the museum experience meant that “the experiential and socio-cultural dimensions of consumption [were] not accessible through experiments, surveys or database modelling” (Arnould & Thompson 2005, p.870). Re-
cricopically, Bowen & Clarke (2002, p.304) suggest that “leaning towards a non-positivist, qualitative, subjective approach does not mean that objectivity is abandoned; indeed, triangulation is a core principle of research.”

In this case, theory and data triangulations were employed for a superior appreciation of both phenomena and context (Jennings 2001). The former, involved a literature review and a classification of the antecedents and contents of satisfaction so as to inform an open-ended instrument and the use of semi-structured questions that allowed for more probing and clarification from respondents (Finn et al. 2000). Questions included matters on consumer motivations, desires, expectations, cognitive and affective satisfaction, benefits and behavioural intentions. Interviews were recorded and lasted at average 7 minutes each.

Further, data collection was "rooted in the reality of experience" (Daengbuppha et al. 2006, p.370) being captured at the point of consumption, whilst at exit from the National Waterfront Museum at Swansea. Forty-six individual respondents, including 23 males and 23 females (five 18-24 year olds, sixteen 25-44’s, fourteen 45-64’s and eleven 65+) were selected for interviewing. Sampling ceased after 46, when the research reached saturation (Daengbuppha et al. 2006, p.384). In accordance with data-triangulation, the approach triangulated visitor interviews with staff ones to help build a more comprehensive framework (exemplified by Bowen & Clarke 2002; Rojas & Camarero 2008). This included an in-depth, semi-structured interview with the museum’s manager as well as three with frontline staff who daily observed visitors.

The data analysis began through successive approximation (Jennings 2001, p.204). Strauss & Corbin’s (1990, in ibid: 200) analytical tool was also utilized. This involved "open coding in the development of concepts, categories and properties; axial coding in developing connections between categories and sub-categories, and selective coding in integrating categories to build a theoretical framework" (Daengbuppha et al. 2006, p.380). After the analysis, the researcher reverted back to wider contributions to theoretically sensitise the findings, thus meeting grounded theory techniques (Goulding 1999, p.651).

**FINDINGS & ANALYSIS**

The analysis of findings was conducted around 4 emergent themes:

1. Disconfirming experiential time involvement or cognitive engagement as indicators of satisfaction in the public museum context;
2. Disconfirming traditional expectancy dis/confirmation as an indicator of satisfaction;
3. Disconfirming traditional objective quality and contemporary affect, yet confirming a holistic outcome quality as indicator of satisfaction;
4. Disconfirming traditional and contemporary behavioural-intentions as indicators of satisfaction.

1. **Disconfirming Experiential Time Involvement or Cognitive Engagement as Indicators of Satisfaction in the Public Museum Context.** The experiential contributions of museum satisfaction have their own presumptions of what specific behaviours can denote satisfaction. This maintains that satisfied visitors will be inherently engaged with artefacts. Urry (in Bagnell 2003, p.93) has termed this “concentrated viewing” and is theorised as “the level of participation between visitors and exhibits” (Goulding 2000, p.263). This presupposition is debated in the current study on three grounds. First, time-involvement and engagement are both dependent on (a) the context (charged or free museum); which feeds into motivations for consumption; and also (b) visitor sought after benefits. Finally, (c) it also depends on previous visit experiences.

First (a) the results show that 18 of the 46 participants came on a “casual” visit to the museum. This included to “see what the museum was about,” “use it as a shortcut,” “during ‘bad weather,”’ to simply “waste time” (4/18) or to “pass by spontaneously” (6/18). A few descriptions of motivations included:

**DELIVERATE/SPECIALIST:** “Because we've got an interest in Welsh history; especially the industrial part” (M, 65+)

**DELIVERATE/NON-SPECIALIST:** “We're just in Swansea for a few days so we thought we'd come. We like to see what a town has to offer when we go...and have a nice time exploring” (F, 73) interview-42.

**CASUAL:** “It's probably as much as anything because it was raining” (M, 45-64) interview-7.

Transparently, satisfaction could not be measured by engagement or time-involvement in the public museum, but instead in relation to customers' initial motives; that is, whether it met what they sought to experience, rather than what they were expected, or supposed to. Secondly, (b) visitors with “casual” or “formal” dispositions displayed disparate desires. This essentially related to the benefits consumers’ anticipated deriving, and as Goulding (2000, p.264) has postulated, "visitors came to a museum with an agenda, such as goods on the shopping list.” Theoretically, Thyne (2001, p.117) has suggested that visitors have “individualistic values, such as education and knowledge, or more socially oriented ones such as fun, excitement and being with friends or family.” San Martin & Bosque (2008, p.269), have also recognized that benefits can be of “physical, social or cultural nature.” Relatedly, three emergent subjective benefits of this study have included “physical,” “cultural” and “social” desires.

As such, twenty-eight of the 46 visitors came deliberately to the museum. 15 of them had no particular interest, but came for social reasons, such as “bringing others,” “spending a day with friends/family,” or “bringing children.” 13 came especially to experience museum elements, such as “maritime,” “architecture,” “exhibitions” or others. Within the sample, social reasons to attend were prominent with 43 of the 46 having come with others, be them a group of family/friends (18/43) spouse (16/43) or children with/out spouse (9/43). It is thus fair to conclude that being socially-motivated (social desire) did not decipher a casual behaviour as such, but rather even formally engaging individuals experienced the enjoyment with other people. The only distinction was that “deliberate,” and more concretely formally-behaving visitors desired to delve within exhibits (cultural desire) whilst casual visitors preferred to use the museum’s surface superficially (physical desire). Hence, being *casually* behaving, did not hint a dissatisfied state with the museum at all—it merely uncovers disparate motivations for consumption, as well as a subjective construction of experience.

Involvement was also dependent on previous visit faculties (c). Beeho & Prentice (1997, p.76) have highlighted that “measuring previous experience is essential as each visitor’s personal agenda is unique.” Practically, 17 visitors came on a repeat visit; they knew the galleries more than first time visitors. This could be exemplified since only 3 of the 17 went to all the galleries and their averaged time spent was 45 minutes each. By contrast, first timers (29) averaged 70 minutes each and 15 of them went to all the galleries.

This section sheds light that the measure of satisfaction in the
public museum context should be the individual benefits that visitors wish to derive in relation to either their casual or deliberate dispositions, and to their cultural (cognitive) social (interaction) or surface (physical) desires; rather than a rationalization of time engagement, effort or absorption.

2. Disconfirming Traditional Expectancy Dis/Confirmation as Indicator of Satisfaction. According to the traditional realm, there exists a causal-relationship between expectancy dis/confirmation and satisfaction (Parasuraman et al. 1988; Bigne et al. 2008) the theory re-known as the ‘dis/confirmation model of expectations’ (Rojas & Camarero 2008). Expectations are seen to be constructed by various sources, such as personal, stimulus (San Martin & Bosque 2008, p.265) or induced sources (Beerli & Martin 2004) as well as tourists’ “career escalators” (Beerli & Clarke 2002, p.300). Conversely, the argument that consumers are seen to evaluate their satisfaction based on a comparison of prior to visit expectations is critically reviewed within the current context; both in terms of the public temperament of the product, but importantly through a deeper appreciation of individual forces shaping events. These can be conceptualized as the “individualized desired benefits.”

The results show that 31 of the 46 informants had some expectations. 17 were repeat visitors (group-1); 8 had expectations through adverts (group-2); 4 based them on recommendation from friends (group-3); and 2 from media sources (group-4); whilst 15 had not expected anything prior to visit (group-5).

As for group 1, 17 knew what to expect as they had been to the museum previously. The experience on the day had mostly met (13) exceeded (1) or fallen short (1) their expectations; whilst some (3) did not perceive these as relevant. However, nowhere did this imply that visitors’ satisfaction was swayed through this; it just confirmed that the museum was perceived as the same or otherwise as on previous visits. Conversely, the question on desires elucidated that 12 of the 17 visitors suggested that the experience had met (11) or exceeded (1) their desires. These included “bringing family or friends” (4) “killing time” (4) “entertaining children” (2) “completing a previous visit” (1) or “having a good time” (1).

Four suggested that the museum had let them down, since they wished for “more exhibits” (1) “larger signage” (1) “more for children” (1) or a “stronger maritime” theme (1). This can be visualized from the below recollections:

INTERVIEWER: In comparison to what you desired from the experience, has it met, exceeded, or fallen behind what you wanted?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, I just wish there was more for kids really

INTERVIEWER: And in comparison to what you expected, has it met, exceeded or fallen-short of what you expected?

RESPONDENT: It has met what I expected (M, 60) interview-41.

Similarly, in group 2, eight first time visitors had read information in leaflets, brochures or the museum’s website. When prompted, 3 did not think these as relevant for an anticipated experience; however, some expectations were met (1) or exceeded (3). For the rest, expectations fell short of a “traditional” or “maritime” outlook. But in which way was satisfaction swayed though expectations? First, it was clear that visitors within this group were tourists and had enquired sources to select what they desired to experience within the geographic area. This was further illustrated by the “desire” enquiry which revealed perceived-benefits. Thus, it was found that the experience had mostly met or exceeded visitor desires when prompted; including to “complete from a holiday experience” (5 / 8), or “gaining historical knowledge” (1). For 2, their wishes were fallen short, since they wanted to experience a “traditional” or “maritime” museum. As one tourist recollected:

EXPECTATIONS: It was a case of picking up brochures; what we normally do is go to each country is pick up those things that we think we’d have specific interest.

DESIRE: I’m fascinated with Maritime and this was somewhat different from what I expected; I expected and anticipated to see lots of ships in the docks or something from the history of the area. But it’s turned out to be something considerably more than that. It’s basically kind of different but far better experience (M, 65+) interview-15.

In group 3, four had heard recommendations. Two reported that these were exceeded, one that it met; and the last that this did not represent an expectation of experience. The desire enquiry however revealed that their wishes were met or exceeded; being to “have a good time;” whereas some were disappointed since they wanted to “entertain children” and some to “find exhibits more interesting.” As a visitor expressed:

EXPECTATIONS: A couple from work had been down and they said they’d enjoyed it. DESIRE: To see what it’s all about and have a look around; possibly more for him [son] really would be the main thing; just to keep him interested (M, 37) interview-35.

In group 4, two visitors had heard the museum in the news or a travel guide. With one not recognising this as an expectation, the other perceived that the experience had met their expectations. In relation to “desires,” these were transparent and were both met, and related to “learning.” In group 5, 16 had no expectations. In terms of desires, 7 had met them and 6 had exceeded; including to “complete a holiday experience” (7) “gain historical knowledge” (3) “have a good time” (2) “entertain children” (3) or just “kill time” (1).

From these multiple insights, it is clear that the “desire” and “subjective benefit” enquiry elucidated faculties as relevant to individuals; whilst the “expectation” enquiry uncovered whether they had heard about the museum, sources and if these were dis/ confirmed. However, since desires are endogenous and self-relevant and expectations are external and socially informed, and because “satisfaction” is an internalized individual process, it is logical that the evaluation point is essentially subjective.

This tourist is a specialist connoisseur in maritime themes. His collected expectations from brochures aimed to meet his inher -ent interests and personal desires. The museum was evaluated on these subjective benefits/experiences.

This parent had a subjective desired benefit (child) that his colleagues may not have had. Within this example, it is clear that this experience is weighed differently from disparate types of people with dissimilar needs—the evaluated point is subjective benefits, and not expectations.
3. Disconfirming Traditional Objective Quality and Contemporar

y Affect yet Confirming a Holistic Outcome Quality as Indicator

of Satisfaction. The next distinction relevant to the traditional CS/D

school, measures visitor cognitive quality-attributes. Traditional

authors affirm that “the effect of perceived quality on satisfaction

is greater than the effect of emotions” (Rojas & Camarero

2008, p.533). In contrast, the contemporary school argues that “objecti

d does not lead to satisfaction as many academics and practitioners

lazily presume; since satisfaction is more affective than quality, with

questions such as did you like it rather than the cognitive question was

the experience of high quality” (Bowen & Clarke 2002, p.298).7 The

current study has uncovered that a holistic quality approach, incorp

orating subjective desired-benefits, enables a transparent indi

cation to a visitor dis/satisfied state. The affective approach in this context

was too summative and could not shed light into consumption idio

syncrasies. First, in relation to “cognitive quality attributions,” all

visitors could evaluate the secondary quality elements of the museum,

including the environment, amenities, staff and orientation. 25 of the

46 liked the “physicality” of space. 14 mentioned negativity with

concerns over empty spaces and maintenance; yet for 7 this did not

matter for the experience. In relation to “amenities,” 10 mentioned

them as positive, 4 as negative; and 32 as an irrelevant element of

service. Further, since the NWM does not have a guided approach to

interpretation, 31 did not mention “staff” as a relevant component of

experience. “Terrain orientation” was mentioned by 14 as positive,

13 as negative and by 26 as an immaterial element of experience.

However, cognitive surface quality could not illuminate di/satisfac

tion states standing alone.

Simultaneously, the affective approach worked as a good

summative, yet not thorough enough tool for the elucidation of di/sat

factory. By using Russell & Pratt’s (1980; Bigne et al. 2005,

p.837) dichotomous of affective satisfaction, being pleasure and

arousal-visitors’ di/satisfied states were classified in relation to the

interpretation of narratives. This revealed that 26 of the 46 were

“generally satisfied” with the museum, with a further 10 being

delighted. These visitors conveyed other emotions, such as entertain

ment (6) by one articulating that “it’s fun, entertaining, and gives

enjoyment” (F, 28). Some were positively surprised (6) through

expressing, “the last time I’d come it was hardly anything here, so I

am gob-smacked with the size of it all” (F, 61)-trans-34. Relaxation

was another reflection (4) with one participant saying “I just arrived

and I feel very comfortable, very peaceful; it’s like dropping in a

church” (M, 45-64)-trans-16. Some (7) expressed negative emotions,

when children were bored, or other struggles, but were unable to be

fully contextualized through the affective approach to satisfaction.

The measure of affective state after the visit could not dig-under the

phenomena, but could denote misleading conceptualizations: being

“generally” satisfied cannot decipher a positive experience per-se,

nor can it illuminate the constructive idiosyncrasies which could

disrupt the experience.

Outcome quality (as subjective benefits) could in practice reveal

satisfaction evaluations of disparate types of visitors. For museums,

these include “educational and instructive experience, excellence of

objects materials exposed, factors of introspection, escape, watching

exhibits” (Nowacki 2009, pp.298-300); whilst for casual consumers

these could also include functionality and physicality of the museum.

Relatedly, the galleries were evaluated in relation to three subjective

benefits of different types of consumers. First, on the role of interactive

media in enabling or hindering cognitive access. Secondly, on the

relevance of the museum for children; and finally, on the informa

tion exhibited, in maintaining interest and an emotional connection.

It was clear that different age groups evaluated the museum from a different perspective (14 negative, 18 positive and 14 not

mentioned). Elderly visitors found that the interactive media could

hinder their cognitive access. On the other hand, younger visitors

were fascinated by the modern approach of interpretation. A gallery

assistant who daily observed visitors as well as a customer noted:

ASSISTANT: “Children find it easy cos they’re around that every day... The older-generation are quite apprehensive to

approach the exhibits, but once we show them how it’s done they enjoy it.”

VISITOR: “If the museum could advertise that people are on-hand to help you; school children come and do it straightforward.

But older people are not used to the hands-on and not everybody’s assertive” (M, 45-64) interview-18.

Further, when family-orientation was a subjective benefit, the

galleries were evaluated on whether the museum met the needs of

their children. Some (9) were happy with the museum’s child-

orientation, whilst others were dissatisfied (10); with most visitors

(27) not mentioning this subjective benefit. It was clear that satisfied

visitors had not brought children with them, yet dissatisfied ones had.

Respective evaluations included:

POSITIVE: “For the kids it must be an absolute joy I should think to visit such places” (M, 65+) exhibit-15.

NEGATIVE: “Things quite often that adults want to look at and read stuff, it’s helpful to have something that the kids want to

look at and that don’t necessarily the same; I think if you can have two things next to each other, so that you can still keep an

eye on your kids but you can get engrossed in something else” (M, 42) interview-28.

The information exhibited in the museum was also evaluated

very subjectively, in relation to the outcomes that visitors wished to
derive. Only 13 of the 46 were entirely happy with the information;

for them, variety and interest were positively attributed, with com-

ments like, “I thought the displays were excellent, quite interesting”

(F, 45-64) exhibit-9. Conversely, 33 complaints centred on the fact

that the NWM was perceived to have too many “themes,” which for

foreign consumers and connoisseurs meant lack of continuity (7/46).

Secondly, that the approach did not allow emotional connection,

when that was an anticipated subjective benefit (10/46). Further, for

connoisseurs, the museum lacked deeper focus on a maritime theme

(5/46); whilst for elderly visitors, who were used to traditional modes

of interpretation, the museum needed more real-life exhibits (11/46).

As such, having 15 galleries (Keen, 2005) each covering a dif

ferent type of industrialization, was perceived as confusing. This was

a particularly for foreign visitors who needed simpler interpretation,

and for maritime connoisseurs, who perceived that they needed deeper

information. As such, two responses included:

Being “energy, landscape, people, sea, communities, organizations,

archivers, money, day’s work, networks, coal, land, transforma

tions, metals and the frontiers’ galleries” (NWM Book, Keen

2005, pp.4-6).
FOREIGNER: One thing that could be changed is the “organisation” because we passed from something into another and there is no real links, no connection between them; and I’m French and it’s not easy” (F, 26) exhibit-31.

CONNOISSEUR: “When I tried to circumnavigate the exhibits, I found myself becoming disenchanted. The sections jump from boy-scouts to swordfish spikes through halls of ships to unions, to rugby. It’s just such a mis-match of eclectic collections that don’t mean anything” (M, 65+) exhibit-4.

Moreover, when consumers desired a “living” museum, or an experience that provokes a “hedonic” response, the museum was evaluated from a different standpoint. An exemplar visitors gauged, “it’s nice to know how peoples’ lives were and I don’t think that came across particularly; It’s just not to the forefront; it just stops at the facts” (M, 45-64)-trans-7. Maritime-specialists on the other hand evaluated the museum from a benchmark of thorough and technical information. Such a visitor mused, “well something to do with the sea. This was supposed to be transference of the National Maritime Industrial Museum of Wales. They brought it down here and put a nice fancy name on it called ‘Waterfront’… well that means bugger-all basically. There’s a huge collection just wasting away” (M, 60)-exhibit-41.

Elderly visitors utilized another benchmark; of previous experience, and felt alienated with the virtual mode of interpretation, by expressing, “the things that were there before… you related more to it. It’s more interesting when you can see it in real-life rather than virtual; on a simpler sense, it’s a museum for old things-they should be shown” (F, 45-64)-trans-44.

Therefore, this section revealed that satisfaction cannot be measured as a homogenous process of evaluated cognitive-factors, or a summary of emotions. Theorization is needed to appreciate disparate realities that visitors bring to their interactions with museums, as well as the subjective personal benefits and meaning-making strategies they seek to derive.

4. Disconfirming Traditional and Contemporary Behavioural- Intentions as Indicators of Satisfaction. The final traditional and contemporary presumptions suggest that satisfied visitors will inherently demonstrate loyalty, such as “complaining behaviour, negative/positive word of mouth and repurchase” (Bigne et al. 2008, p.305). According to this, ‘behavioural intentions’ are split into immediate and future variables. Immediate intentions, according to Rojas & Camarero (2008, p.528) in the context of “cultural tourism, may be described as the intention to purchase guides, publications, souvenirs and presents. Bigne et al. (2008, p.304) also postulate that “on-the-spot behaviours refer to consumers’ efforts to tangibilize the experience, including souvenirs, gifts or pictures.” In relevance to future, these link to the “likelihood to repurchase and recommend to others” (Geng & Qu 2008, p.624) whilst Bigne et al. (2005: 836) incorporate “willingness to pay more.”

The current results highlight a unique complexity of intervening predominate, which disrupt from such rational outcomes. In relation to “immediate” behaviours, such as visiting the “café,” 27 had visited it, whilst 13 had not. Nonetheless, this was influenced by personal circumstances. 5 who did not visit the café were tourists; while they were in the area for a short break, they did not wish to stay fixed in the museum. Others, (3) were casual visitors, having more hasty visits, but were still satisfied with their own constructed products. Besides, four disappointed guests had gone to the café, and this could not illustrate satisfaction. Further, 18 did not go to the “souvenir-shop,” whilst 20 did. Reasons for not going included “rushed visits” (5) perception of the shop as “overly-pricy” (M, 70)-trans-33, or having children. Clearly, going to the souvenir shop was not due to a satisfied state, but was chosen as a subjective desire.

In terms of “pictures” to tangibilize the experience, even though 36 were “overall” satisfied with their experience (as affect), only 5 had taken any photos. Reasons for not taking pictures included “repeat visits” (17), “spontaneity” (8) and “confusion” as to whether pictures were allowed (8). Such visitors reminisced:

REPEATER: “I have done in the past” (M, 45-64) trans-18.

SPONTANEOUS: “No, I didn’t have my camera, we should have brought it” (F, 65+) trans-2.

CONFUSED: “I presume we’re not allowed to take them in here...” (M, 70) trans-43.

Transparency, satisfaction could not be illuminated by immediate intentions, because of the spontaneous nature of visitors as well as due to intervening conditions which swayed the constructed experience. In terms of “future” intentions, these were further contaminated by personal subjectivity. For instance, reasons for not ‘recommending’ the museum included being local, not seeing many people, i.e., being housewife, or living too far away. Similarly, for 11 visitors unable to “re-visit,” explanations included the “distance” such as, “there’s no reason why I wouldn’t come it’s just a long-way” (M, 42)-exhibit-28. Finally, “willingness to pay more” revealed more abstract consumer desires and ideologies. As such, if the museum were to charge a fee in the future it would need to have a regeneration of exhibits (7), as a visitor articulated “only if it was something new really interesting” (M, 25-44)-trans-13. Further, it would also mean that the venue would not anymore be used as a casual escape (14) as a visitor suggested, “now we’re waiting for our daughter; it’s a pleasurable way to waste-time. If there’s an admission-charge we won’t come” (M, 35) trans-20. At the same time, others (8) would not return due to personal ideologies; as a visitor expressed, “I don’t think so! I think I’ve put enough taxes into this” (F, 65+)-trans-1.

Hence, satisfaction could not be explicated by whether visitors would be willing to go to the café, or souvenir shop or to take pictures; neither by whether they are to recommend, re-visit or be willing to pay admission fees in the future. This is since customers were spontaneous and sought to create their own personal experiences. Consequently, these decisions were made on a benchmark of personal wants, circumstances and a creative, meaning-making construction of experience.

CONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION

This study set out to discover the antecedents of satisfaction, by comparing three broad schools of thought. The findings indicate that consumer satisfaction is not a rational process that can be easily hypothesized, but rather a subjective one. Thus, consumers cannot be inherently expected to weigh up their exogenous expectations to the actual service delivery, or tick objective quality boxes of the experience, or to demonstrate loyalty behavioural intentions. Simultaneously, they should not be expected to “engage” with museum exhibits or to evaluate their satisfaction through an affective summary. Conceptually, an inductive, open-ended technique has shed-light into the subjectivity of experience and evaluation-as filtered by individual motivations, desires and faculties. These non-grant narrative desired-benefits have been revealed to work as benchmarks of the constructed evaluation. By implication, future enquiry should be following an open-ended approach to aid the
appreciation of consumer subjectivity.

The industry might also benefit from a “mass customization tool,” previously theorized by Addis & Holbrook (2001, p.56), which could be used to segment the market according to desired benefits. Public museums are advised to incorporate a “balanced” approach in their construction of heritage products; by “taking into account the single consumer and, thereby, allowing him or her to ask for products able to satisfy his or her personal and subjective needs” (ibid.).

The study has been restricted by certain limitations. These have included the concrete case-study approach, a small sample as well as the use of a single methodology. Future line of enquiry may choose to incorporate quantitative techniques to assess these emergent findings, or to replicate the current study in wider contexts. With subjectivity in mind, “the journey to understand tourist satisfaction continues…” (Bowen & Clarke 2002, pp.305-306).

REFERENCES
Exploring College Students’ Perceptions of Negative Consequences of Binge Drinking Through Consumer Collages
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Krzysztof Kubacki, Keele University, UK

ABSTRACT
Binge drinking among young people has become one of the most pressing social problems throughout developed economies. The discussion of its negative consequences has not moved far beyond quantitative research using the factors identified by Wechsler et al. (1994). The purpose of this paper is to investigate students’ perceptions of negative consequences of binge drinking using consumer collages. Our findings indicated that young people’s perceptions of various negative consequences of binge drinking were much more complex and ambiguous than it was portrayed in earlier studies.

INTRODUCTION
Young people’s binge drinking remains one of the most pressing social problems throughout Western economies (Banister and Piacentini 2006). Although significant number of studies investigating excessive alcohol consumption has been carried out over the last twenty years (see for example Wechsler and Nelson 2008), the debates about negative consequences of alcohol consumption have not moved far beyond the original list of factors identified in 1994 by Wechsler et al. Further, extensive quantitative research into binge drinking, focusing mainly on factors contributing to binge drinking (ibid.), has not been paralleled by the same level of qualitative research exploring consumers’ perceptions of their excessive consumption. Only in the last few years we have witnessed an emergence of research exploring for example young people’s socialising and alcohol (Griffin et al. 2009; Szmigin et al. 2008). The purpose of this paper is to investigate young people’s perceptions of negative consequences of binge drinking. As the definitions of binge drinking vary across countries (Oei and Moraw ska 2004), the understanding of binge drinking in this research was based on Martinic and Measham’s (2008) concept of extreme drinking, which includes intoxication, motivation to get drunk, enjoyment of the process, desirability of its outcomes, and long-term experience with alcohol enabling an individual to control their drinking.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Students Binge Drinking
Although the role of alcohol consumption in college students’ life, as well as its causes, have been well documented (Banister and Piacentini 2006; Gill 2002; Makara-Studzi ska and Urba ska 2007), the proportion of students engaging in binge drinking remains high. Johnston et al.’s (2006) research indicates that 40.1% of students in the US binge drink, while in the UK the proportion is even higher—with about 50% of the student population regularly binge drinking (Ardenekan 2005). In Poland, where this research was carried out, the data available show a very similar picture: underage binge drinking remains among the highest in Europe (Hibell et al. 2000; Supranowicz et al. 2006), and it is on the rise among college students (Makara-Studzi ska and Urba ska 2007).

College students’ binge drinking has attracted attention from researchers within the fields of preventive health, psychology, sociology and social marketing literature. A significant part of the literature is dedicated to investigation of individual, economic, political and organisational factors influencing alcohol consumption behaviours (Dowdall and Wechsler 2002; Wechsler and Nelson 2008). For instance, factors such as demographics (Kushner and Sher 1993; O’Malley and Johnston 2002; Presley et al. 1996), psychographics (Camatta and Nagoshi 1995), culture (Menagi et al. 2008), and involvement in other activities (Weitzman and Kawachi 2000; Wechsler et al. 2002) have all been explored. Further literature focuses also on the amount of alcohol consumed (Pickard et al. 2000; Williams and Clark 1998).

Negative Consequences of Binge Drinking
In an attempt to understand students’ perceptions of the phenomenon of binge drinking, it is important to look beyond its causes and quantities of alcohol consumed. Researchers have looked into both positive and negative consequences of alcohol consumption (Kushner et al. 1994; Park 2004; Park and Grant 2005; Wechsler et al. 1994); though, hardly any studies offer more than a mere identification of consequences and the frequency of their occurrence. Yet, as the proportion of students binge drinking remains high, one might conclude that for them positive consequences outweigh those negative ones. While students’ perceptions of positive consequences have been recently well documented in the literature (Banister and Piacentini 2006), it is also important to identify and explore students’ perceptions of negative consequences of binge drinking in order to fully understand the phenomenon.

The last two decades have witnessed some important research into negative consequences of alcohol consumption: their overview can be found in Table 1. Since the influential paper of Wechsler and colleagues (1994), their 12-item Negative Alcohol Consequences Scale has shaped the research agenda. Researchers have explored negative consequences amongst different subgroups of the population: college students (Cismaru et al. 2008; Park 2004; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2008), patients in emergency rooms (Cherpitel et al. 2004), adult men (Peasey et al. 2005) and alcohol dependent patients (Chrostek Maj et al. 2005). Further, two types of research can be distinguished: studies employing more holistic approach and trying to investigate a wide range of negative consequences (Cismaru et al. 2008; Park 2004; Park and Grant 2005; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2008; Wechsler et al. 1994), and studies focused on in-depth exploration of some specific consequences, such as alcohol addiction (Chrostek Maj et al. 2005), alcohol related traffic accidents (Murry 1991), and alcohol influenced sexual behaviour and violence (Hill et al. 2005). Different authors proposed also various categorisations of negative consequences. For example, in their original work Wechsler et al. (1994) talked about direct and second-hand effects, Rundle-Thiele et al. (2008) distinguished between short-term and long-term health risks. In their latest paper focused on students, Wechsler and Nelson (2008) proposed four main categories: academic performance, social relationships, risk taking behaviours and health (see Table 1).

METHOD
This paper is based on a larger research project using collages to investigate the role of alcohol consumption in young peoples’ life. It reports the findings focusing on one of the most important issues which emerged throughout the data collection and analysis—young people’s perceptions of negative consequences of binge drinking.

One of the key limitations of earlier studies into negative consequences of alcohol consumption was their research method. Conducted using researcher-generated quantitative questionnaires (Park 2004; Park and Grant 2005; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2008; Wechsler...
TABLE 1
Negative Consequences of Binge Drinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Negative Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wechsler et. al (1994)</td>
<td>Negative Alcohol Consequences Scale includes 12 items: have a hangover, do something you regret, miss a class, forget where you were and what you did, get behind in school work, argue with friends, engage in unplanned sexual activity, get hurt or injured, damage property, not using protection when having sex, get into trouble with campus and local police, require medical treatment and alcohol overdose. Secondary binge effects include: been insulted or humiliated, had a serious argument or quarrel, been pushed, hit or assaulted, had your property damaged, had to take care of drunken student, had your studying/sleep interrupted, experienced an unwanted sexual advances, been a victim of sexual assault or date rapes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Park (2004)</td>
<td>Based on Negative Alcohol Consequences Scale (Wechsler et al. 1994): being sick/hangover, sexual activity/kissing, fight/argument, school problems, consequences due to another person’s drinking/taking care of others, accident, aberrant behaviour/said or did something should not have/out of control, trouble with authorities/legal, blackout, drinking and driving, bout of depressed mood, other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park and Grant (2005)</td>
<td>Based on Negative Alcohol Consequences Scale (Wechsler et al. 1994): have a hangover, miss class, behind in school, regret something, forget where you were, argue with friends, unplanned sex, not using protection, damage property, trouble with police, got hurt or injured, overdose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherpitel et al. (2004)</td>
<td>Difficulties with: relatives (personal relationships), work, police or other authorities, physical health, psychological health, mental well-being. Other negative consequences mentioned: alcohol dependence, harmful drinking/alcohol abuse, alcohol-related accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill et al. (2005)</td>
<td>Violent gang activities, poor school performance, intimate partner violence, risky sexual behaviours, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual assault and acquaintance or date rape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cismaru et al. (2008 and 2009)</td>
<td>Short-term health risks: dehydration, headaches, vomiting, hangovers, anxiety, depression and other mood changes, impotence and reduced fertility, impairment of co-ordination and movement, injury or death from accidents, falls, attacks, and suicide attempts. Long-term health risks include: alcohol dependence, cirrhosis of the liver, pancreatic disease, cardiovascular disease, neurological disorders, cancers foetal, abnormalities memory loss, impaired ability to learn, liver cancer hypertension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rundle-Thiele et al. (2008)</td>
<td>- Social problems: violence and alcohol’s role in reducing inhibitions and encouraging high-risk behaviour, reduced levels of self-control and an impaired ability to assess risk factors. - Suicide, homicides, and sexual assaults, as well as increased risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases due to higher instances of unprotected sex. - Contributes to: drowning, falls, fires, poisonings, and self-inflicted injury. - Negative health effects: liver cirrhosis and several types of cancer. - Underage drinking may contribute to growth and endocrine effects that upset the hormonal balance necessary during puberty to ensure normal development of bones, organs, and muscles. - Alcohol-related motor vehicle accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wechsler and Nelson (2008)</td>
<td>- Academic performance: missing class, falling behind in schoolwork, and lower grade point average, a relationship mediated by fewer hours spent studying. - Social relationships: antisocial behaviour, including vandalism and getting into trouble with the police when drinking. - risk taking behaviours: including engaging in unplanned sexual activity and failure to use protection during sex, injury and death in motor vehicle crashes. - health: reductions in cognitive and psychomotor performance (which may lead to negative health consequences), alcohol dependency, death from alcohol-related unintentional injuries. Second-hand effects of alcohol: disruption of sleep or study; property damage, verbal, physical or sexual violence, noise disruptions, property damage, and police visits in neighbourhoods near schools with high binge-drinking rates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
et al. 1994), they assumed no significant differences between students and the population as a whole (Banister and Piacentini 2006), and minimised the contribution students’ self-observations could make. By employing qualitative method we are able to explore students’ perceptions of negative consequences of binge drinking and their meaning in the context of students’ life. In attempting to explore the phenomenon on young people’s own terms we are able to better understand the complexity of their attraction to binge drinking and associated negative consequences of excessive alcohol consumption, thus extending our current understanding of it. The main advantage of projective techniques is their ability to penetrate “consumers’ inner thoughts and feelings about products, services, people, behaviors and situations” (Chang 2001, p.253), especially when it is difficult for informant to express them verbally during more traditional research situations such as interviews or focus groups. As the line between positive and negative consequences of alcohol consumption can be very thin, and separating them is often difficult, collage with its lack of fixed borders (expressed through juxtaposition, overlappings and shifting margins and centres) appears to offer significant advantages as a research method (Vaughan 2005).

In the last ten years we have witnessed a growing interest in projective techniques amongst academics and practitioners (Boddy 2005: Slabbinck and Van Kenhove 2009). This revival, fuelled mostly by the increasing use of qualitative methods in consumer studies (Heisley and Levy 1991), has been often attributed to the work of authors such as Belk et al. (1989) and Holbrook (1988). Recently collages have been used to explore the nature and structure of nostalgia (Havlina and Holak 1996), understand consumer desire in different cultural contexts (Belk et al. 1997, study the relationship between young consumers and brands (Hogg et al. 1999) and the role of brands in defining, expressing, and communicating self-concepts in children and adolescents (Chaplin and John 2005).

PROCEDURE

Students between 20 and 21 years old were drawn from a group of fourth year business students studying at a university in the Polish city of Bialystok. 82 students participated in the study: 48 females and 34 males. All data were collected in December 2008. Participants were divided into fourteen groups run in three sessions (4 female groups, 3 male groups and 7 mixed groups), with five groups working simultaneously in the first two sessions and four groups in the last session. Participants were asked to bring a variety of popular magazines which they read regularly in order to use materials that reflect their worldview and communication style; some further materials were also provided by the researchers. Each group was told to prepare a collage entitled “Alcohol in students’ life.” They were given a piece of paper (format B2: 50x70.7cm), glue and scissors, and were asked to cut out relevant materials to construct a collage within 45 minutes. Each session was fairly informal.

All groups were given complete freedom to choose the most suitable for them way of approaching the task. Similarly to Belk et al. (1997), we encouraged students to try and express their feelings, intuitions, imaginings, fantasies, and associations. The respondents were asked to use photographs, pictures, diagrams, patterns, words, letters or whole sentences in order to create and communicate their own understanding of the given subject. Markers were also provided to enable students to make connections between various elements of their collages. Once the collages were assembled, the researchers collected them and after initial analysis brought them back to the class a week later. Then, each group was given 10 minutes to present and discuss the interpretation of their collage. During the course of each presentation they were questioned by researchers in order to better identify the reasons behind selection and layout of images, pictures and words, and their meaning. This part was particularly important as “telling a story about a picture-what a person does reflect how he structures and interprets life situations and reacts to them” (Levy 1963, p.4). All presentations and discussions were filmed using digital camcorder.

FINDINGS

The collages were content analysed using verbal commentary provided by the participants, focusing on their understanding of the negative consequences of binge drinking. After the initial analysis of collages and their interpretations, emerging categories were clustered using categories identified by Wechsler et al. (1994) and Wechsler and Nelson (2008) as the overwhelming majority of negative consequences can be captured within their categories. Due to the domination of mixed-groups collages our findings are presented thematically rather than by gender, noting any differences when observed; the collages are presented in Figures 1 through 6.

Academic Performance

The indicators of poor academic performance caused by binge drinking identified by Wechsler and Nelson (2008) were not coherent with students’ perceptions. Some students, counter-intuitively, talked specifically about their positive associations between alcohol consumption and academic performance. One of the key issues to emerge was inseparability of alcohol consumption and preparation for classes and exams. It became immediately clear that for students any occasion to gather together to study was also treated as an opportunity to consume alcohol. A ritualistic character of that behaviour seemed to motivate them to participate in it, with the promise of excessive alcohol consumption during or after studying seen as a reward for their hard work. For example, one collage showed an image of an intoxicated male student with texts saying ‘studying sober [you] risk death and injury,’ and ‘pleasure’ further below (Fig. 1). It was explained by a female student in this way:

As you can see, in the middle, we placed a picture which is quite funny for us, you know, when you have something to drink, just a little bit, you may feel kind of “blured” [laughs], it definitely applies to students, “studying sober [you] risk death and injury.”

In all earlier studies using quantitative surveys, it was assumed that good academic results would be prioritised by students (Wechsler and Nelson 2008; Hill et al. 2005; Park 2004; Park and Grant 2005). However, this was clearly at odds with students’ expectations, which tended to be oriented more on their social life than academic performance. This difference was highlighted by a male student’s reference to the collage saying “learning is not only about books” (Fig. 3). When describing students’ typical attitude toward five years of university life he said:

Students already left family homes, some came from other towns, others are local and can afford more, they are not under parental supervision any more. This is five years during which students have to party, cause later they will have to pull themselves together and find a job, or God forbid, a wife, partner. I think most students think that apart from exams, we think only how to have fun, and this collage shows it.

†Throughout this article texts in italics and single inverted commas refer to collages, while texts only in italics are direct quotations from students’ interpretation of collages.
This kind of approach was clearly visible across other collages and groups. One group viewed their student life as a cycle of binge drinking with studying and exams at the end of the semester. A student, presenting their collage entitled “a semester from a student life” (Fig. 2), justified the fact that half of its space was covered with images of wine and beer bottles by saying that in students’ life there is a lot of alcohol (...) I think that half of the time dedicated for studying is filled by alcohol, and only about a month during exams their alcohol consumption was curbed.

Risk Taking Behaviour

Earlier studies identified the link between binge drinking and a number of risky sexual behaviours (Wechsler and Nelson 2008). Many of the images presented in the collages referred to the perception of the relationship between alcohol and sex in students’ life. Alcohol was often treated as an introduction to sexual activities, which was presented by students as an important motivator to binge drink, especially in a company of people they found sexually attractive. This was illustrated by a female student who described her group’s collage containing a picture of four young women and a slogan “hunting for occasion” (Fig. 1), by saying that after alcohol the barriers collapse, even girls feel more confident then. This was mirrored in another female student’s comment referring to an image of a man and a woman, with a text saying "guys for sale" (Fig. 6):
Alcohol makes socialising easier, maybe people get more courage after alcohol, they become more open and more approachable.

Further, students also emphasised that excessive alcohol consumption may lead to risky behaviours such as unplanned sexual activity or unprotected sex. However, no references were made to criminal sexual behaviours such as sexual assaults (Cismaru et al. 2008 and 2009; Hill et al. 2005). Instead, students were more concerned with being unfaithful. For example, one collage showed an image of a couple and a text saying “with another person,” and representing a sexual affair (Fig. 4). One student justified the inclusion of it in this way: often one cheats on his partner; we just lose our heads.

Experiences like that showed how difficult it was for students to classify various consequences of excessive alcohol consumption. For them, alcohol was seen as a positive enabler and facilitator of social and sexual relations. On the other hand, their consumption could easily spiral out of control leading to negative consequences of their sexual behaviours. Students’ interpretations revealed that they saw it as a chain of causes and effects, including both positive and negative consequences, often inseparable from each other due to students’ limited ability for self-control. What they appeared to be afraid of most were the consequences of their sexual behaviours that were at the end of this chain, and their aim was to participate in it without losing self-control:

You know, young people often cross the borders when it comes to alcohol. Often it is connected with sex, casual sex with very serious consequences.

The most important of the negative consequences of binge drinking was pregnancy. While other authors talked about failure to use protection during sex (Wechsler and Nelson 2008; Park 2004; Park and Grant 2005), it became clear that pregnancy was what students were mostly concerned about. For example, one collage prepared by a male group used a quarter of its space to present images representing students’ perception of the relation between alcohol consumption and pregnancy. Its authors emphasised that pregnancy is one of the most negative effects, as a result we may not be able to finish our studies. If we have to go to work, then that’s it. Showing images of pregnant woman and a man with a child, and accompanied by texts such as “shock” and “forbidden fruit left a bitter taste for the whole life,” clearly indicated that the fear of pregnancy was for them the most real and likely negative consequence. Several groups stated that it happens relatively often: a high percentage of children were born because of stupid drunken behaviours.

Many of the images presented in the collages clearly referred to another negative consequence identified in the literature—the risk of injury and death in car accidents (Cismaru et al. 2008; 2009; Wechsler and Nelson 2008). Students’ interpretations of the problem showed that they treated those risks very seriously, especially when
it came to driving under the influence of alcohol. This phenomenon was presented by different groups in various contexts. For example, Figure 5 focused on its negative consequences such as injury or death of a binge drinker, their imprisonment, injury and harm caused to other people, and material damage. A female student explained it, focusing on the feeling of guilt:

One of the negative consequences of alcohol consumption are car accidents caused often by drunk drivers, young people coming back from nightclubs. Sometimes even after one attempt [at drink driving] we can end up on a tree, like on this picture, or hit somebody, and we can become murderers. It can lead to imprisonment. It can lead to disability or long stay in a hospital.

In a different way the same problem was presented on a collage prepared by a male group. It contained two overlapping texts: “end of drink driving” and “manly decision” (Fig. 3). Students described it as a type of resolution refraining from drink driving. When questioned about the manly character of that resolution, one student explained that it required courage and persistence. Last but not least, some collages (e.g. Fig. 1 and 4) had more didactic and moralising character, warning others of drink driving.

Social Relationships

Several of earlier studies identified negative consequences of binge drinking related to social relationships (Wechsler and Nelson 2008). This particular category was not featured as prominently in collages as the previous two. Only a few collages focused on issues such as aggressive behaviour or family problems, and even then the problems were rather marginalised in comparison to the rest of the content. It may indicate a lack of importance of those issues in students’ life, but also potentially their unwillingness to discuss them openly. For example, one collage presented an image of an aggressive-looking man holding a beer in one hand and a meat tenderiser in another (Fig. 6). One student reported:

Here we have a man, who is busy drinking his beer and watching telly, sitting with some kind of a meat tenderiser. Some people become aggressive after alcohol... it may also be a symbol of excessive consumption leading to a pathology.

Two of the collages showed images representing instrumental treatment of women as sexual objects, associated with excessive alcohol consumption. One of the male groups decided not to present their collage, because, as they declared, they were ashamed of its content and did not want to discuss it in front of other students. More than half of their collage was taken by a slogan saying “there are no ugly women, only not enough alcohol,” and it was showing an
image of a man with a bottle of wine, covering his eyes, and images of two women: one described as attractive, and the other as ugly. The second collage, prepared by a mixed-gender group, confirmed the perception of the negative behaviour of men towards women after alcohol consumption—an image of a couple in an intimate situation was accompanied by a text apparently describing the man’s behaviour: “he used to intoxicates lonely women.” The scene was interpreted by a male student as a situation showing a man, who gets women drunk and abuses them.

For some groups problems with the police were examples of antisocial behaviour associated with excessive drinking. However, they were not identified as primary consequences, but rather having a causal link, similar to pregnancy in the previous category. On the other hand, symbolic uses of police and their role as an external force curbing and controlling excessive alcohol consumption were common, like for example on Figure 6 with an image of a policeman on the top of the bottle-shaped collage. Externalisation of control was supposed to take the pressure for self-control off students, as explained by a female student:

We associate police with a control over alcohol abuse, with safety and peace. In regard to those car accidents, aggression in everyday life, in the family... everybody should be able to control themselves, but the policeman is a symbol of this kind of control.

Health

Overwhelming majority of earlier research into negative consequences of alcohol consumption emphasised a variety of health-related problems (see for example Cismaru et al. 2008; 2009; Christek Maj et al. 2005; Wechsler and Nelson 2008). Rundle-Thiele et al. (2008), using relevant medical studies, came up with a list of long- and short-term health risks associated with binge drinking (see Table 1). However, the analysis of collages showed that students perceived them as unimportant. They saw their excessive alcohol consumption as something temporary, a part of student lifestyle, which would stop once they left the university. While the short-term risks were a source of entertainment, long-term health risks were dismissed as irrelevant. Several collages used images representing serious health problems caused by alcohol abuse, but students’ attitude was best captured by a student who claimed his group was just trying to present a wider social issue rather than something important to them as individuals. However, students were far from not being aware of the impact of potential negative consequences on their life—Figure 6 showed an image of an unhealthy liver on the margin of the negative consequences of alcohol consumption. When questioned about that, a student replied emphasising hedonistic approach to alcohol:

It’s because when people drink alcohol they don’t think about negative impact it has on their health, but simply count on fun and pleasures associated with consumption.

Images showing short-term health risks, such as vomiting, hangover, smoking accompanying alcohol consumption and reductions in cognitive and psychomotor performance, were common. However, their interpretations always focused on their desirability and funny character, presenting them as something students should be proud of. The only short-term consequence of binge drinking perceived as negative was depression and other mood changes (Rundle-Thiele et al. 2008). For example, two groups showed it as a vicious circle—a cause and effect of binge drinking (Fig. 6):

Nowadays a lot of young people have problem with stress... and they look for solutions in alcohol.

DISCUSSION

Research into students’ binge drinking so far has been quantitative in nature and focused on the list of factors identified by Wechsler et al. (1994). Our data collection was carried out using qualitative method of inquiry: consumer collages proved to be a very useful method for exploring students’ perceptions of negative consequences of binge drinking. Although prepared by students collages imposed certain limitations on the number and variety of issues which could be explored, their interpretations created an opportunity to explore the topic from students’ point of view, without the constraints of researcher-generated categories. Furthermore, due to the collegial character of collages students felt that the responsibility for their interpretations became diluted, what in turn encouraged them to express opinions which might have not been delivered in focus groups or interviews. Another very important advantage of collages appeared to be the opportunity to identify the intensity, importance and relation between various perceptions, using the structure of the collages and their interpretations (Vaughan 2005).

Our findings indicated that the importance of social life for students was the key driving force behind their excessive alcohol consumption (see also Banister and Piacentini 2006). Certain collage characteristics appeared to contradict the negative character of relationship between alcohol consumption and academic performance assumed in earlier research (Hill et al. 2005; Park and Grant 2005; Wechsler and Nelson 2008). A simple division of consequences into negative and positive using categories generated by researchers was not sufficient to fully capture the influence of alcohol consumption on students’ academic performance. However, what we also observed was that alcohol consumption, perceived by students as a form of reward, motivated their frequent studies in groups. One question remained unanswered, though, whether without alcohol students would still be interested in getting together to study as often as with alcohol, and what would be the implications for their academic performance.

As far as risk taking behaviours are concerned, while unplanned sexual activity, unprotected sex and pregnancy were among the main concerns, students talked also about their perceptions of alcohol consumption and unfaithfulness. Contrary to earlier research (Cismaru et al. 2008 and 2009; Hill et al. 2005), no criminal sexual behaviours were identified by students. All three aspects of risk taking behaviours—sexual activities, injuries and car accidents, and doing regretful things—were strongly perceived through the prism of guilt they caused, and presented using strong moralising tone. Similar tone was observed when discussing antisocial behaviours. Students focused on issues such as aggressive behaviour, family problems and sexual objectification of women. Interestingly, the police was showed only in context of the externalization of self-control. Finally, the so-called short-term health risks (Rundle-Thiele et al. 2008), described in the literature as negative (Wechsler and Nelson 2008), were perceived by students as rather positive and desirable, and associated with student lifestyle, which confirms that binge drinking is socially appreciated amongst students.

CONCLUSIONS

Perceptions of various negative consequences of binge drinking emerging in our research pointed out to a much more complex and ambiguous picture of negative consequences of students’ binge drinking than it was indicated in earlier studies. Here, we have observed that often what the literature portrayed as negative consequences of binge drinking, was perceived among students as its positive and desirable consequence (for example some sexual behaviours, short-term health risks). Another aspect that was insufficiently explored by earlier quantitative studies was the level of
intensity and importance of various consequences—which we could observe using collages and their interpretations.

Several negative consequences (for example long-term health risks, aggressive behaviours, family problems) were treated as irrelevant or unimportant for students’ life, while among the most important negative consequences were pregnancy and the risk of injury and death in a car accident. Our collages offered an insight into students’ perceptions of binge drinking and its consequences—they showed them as a chain of causes and effects, where positive and negative consequences often intermingle and overlap with each other. For example, for several of the consequences (e.g. academic performance, some sexual behaviours) the line between their negative and positive character was very thin and their presentation indicated a lack of any fixed borders between them. As such, several of the collages illustrated that it was often not clear to students when positive consequences started and negative ended.

In terms of research implications, it became evident that more careful attention needs to be paid to the context within which negative consequences of binge drinking are studied. For example, the differences in perceptions of negative consequences of binge drinking between our respondents and earlier literature may indicate that similar divergences in opinions could be found among other social groups. Therefore, future research should focus not only on the frequencies of those consequences, but above all attempt to understand their meaning, relevance and importance to a particular group. The consumer collages discussed in this paper offered some indication as to the potential level of diversity of perceptions. Finally, from social marketing perspective, our better understanding of students’ perceptions of negative consequences of their binge drinking may allow us to develop more effective policies and marketing programs preventing excessive alcohol consumption among young people.

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I Drink, Therefore I Belong: Fear of Social Rejection and its Impact on Attitudes Towards Anti-Binge Drinking Advertising

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ABSTRACT

In an experiment we show that attitudes towards anti-binge drinking advertising is significantly impacted by consumers’ self-regulatory behaviour. However, beyond this we show that for those consumers who draw high levels of self-esteem from social approval the use of Social Mortality messages as a means of dissuading binge drinking behaviour were viewed extremely positively. By drawing on Terror Management Theory and Self-Regulatory focus we are able to offer contributions to the Transformative Consumer Research literature, Public Policy and Social Marketers.

Binge drinking is categorised in Britain as being a purposeful consumption of alcohol three times the recommended amount of four units for men and three units for women. Therefore, a binge is the equivalent to four pints of lager for men or 3 pints of lager in one session (Nicholson 2008). Binge drinking is particularly prevalent amongst the University student population who make up over a third of all binge-drinkers in the UK (Norman et al. 1998). Aside from the rising health costs associated with binge drinking, which have been estimated at £55 million a day in the UK (Boffey 2003), the social costs are also rising with reports of increasing anti-social behaviour associated with binge drinking, such as the recent arrest of a student caught urinating on a war memorial (Brooke 2009). The UK recently announced a £100 million investment in an anti-binge drinking advertising campaign to curb the rise in health costs and anti-social behaviour. This research looks to not only understand the effectiveness of such campaigns, but offer a rationale as to how these campaigns can be made more effective by drawing on the concept of Terror Management Theory in the form of Social Mortality Salience and the moderating effect of Self-Regulation.

In the following study we show that the level of self-esteem a consumer draws from drinking and social approval (Terror Management theory) significantly impacts his or her approval of anti-binge drinking advertising messages. This effect is significantly moderated by the individual’s ability to regulate his or her own actions (Self-Regulation theory). The following section briefly outlines the extant literature related to the study before presenting the hypotheses, methodology and findings from the experiment. This manuscript concludes with a discussion of the findings and the implications to consumers, literature and practitioners.

BACKGROUND

Terror Management Theory & Social Death

Terror Management Theory posits that humans use different techniques to avoid the anxiety associated with the knowledge of their own mortality (Greenberg et al. 1990). Much work has been done to progress TMT beyond these original findings that offer specific insight into this study. For example, Arndt, Schimel, and Goldenberg (2003) show that individuals can exhibit a conscious anxiety when faced with their own mortality. As a result of feeling a closeness to their own mortality these individuals used proximal defences to distance themselves from the situation and deny one’s vulnerability to the situation. In addition, Arndt et al. (2003) show that individuals may exhibit defences in which they will engage in a particular behaviour despite the mortality risks associated with the behaviour in order to bolster their self-esteem. For example, Martin and Kamins (2007) show that smokers who derived a strong sense of self-esteem from smoking smoked more when faced with their own mortality. This is a clear example of how self-esteem works as an anxiety-buffer to protect the individual’s worldview in the face of heightened mortality salience (Greenberg et al. 1990).

In the current study we look at how the concept of “Social Mortality Salience” or the prospect of losing social approval impacts young drinkers’ responses to anti-binge drinking advertising messages. Much of the social marketing literature and anti-binge drinking advertisements focus on the personalised health risks associated with alcohol abuse (Greenfield et al. 1999; MacKinnon et al. 1993; Wollburg 2001). However, little evidence exists that communication of these personal health risks leads to any significant decrease in propensity to binge-drink less. As an alternative to the personal welfare messages, we look to see if social disapproval from peers, or Social Death, leads to more positive evaluations of social marketing messages. Those who draw high levels of self-esteem from social approval we label Social Terror Propensity as they are more inclined to feel anxiety where social disapproval exists. Those consumers who draw high levels of self-esteem from internal or personal cues we label Personal Terror Propensity. By drawing on the same rationale as Terror Management Theory it can be reasoned that high Social Terror Propensity consumers would have a positive attitude towards anti-binge drinking advertisements that contain a social pressure element to them. Conversely, high Personal Terror Propensity consumers would not see a message such as this a threat to their self-esteem and as such would respond less positively. Therefore, we can hypothesise the following:

H1: Consumers who report high levels of Social Terror Propensity will respond more positively towards advertising messages that focuses on social disapproval of behaviour than other consumers.

However, understanding that a situation can lead to social disapproval does not instantly mean that consumers feel that they are able to effect any change. As such, an understanding of Self Regulation theory is needed to determine whether viewers of the advertising material feel able to effect any real change in their lives.

Self-Regulation Theory

Self-Regulation theory posits that consumers use both internal and external cues to consciously and actively control and monitor one’s behaviour (Bandura 1991), particularly when comparing one’s behaviour to the expectations of others (Bandura 1986). Moilenan (2007) refers to Self-Regulation as the “ability to flexibly activate, monitor, inhibit, persevere and/or adapt one’s behaviour, emotions and cognitive strategies in response to direction from internal cues, environmental stimuli and feedback from others in an attempt to attain personally relevant goals” (p. 835). This definition again clearly outlines the role of conscious and personal choice in achieving an objective. In the current context, consumers who exhibit a high ability to self regulate would feel they would be able control their drinking behaviour with greater ease, while consumers with a low ability to self regulate would not. As such, when presented with an anti-binge drinking message it is expected that only those consumers who feel they have the ability to control their drinking behaviour would look favourably upon the advertisement, whilst
those who felt they have little or no ability to control their drinking would dislike the message, even though they may draw high levels of self-esteem from social approval. Therefore, the following can be hypothesised:

H2a: Consumers who report high levels of Social Terror Propensity will only respond more positively towards advertising messages that focuses on social disapproval if they possess high levels of self-regulation.

H2b: Consumers who feel they have little or no self-regulatory ability will report unfavourable responses to anti-binge drinking advertising regardless of their levels of Social or Personal Terror Propensity.

The following section will outline the methodology used to test these hypotheses.

**METHODOLOGY**

The current study used a 2 (Terror Propensity: Social vs. Personal) X 2 (Self Regulation: High vs. Low) between subjects factorial design. Data was collected at University open day where it was expected that a number of secondary school and university students would be present. These groups make up a key area of concern for the National Health Service in its bid to curb binge-drinking and as such makes the population a valuable group to investigate. A total of 190 responses were collected from a south-western British university. The sample was comprised of 43% male and 57% female with 96% of all respondents being aged between 16 and 21 years old.

Each respondent was presented with a questionnaire with an advertisement, created by the researchers, which showed a group of friends drinking at a club, enjoying themselves and one another’s company. The tagline on the advertisement read “Give your friends a real night out, drink responsibly.” From here participants were asked to complete a number of questions relating to the independent and dependent variables used in the study as well as complete questions relating to covariates measured as part of the study. The entire study took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Once completed participants gave the questionnaires back to the researcher and thanked for their involvement.

**Independent & Dependent Variables**

The key independent variables in this study were Terror Management Propensity and Self-Regulation. Martin and Kamins’s (2007) scale for Terror Management was adapted to measure Social and Personal Terror Propensity in drinking situations. Of the 12 items, 5 specifically relate to social approval (such as, “Drinking helps be one of the gang” or “Drinking hurts my social relationships”) while the remaining 7 items focus on more personal approval traits (such as, “Drinking brings out unwanted aspects of my character” or “Drinking makes me feel like I’m not in control”). Each question was measured using a 7-point Likert scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The Cronbach’s Alpha score for each scale was sufficiently high showing that the scales were reliable (Social Terror Propensity \( \alpha=.73 \); Personal Terror Propensity \( \alpha=.70 \) [Cronbach 1951]). Hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward’s method, squared Euclidian distance, was used to assign participants to clusters based on the responses to these scales. Two significant clusters emerged from the analysis; the first typified by consumers who responded highly to the personalised terror management scale items whilst the second was typified by participants who responded highly to the socialised terror management items, which corroborates the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Those that responded significantly highly to the personalised terror scale items were labelled as Personal Terror Propensity (n=106), and those that responded significantly highly to the social terror management scale items were labelled as Social Terror Propensity (n=84). Using cluster analysis allows for greater rigor in the participant assignment process but can leave the cell sizes slightly unequal (Hair et al. 1998).

The second independent variable in this study was that of Self-Regulation, or the individual’s felt ability to control his or her drinking behaviour. This was measured using Heather et al.’s (1993) 10-item Alcohol Impaired Control Scale. The Cronbach’s Alpha score for this scale was also sufficiently high to deem the scale reliable (\( \alpha=.82 \) [Cronbach 1951]). Once again, hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward’s method, squared Euclidian distance, was used to assign participants to clusters based on the responses to the Self Regulation scale items. The results produced two clusters which were labelled High Self Regulation and Low Self Regulation.

The key dependent variable in this study was that of Attitudes Towards the Ad (Aad). This was measured using an adaptation of Beltramini (1988) 10-item Believability of Warnings scale. This scale was preferred over other scales as it specifically focuses on social issues and deterrent messages as opposed to many of the Aad scales developed to research commercial messages. The internal validity of the scale was again sufficiently high to deem the scale reliable (\( \alpha=.74 \) [Cronbach 1951]).

**Covariates**

A number of covariates were measured as part of the study to help control for statistical error. Among the covariates were Bearden et al. (1989) Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence scale (\( \alpha=.84 \); Donovan and O’Leary 1978) (1978) Drinking Locus of Control Scale (\( \alpha=.90 \)); age; gender; average amount drunk by the respondent on a night out and average amount drunk by the respondent’s friends on a night out.

**RESULTS**

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) model was used to analyse the data using Terror Propensity (Social vs. Personal) and Self Regulation (High vs. Low) as the independent variables and Attitude Towards the Ad (Aad) as the dependent variable. The results from the ANCOVA showed a significant interaction effect on participants’ Aad (\( F[1, 190]=13.20, p<.001 \)). Subsequent analysis of the means table showed that Social Terror Propensity participants who also reported high levels of Self Regulation did report more favourable impressions of the advertisement (m=3.84, S.D.=.12) compared with Social Terror Propensity Participants who reported low levels of Self Regulation (m=3.11, S.D.=.18), supporting Hypothesis 2a. The results also showed no significant difference in Aad between Personal (m=3.33, S.D.=.12) & Social (m=3.11, S.D.=.18) Terror Propensity respondents who reported low levels of Self Regulation, confirming Hypothesis 2b.

There was no significant main effect for Terror Propensity (\( F[1, 190]=2.90, p=.09 \)) and as such Hypothesis 1 cannot be supported given the current data. The results of the ANCOVA model are shown visually in Figure 1.

**Covariates**

The only covariate that showed a significant effect on the ANCOVA model was that of Drinking Locus of Control. Post-hoc analysis showed that participants that felt they had significant control over their drinking reported more favourable responses to the advertisement. This is a similar result to that found by Martin
I Drink, Therefore I Belong: Fear of Social Rejection and its Impact on Attitudes Towards Anti-Binge Drinking Advertising

et al. (2007) who showed that low locus of control participants rejected advertisements encouraging a change in behaviour as they felt it was beyond their ability.

Discussion

This research has shown that anti-binge drinking advertisements utilising a social pressure message are viewed favourably by consumers who draw high levels of self-esteem from social approval. However, this effect is only seen when the consumer also feels he or she has the ability to regulate their drinking behaviour. For consumers who do not feel this ability to regulate their drinking exists the responses to the advertisement were significantly lower. Similarly, for those who do not believe that their self-esteem was drawn from social approval they reported significantly lower ratings towards the advertisement. As such, the use of social pressure advertisements does have a place in social marketing campaigns discouraging binge drinking and could be a viable option for campaigners, but only if the target population is heavily dominated by Social Terror Propensity consumers and they feel empowered enough to regulate their own behaviour. This resonates with much of the literature on self regulation (Bandura 1991; Carver and Scheier 1981; Moilenan 2007) but also extends the work in Terror Management Theory by showing that an abstract form of mortality, in this case “Social Death,” has a similar effect as physical mortality salience. That is, one will not only use tools available to oneself to avoid physically death (Greenberg et al. 1990; Pyszczynski et al. 1999), but also work to defend oneself from death of an identity or social standing. This fear of identity loss and the need to alter ones behaviour (if perceived possible) in order to maintain one’s identity also resonates with much of the consumer research literature related to identity transitions (Schouten 1991) and psychology literature on conforming to identity expectations (Shih et al. 1999).

One interesting finding from the study is the low levels of favourability shown by those participants who reported high levels of self regulatory ability. Previous research on self regulation and locus of control often shows that self regulation heightens ones favourable attitudes towards an advertising message as the consumer feels the objective is attainable (Holt et al. 2000; Martin et al. 2007; Saltzer 1982); however, in this case the results show that consumers who felt that they could regulate their behaviour did not respond favourably to the message encouraging responsible drinking. One explanation for this could be that these respondents have heard the message before, absorbed the meaning and as such did not feel that they need to be reminded of the message again, similar to advertising wearout effects (Blair 2000; Craig et al. 1976). Alternatively, it could be that consumers who feel they can regulate their own behaviour simply do not wish to be told what they should and should not do by an authoritative governmental figure. Future research should investigate the underlying reasons associated with low advertising appeal by those who feel they are able to control their behaviour.

Implications and Contributions

The key contribution from this study is that we are able to show that messages that emphasise social pressure and social mortality can have an impact on consumers’ evaluations of anti-binge drinking advertising; however, this effect needs to be carefully targeted at those consumers who draw a great deal of self-esteem from social
approval. Care should be taken not to ostracize those consumers who do not draw high levels of self-esteem from social approval as it is these consumers who reported less favourably to the advertisement. Despite this research has shown an alternative to the traditional personal health warning messages that dominate much of the anti-binge drinking and other social marketing campaigns.

This study has highlighted the moderating effect of participants’ perceived feelings of being able to regulate ones own drinking behaviour. Any campaign that does focus on behavioural change needs to be complimented by campaigns that enable the target population to understand that behavioural change is indeed possible. This resonates with recent work in the obesity literature that shows that some participants feel unable to effect any change in their weight through multiple iterations of negative experiences (Veer 2009).

Limitations and Future Research

The sample used in the current study does focus on a very specific group for whom binge drinking is a major issue. However, binge drinking is not a problem that is solely focused outside of a University setting. Further research should also look at other underlying psychological traits that may be significant in the current interaction. For example, we measured individual’s susceptibility to interpersonal influence, but perhaps other variables, such as need for belonging, could underpin some of the effects shown here. Need for belonging has been closely related to younger school age consumers (Osterman 2000) and the transition from secondary school to University, as is the case with some of the participants in this study, could spark a greater need for social acceptance than may be experienced at other times in their life.

The researchers accept that without a thorough qualitative inquiry it would be difficult to fully determine the underlying motivations behind the participants’ responses in the experiment. One area that would be of particular interest would be the possibility of doing a cross-cultural and cross-national comparative study to understand why binge drinking continues to be a severe problem in the UK, but is not such a problem in other countries in Europe, such as France and Italy.

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Constructing Cultures of Caring Consumption: An Exploratory Study of the Lived Experience of Embodiment Within an Elderly Care Environment

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the lived quality of everyday life within elderly community care homes has attracted much media interest within Europe and the USA. This interest often takes the form of policy reports highly critical of the typical quality of care services and lifestyles available to communities of elderly consumers. In the context of an ageing population, the financial implications of different systems of engaging with elderly residents to deliver life experiences consistent with a caring culture have attracted much political interest. The empirical study reported in this paper investigated the lived experience of the context of caring and community among elderly consumers in resident care homes. Using an existential-phenomenological design (Thompson et al., 1989), the study set out to construct a picture of the lived experience of caring, dignity and quality of life, framing those issues through material culture and embodiment. Findings reveal that quality of life is inscribed on the body and that elderly bricoleurs have to work hard to find ways out of institutionalization.

Everyday life within care homes has been the focus of much media interest within Europe and the United States of America over recent years. This interest has taken the form of reports that focus on the ageing population and the financial implications of care for the elderly in care homes (see Morris 2004; Duffy 2003; Carvel and Meikle 2002), profit over care (see Duhigg 2007), maladministration (see BBC 2007), inaccurate reporting of problems (see Copple 2008), the stress associated with relocating groups of elderly people from one care home to another (see Grant 2004; Portlock 2003; Sapsted 2002), nutritional standards (BBC 2009) government legislation (see Butler 2003; Cunningham 2002), physical, mental and/or racial abuse of elderly people in care homes (see Fackelmann 2007; Smith 2007; Gonzales 2004; Marsh 2003) and the spread of infection (BBC 2009). In the light of these mass media representations the notion emerges whereby these accounts have focussed on a range of problematic issues associated with elderly consumers who live in such institutions.

However, as Thompson (1998) suggests, this problem centred approach can be criticised for not explicitly considering the individual lived experiences of elderly consumers as meaningful human situations in their own right. Moreover, elderly consumers’ voices are often muted within gerontological studies of consumption within care homes (Stone 2009; Wilson 1997; 1991). Thus, there is a distinct lack of studies that attempt to understand what it means to be a consumer within such an institution. To this end, which body of literature can be used to illuminate this study? Whilst an argument can be put forward in favour of viewing the dynamic fluctuations of culture as a meaningful enabler to create new identities through consumption. Following on from this, this paper suggests that everyday lives of elderly people within a care home can be thought of in a very similar way and are equally worthy of scholarly study. Thus, the fundamental issue that this paper addresses is: How do elderly consumers create meaningful everyday experiences within care homes?

CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION

Culture is “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [wo]men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973, p.89).

Following in the relatively recent footsteps of scholars who have attempted to theorise “culture” within consumer research (e.g., Arnould and Thompson 2005) this study refers to the functional anthropological theory of Geertz (1973) to suggest that culture plays an important part role in continually enabling symbolic meaning to emerge, develop, structure and transform shared everyday experiences and belief systems throughout the life course. Reflecting upon such a proposition, the notion emerges whereby culture can be thought of as a systematic framework that provides the basis for a huge proportion and wide range of life experiences and knowledge generation practices (see Martin et al. 2006; Bengtsson et al. 2005; Goulding and Shankar 2004; Maxwell 2003; Fung 2002; Goulding et al. 2002; Hill 2002; Kates 2002; Kozinets 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). By virtue, it could be argued that, from such a functionalist perspective, people are suspended in the cultural webs of significance that have been spun over a significant amount of time (Geertz 1973).

However, current thought within anthropology, suggests that the functional approach to culture that is based on an assumed, coherent and fixed cultural boundary (as implied within the metaphors of “a system of inherited conceptions” and “a web of significance”) is problematic. As Ingold stresses, “what we do not find are neatly bounded and mutually exclusive bodies of thought and custom, perfectly shared by all who subscribe to them, and in which their lives and works are fully encapsulated” (1998, p.330 his italics). Meditating upon similar issues leads Kottak (2008) to claim that “the tendency to view culture as an entity rather than a process is changing” (ibid, p.287). Contemporary anthropologists now emphasise life processes by focussing on human beings whose every lived experience is characterised by being reflective and effectively engaged (Rapport and Overing 2007). As Ingold concludes, “it might be more realistic…to say that people live culturally rather than they live within cultures” (ibid, p.330).

Within consumer research the work of Arnould and Thompson (2005) is often referred to when discussing issues related to Consumer Culture Theory (henceforth CCT) despite its slight functional orientation. The preceding observation is not meant to imply that CCT has little value in attempting to craft a suitable theoretical building block within this paper. Part of CCT’s value resides in a call to encourage consumer researchers to reflect upon the contextual, productive, symbolic and experiential aspects of consumption and how these shape (and are shaped by) lifestyle goals, and personal & social circumstances (ibid.). More importantly, Arnould and Thompson also remind us that “CCT concerns the co-constitutive, co-productive ways in which consumers, working with marketer-generated materials forge a coherent, if diversified, and often fragmented sense of self” (ibid: ??).

Schau et al. (2009) forward an argument that suggests it is of significant value to utilise CCT to investigate issues relating to older consumers. To this end, the authors reject the structural functional gerontological theory of Erikson (1982) that suggests that cultural and societal factors merely affect the specific identities of older people in favour of viewing the dynamic fluctuations of culture as a meaningful enabler to create new identities through consumption. Following on from this, this paper suggests that everyday lives of elderly people within a care home can be thought of in a very similar way and are equally worthy of scholarly study. Thus, the fundamental issue that this paper addresses is: How do elderly consumers create meaningful everyday experiences within care homes?
inferences, and conjectures that exceed the evidence provided by his own terms and category systems (Thompson et al. 1989). As text derived from the interview is presented in such a form that uses that shape Bill’s everyday life within Cedar View. To this end, the sustained and detailed insight into the consumption experiences case-study description will be presented in an attempt to provide methods enable deep understandings of the nature of what it means to be a consumer within a care home to emerge. Furthermore, existential-phenomenology is a methodological approach that enables the researcher to gain in-depth first person atheoretical descriptions of participants lived experiences (Thompson et al. 1989). Thus, to understand elderly consumers lived experiences, it is necessary to appreciate how they define their own lives (Aberg et al. 2005). In this case, the researcher invited participants to give a relatively unrestricted account of their lives within their respective care homes. By virtue, each participant was invited to talk about some of the things in their room with the goal of obtaining first person descriptions (Thompson et al. 1989) of these things.

The identification of suitable care homes that could enable the initialization of the fieldwork depended on practical considerations such as the type of care home and the number of people who were fit enough to be interviewed. Following on from this, letters were written to several care homes within the United Kingdom containing information about the nature of the research project, enquiring whether it would be possible to conduct interviews with elderly people within that particular institution. By virtue, the managers of Robinlew House and Cedar View (names changed) provided the researcher with access to their respective institutions and suggested potential participants. As such, it was necessary to work around the routines of daily living, such as meal times, visiting professional carers (such as physiotherapists, vicars, chiropodists etc.) or social activities (such as trips to the theatre, tea dances, visiting friends etc.), in an attempt to ensure that any interview would not disrupt the social and/or care needs of the potential participants. In light of this, sixteen potentially suitable participants were approached and informed of the research objectives in the hope that they would agree to participate. Of this group, eight participants happily gave their consent to be interviewed. These are identified within Table 1.

**SELECTING A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH THAT IS SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY**

A major factor in selecting methodological tools derived from existential-phenomenology is because the outlined approach enables consumer researchers to engage with elderly consumers in such a way that enables them to reflect upon the flux of their everyday lived experiences. Viewed in this way, existential-phenomenological methods enable deep understandings of the nature of what it means to be a consumer within a care home to emerge. Furthermore, existential-phenomenology is a methodological approach that enables the researcher to gain in-depth first person atheoretical descriptions of participants lived experiences (Thompson et al. 1989). Thus, to understand elderly consumers lived experiences, it is necessary to appreciate how they define their own lives (Aberg et al. 2005). In this case, the researcher invited participants to give a relatively unrestricted account of their lives within their respective care homes. By virtue, each participant was invited to talk about some of the things in their room with the goal of obtaining first person descriptions (Thompson et al. 1989) of these things.

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**THE CASE OF BILL**

In line with Stone (2009) and Thompson (1998), a single case-study description will be presented in an attempt to provide sustained and detailed insight into the consumption experiences that shape Bill’s everyday life within Cedar View. To this end, the text derived from the interview is presented in such a form that uses his own terms and category systems (Thompson et al. 1989). As such, these interpretations do not contain any external verifications, inferences, and conjectures that exceed the evidence provided by the transcript. Furthermore, the entire interview transcript has been read on many occasions, and individual passages have been related to those preceding and proceeding in order to improve interpretive vision. It is difficult to illuminate the interpretive process beyond this characterisation because “the process is more a matter of tacit knowledge than explicit application. The process has a fundamental ambiguity to it in that the researcher must know how to interpret” (Pollio et al. 1997, p.50). Moreover, the actual practice of interpretation “may also be a non-representable form of knowledge” (ibid.).

At the time of the interview ‘Bill’ was a 94-year-old man who had lived in Cedar View for about four years. Set within the idiosyncratic context of the death of Bill’s wife, the transition from his former home to his room and his increasingly frail body, Bill opened the discussion by delineating his thoughts relating to the other residents that lived in Cedar View. The opening portion of the fifty-minute interview can be accessed within Appendix A. The findings and interpretations are as follows.

**ATHEORETICAL E-P FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

In the light of the text contained within the appendix it would seem that, in the main, Bill appears to be relatively content with his life in his room and within Cedar View despite his age (at the time of the interview he was 94) and not being able to stand or walk. To this end, the text reveals that the strength of Bill’s mind & upper body (chest, arms, hands etc.) enable him to request assistance to meet his care needs, maintain his social ties within Cedar View and to occasionally access consumer services at his local Post Office. However, given that Bill’s body seemed to be weakening it would seem reasonable to suggest that, at some point in the not-too-distant future, Bill would no longer be a position to be an independent consumer. In the light of this possibility, his body could be thought of as existing in an iron cage that could quite literally restrict his ability to move, socialise and consume.

Arguably, such a scenario brings the need for personalised and sensitive care strategies into much sharper focus. Whilst the text suggests that Bill seems to get on well with at least one or two of the carers within Cedar View it would seem reasonable to suggest that he may need to develop stronger affectual relationships with more of the care home staff in order to resist the inevitable pull of the iron cage. With such a scenario in mind, good carers could be seen to play a very important role in delaying this life event. By virtue, the proposition emerges whereby such figural service providers could be thought of as cultural buffers that protect Bill from the chronological pull of the iron cage. Conversely, it is conceivable that less sensitive carers may prefer to push Bill towards this physically restricted future if they believe that their job will become easier over time.

The vignette then moved on to reveal that Bill was still capable of flexing and using those bodily muscles that control the appropriate limbs (i.e., arms, hands etc.) required to engage with a very important
object of material culture—the help cord that hung next to his bed. However, Bill claimed that he very rarely attempted to attract the attention of the carers by using this signalling device. Despite this claim, the text indicates that when Bill signalled to the carers that he required help they responded efficiently and effectively to his requests. Such a scenario seems to suggest that Bill maintained a sense of independence during the day. However, this may well have become more difficult at night as he could not get out of bed on his own. For example, this can be seen through his recent experience of waking up during the night because he was feeling cold, pulling the cord, and the carers responding by bringing him additional bedding. However, in this case, the response by the carers was slightly tempered by the same carers waking him up again at six o’clock in the morning so that they could prepare Bill for the day ahead. The resultant dialogue suggests that Bill could not understand why he was the first person to be prepared for the day ahead by the carers.

Certain sections of the interview text draw the reader’s attention to Bill’s relationship with Diane (manager of Cedar View). As such, it would seem that a clash of personalities had arisen as a consequence of Bill’s outspoken nature. Perhaps this could be seen to be an attempt to resist some of the more rigid rules and regulations that were put into place in order to ensure that the care home runs as smoothly as possible. Following on from this, the text moves on to reveal that the manager of Cedar View had recently experienced a cancer scare and that this seemed to have reduced the tension that existed between Bill and Diane. Reflecting upon such an issue may have led Diane to consider her own mortality and to view the residents of Cedar View through a more sensitive and caring lens as opposed to strictly adhering to institutional rules and regulations. Such a scenario may have led Bill to suggest that she toned down a lot since her health problems.

The preceding passages also reveal that Bill was no longer in a position to go for a walk as he was becoming increasingly frail and had been using a wheelchair so that he could go to the Post Office. With this example in mind, the passages under consideration suggest that Bill had recently resisted the intentions of two carers who tried to prevent him from going to the Post Office. Such an experience seems to be inscribed with the strength of Bill’s mind, arms and hands and the figural role of his wheelchair to compensate for his lack of mobility. This being the case, the interview text suggests that whilst Bill’s wilful nature caused some tension between himself and the carers as he exited Cedar View, the same patterns of lived experience can be seen to propel Bill and his wheelchair along a path with many hollows. By virtue, the interpretation can be forwarded that whilst Bill’s legs had become increasingly frail, his mind, arms and hands were still incredibly strong and enabled him to resist certain aspects of institutionalisation and maintain a certain amount of independence as a consumer.

**DISCUSSION: BODILY MOVEMENT AND CONSUMPTION**

The preceding idiographic interpretations reveal that Bill’s everyday lived experiences were characterised by a range of life-course conditions that restricted what sort of person Bill could become at this time in his life (Grayling 2009). Such a scenario appears to be underpinned by a range of institutional rules and regulations and a gradual loss of bodily independence that led to a reduction in Bill’s ability to move his legs, socialise and consume within such an institution as Cedar View. Despite such a proposition it could be argued that the findings and interpretations appear to suggest that Bill’s movement within and out-with Cedar View enabled life to occur within the flux of dynamic cultural activity (Schau et al. 2009).

If the reader were to accept such a proposition, then rather than thinking of the body as being suspended within a functional “web of meaning” (Geertz 1973) that structures understandings of cultural codes, social practice, emotions, cognitions and consumer goods, this paper argues that bodily knowledge is derived through the process of reflecting upon and engaging (Rapport and Overing 2007) with interactions and movement between social and material cultural processes (Kottak 2008; Ingold 1998) throughout the life course. Viewed through such a lens, Bill’s bodily movement enabled him to forge a relatively coherent sense of self (Arnould and Thompson 2005) through the consumption of both care services and Post Office counter services. The latter experience arguably became more meaningful in the light of the need to continually watch, listen, feel, reflect upon and respond to cues that prompted Bill to fine tune his orientation and pace on route to the Post Office (Ingold 2007). Moreover, perhaps it can be argued that life happens and elderly people consume whilst moving (ibid.).

However, given the amount of physical effort required to travel to the Post Office it would appear that a dynamic tension may have exist between Bill’s expectations and the reality of his everyday lived experience. As Aberg et al. (2005) suggest declining physical function may have subsequently influenced Bill’s perception of his physical capabilities and the extent to which he was able to express himself, consume and bear witness to positive life meaning without the need for assistance from other people. The ability to move (albeit in a restricted manner) seemed to be particularly important to Bill as this enabled him to address a small number of carefully chosen material artefacts (Levi-Strauss 1966)—most notably a wheelchair, a help cord and carers. Viewed through this lens, perhaps Bill could be thought of as an elderly bricoleur (ibid.) who used items of material culture (or bricolage) as symbolic social resources (Schau et al. 2009; Epp and Price 2008; Visconti 2008; Arnould and Price 2006; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Maffesoli 1996) or condensed expressions of necessary relations (Levi-Strauss 1966) to enable transient meaning and comforting, stimulating, gratifying and occasionally independent emanations of consumer culture to emerge within his everyday life within Cedar View.

Furthermore, it is argued that Bill (re)created highly meaningful and distinctive cultural worlds (Arnould and Thompson 2005) and a sense of identity (see, for example, Venkatesh and Meamber 2008; Brownlie and Horne 1999; Belk 1988; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988) by speaking through and calling out (Dant 1999) from such items of bricolage on a regular basis. To these ends, the notion can be forwarded that both the aforementioned elderly bricoleur and his items of bricolage can be seen to sustain each other to the extent that they can be theorised as “inscriptions of movement” (Wagner 1986, p.21 in Ingold 2007, p.79). By virtue, perhaps much of what Bill experienced within such an institution were inscribed by nature (Miller 2005), subconscious habits (Bauman 2004; Gray 2002; Levi-Strauss 1966), institutional rules and practices that are associated with meaningful engagement and movement within consumer culture despite his physical limitations.

**CONCLUSION: CONSUMING WITHIN A CARE HOME**

Rapport and Overing (2009) write that “There is no longer traditional, bounded cultural worlds in which to live—pure, integrated, cohesive, place rooted—from which to depart and which to return, for all is situated and all is moving” (ibid., p.298). In this paper we have sought to further understanding of the character and nature of consumer culture through reference to a particular research context—that of the residential care home. Our analysis, which we argue offers value to consumer culture theorists, reveals that critical to such contexts is the view of identity as in process and transition, a perspective which
places especial attention on notions of movement and the practices of doing over having or even being. Our perspective focuses on the constraints of such contexts, but also the forms of action they make possible. In this sense, we offer, in line with Rapport and Overing (2009), the suggestion that movement and motion is a fundamental consumer condition. This criticality reveals itself through the suggestion that consumers conceive of their lives by way of motion in terms of identities, relations, people, things groups, societies, cultures, spaces and moments throughout the life course. In this way, the care home is a bounded context within which movement and movements occur. More so, such institutions as the care home can further be understood as spaces within which particular kinds of consumer movement are inscribed into the social and material fabric of such institutional contexts and the institutional life which they make possible. In this sense we contend that consumers operating within such contexts often draw upon available local resources to generate their own resources for the articulation of their own identity projects. In this manner, choice may be severely constrained but attention to such extreme consumption contexts may be necessary to further understanding of the character and nature of consumers identity projects.

The study reveals that contrary to common understandings, elderly living and lifestyles are subject to transience and renegotiation in ways which suggest that earlier states of being are safely tranquil and controllable. We have discovered that the body, and its decline, not only becomes the site of transformative experience, but that the lived nature of that decline generates channels through which forms of interaction, including consumption of caring services and the provision of a community culture, become the points upon which self-understanding and quality of life turn. Movement is a basic feature of the human condition and the study shows that the elderly, just like the rest of us, conceive of their lives by way of movement between human identities, relations, people, things, groups, societies, cultures, environments and times throughout the life course. A residential care home is somewhere where movement should occur and opportunities for the experience of movement should be provided. By virtue, such institutions need to be understood as places where certain kinds of consumer movement are inscribed into the social and material fabric of institutional life.

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APPENDIX

Interviewer: Why don’t we start by talking about some of the things in your room?

B: At the end of this month it will be four years since I moved into this room. I didn’t like it at first, but now I don’t have any problems at all. If I don’t like anything I say so and it’s generally put right. On the whole everything is all right. I have this room to myself. Now, I can’t walk, I can’t stand up. I’m 94 at the end of the year—it’s my birthday on the last day of the year. My wife died 6 years ago. I get on well with everybody here. There are only 3 men and the rest of them are women [coughing]. I’ve got a cold, but, er, my head is all right, well, I’m all right in myself. I told you I’m now 94. One or two of the carers here are really great. There’s one who’s been on holiday. She should be back today and I expect to see her very shortly. She’s a lovely lady in my opinion. That’s my opinion, other people may differ.

[Bill experiences another small bout of coughing].

Interviewer: Are you OK?

B: Yeah, I’m OK. I just wish I could walk. I used to walk round here. Walk, walk, walk, that’s all I did.

[Noise interruption; bleeping sound]

Interviewer: What is that noise?

B: Can you hear it now?

Interviewer: Yes.

B: I’ve got used to hearing it. I don’t know what that is but I can hear it now. I’ve got no idea. Well everything is wired up here. If I want something I just pull this cord which operates a buzzer down there. They come up and turn it off in here and see what the trouble is. I can hear it now and yet I can’t hear other things.

Interviewer: Do you pull the cord often?

B: Very rarely. I use it when I’m in bed there. I actually used it earlier this, or was it yesterday morning? I can’t tell which. They came in and said, “What’s the matter?” “Cor,” I said, “I think I’m getting cold.” Of course, everyone here sleeps with their windows and doors shut. I can’t sleep with the window shut, I must have it open. Of course, I’ve never smoked in my life, never. But anyway, they said, “What’s the matter?” I said, “I’m cold. I can’t sleep.” So they put some more blankets on. I was just getting warm and drifting off to sleep and I heard a trolley wheel in, “Come on Bill, time to get up.” Six o’clock in the morning it was. They always come to me first. I don’t know why. They say, “You can stay in bed.” But I thought now I’m awake, what’s the point of another quarter of an hour? So they got me up and I sat in the chair.

Interviewer: What do you think about being woken up at six in the morning?

B: When I first came here I got up myself, but not now, I can’t. I used to get up pretty early and go for a walk. I used to meet some of the early workers coming in, and they used to say, “What are you doing here?” I used to say, “I’m just going for a walk.” But once I found I couldn’t walk I got that frame. I hadn’t had that for long before they put me in that chair—I operate it myself. The other day I wanted to go to the Post Office. Well, I didn’t know I was supposed to keep within the grounds and one of the carers here didn’t know either. She’s a lovely lady, So, I went out and someone came running after me. “You’ve got to come back.” I said, “I’m not coming back, I will be back in a little while but I’m going to the Post Office.” So, to the Post Office I went. I carried on and then another carer came after me. “Where are you going?” “I’m going to the Post Office.” “You’ve got to come back.” “No,” I said, “I’m going to the Post Office,” and I went to the Post Office. When I got back, I was all exhausted; I don’t know how I got back. The path goes up and down and the chair went in every hollow it could. You had to be really careful how you handled it. But anyway, I did get back and they reported me to Mrs. whatever her name is, I can’t remember. She said to me, “Cor, you must have some strong arms.” I thought I did n’all. If you can walk, you can walk out and come back again, which I did in the first place. But anyway, I’ve been out in it this morning, out in the front there to the top of the drive and watched the traffic…[pause]…whatever was I gonna say?…[pause]…who sent you here?

Interviewer: Well I contacted Diane (name changed) a couple of weeks ago to see if it was OK to come into Cedar View to speak to people such as yourself.

B: And she suggested me [laughing]?

Interviewer: Well, I’m sure it was because of the sort of conversation we’ve had this afternoon. It’s been very interesting.

B: Well when I first came here I didn’t like Diane. But, just after Christmas she was struck down with cancer. Then she went to hospital and what have you for treatment and they cured her. She’s toned down a lot now. A while ago I had an argument with another man who has just died. “What’s going on here?” she shouted. Well we were having a bit of a barney. I am very outspoken.
ABSTRACT

This brand culture research project explores the expressions of rebellion and questing for creativity in small dynamic friendship circles and their relevance for a vibrant urban reputation. The poetic texture and the schismatic core of the city as a brandscape are staged in three embodied acts.

An explorative case study follows a collaborative creative circle of musicians in action. Next, paradessentials of brand performativity are sourced from key interpreters. In ethno-poetics there is no hypothesis up for validation; the project concludes with individual evocations, as a sequential thickening of unresolved paradoxes of the city’s ambiguous reputation, in newly commissioned poetry.

INTRODUCTION

God Save The Clean. A block-sprayed patch of faded blue graffiti for local 1980’s band The Clean survives on a white painted corner stone of the First Church in the middle of the city of Dunedin in New Zealand. On the cold bottom edge of the world near Antarctica, where the occasional iceberg floats by, few global fads and fashions seem to take hold and an insular but outspoken version of cultural creativity thrives. As a provincial university town with about 100,000 inhabitants Dunedin has established a tradition of divergent new music at the time of Flying Nun Records. “Dunedin is awash in rock bands, perhaps more good bands per capita than any city in the world...There’s no audience there; it’s just a town full of band members,” the Chicago Tribune stated in a 1992 headline (Eggleton 2003). Perhaps ironically, the rock-solid First Church is also seen as a prime representation of the Presbyterian roots and stout autonomy of the city. The meaning of the cityscape is exposed on a wide canvas somewhere between the conservative materiality of black granite and the metaphorical remnants of creative cultural experiences. The following explores how the possibilities for citizens to be rebelliously creative in small dynamic friendship groups “sits” in this particular city, and how these circles contribute to the paradoxical essence of its urban reputation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Material and metaphorical experience spaces can be seen as places where the production of meaning and its performance are simultaneously enacted. The engagement with the actions, performances and practices of the citizens “make places” (Baerenholdt, Haldrup, and Larsen 2008) in the experience economy. The essence of what the urban reputation is in brand terms, is encapsulated in meaning arising from the creative engagement with an offering (Sherry 2005). Research into the aspects of a cityscape and its attraction for creative individuals, stress the actual cultural performance as a major component of urban reputation (Evans 2003; Throsby 2001). At the same time, creative talent is an important driver of the image of a networked creative industry (Caves 2000; Landry 2000; Porter 2005). Locality can be both perceived as a brand based on reputation and tradition, and as a community of creative workers (Drake 2003), whereby locality or place is not only spatial or scalar but relational and networked (Appadurai 1996) thus both product and experience of interactivity. Brands are increasingly experienced and valued in horizontal networks (Hippel 2007), communities in general (Luedicke and Giesler 2007; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Muniz and Schau 2005), and creative communities specifically (Andriopoulos and Gotsi 2000; Drake 2003; Uricchio 2004). This study offers an analysis of how the cultural paradoxes that have grown to be embedded in the performativity of a location may provide inspiration in the creative process (Drake 2003). The research does not extrapolate brand image on the basis of cultural facilities or investments, but analyses the vitality and aesthetics of place as a marketable commodity on the basis of the cultural activity of actual participants in the creative industry. Urban reputation is traced and evoked in terms of the dis-connected networks (Hage and Rogers Hollingsworth 2000).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This ethno-poetic project seeks new grounds for brand performativity as a combination of the embodied praxis of collaborative circles (Farrell 2003) and a paradoxical brand essence or “paradessence,” defined as: two opposing desires a brand can satisfy simultaneously (Shakar 2002). This integral ambiguity (Brown 2005) keeps a brand suspended in opposites (Sherry 2003). As such, the confrontation with the paradoxical essence of “being” (Heidegger 1962), in the context of creative communities, offers new insights into the socio-cultural, generative force of interaction (Watzlawick 1984). There is no effort to freeze the logic of this suspension in narrative; a post-ironic distance leads to an open-ended individual evocation of paradessences in poetry. The quest is for an evocative approximation of a deeper differential fate of place in collaborative performance (Hamara 2007). This requires finding new ways to resist narrative scripting of meaning in an aesthetic vocabulary that accentuates fragmented expressions of beauty and ugliness.

METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative research, the long trajectory from positivism and the validation of hypotheses, to the meaningful evocation of contradictions is further pursued in the sequential thickening of unresolved paradoxes. Data gathering for an aesthetic inquiry that front stages the potency of contentious views of what is and what could be, requires access to artful informants who are sensitive to form. The negations of contraries are bread and butter for researchers who approximate the essence of culture’s meanings for the benefit of market place reputations in semiotic squares (Greimas 1966;1983). Aware of the resultant stasis of such linearly re-constructed, retrospective brand realities, the present research seeks to penetrate “meaning” in the fullness of its gerundival sense that approximates its “dasein.” The approximation thereby occurs by studying processes rather than just outcomes, interactions rather than just actions. Gaining insights into how talent and reputation resonate requires collaborative catalysis of aesthetic expressions of what is enacted and what could inspire. Resisting the temptation to capriciously concoct a trunk line narrative effectively unscripts a purposive cultural brand prototype. In this instance, the suspended narrativity of the performed creativity that magnetises an urban reputation for the retention and attraction of talent is staged in three acts.

In the first act of the inquiry, a case study of an embodied musical collaboration particularises the process of creative work in a dynamic friendship circle in relation to local reputation. The aesthetics don’t map what reputation is, but how reputation inspires, conspires and performs in instrumental intimacies. In the second prosaic act, a quartet of reputational paradoxes is filtered from conversations with artistic, business and cultural key interpreters (Verganti 2009). This analysis locates paradessential themes in
grounded and multi-vocal praxis. In the third act, each of the four paradoxes is deepened by means of newly written poems. This is not conceived by telling a more intricately closed narrative, but by calling on disjointed lyrical explorations that critically reveal (Wijland and Fell 2009) and heighten evocation (Sherry and Schouten 2002) at a more visceral level.

**ENACTMENT IN SONG: PRAXIS IN A COLLABORATIVE CIRCLE**

Aesthetics offers a vocabulary for exploring social time and social space and “the social works of aesthetics is especially central to performance, where the labours of creation and the dynamics of consumption are explicitly communal and corporeal” (Hamra 2006). *Pages from Dunedin* (Burns 2009) is a collaborative musical project that originated from a local venue with particularly successful “open mike” nights. A group of songwriters and often acoustic performers met on stage and conceptualised a cooperation that led to a CD, a tour, new songs and fragmented evolving sessions. It enacts the differentiation of the urban space as a multi-vocal expression of “practiced place” (Certeau 1984) and also happens to stage that uniqueness in the thematic cohesion that organically performs reputation. As a collaborative circle (Farrell 2003), it epitomizes the geographic location from where it conspires, criticises and creates. It reflects the six stages of creative circles development: formation, rebellion, quest for a shared vision, creative work, collective action and group disintegration (Farrell 2003). These stages have also been transposed on the creative praxis of marketing academics (Bradshaw and Brown 2008). At the formation, the members may be no more than acquaintances meeting in a “magnet place.” In the case of this circle of musicians, this was the podium of Backstage. A local songwriter recalls: “A band consisted of whatever musicians wanted to be involved and we played songs that were completely made up on the spot that we were never allowed to play the songs again. I guess that’s an example of how these things work here.” (Mark).

Farrell presumes that frequent peer interaction is more important than mentors or role models. This seems to be especially relevant in music (Peterson 1997). The formation of a group requires boundary markers who evaluate the access. In that sense initial group members discuss the quality of songwriters; perhaps typically for a Dunedin circle there is no real philosophy, but members have their own thoughts and argue, on “who’s shit and who is quite good and who’s got something to offer?” (David).

Creative circles often rebel against authorities in their field and engage in the ritual sharing of anecdotes. What happened after “God Saved the Clean” is a question with regards to both creative positioning and local heritage which any local musician who is culturally shapes aesthetic invention will have to answer. *Pages from Dunedin* fits the peculiar rhythm of musical invention in the city in the sense that it shares the vision and reves the importance of song writing, but at the same time it defies the archetypical gothic heritage: “It’s like: can we please move on from the fricken 80’s?” (David). The formation of a new creative circle requires the creation of a shared vision as part of its productive quest: “All the old guys in Dunedin were good songwriters and it’s definitely not a move away from that. It’s a songwriter’s album; not mainstream, but often quite edgy and dark. In Dunedin getting your name out there is quite easy; offering support and generally being positive is more difficult.” (David). It’s part of Dunedin’s unglamorous music tradition that there is a lo-fi approach to music making. Indicative of the tolerant stylistic diversity, the range of individual styles on display even on a single night is stunningly broad to outsiders visiting from other towns: “I’ve been able to do things that stand out, figured it out on my own, whereas I’d like to go to Melbourne and meet some people that are way ahead of me and that I can work for and learn from. In Dunedin it’s almost like through pursuing these things you become one of the main people who are doing stuff.” (David). The success of a recognizable circle is in the collective action effectuating the execution of the art: the tour, the CD and its planning and deadlines. As with any group disintegration and member individuation in the creative circle theory, *Pages from Dunedin* as a group of musicians has disbanded. Regardless of this, the creative dynamics of the city are not magnetic enough to be a deciding factor in the process: “I’m quite happy in doing things here, and make a difference, but the core who remains here isn’t strong enough to draw me towards staying.” (David). This story of “Pages from Dunedin” shows how the city’s culture is conducive to a unique and distinctive fashion of circle development and fresh vigorous forms of sustaining the performativity of its reputation. The singularity of the place in the context of cultural performance is summed as follows: “I think what we had going, was pretty bloody good. In Dunedin’s just so easy to be in your own space, you can go and live round very few people if you want to.” (David)

**BRAND PERFORMATIVITY IN PARADESSENTIAL POETICS**

Paradoxical essence is suspended and negotiated between varieties of inventive actors who fully stretch what a place comes to mean. The inclination to innovate is unevenly distributed in non-stereotypical spiritual collaborations that co-habit in the city. Key interpreters have privileged access to their creative circles, but also have a heightened awareness of what particularises the cultural environment. Four different themes of the paradoxical essence of the town’s urban reputation emerged from focus groups with a mix of representatives from artistic, business and cultural vocations.

The discourse that differentiates the contested reputational space of a city finds a richer expression in non-linear poetic terms. New poems were written on the basis of the four paradesences that emanated from the prosaic conversations. Although these have a generic strategic relevance with regards to the city’s distinctive sphere of meaning, each evocation is idiosyncratic. By its very character ethno-poetics can simultaneously move in two directions: the socio-cultural and the aesthetic (Beach 1999). Similar to musical talent in local circles, the poets enact the performativity of the city brand, in a rebellious fashion in content and form, and have recorded their work. The poems show that creative talent thrives in different cultural strata, in different configurations and in disparate stylistic expressions. The following lyrical fireworks each start with a prosaic condensation of paradesententials from the initial key informants.

**The Paradessence of Collaboration: Intimacy and Segregation**. Dunedin is a small town where everybody knows everybody unsurprisingly well. It is nearly impossible to not physically meet. Intimacy makes creative circle development in this particular town different as compared to other locations; the shared expression is that if you want to start a collaboration you’ve pretty much immediately got access to a local elite of the best talents and a cultural or business stage. Different creative streams (expression or vocation) don’t seem to mix much. This means that collaborations are predictably and perhaps dangerously intimate and take place in segregated physical spaces with little chance of cross fertilization. Given that the town is too small to support a richly differentiated network of third places (Oldenburg 1999), venues and stages for creative expression are unusually tolerant of different styles. This means intimate collaborations have a history of materializing in the privacy of the city’s notoriously cold wooden villas. Traditionally the town’s geographic isolation seems to have allowed it to
develop cultural idiosyncrasies that are comparatively undiluted by the gravity of global trends. Local poet Peter Olds has been writing about the individual act of creating and the lures of social experiences ever since the iconic petrol head poems of nearly 40 years ago (Olds 1972) to recent new work (Olds 2004) that regularly explores the city; a theme that features again in his singular version of underbelly creativity amidst mentally partitioned urban circles (see Appendix 1).

The Paradessence of Flow: Terminus and Transience. In the conversations there were often references to the major dividing line between “town and gown,” the traditional Presbyterian city with an older demographic and the equally heritage-imbued Otago university populated with academics and a much younger community. The frequencies of what creativity, community and place have come to mean for these cultural strata are increasingly disparate. The imaginative and self-proclaimed conservative population who has decided to settle in Dunedin has a paradoxical rebellious streak in its own right. There is pride in being successful in making a living on the edge of the world and serving the town in a manner that is idiosyncratic and different from the rest of the country in a Southern, rural way. The infusion of new ideas from a structurally transient population is a part of the cosmic make-up and the seasonal rhythm of the place. Movement is a constant and as such, beneficial. The fact that the city’s constitution comprises cultural streams of variable temperament and rhythm and of distinctive objectives and incentives, means that intimate collaborations have to position themselves in the context of these two discordant streams. This could materialize in finding ways to funnel inspirational energy from the inherent discontinuities or build on the anxieties of influence. The 2009 Burns Fellow for literature at the University of Otago was Michael Harlow. He is a long-time (Harlow 1980, 2009) lyrical poet, who lives in Alexandra and who is an excellent example of a transient creative in Dunedin. This is his version of coming, staying and departing (see Appendix 2).

The Paradessence of Quality: Excellence and Mediocrity. Dunedin is a town that is small and geographically and culturally isolated. This means that it is comparatively easy to be deemed excellent and find exposure and stages. At the same time there is risk that perceived local excellence in a less saturated talent environment is unchallenged and not competitive on a wider scale. There is enough critical mass to create a couple of firms who specialise in a particular niche and are better than anybody else in the whole world. There is a sense that you can do anything here and a feeling of close knit camaraderie that makes ideas happen. At the same time there is a risk of a big fish / small pond mentality. “I’ve seen a lot of people get drunk on that whole thing; people who have stayed in Dunedin because even though their work is mediocre they still get recognised - and that has to go.” In a regional city it is difficult to surround yourself with people who are better than you and that’s considered to be a hard sell for Dunedin specifically, and even for New Zealand in general. There are few mentors or examples from whom you can learn. They might be there, but they’re hidden in the woodwork. Dunedin is also a place that has an explorative, liberalist nature; where few things are instantly measured and graded in over-mediated exposure and a lot of vulnerable work is possible. Musicians don’t compete to be the tightest band or the most impressive live band or the best singers, or the fastest guitar players. They compete to have something different; they inherently seem to think about differentiation. In the following short evocation, the researcher and the poet subjectively merge in introspection (Wijland 2009). The groundedness of rural Central Otago is compared with the high culture of the academic city and in both sites evidence of the particularities of local excellence and mediocrity are explored (see Appendix 3).

The Paradessence of Reputation: Pride and Embarrassment. Dunedin is a town that instills southern pride, if you can make a creative living here that adds to your vocational stature. At the same time the perception is that you have to make it elsewhere first and the Dunedin pedigree of a creative collaboration is seen as parochial. Creative people at times seem to be embarrassed by Dunedin’s city brand and provincial reputation. There’s pride in the fact that its formative conditions are not for everybody, but for the designated few. In a city that offers little imaginary substance (even if pressed hard, key informants have trouble coming up with iconic visual anchors for the place), nature as an atmospheric or surrounding physical presence is a core constituent of what attracts and keeps talents in the city. The city thrives on the bizarre and the oddball as embodied in graffiti, from the weird giraffes that are everywhere, to the returning spray-painted statement: “we are all dead souls.” Key interpreters show exasperated embarrassment, not with the way the city walks, but the way it institutionally talks. In part this seems typical of the mistrust of grand schemes by both conservative independents and entrepreneurial and artistic inventors. Performance poet David Eggleton has an acute sensuality for the language of marketing—a quality that reverberates in many of his poems (Eggleton 1983; 2006) (See Appendix 4).

CONCLUSION

This research assesses how a city makes “an exhibition of itself” in relation to its captivating lures for creative talent. Exploring the existentialist notions of Heideggerian concept of “dasein” as manifested in interactive, meaning-creating processes, it theoretically interlaces the two concepts of Farrell’s collaborative circles and Shakar’s paradessences, in order to provide an embodied basis for the deconstruction of cultural scripts. It investigates the brand consequences of the reality that both original inventions and expressions are literally “invested” in people. From a contextual perspective the research finds that the praxis of aesthetic expression in small collaborative circles is a prime amplifier of a credible brand performativity. Strategically, paradessences designate the long term characteristics of a place; they are the cultural fate under which any urban reputation senses and produces aesthetic activations. For the short term dynamic collaborative enactments animate the fragmented “home-truths” of the place. From a methodological point of view, this research contributes to currently limited applications of non-narrative discourses in consumer culture. It stages expressions by key informants in three distinctive presentational research modes: embodied-enacted, prosaic-explorative and evocative-poetic, that is effectuated by privileged access to various layers of creative culture. As such it beneficially embeds a poetic logic in a cohesive research sequence, whereas in previous poetic exploits, artistic and scientific components are rarely integrated. What makes the city vibrant is the cultural suspension of beauty and ugliness across a range of quiet and anarchic animations that give rise to particular evocations and inventions. Advances in lyrical consumer research irreverently contribute to the deconstruction of prototypical brand concepts.

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APPENDIX 1
Ballad of the Last Cold Pie

A man is writing in a large notebook with colouring pencils at a table near the door in the Methodist Mission coffee lounge. A life story? A theory of life?... An intense concentration of tea things and a banana skin.

A regular customer rolls in, steaming a little, and loudly requests four slices of buttered toast, and though it’s a bit on the hot side for soup he’ll have it just the same, with the usual pot of tea.

Well-groomed office workers on a coffee-break from the upstairs law firm pop in for the convenience of the home baking and the friendly reception Dressed in standard black evening-wear: high heels and flat weekday hairdos, they greedily swipe the last of the sweet cakes from the servery, then outside to stand for a minute in the gritty wind for a quick smoke.

All are welcome who are thirsty and able. Everybody brings his own trouble and meat to the table: Corporate T-shirts from some abandoned cause; pinstriped suits from the Salvation Army; gym-shoes from the Red Cross — some with shaved heads like the outer skins of onions; others with wheezing lungs like the inner linings of cabbages. A woman, mumbling quietly to herself, red-kneed, bows respectfully (Chinese style) before a plate of buttered scones...

The man with colouring pencils has developed a bleeding nose — complains of ringing in the ears and lack of privacy; gathers up his notebook, pencils and life story. Scoots out the door.

The lady behind the counter takes the last cold pie from the servery and offers it unheated to a latecomer (who likes his pies like that); who nibbles it greedily like a rat —

(continued)
shakes crumbs off his newspaper; reads aloud, sips his tea noisily, coughs his guts up — buys two jars of pickle on his way out to the granite lipped street; his eyes rolling like two minced rissoles.

To save some part of the story gone missing, dreaming of one place you arrive at another; somewhere east of somewhere else where forgetting is always about remembering, isn’t it?...

As if everyone is hurrying to board the train at the same time

Turning the page, we see: all that deep down whiteness: the snow falling on all the stranded houses; ear to hand, you can hear as if from afar one dark window then another calling out for a touch of light, if you please, a touch to make us shine; there’s more to this than meets the eye the ear is listening to, don’t you see?...

And here, all the emptied rooms the good Lord never entered; these orphaned words, motherless and fatherless, swarming to re-assemble inside the family Bible no one has read for years…

Ah, yes—the dear years, the “dear departed”; it may be they’ve gone missing, too; like a film put in backwards, “with calm firm steps, backwards.” And look—turning the page:

Fluttering on their hooks, such a family of clothes you might expect something in return—a hat doffed, a sleeve or two shaking hands, a bodice full of slightly steamy expectations… But, no—they are merely happy to be eating air, leaning into each other, a little caress here, another there in a “very existential place”; and not even a wasp of a word between them. Oh—happy somebodys at last…

And for a fine finale, sometimes we have to go back to the beginning to end up east of anywhere else, don’t we? You know, to make the “far more near”; to make the place safe. To end up where you hear for the first time: look—I saw the star I fell from, and just now. And I do like the way your face is living, today and tomorrow, too—don’t you?

And you do wonder, I do: what is the name of this place—what songs do they sing here to wake up to?
My inland gully is hidden
from reception.
In the absence of a wider world
a broad band of wetland grass
leads the way to the Upper Pond.

On the downside of nearly everything
anywhere I plant hopeful
chestnuts in an abiotic patch
I reckon will suit them just fine.

If you follow the Downs Road
beyond where index contours
bite calves
you're stereographically balanced
between a cartography of arteries;
Dunstan Creek and Manuherikia River
baptized in the folds of a map.
So much more is sky than land.
One tree is not enough substance
to name the flat ridge
but its road.

In the village pub wisdom is granted
for ancient repetition of seasonal arguments
on clouds and pests and poison and the price
of what is sold, shorn, slaughtered or lost.

Rivers end near the flatland campus
where uncrowded isolation revels
in mindful extremes
in the quiet weathered few
in the naïve talent that wants
in the human colluvium banding together
in the unchecked passion and difficult words
that educe sustainable singularity
and imagine stuff like nowhere.

Fluorescent builders commit
an act of grey
and scramble to finish
the new psych building
in time.
For I will consider Dunedin, for you are a brackish backwater inhabited by south sea gods.

For tipped out of a colonial toy-box, your stone buildings mingle with the bones of the land.

For oystercatchers by night, above Knox Church, cluck and chuckle, flying seawards.

For you have villas, with diamonded mullions blazing, and glossy cast-iron lace-work whose doily fringes hang above verandas.

For you have villas decaying and tomb-like, mantelpieces crammed with empty bottles and medication.

For Robbie Burns in bronze plucks a quill from a passing gull, and writes on air words in praise of Octagon hip-hop.

For at your centre you have a shiny Gaggia espresso machine.

For within your castle keep are the witch hats and wizard cones of pinnacles and turrets, cloak draperies, and a vault possessing the Harry Potteresque desk of the Ettrick Shepherd James Hogg.

For your bees nuzzle summer’s clouds, and your skateboarders scrape out pavement’s song, and shadows drawn from trees run across your parks in the late afternoon.

For Jetty Street on Sunday is loud with the eerily magnified musical whispers of industrial rust, and guitar fuzz buzzing like sourly ground-up sawdust.

For Anzac poppies bloom in Picardy Street, and orange cordials are poured on Alhambra’s sports fields.

For every other corner on Princes Street echoes to bagpipe skirls, horse hooves clatter, and phantom flow of golden syrup ragtime piano solos.

For Rattray Street remembers the boogie-woogie, the elective jazz mutes, the wah-wah pedallers and the doesy-does beneath zigzag steps.

For King Edward Street is greasy with the taste of Southern Fried Gothic, and loud with rugby choruses from beer-babblers at the Brook.

For your seagulls glide up and down George Street looking to greet all they happen to meet.

For your mollusc-like dwellings are concealed by tough thorny hedges.

For you have your pipe-dreams of a harbour bridge and railway tracks elevated above a statue of Queen Victoria surfing.

For you still possess the ruined grandeur of some cavernous Edwardian gin palace populated by elderly alcoholics.

For you are a synonym for depopulation, petrified as limestone, with your buried tunnels leading to bricked-up bomb shelters and closed gold smelters.

For you are a clue to all of New Zealand, a primal bog of settlement which has evolved to spawn many of the nation’s symbols of self-identification.

For who knew what could grow inside your cocoon of will and idea.

For there are rumours of beetles munching their way through your museum, over the notched spears and sandstone sinkers, the basalt adzes and bones of birds.

For you are a jester in cap and bells holding up an inflated gallbladder on a stick, which vibrates in the wind like an aerial tuned to otherworldly hymns.

For in the New Year you are a ghost ship of a town maintained by a tatterdemalion skeleton crew in op-shop regalia.

For the sight of you spread out in the skylarking sun reveals postal districts packed with concealed email users.

For you stretch up, Dunedin, take a breath, and sunk in dreamtime vacancy seek to break the trance of a hundred years, aware in your cobwebbed obstinacy that you’re making an exhibition of yourself again.
ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the role of other people as extended self, and tries to investigate its distinctive nature embedded in a unique form of relationship between mothers and daughters in Japan. Through carefully interpreting the direct observation of the catalogue shopping performed by six mother-daughter pairs as well as the depth interviews, it reveals that daughters play dual roles as mothers’ extended selves. Daughters are treated as if they were non human objects like mothers’ Barbie Dolls; also, they are treated as highly important for mothers, and are expected to accomplish mothers’ ideal self in substitution for them.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of extended self introduced by Belk (1988) clearly opened another avenue in the field of consumer research. The simple but strong notion, that the possession helps consumers define and construct their feeling toward the self, guided a series of related researches. These researches include some special cases of extended self, such as collections, money, pets, other people and body parts.

This research focuses on the role of other people as extended self, and tries to investigate its distinctive nature embedded in a unique form of relationship between mothers and daughters in Japan. Specifically, it sheds light on the dual roles of daughters as mothers’ extended selves, through careful interpretation of the verbal data gathered from the direct observation of the catalogue shopping performed by six mother-daughter pairs, as well as depth interviews. Culturally, Japanese mothers and daughters in general form close relationships, and especially the daughters tend to depend on their mothers both financially and mentally. The interpretation revealed that, on one hand, daughters are treated as if they were non human objects; in fact, they were just like mothers’ enjoyable toys. On the other hand, however, having become a part of their mothers’ extended self, daughters were treated as highly important for them, and were expected to accomplish mothers’ ideal self in substitution for them.

This research first reviews the related literatures on extended self and mother-daughter relationships, and it introduces the main proposition. It then explains the unique methodology and the data collecting procedure. Finally, it describes the data and presents major findings, limitations, and the future research directions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

(1) Other Person as Extended Self

As clearly stated in the phrase “we are what we have,” possessions are the most important contributions to our self identification, and at the same time they are pure reflections of the self concepts (Belk 1988). Consumers construct their own self image through various types of consumption (McCracken 1986; Saren 2007). Self concept is one of the most important key concepts in the consumer behavior literature, thus there have been enormous amount of research focusing on this key concept (Sirgy 1982). Self concept refers to “how a person perceives herself (Sirgy 1982, p.139),” and its characteristics can vary across different persons and different time periods (Belk 1989). Ideal self refers to “how a person would like to perceive herself (Sirgy 1982, p.139);” and consumers constantly seek for the fulfill-ment of their own ideal selves through purchasing and consuming various types of objects. According to the conceptualization of extended self in Belk (1988), consumers own their core self and try to extend it through possessions, and certain types of objects become part of the extended self (Belk 1988; Mittal 2006). Extended self differs from emotional attachment or product importance in this way. There have been some criticisms against extended self concept (Cohen 1989). Nevertheless, it is one of the most important and powerful concept in understanding consumer behavior (Belk 1989).

Consumers are known to extend, enlarge, and strengthen their selves through key possessions (Belk 1988; Ahuvia 2005), and previous researches on this topic have identified many types of objects that may comprise the extended self, including things in the workplace (Tian and Belk 2005), personal web sites (Schau and Gilly 2003), loved objects (Ahuvia 2005), body parts at plastic surgery (Schouten 1991), and pets (Kravets and Tari 2008; Hill, Gaines, and Wilson 2008).

Belk (1988) also pointed out some special cases of extended self: collections, money, pets, other people, and body parts. This research focuses on the fourth case, other people, and tries to apply it to further understanding the relationships between mothers and their daughters in Japan. More precisely, it sheds light on the unique roles that daughters would play as part of mothers’ extended self.

As for the case of other people as extended self, the following two viewpoints are of great importance. First, other people can sometimes be seen as non-human objects. For example, some people may “wear” their friends or lovers in order to construct their ideal self image, as if they were fine clothing. Another example is the fact that children are sometimes treated as objects of possession, especially in divorces (Derdeyn 1979; Hobart 1975). This notion of treating other people as objects without thoughtful considerations is particularly important when understanding the unique relationships with other people.

Secondly, other people can sometimes be extremely important to a self, especially when they become part of it. A good example of this is that children or grandchildren can deliver people a sense of immortality (Lifton 1973). Also, people are more willing to share with those they have made a part of their extended selves (Belk forthcoming). At the same time, any damage or loss of close friends or spouses would hurt the original self concept. Sexual infidelity of spouses or lovers drives a serious ego wounding, and often results in a feeling of loss of self (Clanton and Smith 1977). Also, death of family members can often deliver a self loss (Doka 1986).

As for the focus of present research, the relationship between mothers and daughters, the above two viewpoints are both important. First, daughters can serve as mere objects or things for their mothers, especially in the phase of mothers’ simply enjoying shopping with them. Mothers sometimes choose their ideal outfits for daughters, as if they were the Barbie dolls. Secondly, daughters can serve a significant role for their mothers, as being a part of their mothers’ extended selves. In this sense, mothers try to fulfill their own ideal selves through interacting with daughters as part of their ideal selves.

(2) Mother’s Expectation: Fulfillment of Mother’s Ideal Self by Her Daughter

Most scholars seem to agree that the term “self-concept” denotes the “totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to him as an object” (Rosenberg 1979). Symbolic interaction theorists view the self as a function of interpersonal interaction.
Actual self refers to how a person perceives herself. Ideal self refers to how a person would like to perceive herself. Social self refers to how a person presents herself to others.

We should not consider that self image is a static cognitive state that remains constant in any situations or it may be an oversimplification of individuals’ cognitive states. When the individual encounters different social situations, he/she chooses one of the self-images which are the most required by the situation among a repertoire of highly diversified self-images (Schenk and Holman 1980).

Global self-attitude, such as self-esteem or self-satisfaction, has been treated as a conscious judgment regarding the relationship of one’s actual self to the ideal or social self. Self-concept must be treated as having two components; the actual self-concept and the ideal self-concept. Ideal self-concept is defined as the image of oneself as one would like to be. The ideal self-concept has been referred to as the “ideal self,” “idealized image,” and “desired self” (Sigsy 1982).

In his self-in-relation model, Surry (1985) maintained that the self is organized and developed within the context of significant relationships. For women, these significant relationships seem to be with their mothers (Surry 1985). It seems reasonable to look at mothers as primary socializing agents for the formation of their daughters’ attitudes (Bohannon and Blanton 1999). Research on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes has indicated that parents’ attitudes in general, and mothers’ attitudes in particular, are significant predictors of the attitudes of their daughters (Acoc and Bengston 1978; Bohannon and Blanton 1999).

Symbolic interaction theorists assume that people are born asocial into a world of meanings that are translated to each child through interactions with significant and generalized others who are the primary socializing agents for each new generation (Mead 1934). They have long proposed that parents are the most influential socializing agents for their children (Cooley 1902; Sullivan 1947; Turner 1962).

Mothers might be significant socializers for their daughters and control them by using social power. Social power consists of reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power (French and Raven 1959). Both reward and coercive power require surveillance on the part of the powerful person in order to administer the rewards and punishment and thereby control the outcome of result for the person being influenced (Acoc and Yang 1984). French and Raven (1959) argue that there is a causal link between referent power and identification. They suggest internalization of norms, attitudes, and values between the powerful person and the person influenced in the referent power category (McDonald 1977; 1980).

Chodorow (1978) and Boyd (1985) discuss mother and daughter identification as a concept. Chodorow contends that daughters internalize many of their mothers’ behaviors, values, thoughts, and meanings. This internalization leads them to be like their mothers. Weitzman (1984) alternatively, suggests that daughters are like their mothers because they are reinforced to be so.

A daughter continues to identify with her caregiving mother, thereby maintaining the mother-daughter relationship while establishing her identity. Because of their prolonged identification with their mothers, daughters often perceive themselves as more like their mothers than sons are like their fathers (Chodorow 1978).

According to Nobuta and Ueno (2008), in contemporary Japan, identification with mothers does not simply mean identifying with the actual existing mothers. Mothers try to get their daughters to identify with their ideal self. There are things that mothers cannot achieve in their lifetime. The mothers we studied are in their late 40s and the early 50s. They have been educated under the post-war liberalism school educational system in Japan. Differing from their parents’ generation, the so-called pre-war generation, they were encouraged to live on their own will even after getting married and becoming mothers. However, in their actual lives, they have to suppress their will and have to live for their husbands and children. Many of them may live without accomplishing their dreams.

Thus, they expect their daughters, who have higher education and do not marry until their middle 30s, to become just like their ideal selves. In other words, mothers are expecting their daughters to represent and achieve their (the mother’s) ideal self (Nobuta and Ueno 2008). By using power, mothers try controlling their daughters and make them identifying with mothers’ ideal self (see Figure 1).

**PROPOSITION**

We contend that in many respects, daughters are their mothers’ extended self. There are two different notions underlying this proposition involving the extended self. One is that contemporary Japanese mothers treat their daughters as objects of possession. The other is that contemporary Japanese mothers expect their daughters to accomplish their own (the mothers’) ideal self. Two seemingly contradicting types of roles played by daughters as extended self seem to exist. However, there is heterogeneity in the mother-daughter relationships; therefore, phenomena and practices are expected to vary.

**METHODOLOGY**

Methodologically, this research follows the interpretive approach, and applies both the observation method using camcorder to assess data of the actual shopping process, and semi-structured depth interviews that preceded the observation. The direct observation method provides a more accurate assessment of the varying modes of interaction than would be obtained by relying solely on self-reports elicited in interviews or direct measurement under laboratory conditions (Atkin 1978).

In order to capture the unique relationship between mothers and daughters, the authors asked six mother-and-daughter pairs to perform a catalogue shopping task in which they were to freely discuss the outfits in a fashion catalogue and to choose one ideal outfit for the daughter in an attempt to improve her present image. The catalogue shopping situation was selected because it was expected to provide rich data on the mother-daughter interaction in a relatively natural setting.

All of the six daughters were aged from twenty-two to twenty-three years old, either junior or senior students in a college, getting ready for their new careers after the graduation. Thus, the outfits they were to select were made with their impending transition to a career in mind. Table 1 shows the basic information about the six daughters (HINA, YUNA, ERIKA, MAYU, YU and AIRI) and their mothers. Two pretests were conducted to decide a) the catalogue shopping situation, and b) the actual shopping catalogue, using another group of female students. As a result, choosing a different and more sophisticated outfit for the daughter as working woman was selected as the shopping situation. Also, a popular shopping catalogue issued by one of the largest clothing store, MARUI, was selected since it was widely read by the female college students.

The whole catalogue shopping process was recorded and so was the interview after they came to the decision. The shopping process took about thirty to forty minutes, and the interview lasted for about another one hour. Each pair received 10,000 Japanese yen (about 111 US dollars) for their cooperation, and was told that they were to spend it to actually purchase the ideal outfit they had chosen from the catalogue.
All the verbal content from the actual shopping process and the follow-up interview were recorded by two video camcorders. Four coders documented verbal data, and at least two different researchers checked the documents multiple times, in order to assure the reliability of data documentation.

**DESCRIPTION**

This section describes the interaction between mothers and daughters by analyzing verbal data while using the visual data recorded in video as a complement. Daughters were found to be a part of the extended self of their mothers. There are two different meanings of extended self here. One is that mothers treat their daughters as possessions. The other is that mothers treat daughters as the one who will accomplish mothers’ ideal self. Although we found generally these two senses of extended self, since the relationships observed between mothers and daughters are each different, the extended self phenomena and practices vary.

(1) Mothers Treat Daughters as Possessions

Mothers reported that they used to have fun for playing with putting clothes on their daughters. While choosing clothes in the research, they remembered their past experiences when they used to freely choose their daughters’ clothes when they were still little. Mother Z recalled the criteria for the purchase decision making as being something she likes her daughter to wear. While browsing the magazine she talked to herself:

Mother Z: (By thinking aloud) something I’d like to put on her, something I’d like to put on her (OBSERVATION PART).

Mother U compared the clothes her daughter and she were seeing in the magazine with the clothes she used to put on her daughter in childhood.

Daughter HINA: I like to choose with you.

Mother U: You can put a post-it on which you like.

Daughter HINA: This is pretty. You don’t like it so much, do you?

Mother U: Well, it is just like the one you wore when you were little. (OBSERVATION PART)
Mothers still want to play dress-up dolls with their daughters who are already in their 20s. Mother Y stated that looking for her daughter’s clothes is more fun than looking for clothes for herself, because she can have the same kind of excitement as in a dress-up doll play.

Interviewer: Why is shopping with your daughter fun?
Mother Y: It is like a dress-up doll play. Ha-ha.
Daughter YU: I didn’t know that.
Mother Y: It is always more fun to see products for my daughter.
Interviewer: Then was today also a dress-up doll play?
Daughter YU: You put this on me, and that on me,
Mother Y: Yes. (Puts clothes on her daughter in gesture) Umm… How are these clothes on her? (INTERVIEW PART)

Mother X also said that she used to make her daughter wear pink colored clothing that her daughter, MAYU, no longer wears.

Daughter MAYU: Among these, this pink one is the best. I don’t wear pink color. Pink is cute but I don’t fit on the color.

Mother X: I used to make you wear pink when you were a child. (OBSERVATION PART)

Here the mother tries to veto the clothes she does not want her daughter to wear. Daughter YU pointed out that her mother tries to prevent her from choosing the one she does not want her daughter to wear.

Daughter YU: (Pointing one clothes) You don’t like this, do you?

Mother Y: Ha-ha. Yes, yes I like it.
Daughter YU: No, you don’t. Ha-ha. You are trying to prevent me from wearing it. (OBSERVATION PART)

(2) Mothers Treat Daughters as the One Who Will Fulfill the Mothers’ Ideal Self

1) Daughter’s Identification with Past Mother. Mother Z used to wear check patterned clothes when she was young. She wanted her daughter to wear check patterned clothes as well, based on the memory of her past.

Mother Z: When I was young, I always wear check patterned clothes. Lately, check becomes in trend. They remind me of those days and…

Daughter AIRI: You wanted to make me wear like you?
Mother Z: Right.

Interviewer: Why do you want to make your daughter wear check patterned clothes?
Mother Z: Because I like check. I have an image of youth in check. Though I like check, I can not possibly wear them in my age any longer.

Daughter AIRI: You don’t have guts to wear them?
Mother Z: No, I don’t. Thus I want my daughter to wear them instead.

Interviewer: Ha-ha.

Daughter AIRI: Pushing, pushing me. (smiling)
Mother Z: Since I myself wore them, I want my daughter to have the same feeling.

Interviewer: What kind of feeling did you have when you were wearing check pattern clothes?

Mother Z: Well, on my date, I was in a state of nervous excitement. Ha-ha.

Daughter AIRI: You wore check clothes. I’ve never heard of it.

Mother A: Ha-ha. (INTERVIEW PART)

Daughter AIRI recognizes that her mother is deliberately forcing her to choose a particular type of outfit that she used to wear when she was in her daughter’s age. Knowing her mother’s expectation, AIRI is willing to hear her mother’s old memories, while seeing her not as her own mother but as a sentimental girl just like her. Through this process, AIRI seems to be identifying with her mother’s previous self.

2) Daughter’s Identification with Present Mother. Mother U wanted her daughter to wear the clothes she could no longer wear, since they were too cute for her age.

Daughter HINA: I see you prefer the one with frill. You like airy skirts. I like them too.

Mother U: Yes, but I cannot wear this type (since it is too cute).

Daughter HINA: I see. (OBSERVATION PART)

Mother Y almost chose a particular type of clothes that she would like to wear.

Mother Y: I was almost choosing the one for myself.

Daughter YU: I see you choosing what you like to wear. (OBSERVATION PART).

Also, mother Z was almost choosing the clothes she likes to wear.

Mother Z: This one is nice too.

Daughter AIRI: I prefer this one. You said it is nice but please remember that you are not the one who will wear it. Ha-ha.

Mother Z: I like to wear it. Ha-ha. (OBSERVATION PART)

Mother V does not buy much for herself. Even though she occasionally finds nice coats at her favorite store, she easily gives up buying it. She says that her daughter buys clothes for her vicariously.

Mother V: I am of course interested in buying clothes. When I see my daughter wearing trendy clothes, I want to buy a coat for myself. Gradually I lost my purchase motivation, thinking “Let’s buy it next time.”

Daughter YUNA: You have a great interest though.

Interviewer: And your daughter gets a coat instead.

Daughter YUNA: Yes, right? (Looking at her mother) (INTERVIEW PART)

Mother W wanted to buy the clothes for her daughter that she would like to wear if she was younger. She used the term “pseudo experience.”

Mother W: I always try making my daughter wear what I like to wear, imagining I would be wearing it if I were younger.

Interviewer: Why do you want to make your daughter wear what you like to wear?

Mother W: I don’t know. Maybe it is a pseudo experience. I naturally think she should wear it.

Interviewer: Can you explain what you mean pseudo experience?

Mother W: I will be like this (pointing at her daughter), seeing my daughter wearing it.

Daughter AIRI: Ha-ha.

Mother W: I am like this if I were younger.

Interviewer: I see.

Mother W: When I go out for shopping with my daughter, I say “You look good on this.”

Daughter AIRI: You are forcing against my will. Ha-ha. (INTERVIEW PART)

3) Daughter’s Identification with Mother’s Ideal Self. In purchase decision making process with their daughters, mothers remembered the time when they were in their daughter’s age. Not only was the actual past simply reconsidered, these mothers also imagined the possibility of another life, wondering “what might have happened to my life if I had not quit working?” Mother W fantasized such a world where she had kept working. She has a former colleague who is still working. When she met her, she could not help but wonder what might have been like if she had kept working. She was certain that she should be in a superior position to her former colleague, and a feeling of regret arose in her mind. She tried to entrust the possibility of her unachieved dream to her daughter whom she urged to achieve it. All of these conveyed during the observation phase. Mother W enjoyed shopping task, imagining herself keeping working at the office and becoming a successful business woman.

Interviewer: What kind of woman would you like your daughter to become in her future?

Mother W: Carrier woman.

Daughter ERICA: Ha-ha.

Mother W: I want her to keep her job and I will take care of her children. I want her to keep her job even after her marriage. After the economic crisis, getting a job is even tougher, though. I want her to work very hard.

Interviewer: Do you have a similar carrier? After your marriage?

Mother W: No, I was such a hard worker, but stopped working after my marriage. I always wonder what would be like if I hadn’t stopped working then. It might be wrong to reflect my dream...
Daughter AIRI: (Giggling)

Mother Z: It may be a fantasy but I want my daughter to go to office after she loses her weight and becomes smart and brisk.

Daughter AIRI: Ha-ha.

Mother Z: I wonder why I chose these clothes today. I think it seems like typical “OL” (office lady), Marunouchi (biggest and the most popular office district in Tokyo) OL (Giggling).

Daughter AIRI: (Giggling)

Mother Z: Didn’t you say that you wanted to work at Marunouchi area?

Daughter AIRI: Did I? Ha-ha. I don’t know...I want to work at trendy office districts.

Mother Z: Too much desire.

Interviewer: Is the desire your daughter’s? Or is it your will?

Mother Z: I used to work at Otemachi area. Those areas around Tokyo station, such as Ginza and Yurakucho, are...Is it my will?

Daughter AIRI: (Giggling)

Interviewer: Is it mother’s will?

Mother Z: (nodding) It may be my will.

Daughter AIRI: Is it? Ha-ha.

Mother Z: (nodding) Yes, it is my will.

Daughter AIRI: (Giggling)

Mother Z: I noticed it while I am talking right now.

Interviewer: I see. It is mother’s will.

Mother Z: You are right. You are right. I understood it while I am talking. (INTERVIEW PART)
REFERENCES


**ABSTRACT**

Although consumers have always been fascinated by the works and private lives of film stars, scant attention has been paid as to how the relationship between fans and film actors expresses itself in everyday consumer behaviour. This paper sets therefore out to explore celebrity fandom as a holistic lived experience from an individual fan’s insider point of view. Using subjective personal introspection, the lead author provides insights into his own private everyday lived fan relationship with the actress Jena Malone. The findings indicate that the fan engages with the film star’s public persona through a personal intertextual reading of “reliable” media texts, which can even result in a feeling of “knowing” the celebrity like a personal friend—and even “love.”

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**INTRODUCTION**

Since the dawn of the Hollywood star system in the early 1920s, consumers have always been fascinated by the works and private lives of film stars and any other celebrities (Barbas 2001; Dyer 1998; McDonald 2000). Indeed, the public demand for celebrities has grown so strong these days that film actors, directors, musicians, athletes, novelists and models have without doubt become an essential part of our everyday culture (Gabler 1998; Geraghty 2000; Turner 2004) and contemporary market economy (Thomson 2006). Surely, most people tend to have merely a fleeting interest in celebrities per se and enjoy primarily the exchange of gossip with other like-minded individuals (Turner 2004). But some consumers experience a significantly more intensive level of interest and admiration for an individual celebrity and, subsequently, become what are commonly known as fans (Leets, de Becker and Giles 1995; O’Guinn 1991; Smith, Fisher and Cole 2007) or celebrity worshippers (McCutcheon et al. 2003). And, as it happens, I’m one of them. Ever since I bought by chance the DVD of the indie-film *Saved!* (US 2004) back in April 2005, I have been the devoted fan of the young, attractive and very talented actress Jena Malone, who features primarily in lesser known, yet much more interesting and challenging indie-films such as *Donnie Darko* (US 2001), *The United States of Leland* (US 2003), *Four Last Songs* (UK 2007), *Into the Wild* (US 2007), *The Ruins* (US 2008) and *The Messenger* (US 2009). But what is it exactly that attracts an ordinary consumer like me to become and remain the devoted fan of a film actress? What does the lived experience of being the fan of a film actress (or any other celebrity for that matter) mean for the individual consumer? And how does celebrity fandom express itself in everyday consumer behaviour?

Because these are very interesting questions, it is quite surprising that little research has so far sought to address them. In order to fill this knowledge gap, the current study provides some insider insights into a consumer’s holistic everyday lived fan experiences with one’s admired celebrity from an existential-phenomenological perspective (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Thompson 1997). Using subjective personal introspection (Brown 1998; Gould 2008; Holbrook 1995), I describe and examine hereby my own private lived consumption experiences of becoming the fan of the film actress Jena Malone back in 2005. In doing so, this research is not only looking for any evidences that either support, question or even contradict previously held assumptions about fandom, but also draws on narrative transportation theory to explain a fan’s experienced relationship with one’s admired celebrity as an immersion into a “melodramatic narrative.”

**THE DANGEROUS LIVES OF CELEBRITY FANS**

While a growing interdisciplinary body of literature has been investigating in particular sports and media fans, it still lacks a coherent understanding of what actually constitutes fandom in the first place. In fact, the interpretation of what a fan is seems often to be highly dependent on the underlying agenda of the researcher studying the phenomenon (Smith et al. 2007). What is clear, though, is that both academic literature and popular media have placed fans consistently on the receiving end of negative stereotyping, ridicule and bad press (Barbas 2001; Jenson 1992). As desired, fans are conceptualised either as uneducated, gullible and vulnerable “numbs,” who are easily manipulated by the dangerous and controlling popular mass culture (Boorstin 2006; Fiske 1992; Gabler 1998; Schickel 1985), or as subversive and creative rebels against the corporate establishment, who poach and utilise commercial media texts to create new textual products (Barbas 2001; Jenkins 1992; Turner 2004). Some authors portrayed fans as members of neo-religious cults, who worship celebrities like gods through shared rituals and the sacralisation of associated items within like-minded communities (Kozinets 1997; O’Guinn 1991). Others described them as geeks and alienated, lonely social misfits, who experience for various reasons deficits in their social skills and networks (Horton and Wohl 1956). While often being intelligent, well-educated and highly successful at work or school, these consumers feel in their private lives lonely, rejected and stigmatised especially by those others, who may be less intelligent and creative, but more privileged in terms of social skills, status and/or physical attractiveness (Kozinets 2001). Fandom would provide a means of compensation and social interaction with similarly isolated individuals. In following Munsterberg’s (1916) legacy, however, some social psychologists have recently set out on a quest to confirm sensationalist stereotypes in the popular media by portraying fans as cognitively inflexible, gullible and dull individuals (McCutcheon et al. 2003) or, even worse, as delusional, pathological-obsessive stalkers (McCutcheon et al. 2006).

In light of these devastating views of fans, admitting to one’s infatuation with a film actress and risking to be branded with one of the common stereotypes seems to be an unwise move. But maybe there is much more to a consumer’s personal fan relationship with a celebrity than previous research have uncovered so far. Indeed, despite their different perspectives, all those studies have essentially two main things in common. Firstly, previous research studied only certain, more “extreme” subgroups of fans on special occasions such as Star Trek conventions, fan-club meetings or fan-blogs (Jenkins 1992; Kozinets 1997; O’Guinn 1991) while paying scant attention to the ordinary everyday lived experiences of the “normal” fan. Secondly, the fandom literature has focused either...
years ago and advanced in particular by Gould (1993) and Brown (1998). In its purest form, SPI is an “extreme form of participant observation that focuses on impressionistic narrative accounts of the writer’s own private consumption experiences” (Holbrook 2005: 45), where the researcher is also the sole informant. One of the major advantages of this research method is that it allows the researcher for an unlimited 24-hour access to an insider’s everyday lived experiences with the researched phenomenon without having to wrestle with ethical concerns regarding the informants’ privacy (Brown 1998). Moreover, SPI enables the researcher to explore the subjective nature of human feelings, dreams, sensations and streams of consciousness related to consumption (Gould 2008) in the very way they are experienced by the individual, but remain inaccessible through traditional scientific or qualitative research methods. Hence, for this study, I provide some introspective insights into my own private lived consumption experiences as a devoted fan of the film actress Jena Malone after having collected three types of introspective data.

My lived fan experiences in the period from April to September 2005 were obtained as retrospective data in a 36,000-words essay, which was written in September 2005 to describe how I became a Jena Malone fan. My everyday lived experiences as a Jena Malone fan from 11th September 2005 to 31st December 2006 were then collected as contemporaneous data while they occurred in real time to ensure a high degree of ‘data accuracy’ (Wallendorf and Brucks 1993). Contemporaneous introspective data field the unique advantage of providing a large pool of emotional data that would be inaccessible to any other research method that is based on retrospective recall or pure observation and, thus, inevitably lost forever (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2008). To ensure data accessibility for external review, I have recorded the data systematically, unfiltered and on the spot in a specifically assigned diary (Patterson 2005). In total, I obtained more than 150,000 hand-written words as raw contemporaneous data aided by 50 photographs for a thorough hermeneutic part-to-whole analysis (Thompson 1997). The entire transcript was read to gain a first sense of the overall picture. Due to early impressions, the data were broken into manageable, logically coherent chunks to be examined individually. Emerging key themes were then put into the context of each other and the overall consumer narrative. As the recorded data represented a ‘plotless’ sequence of instances, they were summarised in an extensive narrative that reflects the chronological order of events and stays true to the emotional consumption experiences and feelings. Due to the limited space, the following essay provides a brief snapshot of this consumer narrative with a focus on some interesting insights that have emerged iteratively from the introspective data recorded in 2005. The reader may be reminded that the emphasis is placed less on the recollection of factual behaviour but more on the emotional daily lived experiences (i.e. private feelings, thoughts, fantasies and daydreams) that enhanced or derived from the consumer’s fan relationship.

CONFESSIONS OF A JENA MALONE FAN (AN INTROSPECTIVE ESSAY)

“As I said earlier, it all started back in April 2005, when I bought by chance the indie-film Saved! (US 2004) in a 3-DVDs-for-£20 sale. I can’t really explain why, but I simply had this sudden urge creeping up in me that I had to own this particular film. And it has become one of my favourite films ever since! Moreover, from the very first moment I watched it, I was absolutely blown away by Jena Malone’s acting performance in portraying the lead character Mary Cummings - a good Christian girl who tries to save her boyfriend from being gay by sacrificing her virginity, but gets pregnant as a
result and is, subsequently, ostracised exactly by those, who preach the Christian values of love, tolerance and forgiveness. Though I have to admit that I was very attracted to her beautiful eyes, her charming smile and her natural beauty, I was also totally captivated by her believable, natural acting performance and simply had to watch the DVD at once for a second time. But this time, I switched to the commentary of the leading actresses Jena Malone and Mandy Moore. While I listened to Jena Malone explaining how she developed her character within the context of particular film scenes, I became even more fascinated by her. Not only is Jena Malone an extremely good actress and very pretty, but she also seems to be an exceptionally interesting, smart and surprisingly mature young woman. Surely, there is always the danger of mistaking the actress with her character–unless you have seen her in a variety of other roles. For me, a really good actress is therefore one, who makes each of her characters appear to be believably ‘real’ and who manages through her performance that you enjoy even those films that you would have never watched otherwise.

Because only a few actors/actresses would meet these criteria, I wanted - no I needed - to find out more about Jena Malone as a person and actress as well as to watch other films with her. Hence, I started to browse the Internet for any information that I could get my hands on. Only, I could hardly find any at all! While there are hundreds of sites and articles for virtually every single talented and more often untalented (wannabe) celebrity on Earth, disappointingly little was available on Jena Malone. Nonetheless, I discovered on IMDb that Jena Malone, at the age of 20 back then, had already featured in 20 films, 3 TV soap guest roles and one audio recording of a theatre play. Armed with this list, I started over the next weeks to buy the DVDs of Stepmom (US 1998), Cheaters (US 2000), The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys (US 2001), Donnie Darko (US 2001) and Life as a House (US 2001). As I could relate to each of her characters empathetically as if they were ‘real’ people, each of her films that I watched convinced me more and more of her exceptional talent as an actress and increased an inherent desire in me to acquire ALL her films for my private film collection. But that was easier said than done, when I soon discovered that most of her films have only been released in the US as Region 1 DVDs, but not as European Region 2 DVDs. While in the past this would have been the end of my efforts, this time I started to look desperately for suitable alternatives like VHS videotapes or VCDs until I could replace them with a more suitable DVD release. Finally, I purchased an external DVD drive for my laptop, which I locked then into Region 1 to watch those US DVDs that I bought on Amazon.com or eBay to satisfy my hunger for her films. All the time, however, I also felt in me this strong desire to learn more about the ‘genuine’ private person Jena Malone - something I have never really experienced in this form before. Thus, when I discovered Rommelmann’s (2000) LA Weekly article, I was (and still am) absolutely captivated by what I learned about Jena Malone’s personal background and my admiration for her increased significantly.

Jena Malone was born on 21-11-1984 in Sparks, Nevada, as the unplanned result of a one-night stand and spent most of her childhood growing up in the poverty of trailer parks. With her single-mother Debbie being a struggling actress in an amateur theatre, Jena wanted to be a performer from early on and responded as a 10-year old to the ad of an acting school, which turned out to be a fraud. Nonetheless, Jena caught the eyes of both Beverly Strong, who signed her on the spot to become her personal manager, and Anjelica Houston, who cast Jena for the title character in her directorial debut Bastard Out of Carolina (US 1996). Anjelica Houston also introduced Jena and her mother to Toni Howard, an influential agent specialised in child actors, who signed her immediately for International Creative Management. But what really impressed me most was that, even as an 11-year old, Jena preferred (to her manager’s frustration) to feature primarily in those film projects that were dear to her heart rather than in commercially promising blockbusters. Thus, she turned down roles in Air Force One and The Parent Trap (Lindsay Lohan got the part instead) to play the lead characters in Bastard Out of Carolina (US 1996), Hope (US 1997) and Ellen Foster (US 1997), for which Jena received critical acclaim, some film awards and a Golden Globe nomination. Yet, life in Hollywood didn’t turn out to be that glamorous for Jena and her mother. As Debbie was required by law to be present on set at all times, she couldn’t work herself and Jena became the family’s sole breadwinner. It also meant that Jena received only home-schooling–though concluding from her interviews, she seems to be very intelligent, very well read and really knowledgeable. But worst of all, after approx. 30% of her gross earnings were already deducted as fees for her manager, agency, accountant, lawyers, etc., her full income was taxed at 45%, although film production companies were required by Coogan’s law to pay 30% of a child actor’s salaries into blocked trusts, which only become accessible at the actor’s 18th birthday (Rommelmann 2000). This meant that Jena was rarely left with more than 7% of her earnings to live on.

When finally faced with a bill of $150,000 in back taxes and near bankruptcy, Jena filed, aged 14, for legal emancipation from her mother, which was granted at her 15th birthday, in order to work legally like an adult in the film industry and to access her blocked trusts to pay off her debts. Since then, she is managing her own career without the interference and approval from others (Calhoun 2003; Rommelmann 2000). This also included firing her manager Beverly Strong and any other stakeholders, who had profited from her in the past, as well as switching to United Talent Agency, who offered much more favourable terms and absolute creative freedom. Furthermore, Jena focused on portraying complex young female characters with real problems in challenging and artistically creative independent film productions rather than on fulfilling some ominous stereotypes in those typical teen-comedies (Lyon 2008; Miller 2006). That’s why she also refuses to do glamour photo shoots for fashion or celebrity magazines that would ‘present girls with false beauty ideals they can hardly fulfil and only make them feel inadequate’ (Rems 2004). In contrast to many other young film actors, she shunned the glamorous LA party life as well by moving back to Lake Tahoe, where she felt happy as a child (Calhoun 2003; Lyon 2008). To me, this explains maybe why Jena Malone managed the transition from child actress to a serious young adult actress so effortlessly without losing her integrity, while so many other former child actors like her contemporary Lindsay Lohan struggled or even failed in their careers. I was really impressed by her life story and how she managed, despite her young age and the economic as well as personal pressure she was under, to remain true to herself. I felt, somehow, inspired by her.

Back in Germany, I grew up as one of those latch-key kids in a disadvantaged working-class neighbourhood. Fortunately, my parents were among the very few, who were steadily employed and earned a small, but regular income that enabled us to move to a slightly better neighbourhood when I was 12. Because films have always provided me with a mental escape, being an actor was a passion of mine from early on as well. I even joined the drama society in school, which was pretty much the best experience of
my entire schooldays. Yet, in contrast to Jena Malone, I lacked her determination to follow my dreams. Moreover, due to my poor grades, my parents insisted that I had to focus only on relevant ‘practical’ subjects and made me quit again. To be fair, I wasn’t probably talented enough to succeed as an actor anyway. Still, there has always been this inner feeling of something’s missing… After working a few years in sports retailing, the film Dead Poets Society finally inspired me to go to university and, eventually, become a lecturer instead. Since learning about Jena Malone’s personal life story, I have the deepest respect for her and how she succeeded against all the odds in doing what she wanted to do. She is not only extremely talented, but also managed to resist all the temptations of glamour, party-life and the commercial exploitation of the Hollywood machinery without losing her personal integrity. As I said, quite an astonishing achievement for a young woman from a poor social background! And, by October 2005, I had become so fascinated by Jena Malone that I simply wanted to hear and read more about her in order to understand her thoughts and feelings as a private person. But because she doesn’t fit or fulfil the typical celebrity life-style image of glamour and scandal, the media seem largely to ignore her and meaningful articles are unfortunately rare.

Nevertheless, despite the scarcity of meaningful information in the media, I still managed to acquire a few cultural magazines with really interesting interviews with or articles about Jena Malone on eBay (i.e. Calhoun 2003; Lyon 2008; Miller 2006; Rems 2004) by paying often more than the actual retail price for them. But for me, they are totally worth it! And when Pride & Prejudice (UK 2005) was released in Irish cinemas, my excitement was further enhanced by the opportunity to watch Jena Malone for the first time on the big screen. At the same time, I experienced in addition to my already strong admiration for her artistic work also a growing emotional attachment to Jena as an attractive woman. In fact, I really fancy her as the normal, intelligent and interesting woman I perceive her to be with all her positive and negative qualities. Indeed, I would love to meet and go out on a date with her. But as it is highly unlikely for that ever to happen, I began instead to look for some personalised items of Jena Malone, such as original hand-signed photos, that would give her some kind of tangible presence in my life. When Jena Malone gave her Broadway debut in Doubt (US 2006), I came into contact with a professional autograph trader, who offered me to get any photo image that I would email him signed by her in person. A few days later, he asked me whether I would like it if Jena would dedicate them to me personally. Was he kidding me? If that’s possible, I obviously would love that! And, indeed, he managed that Jena signed a total of 21 photos with a personal dedication to me (Photo 1), which have become my most-valued treasures ever since, because they truly symbolise her ‘physical’ presence in my life. Moreover, as Jena Malone is always on my mind, so to speak, I must admit that she also occupies a certain space in my everyday life that goes beyond the mere acquisition of associated items and
HOPE (OR DISCUSSION)

Although the introspective essay only covered the first 9 months of my personal Jena Malone fan relationship, I will now discuss one particularly interesting insight that emerged iteratively from the data by drawing on narrative transportation theory (Gerrig 1993; Green et al. 2004). While previous studies conceptualised fandom mainly as the social interaction between like-minded individuals within their respective consumption subcultures (Jenkins 1992; Kozinets 1997, 2001; Richardson 2004), the introspective data clearly show that my own personal fan experiences and any subsequent consumption practices focused exclusively on my emotional attachment to Jena Malone herself and on my admiration to her artistic work as an actress. In fact, during the entire 16 months of contemporary self-observation, I have never shown any intentions to share my intimate admiration for her with other fans either online or in person, but preferred to enjoy it just by myself instead. Obviously, the only exception would be Jena Malone herself - but that’s quite a different story and unlikely ever to happen (Barbas 2001). Now, it can be argued that the main reason as to why my observed fan experiences revolved solely around the personal relationship with the film actress rather than the participation in an ominous fan community is that I would actually be “in love with her” - which may not be so untrue. After all, sexual attraction surely played a role in capturing my initial interest in Jena Malone and, in some way, continues doing so as part of an ongoing romantic infatuation. But how can you actually “love” somebody you don’t know, have never even met in person and most likely never will? Drawing on narrative transportation theory would provide in particular some insights into this intimate - but in the literature largely neglected - aspect of fandom.

There is strong evidence in the presented introspective data that my continuing admiration for Jena Malone derived from my personal engagement with her artistic work as an actress as much as with her private persona. However, as I’m unlikely to ever get to know Jena Malone personally, my impression of her personality is essentially an intertextual reading of what I, as a consumer, perceive to be relevant and ‘reliable’ media texts such as her TV and print media interviews, her personal websites and detailed articles in better magazines (Barbas 2001; Dyer 1998; Geraghty 2000). But while Dyer’s (1998) stardom theory suggested that a consumer’s image of a film star would be static and externally managed by the media, the introspective data actually indicate that it is constantly evolving within the consumer’s mind; similar to the images we have of those people we regularly encounter in our everyday lives. The consumer internalises the celebrity’s public persona psychically within oneself, loads it with personal thoughts, feelings, fantasies and meanings and, then, projects this personal impression back onto the film actress. This would explain why my personal impression of Jena Malone’s personality emphasised especially those aspects of her character and personal life-style that resonate strongly with my own private life experiences, ideals, dreams and desires and, hence, strengthen my emotional attachment to her as a “genuine person.” This continuous process of introjection and projection (Gould 1993) allows thereby for the feeling of “knowing” the film actress like a friend, whose course and life choices are then followed empathetically as if s/he is a media character in an ongoing melodramatic narrative (Argo et al. 2008). For instance, I empathised genuinely with Jena Malone in how she handled so maturely all the problems she had to face even at such a young age and admired how she developed into such a smart, nice and interesting personality without ever losing her personal integrity.

The current stardom literature is thereby also contradicted with regard to how consumers (and especially fans) relate to film stars. In his seminal work Stars, Dyer (1998) viewed film stars as systems of semiotic images that personify the society’s cultural ideals of success, glamour, the extraordinary and even the divine. Thus, in drawing on selected examples from the Hollywood studio era of the 1920s to early-1950s, Dyer theorised that fans would admire film stars as “flawless, superior” human beings, who display a consistent personal image both on- and off-screen through the portrayal of mainly those film characters that seem to mirror their own “true” personality and life-style in real life (Barbas 2001; Geraghty 2000). My admiration for Jena Malone, however, results from her ability and flexibility as an actress to portray a diversity of characters that often differ significantly from her off-screen persona as much as from each other. But more importantly, my emotional attachment to Jena Malone derived actually from viewing her as a “normal” girl with all her own personal character strengths and weaknesses rather than as a semiotic signifier of some cultural ideal. This means that I adore her primarily as an interesting, smart, natural, beautiful and talented young woman, who also has her flaws, some “bad habits” and makes mistakes from time to time - just like you, me and anybody else. My feelings of empathy and infatuation for Jena Malone are even further enhanced by engaging in out-of-text intertextuality (Hirschman 2000; Wohlfeil and Whelan 2008), whereby I linked her personal life-story with my very own private life experiences to an extent where I even partially identified with her (Cohen 2001). This becomes particularly evident in my reading of Rommelmann’s (2000) article, when I compare both our upbringing within disadvantaged social backgrounds and admire her courage and determination in following her dreams, while I failed to do the same even under less severe circumstances.

THE RUINS (OR CONCLUSION)

In heeding Smith et al.’s (2007) call, this introspective research studied celebrity fandom from an “insider” perspective in order to explore the nature of consumers’ emotional attachment to their favourite celebrity. The main finding that emerged iteratively from the introspective data is that a consumer’s fan relationship revolved primarily around one’s personal engagement with the celebrity’s artistic work and public persona, whereby the latter is essentially the fan’s personal intertextual reading of what s/he perceives to be relevant and “reliable” media texts. Drawing on narrative transportation theory can hereby explain in particular how and why fans often develop and experience the feeling of “knowing” the celebrity personally, incl. his/her private thoughts, feelings, personality and way of life, despite having never even met the real person. This experienced “bond of emotional closeness” can at times be strong enough to elicit within the consumer a feeling of “personal friendship” or, in some way, even a feeling of “love” towards the admired celebrity. Moreover, it would also provide an explanation as to why fans sometimes feel enormously disappointed, when their most desired dream of actually meeting the adored celebrity in person comes true, because the celebrity turns out to be a different person in private life or just can’t live up to the (maybe unrealistic) imaginary person that they have created in their mind (Gross 2005). Of course, I don’t suggest that the presented introspective data and the proposed interpretations could be generalised. Instead of imposing only my own interpretations on you as the reader, I would like to encourage you to derive your own understanding of a consumer’s fan relationship with one’s admired celebrity through your personal engagement with the presented consumer narrative (Gould 1993; 2008; Holbrook 1995; 2005) and connect it to your own private life experiences.
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Re-Imagining The City of Liverpool as a Capital of Consumption

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WHAT THE FLOCK?

Have “ewe” heard that over a hundred Superlambananas recently roamed through the city of Liverpool? More of a playful and colourful way to brighten up the city than a commentary on genetic cloning, the public art event called “Wild in Art” was a huge success, and has been one of many novel ideas the Liverpool Culture Company have called upon to re-imagine the city of Liverpool. For until recently, Liverpool has a thoroughly mauldin narrative, a mawkish mythology that cast it as a blot on the landscape, a national cultural joke, Cinderella at the national city ball (Grumenberg and Knifton 2007; Belchem 2006). Thoroughly woe betided, Liverpool was frequently characterized as “one of Britain’s most blighted cities” (Kivell 1993, p.164), a dystopia mired in “decay and dereliction, high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions” (Savage and Warde 1996, p.267), and as “a scarred, de-industrialized landscape” (Childs and Storry 1999, p.283). From the comical “calm down caricature” to the cheerless hardscrabble image of “shell suited scallies,” scousers have been derogatorily labeled and stereotyped like no other city-dwellers in England (Boland 2008). Such has been Liverpool’s downtrodden stature, its reversal of fortune in the wake of industrial decline, the yawning gap between it and the rest of England, that despite once being the second city of the English empire (Haggerty and White 2008), it is now, somewhat speciously perhaps, cast as a postcolonial city on a par with those in the Third World (Munck 2003). Jacqueline Brown (2005, p.131) goes so far as to say that “its postcolonial displacement, its dislocation from the imperial centre” at least involves: scouring the history books for points of hometown distinction; celebrating a sense of place by making local landmarks more tourist friendly, perhaps by installing a touch-screen kiosk or two, erecting plinths in honor of famous locals from the past and present, renovating and renewing public architecture, shopping precincts and generally polishing the town’s jewels, whatever they might be, for the purposes of public display. Ultimately, the goal is to create a more palatable and exciting place tale. The danger is, of course, that if everyone follows this trajectory then it becomes a zero-sum game, one culture-led regeneration project simply cancels out another. One of the authors of this paper was vividly alerted to this incongruity recently on returning to his obscure hometown in Ireland, where he discovered that the new town hall extension had been artfully etched, no doubt to the mayor’s gleeful satisfaction, with words and phrases lifted directly from what seemed like some generic “how to do culture-led regeneration projects” manual. Facile and non-descriptive statements like, “from weaving cloth we weave thoughts,” “wind bouncing on my face” and “feels like freedom” were everywhere, and any semblance of deeper meaning was entirely precluded (Ward 1998). It made us wonder if these schemes, which rely on intangible notions like culture and creativity to market destinations, are now too frequent in number to actually benefit the places themselves or is the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development correct in asserting that all regions should be “trying to increase their comparative advantage by adding to their stock of cultural attractions” (OECD 2009).

The purpose of this paper then is to explore whether or not Liverpool, during its “cultural moment,” has really become representative of anything distinctive and different, or has, in fact, the project seen the place become just another conventional landscape of consumption, characterized only by the homogenized symbols of multinational stores that line its streets, losing along the way, something of its true identity? Naturally, the focus will be on the consumer’s not inconsiderable role in Liverpool’s cultural metamorphosis. The promise of consumer marketing, after all—whether it is called “place marketing,” “city branding,” “tourism marketing,” “destination marketing,” or “place branding”—serves as the rationale behind all of these cultural transformational packages (OECD 2009; Miles and Miles 2004). The latest textbooks in the field purport to be able to reposition a city suffering from a seemingly terminal case of bad press and to promise to transform destinations in crisis into places that people might once again like to visit (Anholt 2007; Avraham and Ketter 2008). Nonetheless, marketing centrality in this process is not without controversy. The objectives of place marketing schemes, some argue, are entirely misplaced and counterintuitive (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005; Jamroz and Walsh 2009). Urban planners and geographers have been most vociferous in their condemnation of such schemes. They argue that, “Packaging and promoting the city to tourists can destroy its soul. The city is commodified, its form and spirit remade to conform to market demand, not residents’ dreams.” (Holcolm 1999, p.69); and that using place marketing is an “extremely fragile basis on which to build the fortunes of a city” (Oatley 1998, p.xiii). Bearing this in mind, this paper will commence with an elaboration of the methodology, and then proceed by introducing the capital of culture concept and Liverpool’s brand heritage. Two main empirical issues will be explored: whether the negative perceptions of Liverpool have been altered by the project; and the extent to which local people are involved or not. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn about the future Liverpool faces in respect of the ECoC project’s legacy.

IN MY LIVERPOOL HOME

To thoroughly address this research agenda we adopted a three-pronged ethnographic-style methodology. The first element consisted of in-depth interviews with Liverpool residents aged
from 19-65 years, and the second consisted of in-depth interviews with the organizers of the ECoC events. In total, 8 key informants were interviewed by a research student, Amy Smith, without whose sterling efforts this paper would remain unwritten. Among others, interviews were conducted with key informants such as Phil Taylor, Infrastructure Manager for Creative Communities, and Christine Peach, South Liverpool Neighborhood Manager for Liverpool City Council. The third plank of this research project involved the solicitation of 156 introspective essays from individuals who on the one hand can be classified either as locals or visitors to the region, and on the other, can be collectively regarded as a research-enabling student cohort. The field methods employed in this study are similar to those of most interpretive consumer behaviour projects in which the researchers, in this case positioned in the vantage point of their Liverpool homes, attempts to understand a culture by living, participating in and observing its everyday enactment. All in, this entire research process generated a total of 348 typed A4 pages of interview transcription and introspective text. For the purpose of conducting the empirical analysis and writing this paper, we also drew upon a bundle of academic papers, a fat notebook of ideas and observations, and interdisciplinary insights drawn from fields such as urban studies, tourism, retailing, geography, place branding, city marketing, sociology and cultural studies.

CITIES OF CULTURE

Considered separately, the linked ideas of “cities” and “culture” can be exasperatingly ambiguous; considered together, they become virtually inescrutable. What is Liverpool really? One could argue that it is enclosed within the geography of its centre and surrounding districts, but it is not quite as simple as that, for the idea of Liverpool is also connected to the myth and iconography of its real and imagined cultural history. A city then resists totalizing description, has a shifting pulse of experience and place, and crucially, is not hermetically sealed from the rest of the world (Alter 2005). In Liverpool, for instance, one might easily imagine a scenario where a tourist purchases an Italian espresso in a Japanese restaurant from a Portuguese waitress while listening to the late Michael Jackson. And where is Liverpool in this experience? Maciocco and Tagliagambe (2009, p.62) would assert that it is nowhere, by rather dramatically claiming that cities do not exist anymore, that they have become, skirts, out of reach. It’s a place that is easy to circumnavigate, easy to unintentionally exclude from the country’s mainstream activities, such that Liverpool becomes what Stark (2005, p.20) describes it as “opaque and mysterious.” Add to this the illusive nature of this thing called “culture,” which has, to put it mildly, a vast array of meanings and values (Evans and Foord 2003; Miles 2007), and one might be forgiven for thinking that those whose responsibility it is to captain this so-called city of culture are onboard a Mersey of meaninglessness.

While such nuanced academic intrigue and scope for discussion has perhaps been the prize truffle that has led so many academicians and Ph.D. students, each with their own interests and agenda, to coalesce around Liverpool’s cultural moment (Munck 2003; Belcher, 2006; Grunenberg and Knifton 2007; Boland 2008), the ambiguous and multifaceted meaning of both “cities” and “culture” did not deter the European Commission from setting up the ECoC programme in the first place, nor indeed did it stop Liverpool putting together a successful bid to become one (Miles 2007). The meat and magic of Liverpool’s bid was to design an annual calendar of themed years that stretched from 2004 right through until 2010, thereby emphasizing that although 2008 was the focal point, the project would have impetus for seven years. These yearly themes include: Faith in One City (2004), Sea Liverpool (2005), Liverpool Performs (2006), Liverpool’s 800th Birthday (2007), European Capital of Culture (2008), Year of Environment (2009) and the Year of Innovation (2010). By employing this strategy, Liverpool cleverly illustrated not only its strong cultural heritage, but also its desire to create a lasting legacy (Liverpool Culture Company 2007).

More specific initiatives were aimed at encouraging locals to get involved in the ECoC and generate a sense of involvement in the city’s neighborhoods. By doing so, it was hoped that new and exciting local talent that stands, after all, as an example of culture in the city would be discovered. The Creative Communities initiatives, which apparently is the biggest community art programme in the UK, and has been held aloft by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as a fine exemplar of how other cities should use culture and creativity to regenerate a city was one such driver of local participation (Liverpool Culture Company 2007b). The schemes rhetoric is impressive, seeking: “To be a grant giving programme which places citizens and their wishes centre-stage. To develop partnership projects which weave culture into the fabric of regeneration. To utilize the best local, national and international artists in making culture a relevant part of everyone’s life” (Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Culture Company, The Open Culture Project 2005) “Song for Liverpool” run by the Open Culture Project also illustrates how attempts were made to actively engage locals in the Capital of Culture. A local radio station, Radio City, challenged local singers and songwriters to write a celebratory song about Liverpool for the ECoC 2008. Local people had the opportunity to vote for the best song and the winner recorded the song as the anthem for Liverpool’s celebrations (Liverpool Culture Company 2007c).

AN OUTSIDER BRAND

Prior to examining the impact of ECoC, it is perhaps worth commenting on Liverpool’s unique brand heritage. According to Holt (2004, p.215) understanding any brand needs, “a cultural historian’s understanding of ideology as it waxes and wanes, a sociologist’s charting of the topography of social contradictions, and a literary expedition into the popular culture that engages these contradictions.” We cannot hope to offer anything as deeply nuanced here. It would take a book-long treatment to unpick the layers of myth and iconography that make-up the idea of Liverpool. It might just be possible, though, to identify some of the distinguishing features of Liverpool’s commercial viability.

Its geographical location situated on the far North West of England places Liverpool very much on the periphery, on the outskirts, out of reach. It’s a place that is easy to circumnavigate, easy to unintentionally exclude from the country’s mainstream activities, such that Liverpool becomes what Stark (2005, p.20) describes it as “the least ‘English’ part of England.” Brown (2005, p.6) similarly argues that, “Liverpool may very well be in Britain but the city’s national citizenship, as it were, cannot be assumed.” So without even a sip of marketing formula or branding brolide, Liverpool can lay claim to a natural source of distinction, of differentiation, that other cities would drain their rivers to obtain, probably. Its location on the edge of England, which might at first seem wholly disadvantageous, has wrought unexpected benefits. As Adams (2004, p.3) also states, “Edges are interesting. They are places of tension, of transformation, of discovery, creativity and disaster. And edges are—yes—edgy.” And which city in the world does not want to be edgy? Speaking of which, for a time one of the authors of this paper lived in the appropriately named Edge Lane, a suburb of Kensington, which he can assure you is nothing like its London namesake. It was a dangerous place; friendly on the surface, but a late night party, a stabbing, a robbery, a drug overdose never seemed very far away. He loved it. Nor is he alone in this fascination. According to Fincher et al. (2002, p.29), there is now a new bohemian class in post-industrial cities that are attracted to “the frisson of living
in proximity to multiple deprivation.” Liverpool, with some of the wealthiest postcodes in the country, located directly alongside some of the poorest, is well-placed to offer this new bohemian experience. Tours of the hotspots could even be offered, visiting perhaps the scene of the Toxteth inner-city riots of the 1980s which lasted for four days, during which 150 buildings were burnt down and 781 police injured (Childs and Storry 1999).

The Beatles also stood, and still stand, for something that is distinctly Liverpudlian. Of course, it is terribly fashionable these days to suffer from Beatles ennui. Fab Four fatigue. Terence Davies, for instance, in his recent documentary about Liverpool, Of Time and the City (2008) dismissed them with a mocking and derisory, “Yeah, yeah, yeah.” Nonetheless, though they might have the status of cliché, no one can deny the phenomenal influence and commercial viability their music retains. More than anything, though is often forgotten, they epitomized the notion that “middle-class virtue was a sham; authorities were there to be mocked; irreverence was the order of the day” (Stark 2005, p.20). Singing about places in Liverpool “Penny Lane”, “Strawberry Fields” and “In My Life”, also lent Liverpool, alongside the collective popularity of “Mersey sound”, a certain romance that to this day still brings tourists to the city. Music tourism, related to the city’s famous past, has been a key linchpin in the rejuvenation of previously abandoned sites in the city. The Albert Dock, for instance, has been transformed into a tourist Mecca complete with souvenir shops, a Museum of Liverpool Life where Beatles artifacts are on show, and The Beatles Story, a museum devoted to depicting “authentic” scenes, such as a copy of the Cavern Club, where the Beatles began their career. As an acknowledgement of the importance of tourists to Liverpool’s economy, it has also renamed its airport, John Lennon Airport (Connell and Gibson 2003).

In summary, Liverpool has always had a whiff of the countercultural about it. Edginess and the sense of alienation that Liverpool has felt for many a year, made worse perhaps by being made a scapegoat by the rest of England for the sins of all English slave-traders, has inadvertently conferred it with a cape of authenticity, which as Sorkin (2001, p.68) notes is “the costume worn by contemporary styles of alienation.” Stark (2005, p.40) eloquently summarizes the historical impetus that helped create Liverpool’s outsider brand identity:

Liverpool seemed almost like the frontier–impertinent, emotional, and a lot less important than the capital city, which was considered the center of almost everything the establishment considered English. This sentiment contributed mightily to the sizable chip on northern shoulders that fuelled a kind of antie='_establishment attitude. Liverpool was a place, remarked one critic, that marked you for life and identified you as something of an outsider—a sensibility that was enhanced in a town populated by sailors, who have always tended to view themselves as outsiders as well.

Of course, one should not overstate the extent to which Liverpool is a city of difference, an outsider brand. It is crucially important for the sake of its visitors that it retains an overwhelming sense of familiarity, or what researchers in tourism call “cultural approximation”; that is, the extent to which the culture and language of visiting tourists are similar to the place they are visiting (Tuan 2006). Thankfully, Liverpool can claim a fairly good cultural fit to the rest of the English speaking world, especially when it is placed into context alongside Liverpool’s key attractions: an outstanding architecture of refined streets and elegant vistas that few other cities can match; the knowledge that Liverpool is home to the highest number of protected buildings outside London; a waterfront of World Heritage Site status; an eight mile stretch of docklands in development full of high rises and coffee bars; and a rich maritime heritage. One wonders why all previous attempts to revitalize Liverpool and restore the city to its former glory have been always fallen short (Munck 2003)? So a lot was riding on the ECoC project to finally deliver on the huge potential of this underappreciated city.

**LABELING LIVERPOOL AND STEREOTYPING SCOUSERS**

In the run up to and during 2008, considerable positive media attention focused on Liverpool as the city celebrated its year as the ECoC. Nonetheless, its success was always going to be partly judged on whether the title could help reposition Liverpool’s lamentable, and long-standing reputation as bleak, toxic and populated by work-shy rogues. It did not matter that this was a faintly ludicrous expectation, since stereotypes, like stubborn weeds, are incredibly persistent. Perhaps this dubious outcome of the ECoC project was repeated so often partly since a frequent message from marketers is that a brand like Liverpool, any brand in fact, should not aim to be perfect, but should concentrate on “removing the bits of the brand that do not work as well as they might” (Braun 2007, p.170). Another reason is that Liverpool’s negative reputation is such a local bugbear that emphasizing such a possibility might possibly get the locals on board. Its corrosive effect was certainly crystal clear to the Liverpudlians interviewees, as one lady from Garston made plain: “Liverpool, I believe, gets a very bad press and always has done, from way back. When you tell people that you’re from Liverpool, they sort of recoil, because they always think of Liverpool as being dull and dirty, and that’s not how it is” (Female 52, Interview). A dire reputation all the same, might be something city residents could just about cope with, but as a classic British example of urban regeneration in the same vein as Glasgow, Cardiff and Leeds, Liverpool’s national standing is vital to its success. Quite simply its economy would dramatically shrink without a heavy influx of tourists and shoppers (Middleton and Lickorish 2007). It must have been a relief then, when even before regeneration plans were drawn up and events organized, that the mere idea of Liverpool as a receptacle of culture, while a source of endless mirth to some, made some people, especially non-Liverpudlians, question and revaluate their prejudices against Liverpool, while at the same time conferring Scousers with a renewed sense of civic pride and confidence. This sentiment was strongly evident in the empirical data:

Liverpool has acquired many negative stereotypes over the years and when I told people it was where I wanted to go to university, many people asked why or made remarks such as, “Oh you’d better watch your wallet!” and “Make sure you don’t pick up that annoying accent!” But I quickly followed it up by, “Oh but did you know that Liverpool is going to be the European City Capital of Culture in 2008? There is lots of regeneration and there will be plenty going on in the city.” My comeback always worked a treat. People seemed impressed and interested, which made me feel like I had made the right choice of city. All my friends were going to Glasgow, Edinburgh or Newcastle, which all seemed to have something that little bit extra over Liverpool, but I stuck by my guns and hoped that Liverpool wouldn’t let me down. (Male 20, Introspection)

And then there’s the reputation, and the stereotypes. No, Liverpool has little postcard appeal. And yet I still chose to study here. Partly because I know that love at first sight is always at risk of fading all too quickly. It’s the love that’s given time
to develop which is most likely to last-cheesy but true. Also the Capital of Culture thing, I have to admit it played a part in my decision. Yes it sounds fancy, but not just that; you’d think that the “European Capital of Culture” would be given a certain amount of funding to go into things like infrastructure which would be beneficial to the city in years to come. You think of job opportunities, all kinds of exciting events, just an overall atmosphere of departure. Well I did, anyway. Whenever I asked one of my friends or fellow students about their motivation for coming to Liverpool I usually got a variation of one of the following two answers: “the football,” or “I dunno, it wasn’t even my first choice I just kind of ended up here.” Yet once they reach their second year most have become ardent supporters of this year’s “European Capital of Culture.” Quite a pompous title that seldom fails to impress. (Male 22, Introspection)

I am the ultimate definition of a Scouser with the permanent tan, the hair extensions and a wardrobe full of Cricket bags, but there is more to me than that. I am a University Student, a champion horse rider and a county sports player, and I believe most Liverpudlians are in a similar situation. Assumptions are made, and they never get the chance to amend them. This Capital of Culture 08 will give people a chance to see behind the prejudices and stereotypes and see Liverpool for what it really is, this has already began by the Sunday Times running a piece on Liverpool’s Style, and Scouse girls have been voted the most stylish in the UK, spending more man hours on hair and beauty than the rest of the country (by quite a bit actually). The shops are being praised the Clubs and bars are teeming with celebrities. I was sat next to Jennifer Ellison and Dwight York last night and Jordan and Alex Curran a few weeks earlier. So evidently the stereotype is falling away and people are embracing the lives and even idolising our lifestyles. (Female 23 Introspection)

Yet despite the initial euphoria and excitement that was expressed, it was not long until a muted sense of disillusion and disenchantment became apparent. Troublesome issues such as the constant changes in the board members of these governing bodies (e.g. Robyn Archer quitting as Artistic Director), the curiously constant changes in the board members of these governing bodies, the magnitude of inertia, the frittering (e.g. Phil Redmond in. A lot of people I know have just lost patience with it, they’re not bothered any more, I don’t know anyone who cares about it at the moment. (Male 19, Knotty Ash, Interview)

While this is all water under the historical bridge, occasional negative reports in the media especially in Private Eye and a controversial online blog called Liverpool Subculture which revealed in mistakes made by the organizers and made numerous allegations of corruption (see: http://liverpoolsubculture.blogspot.com) did not help matters. As a result, trust in the municipal bodies, the Liverpool Culture Company and the Liverpool City Council, who collectively organized Liverpool ECoC lessened. Adding to this murmur of unease was the make or break situation that Liverpool faced. This was Liverpool’s one and only opportunity to illustrate to the rest of the UK and the entire EU that they were worthy holders of the ECoC title. Failing to put on a good show was unthinkable. Imagine the unbearable flood of ridicule dispensed by those on the south side of the English divide that would have ensued. Imagine suffering the indignity of having such grim stereotypes confirmed rather than eradicated. The indignity, the humiliation, the insult to injury would have been enormous, and could have led to the further erosion of Liverpool’s already tarnished reputation.

LIVERPUDLIAN PARTICIPATION

According to Sir Jeremy Isaacs, Head of the Capital of Culture judging panel, the most important element that influenced the decision in the favor of Liverpool was that it had a ‘greater sense that the whole city were behind the bid’ (BBC News 2003). Yet as we have seen it was not long until disgruntled Liverpudlians began to demonstrate that perhaps this was not entirely true. The general literature on this subject would seem to confirm the legitimacy of their concerns. Parker (2008, p.8) in a recent panoptic review of place marketing literature concluded that “the marketing of places has often been seen as something you do to those outside a place, rather than those within it.” There was a growing fear that what was happening in Liverpool would disenfranchise locals, and that all the statements of bringing them on board, of inclusion, of participation amounted to nothing more than meaningless rhetoric:

When you tell people that you’re going to make their city better and regenerate their houses, people love that, they love their city and they want it to look nice, you want nice housing and you want nice shopping areas and you want nice things, but I think that most people are still clinging onto the hope that this event will change things in Liverpool that can only be seen after next year. (Female 46, Tuebrook, Interview)

At the time of the bid many people were behind it, but I think that it’s in our nature to be cynical about things, people I think still are behind the bid, they want things to be changed in Liverpool and improvements to be made to their city and want the result of the bid to change Liverpool. (Male 30, Kirkdale, Interview)

Specifically, locals most often vent their spleen at the apparent disparity between core and periphery. The perception that the core (i.e. the city centre), will feast on the influx of new investment, while the periphery will be left with meager pickings. This attitude is most evident in the periphery itself, in the depths of Kensington and Toxteth where many regard the entire project as a gigantic waste of time:

All this money is being ploughed into the city centre, but none of it is going to the outside areas, Kensington has been promised money for the past 15 years and all they’ve done, is knock up a few new shop fronts, that’s the regeneration. The money’s gone into the city centre and nowhere else and made
it unbearable for people who have to live here and go to work everyday or go to shop.  (Female 46, Tuebrook, Interview)

A lot of the old council houses are derelict and the word ghettos would be an adequate word to describe a lot of areas outside the city centre.  (Male 30, Kirkdale, Interview)

Take Kensington, there’s so much crime, they’ve got a huge prostitute problem, I just want to see the city get cleaned up. All the money’s going into the city centre; take to £700 million shopping centre on the docks, and the Arena on the front. I don’t think that the needs of the local people are actually being taken into consideration, when you look, all the money is being concentrated into the city centre, as I say when you go a couple of miles outside the city centre, when you look around there, you don’t see the benefits for the local people.  (Male 19, Knotty Ash, Interview)

I think that whilst it’s all positive, all what they’ve brought to the city centre, the whole point of 2008 was not just for the city centre and they’ve just focussed on the city centre. In my opinion the amount of houses boarded up in Kensington where we live is just ridiculous... So whilst it’s great for the city centre; 2008 isn’t just about the city centre, it’s about everywhere; it’s about creating a positive image of the whole place.  (Female 22, Kensington, Interview)

To make way for the massive Grosvenor Project—a tastefully designed development of steel and glass, offices, apartments, cafes and shops, shops and more shops—Liverpool had to give up some of its most cherished cultural treasures. Quiggins, an alternative shopping centre for local Liverpool businesses, had to move from its original building, a prospect that some local residents finds unacceptable:

Another thing, take Quiggins, that was one of the things that contributed to us getting the Capital of Culture and then all of a sudden, the Grosvenor project decided that they wanted it and because they’ve got the money and it can buy them everything, Quiggins got pushed out. I went past the new place, Grand Central, and it is great, you’ve just lost something that was close to peoples’ hearts. It was just a place that everyone knew about, it was like Liverpool’s little secret. In that sense I think that the locals have lost out a bit, like major firms, have pushed out smaller businesses. Big companies have come to the city centre, seen the space and developed on the land, whereas over a period of years that space would have been taken up by local businesses. So they’ve lost out. (Female 20, City Centre, Interview)

Well, I’ve personally come to think over the last 18 months that in this headlong race to regenerate Liverpool in time for 2008, many of the smaller niche business enterprises have been heavy-handedly brushed aside. For example Quiggins has only got one year left, the Liverpool Palace has already been shut by Urban Splash in order to cash-in on the big business clients when it’s re-developed and the Church Street traders are finally being extinguished this April. It’s therefore good that somewhere like the new Gostins alternative shopping arcade on Hanover Street is still holding out some hope for small traders with their vibrant eclectic mix of fashion designers, music shops, fortune tellers, body piercers, hairdressers and the like. Because unless places like Gostins continue to provide affordable premises for small start-ups, in 2008 you won’t be seeing Capital of Culture, you’ll be seeing Capital of Bland!  (Male 2005, Online Discussion Board)

Some participants also voiced concern that many of the regeneration works such as the new apartments, hotels and shopping centre, were simply beyond the means of local people, most of whom will never be able to use these facilities however amazing they might be. Such a sentiment further emphasizes the idea that attracting visitors to the city is the key priority. In response, the organizers maintain that they are aware of the simmering resentment such relocation decisions can cause. Christine Peach, from the Liverpool City Council was quick to point out that people hold conflicting views as to what ‘regeneration’ means, as a result it is difficult to please the entire Liverpudlian community.

Some people, their definition of regeneration is not what other people’s is. What we’re trying to do is put people in the situation whereby they can at least say what they’d like to see. It’s about having short lead in our long term aspirations trying to come up with ways to make things happen then if not giving a reason why.  (Christine Peach, South Liverpool Neighborhood Manager, Interview)

With regards to the programme of celebratory events that took place in and around Liverpool throughout 2008, it is evident that some local people think that they did not accurately represent the culture of Liverpool. Although some participants recognized that the events were intended to appeal to both the local people and to visitors, they felt that the needs of outsiders were prioritized. Phil Taylor, the Creative Communities Infrastructure Manager, countered this viewpoint, detailing how the Creative Communities schemes had communicated to local people, how they encouraged people to get involved in the ECoC, and how they involved local people in the decision making processes. When reflecting this back to interview participants, none of them had heard of the schemes and grants that are available to local people and had never heard of the term Creative Communities, although assurances were made that every effort had been made to reach as many people in the community as possible. The council recognized that reaching everybody is an almost impossible task.

I wouldn’t suggest that the case from the outside but I would say that there have been excellent marketing and communications from the Culture Company itself, you know they’ve been very proactive in that, the schemes that they have run have all been very, very good. I think that you need lots of intervention to make people feel involved, and some people will always feel more involved than others, say I think these local projects are certainly a way of, very good for getting local people involved.  (Christine Peach, South Liverpool Neighborhood Manager, Interview)

As the years have progressed, we have managed to penetrate most of the local wards in the city. We’ve gone out to try and engage people and also find out why they’ve not been involved before. It’s interesting because when you speak to people, some people don’t find out about these things although publicity has been high, because their communication networks. We have people doing door-to-door leafleting and there’s a huge turnout but we are conscious that sometimes these programmes don’t reach everybody.  (Phil Taylor, Creative Communities Infrastructure Manager, Interview)
This constant tension between locals and municipal bodies over tourist versus local needs is a typical problem faced when trying to market and manage a city like Liverpool, which simply could not survive without its annual flood of tourists. Revitalization strategies cannot by themselves alleviate the poverty of low-income Liverpudlians, and any forlorn hope that the ECoC project might do so, is wishful thinking (Zielienbach 2000). Revitalization strategies can nonetheless, attract businesses that create additional jobs, many of which will be filled by individuals living within the Liverpool community. Ultimately, the ECoC project, is, “an exercise in balancing the global with the local, complementing images of local allure with global appeal on the one hand, while striking a balance between the needs of residential constituents and external interests on the other.” (Chang and Huang 2004, p.229)

FUTURES FOR LIVERPOOL

So what is the final verdict on Liverpool’s “cultural moment”? Certainly, it is unfortunate that the launch of Liverpool’s cultural and shopping transformation coincided with the worst recession the country has seen since the 1930s. Back in 2003 when the award was announced, the organizers could not have foreseen that the entire nation would no longer be on a frenzied shopping spree, and only in the worst possible scenario would Liverpool One owner, Grosvenor, have imagined that the value of its one billion pound development would have lost over a third of its original value. This same shopping precinct, beautifully designed though it may be, is also tarred with that most damming indictment of globalization, that it offers only the same shops selling precisely the same goods as everywhere else (Ballantyne 2006). Its concession, amid 1.6 million square feet of retail space, to set aside a dozen small units for independent shopkeepers seems quite tokenistic (Pickard 2007). To make matters worse, there have been some very vociferous critics of Liverpool’s future architectural ambitions. Tom Dyhoff (2008) on The Culture Show questioned why Liverpool’s recipe for the future is: “so depressingly familiar, so ordinary….Liverpool’s new face could be anyone, anywhere. It’s like a Botexed bimbo. It’s got no character, no distinction, no Liverpudlianness.” Combine this with the knowledge that Liverpool currently has many empty blocks of unsellable buy-to-let flats, and one might conclude that the project has been less than successful (Piloti 2009).

Still the Liverpool brand has clearly been reinvigorated and its place-based cultural capital boosted. Its pre-ECoC brand was tired and formulaic, grim and colorless. It relied too heavily on football and the Beatles as sources of distinction. Geographically, the sheer size of the Liverpool One project will undoubtedly, in time at least, help the city realize Reilly’s (1931) law of retail gravitation, whereby shoppers congregate in greater numbers due to the increased size of the shopping district. Liverpool might not quite have attained the status of “the world in one city” as its ambitious strapline claims, but one can hardly fault its ambition and there is no denying that it offers only the same shops selling precisely the same goods as everywhere else (Ballantyne 2006). Its concession, amid 1.6 million square feet of retail space, to set aside a dozen small units for independent shopkeepers seems quite tokenistic (Pickard 2007). To make matters worse, there have been some very vociferous critics of Liverpool’s future architectural ambitions. Tom Dyhoff (2008) on The Culture Show questioned why Liverpool’s recipe for the future is: “so depressingly familiar, so ordinary….Liverpool’s new face could be anyone, anywhere. It’s like a Botexed bimbo. It’s got no character, no distinction, no Liverpudlianness.” Combine this with the knowledge that Liverpool currently has many empty blocks of unsellable buy-to-let flats, and one might conclude that the project has been less than successful (Piloti 2009).

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Nor has the city’s identity dissolved into similitude and sameness via a creeping cultural and commercial apostasy. As Anholt (2007) astutely observes, a city’s culture is not always easy to distinguish from the culture of its country. Liverpool has no such problem. For a time it might have been a mildly less attractive place to work and “produce,” since as the empirical research illustrates some local residents felt temporarily disaffected, but ironically as the infrastructural investment took hold, it became a more attractive place to “consume,” thereby increasing job opportunities and the productivity of local residents (Ritzer et al. 2005). As a brand, Liverpool has always been firmly located on the map of the imagination, but the ECoC project has given it a new lease of life and creativity. The city, as this paper has alluded, has been a source of creative inspiration for poets, photographers, historians, philosophers, and even the odd marketing professor. You only need to witness the success of Liverpool’s newest mascot, the Superlambanana, or the fifty foot La Machine spider sculpture that recently stalked the streets, to see that Liverpool has a new momentum that the city council will not easily let slide. Plans are already underway to host 100 free events in 2009 to build on the success of the ECoC year, and further monies have been set aside to continue the rebranding of the city into the next decade.

As this paper has demonstrated, Liverpool is a sophisticated outsider brand that fuses progressive and regressive, optimistic and pessimistic, traditional and contemporary elements of the kind that “Cultural Consumers” are said to adore (Martin 2007). So, if as Marshall (2004, p.54) maintains, distinctive competitive advantage remains “the catch-cry of the modern era” then Liverpool is well placed.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze how the superiority of a living place is determined. The paper begins by building a conceptual framework of the sense of place. It positions place identity, place uniqueness, and place dependency as concepts evolving through reciprocal interaction. The paper explores two empirical questions: first, the meaning themes characterizing the best living place are analyzed. Second, the types of reasoning used to justify the superiority of the place are investigated. A dataset gathered in a competition is analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Social, functional, and environmental meaning themes form the co-occurring categories of justification. Four types of reasoning are identified: belonging, convenience, distinction, and convincing. These findings are discussed alongside those from earlier research.

INTRODUCTION

Social scientists have long been interested in the meanings that different places hold for people. For instance, in 1976, Relph identified three components of place: physical settings, activities, and meanings, and argued that meanings are probably the most difficult to grasp. Since then, meanings given to places and the more general topic of people's relationships with places have attracted several researchers (e.g., Jaakson 1986; Sixsmith 1986; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996; Gustafson 2001; Manzo 2005).

Meanings related to home place or other important places can indeed be multifarious and dynamic. One of the challenges posed by place-based research in general is that places are not isolated and static, but are continually reproduced in interaction with their surroundings (Massey 1994; Smaldone, Harris, and Sanyol 2005). Therefore, places can mean different things to different people at different times.

Prior empirical research on places has focused on several different kinds of places ranging from nations to small living areas. Home-related meanings however, constitute an important area of research (e.g., Csiszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Sixsmith 1986; Smaldone 2000). The previous findings show that small places (e.g., residences and neighborhoods) are given self-related meanings more often than larger places (e.g., nations and continents) which are usually attributed with meanings related to others and to environment (see Gustafson 2001, p.12; Canter 1997). However, meaningful places can be both current residences and places outside of a person's own residence (Manzo 2005, p.74).

The current work focuses on the positive side of places, but approaches the subject from a different point of view than has been adopted previously. This study is interested in finding out what becomes important to people when they are asked to spontaneously address the question of why some place is the best place to live. The focus is on the nature of the meanings people use in their reasoning, when they try to convince someone that a particular place really is the best; and on the underlying issues that make some place “special.”

This article aims to analyze how the superiority of the living place is determined. To accomplish this, our empirical analysis focuses on a local community, Sulva village, which is located in the Mustasaari municipality in Finland. Sulva was selected as the best place to live in 2006, in a competition organized by the “Good Living 2010” –development project. The current paper addresses the research question inductively so that empirical data is discussed alongside prior theoretical concepts. It begins by building a preliminary understanding of the useful theoretical concepts. After that, the paper explores two empirical questions; first analyzing what kinds of meaning themes characterize the best living place. By identifying the meaning themes, we are able to show the broadness and multiplicity of our empirical data. Second, the types of reasoning used to justify the superiority of the place are investigated. Based on the nature of our data, we are able to discover the underlying types of reasoning used to convince other people of the superiority of Sulva.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Much of the previous research on place has concentrated on understanding our relationships with places. People's strong bonds to places have particularly fascinated researchers. This is because the feelings of belonging, protection and comfort have been found to describe people living and visiting different places (Manzo 2003; Moore 2000). Further, the concepts of place attachment, place identity, place dependence and sense of place provide a rich and diverse set of approaches to help understand a connection to a place. However, there is still some disagreement with the definitions of these concepts; the disparities resulting from the researchers' different perspectives, ontological and epistemological backgrounds as well as the variety of study contexts (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, and Bacon 2004; Lewicka 2008, p.211; Kyle and Chick 2007, p.210). Below we identify the meanings of these concepts, form an initial conceptual model of them, and explicate their use in the present study.

A person's connection to a place is based on their creation of meaning for that place; it is an emotional bond between a person and a place that develops over time. The concept used to describe this bond, as well as its strength is referred to as place attachment (Low and Altman 1992; Smaldone, Harris, and Sanyol 2005; Lewicka 2008). The concept of place attachment has been argued to include three components: affective, cognitive and behavioral (Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant 2004). However, the affective component is usually emphatic to the others. For example Hernandez et al. (2007) define place attachment as an affective bond that people establish with specific areas where they prefer to remain and where they feel comfortable and safe. Lewic (2008) also points out that awareness of the place history intensifies place attachment. Low and Altman (1992, p.3) suggest that place attachment is a complex concept that incorporates a variety of analogous ideas such as topophilia, place identity, insideness and sense of place. They see it as an integrating concept that involves patterns of attachment, places that vary in scale, specificity and tangibility, different actors, different social relationships and temporal aspects (Low and Altman 1992, p.8).

Within the psychological stream of place research, place attachment has been conceptualized as having two components, namely place identity and place dependence. Place dependence has been conceptualized as the subjective quality of a person's perceived strength of association with the place. It is a more functional aspect of place attachment, often based on a utilitarian decision-making process, with little or no emotional involvement. Place dependence has two components, namely the quality of the current place and the...
quality of other substitute places that are comparable to the current one. Place is viewed as a setting where the individual engages in some activity to meet a set of particular needs (Smaldone et al. 2005).

**Place identity** can be used for two different purposes. First, it can refer to the place’s own features that guarantee its distinctive character and continuity in time; place uniqueness (Lewicka 2008, p.211). Second, it can be viewed as a component of personal identity, as the process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place (Hernandez, et al. 2007; Stedman 2002). Thus, it can be used in connection to the people living in the place when they use the place in their self-identification. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) identify four processes through which people express their identity with and through places: distinctiveness (people use place identification in order to distinguish themselves from others), continuity (the place provides a sense of continuity of the self), self-esteem (people feel proud of the place) and self-efficacy (qualities of the place that facilitate everyday life of people in various ways). These principles of identity form the bases for local attachment.

The concepts of place attachment and place identity are closely linked (Chow and Healey 2008), and differences between them remain complex. Indeed, Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace and Hess (2007) identify four different stances regarding the relation between place attachment and place identity. First, several authors consider them to be the same concept and either use them synonymously or operationalise attachment in terms of identity (Stedman 2002). Second, some consider them inclusive of one another, for example Smaldone, Harris, and Sanyal (2005) have conceptualized place identity as a component of place attachment. Third, place attachment and place identity are seen as dimensions of a supra-ordered concept, such as sense of place (Hay 1998; Jorgensen and Stedman 2001). Finally, it is suggested that place attachment is a multidimensional construct that incorporates factors such as identity, dependence on place and social bonds (Kyle, Graefe, and Manning 2005).

**Sense of place** can be regarded as a broader and more encompassing concept than place attachment, as it also includes identity and dependence (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001). While it also refers to attachment, it indicates at the same time a more subjective way of feeling and experiencing the place. This can be seen in Hay’s (1998, p.5) argumentation, when he emphasizes that sense of place differs from place attachment in terms of the former considering the social and geographical context of place bonds and taking into account the senses of the place, such as aesthetics and a feeling of dwelling, in addition to the social and geographical context of place bonds. However, some writers have conceptualized sense of place in a similar way to place attachment (Smaldone et al. 2005).

Sense of place does indeed give meaning to the specific place. Agnew (1987) describes that meaningful places emerge in a social context and through social relations. They are geographically located and at the same time related to their social, economic, and cultural surroundings. They give individuals a sense of place, a “subjective territorial identity.” Thus, sense of place highlights the subjective and the insider’s way of sensing the place, in other words rootedness can be used to describe the concept (see Tuan 2003). Similarly, Durie, Yeoman, and McMahon-Beattie (2005) connect the sense of place in to the history of a nation thus following Lowenthal’s (1985) ideas of the strong role of historical roots, authenticity and nostalgia in creating the sense of place.

Our initial conceptualization follows the framework presented by Jorgensen and Stedman (2001), where sense of place is viewed as encompassing concepts of place attachment, place dependence and place identity. Sense of place goes beyond place attachment by extending to the social, cultural and historical context of the place and also emphasizing the multisensory and emotional conception of the place. Further, place dependence and place identity are seen as components of place attachment. Place identity is understood as a two-part concept including the view of it as a part of a person’s identity (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996), and as a place’s uniqueness. Figure 1 pulls together the core theoretical concepts.

The empirical findings further build up the understanding of these theoretical concepts and their relations as well as the meanings related to the best living place.

**METHODOLOGY**

The data used in this study was gathered in a competition instigated by a development project entitled “Good Living 2010”. People were asked to vote for the best place to live in Finland in 2006. The voting was conducted through web pages and votes were gathered in two phases. In the first phase, people were asked to suggest places and justify why their suggested places should progress to the second phase. In the second phase, the respondents were asked to vote for the best place to live from a shortlist of 12 places. The question was formed: “Tell us why the place you chose is the best in your opinion.” Altogether 4988 votes were cast, 1286 people voted for a small village in western Finland called Sulva. These
1286 open-ended written justifications form the dataset of this study.

The answers varied from one word such as “best,” to 226 words, while most answers were a few sentences long. People integrated different meanings for their own purposes. For some people, it was enough to say they live in the village themselves or that the village is beautiful or safe. Some people used many more words: “In Sulva past and present times meet seamlessly. Premises and gardens are well taken care of. People are friendly, there are a lot of activities for young and old. The municipal economy is in order, there are no political contradictions. Childcare and schools are well organized. There are good connections to Vaasa” (42/14).

We employed a qualitative content analysis when working with the data. The meaning themes were identified through an inductive analysis so that the multiplicity of different meanings could be captured (Miles and Huberman 1994, pp.55-58; Strauss and Corbin 1990, pp.62-74 and 98-115). First, the data was read a number of times and coded initially in a descriptive form. Gradually the first level codes were merged into broader meaning themes. The meaning themes and their relationship with each other were compared with earlier theoretical models and our own theoretical model was developed. The data was coded separately by three coders, who discussed the themes identified with each other during the analysis.

This kind of competition data is authentic talk and thus interesting for research. However, as secondary data often has some restrictions, also in this case some limitations should be born in mind. The competition format asks the respondent to justify why some place is the best. This probably directs the answers to be positive in nature. Only a few justifications included partially negative comments. In addition, the inclusion of the word “best” might have directed answers away from simple description. The internet competition situation might prompt people to offer meanings that are quick and easy to write. Further, one might ask whether the answers are true or false. However, this is not an important question as we are interested in how people justify their choices. Therefore, these answers also show the socially approved ways to justify the choice of the best living place. That is, place-related meanings are regarded as socially constructed and created, developed and contested as a part of social and cultural meaning structures.

MEANING THEMES RELATED TO SULVA

We begin our empirical analysis by describing the meaning themes identified from the data. Our analysis seeks to answer the question: What kinds of meanings characterise Sulva? We begin by interpreting the social meanings related to the place, then move on to functional-related meanings and close with meanings related to environment.

The Theme of Social Meanings

The first meaning theme reflects social meanings, which are classified into three levels: home, communality and culture. The meanings related to home are quite private and self-related meanings (Gustafson 2001; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981). They come up in quotations such as “Sulva is my hometown, it is a pearl on earth” (23/3). These meanings also reflect the cultural normative way of thinking, as it is often taken for granted that the home place is the best place. Well-known phrases such as “Home sweet home” and “Home is where the heart is” reflect these kinds of culturally shared meanings. Moreover, the argument is very straightforward and rational, the person who lives there, should know the place better than anyone else (even if the knowledge is very subjective). Adjectives like cosy, welcoming, comfortable and idyllic can also be grouped under this theme. The emotional and personal expressions like “feel good,” “safety” and “peaceful,” “child-friendly” reflect the home-related meanings as they provide reasons for why a person has emotional bonds to Sulva and is rooted in the place (Kyle and Chick 2007).

The next level of this meaning theme is communality. It relates to the social nature of the living place. Similarly, Gustafson (2001: 9-10) connects these meanings to the relationship between self and others. The data revealed arguments like: “People are friendly here.” “People talk and say hello to everybody” “Good neighbors who help when we are traveling” and “Everybody is like one big family.” One important finding related especially to Sulva is the bilingual nature of the village. The official languages of the village are Swedish and Finnish and both are naturally tied together in the everyday lives of the residents. People cited the bilingual culture as a reason for the broader liberalism of the village. People used to dealing in two languages on a daily basis tend also to share important values like multiculturalism and internationality. The next citation expresses the communality and liberality of the place: “Bilingualism, multicultural values and tolerance are the natural side-effects that come from the progress of Sulva.”

The third meaning level is labeled culture. Like bilingualism, the village’s cultural history is also one of the unique features of Sulva, and was discussed extensively in the open responses. One of the most common arguments was that “old and new are combined together.” This point specifically refers to the living history museum and cultural centre of Sundars, located in Sulva village. People appreciate that the preservation of traditions was truly valued and cherished and they regard it as important to be rooted in the place in which they live. “The small-scale and practicability of former times mark out the houses and outbuildings. I guess it forms a tie into our past and creates a feeling of togetherness as well, both to the former generations and to the people living today” (2/13).

The Theme of Functional Meanings

The second theme is termed functional meanings. It communicates both the different functions and the utilization of space in Sulva, on a level that is not as personal and emotional as above, but is more practical and observable. These meanings are classified into three levels: residence, services and location that extend in a form of spatial coverage.

The meanings related to residence were those mentioning specifically the functional aspects of buildings and accommodation, which were described as numerous, functional and suitable for everybody. Even when the unique nature of Sulva’s architecture and historical buildings were emphasized, it was also argued that Sulva is a place that is approachable for everybody and anyone can move and live there.

The second meaning level is termed services. The meanings related to services were found in references emphasizing the sufficiency of available services; “There are all the functions which you can hope for a good living place available in Sulva.” Not just the amount, but also the quality of the services available in the village was appreciated. In addition to the services supporting everyday living, the existing cultural and leisure services were highlighted, for example, the football area “Swembley,” horse riding areas, the library and cultural center. However, services were also discussed in connection to the bigger town, Vaasa, which is located next to Sulva. The closeness of Vaasa was seen to compensate for any possible shortage of services, as the next citation shows: “A very cosy village where you can find services but live at the same time in the country. Nearby is Vaasa, where you can find all the rest of the services, when you need them.”

Indeed, the third meaning level is termed location. As mentioned above, it was discussed in connection to service supply, but
also more generally in connection to the geographical location of Sulva. Sulva was praised for its location close to the city of Vaasa, close to the countryside and also near an airport and motorway. The airport makes it possible to be easily connected to the rest of Finland, Sweden and the whole world, as the next two citations emphasize: “An idyllic countryside village close to the town (Vaasa) and with good travel connections” (62/1) and “My best friend also lives here and we can quickly get to concerts in Stockholm” (17/6).

The Theme of Environmental Meanings

The third theme reflects the meanings connected to environment. Following Tuan’s (2003) conceptualizations, we connect this meaning theme especially to the concept of space as it is defined as more open and free than a place is. These meanings are classified into three levels: built environment, natural environment and atmosphere.

The first level of meanings concern people’s descriptions of the built environment. The houses and their environment are described as beautiful and cozy. Children are seen as playing in big gardens, close to neighbors and the center of Sulva. “Elegant houses and gardens.” (5/19) People described how the architecture combines old and new in an aesthetic manner. “In Sulva old and new architecture is combined in a good way. Sulva is living countryside!” (23/6). The Ostrobothnian building style was valued and thus preserved in the area. There is a museum area called Stundars exemplifying traditional building styles, and those styles of building have also been used in more modern houses. At the same time there are new, more modern houses and newer living areas. “Peaceful, lovely environment. Beautiful buildings” (17/2).

The second level of meanings concerns the natural environment. It is used as a justification in various ways. First, Sulva is described as being located in the country. Second, the countryside is described as being nearby and as having some interesting natural attractions. The Söderfljarden area and fields nearby are used by thousands of birds during the spring and autumn migration periods, providing not only a special opportunity for birdwatchers but also bringing wild-life closer to everyone. “The area is active countryside and it is very peaceful in a positive manner, even though it is close to city. Here one can find all necessary services within a small distance. Also nature is very close and there is a very rich animal life. Finland hardly has another place where so many cranes can be seen in spring and autumn (22/6). Third, respondents described the leisure activities available such as skiing, hunting, bird-watching and picking berries.

The third level of environment includes the description of the atmosphere in the area. This is in line with Gustafson’s (2001) findings of the special atmosphere or the climate of the place—the area is described as communal, because people do things together and there is a sense of community spirit. Motivations include nuanced descriptions of what Sulva is like, such as peaceful, beautiful, idyllic, secure, humane, spacious, quiet and clean. “You can sense the spirit of this village!” (36/5). In this way the place becomes a state of mind.

The Conceptual Construction of Sense of Place

Based on our data we suggest that place identity, place dependency and place uniqueness arise from reciprocal interaction between social, functional and environmental meaning themes. The perception of place identity is embedded in the interaction between social and environmental meanings. Place dependency has its origins in the interaction between social and functional meanings. Finally, place uniqueness arises from the interaction between functional and environmental meanings. While place identity and place dependency require a person’s experience and an insider view, place uniqueness reveals an outsider’s point of view. Functional and environmental meanings can be observed by an outsider and so result in a perception of a place’s uniqueness—even though the person questioned is not an insider. All the meaning themes and the conceptual construction of sense of place are depicted in Figure 2.

Our framework can be evaluated in connection to prior frameworks presenting the dimensions or meanings of places. One of the most influential frameworks is provided by Gustafson (2001). He classified the various themes of meanings related to important places under three broad themes: self, others and environment, emphasizing the interaction between the three themes. While Gustafson
denotes the theme of others as one theme, our data suggests that the meaning theme of social meanings includes both the subjective way of sensing the place, and the communal and cultural meanings related to it (see Tuan 2003; Hay 1998).

Moreover, our framework places more value on the different levels of each meaning themes. Different levels indicate both spatial and temporal extension of the meaning themes. The meanings break out from their concrete physical objects and extend to different states of mind, where places become spaces.

Finding the Types of Reasoning for Asserting the Superiority of a Place

Next, we focus on showing the underlying types of reasoning used to convince other people of the superiority of Sulva. We are interested in a manner of speaking—how people speak about the place (in parallel with meaning themes that elicit what people speak). The types of reasoning feature heavily our empirical data for two reasons. First, the data is focused on argumentation, and this is why the comments people enter on the competition form are specifically selected to make an impression on the jury. Second, as our data reveals, most of the comments were written by people living in Sulva or having some other close connections to Sulva. Therefore, the comments can be seen as a display of Sulva as a part of their self-identities. Figure 3 illustrates the types of reasoning used to justify the superiority of the place.

We label the first type as belonging, to indicate the close relationship between the person and the place. It emphasizes an affective manner of reasoning. Comments like “I live there” show how people use this function to argue why some place is the best by using their own subjective experience. Also Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) have identified self-esteem as one of the dimensions of place identity. It comes close to belonging as self-esteem according to Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) can be described as people’s pride in their living place.

The second type is called convenience. It refers to the flexibility and smoothness of daily activities. It is very practical type of reasoning. This type comes close to the self-efficacy, which is related to the person’s ability to carry out their daily functions and activities in the specific environment (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996).

The third type is called distinction. By that, we refer to the evaluative and comparative nature of the justifications. The meanings of Sulva were described in terms of other places, both implicitly and explicitly. Usually this was done in connection to size, infrastructure, and the spatial and multicultural nature of the place. Similarly, Gustafson (2001, p.13) views distinction as one of the underlying dimensions organizing the meanings of places, as he regards it as a basic human feature in making categorizations between places.

The fourth type is called convincing. Citations like “Sulva is a place where people are willing to move in” or “Sulva is one of the healthiest places in Finland, regarding both the alcohol/drug use, mental health and the overall happiness!” (21/13), reveal that argumentation is built on more objective and evidence-based evaluations. The person seeking to convince adopts the role of expert.

CONCLUSIONS

This study brings out three conclusions. First, based on our theoretical and empirical analysis, a conceptual model of sense of place is proposed. It proposes the concepts of place identity, place attachment and place dependency arising from reciprocal interaction between social, functional and environmental meanings.

Second, as our empirical data reveals, there is no single characteristic that produces the best place to live. The meanings used to express why Sulva is the best are numerous and varied, even though the place in question is a very small village. It seems that these meanings involve things close to everyday life; for some people it is the beauty of nature, for others the friendly neighbor or leisure time activities. Also, it seems that the best place to live includes multifaceted “both-and”-aspects that enable people to connect with the place. For example; because it contains both historical and new buildings, or is both close to city and close to nature.

Third, not only the meanings attached to the place varied greatly, but also the type of reasoning used to bring out these meanings. Belonging, convenience, distinction and convincing are proposed as types of reasoning behind the assertions of the superiority of the place.

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ABSTRACT

How do HIV+ consumers in developing nations become public spokes-models/activists who convince others to adopt Positive Living, a health lifestyle that clashes with local beliefs and customs? We find they undergo a radical self-transformation involving a three-phase normalisation process: 1) Facing the Worst, including denial, concealment and delayed testing, 2) Walking the Talk, including developing lay expertise, dealing with stigma, and embodying the principles of Positive Living, and 3) Talking the Walk, including moving beyond personal concerns and pursuing broad social goals. As activists, HIV+ consumers must temper their radicalism and deal with multiple players in a highly socio-politicised contested field.

“As my successor they crowned an individual not living with the HIV virus. When he gets around people living with HIV/AIDS, his reactions or emotions don’t mirror that of the audience, because he doesn’t seem to reflect and show the pain that they, as people living with HIV/AIDS, feel.” (Mr. HIV/AIDS Positive Living 2006, Botswana)

How do HIV+ consumers in developing nations rise above a serious physical illness and its associated stigma to become public spokes-models and activists who convince other consumers to adopt Positive Living, a health lifestyle that clashes with local cultural beliefs and customs? Our respondent, Mr. HIV/AIDS Positive Living 2006, gives us one clue, explaining that when his successor, who is not HIV+, gave a speech, you could tell that he was not a person “walking in our shoes.” Lay people who embody shared experiences with their audience are often perceived as more credible spokes-persons for a cause (Ignatow 2007). Also non-self interested sources are much more likely to convince other consumers to make significant changes to their behaviour (Watts and Dodds 2007).

A prominent characteristic of successful HIV/AIDS social movements in the USA is that they were able to mobilize lay experts drawn from existing communities (Zoller 2005). The 1985 STOP AIDS movement in San Francisco emanated from the gay and bisexual community, and ACT UP, established in New York in 1987, started as a coalition between the gay and apartheid rights movements. Such hyper-organized activist communities had already established leaders. Often these leaders were HIV+, giving them additional credibility as spokes-persons (Epstein 1995). They also had a superior capacity to generate empathetic identification by sharing with their target audience embodied illness experiences, deemed crucial to creating collective illness identities within illness movements (Brown et al. 2004).

An illness community is most likely to succeed in establishing a collective identity when the illness is widely recognised; if the illness can be linked to previous movements (e.g. the HIV/AIDS link to gay communities in the USA); when the movement incorporates socio-political dimensions such as gender, race, or class; and if the movement affects a large number of the population (Brown et al. 2004). In the context of developing nations, HIV/AIDS tends not be associated with particular socio-political groups, instead gaining momentum from the fact that the virus affects so many. When no established social movements exist to spin off, HIV/AIDS activism must start with small groups of individuals. The situation is complicated by the fact that HIV/AIDS is heavily stigmatised, often materializing in the exclusion of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWAs) from paid work and social life (Joachim and Acorn 2000).

Our research draws upon an ethnographic study of The 2005 Miss HIV Stigma Free beauty pageant and 2006 Mister Positive Living contest in Botswana and in depth interviews with contestants, activist leaders, experts, and public health administrators in the period 2006-2009. The participants in these pageants are some of the very few people living with HIV/AIDS to go public with their HIV+ status. To qualify contestants need to display high levels of lay-expertise about HIV/AIDS and show potential to act as effective public spokes-models of Positive Living and activists on behalf of the PLW community. The consumer behaviour in question-Positive Living-is a constellation of consumption practices that increases the likelihood PLWAs survive and not infect others. At its most basic, Positive Living involves testing to know one’s HIV status; always engaging in safe sex regardless if one is married or single; having regular medical check-ups to check disease progression; eating a well-balanced diet; stopping smoking; and adhering to prescribed medication, and exercise. Positive Living requires a constant life long commitment to be effective.

Our study is timely for several reasons. First, HIV/AIDS is a major killer on a global scale and is happening right now. No cure yet exists but people survive, often for long periods, with antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. Hence adherence to treatment, which is one principle of Positive Living, is a matter of life and death to PLWAs. Second, we observe that thirty years of massive marketing of the Western bio-medical model to the African continent has yielded very modest results in reducing HIV/AIDS. A common explanation of this marketing failure is the lack of a consumer orientation needed in markedly different cultural contexts (Swdiller 2006). For example the popular slogan “Avoiding AIDS is as Easy as ABC: Abstinence, Be faithful, and Condomize” is not easy at all in practice. The main reason is that in African and other developing countries HIV/AIDS is spread through heterosexual encounters. This situation is markedly different to Western countries where the virus is mainly confined to gay men and intravenous drug users. In developing countries the HIV/AIDS virus typically affects the whole population and corrupts everyday life practices and cultural beliefs about fertility and gender relations (Liddell, Barrett, and Bydawell 2004). You cannot easily ask all people to stop having sex and stop having children.

A third reason is that HIV/AIDS Positive Living movements is seen as one of the most successful health movements of all times together with the breast cancer movement (Zoller 2005). HIV/AIDS activism has contributed to increased funding, greater medical recognition of alternative treatment approaches and major shifts in how clinical trials are conducted (Brown et al. 2004). Finally, HIV+ activists in a developing country represent an unrecognised and under-utilized epistemic community that operates outside established theoretical frameworks. Prominent anti-consumption factors in developing nations prevent PLWAs from adopting Positive Living with ease (Paxton 2002). Factors include elevated stigma, patriarchy, chronic poverty, alcoholism and a bifurcated political and cultural system in which traditional beliefs often ignore or reframe the disease (Liddell, Barrett, and Bydawell 2005; Physicians for Human Rights 2007).

By focussing on HIV/AIDS activism in a developing African nation, we introduce a very different study context compared to the anti-business activism (Kozinets and Handelman 2004) or...
brand activism (Luedike, Thompson, and Giesler 2010) typically studied by Western consumer researchers. Our activists are not anti-consumption of certain brands or products—rather they are promoting consumption of a physical and psychologically healthy lifestyle for people infected with HIV/AIDS and uninfected people who have a high chance of infection. Very significantly physical and psychological embodiment of the disease and the Positive Living lifestyle are crucial to their effectiveness as spokes-model/activists.

In the next section we discuss the concept of Embodied Health Movement (EHM) in relation to consumer research. Then we present our study context and explain why this is a critical case for understanding public HIV+ spokes-model/activists who promote strenuous consumption lifestyle intended to prolong life and improve its quality. Thereafter we analyse the embodied accounts of our informants and link these to theory.

**EMBODIED HEALTH MOVEMENT (EHM) ACTIVISM**

Embodied Health Movements (EHMs) have become the most widespread and empowering form of consumer activism. The term “embody” means to personify and realize in action. EHMs view their constituents as consumers and emerge from grass-roots activity (Ruzek et al. 1999). EHMs are defined by three characteristics: i) the inclusion of the body, ii) challenges to existing medical/scientific knowledge, and practice and iii) the involvement of activists collaborating with scientists and health professionals in crafting more effective treatment, prevention and research, and expanded funding (Brown et al. 2004, p.55).

Embodied illness experiences are very different from the embodied momentarily/in-situ experiences typically studied in by consumer behaviour theorists (see a review in Joy and Sherry 2004). The much cited skydiving experience (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993) and river rafting (Arnould and Price 1993) studies are examples of voluntary consumer experiences that produce highly pleasurable bodily sensations. In contrast chronic illnesses are non-wanted and involve life long stressful and physically painful experiences (Joachim and Acorn 2000). Participants in EHMs not only share with others the bodily experience of living with a chronic illness but also the strenuous efforts needed to follow treatment. EHM activists work from both an oppositional and a collaborative position, with the existence of opponents (Brown et al. 2004; Zoller 2005). EHMs can be conceptualized as movement fields where the boundary between experts and lay people become blurred with experts, scientists and public health officials moving in and out of the field. This is a characteristic of “contested” movement fields since they challenge science, diagnosis, treatment and prevention (Brown et al 2004; Ignatow 2007). In such fields lay person expertise becomes important in setting the scientific and the socio-political illness agenda. Normally EHM health activists cannot easily exit the system or escape their opponents, as they are dependent on medical expertise and public health to treat their illness.

**RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHOD**

In June 2001, Fetus Mogae, then President of Botswana summed up the situation: “We are threatened with extinction. People are dying in chillingly high numbers. It is a crisis of the first magnitude” (Farley 2001, A3). From 1992 to 2004 the life expectancy at birth in Botswana fell by 29 years (Stover et al. 2008) and the most recent infection numbers show that in the reproductive population age groups up to 40% are HIV positive (NACA 2009). To combat the problem Botswana became the first African country to provide free antiretroviral (ARV) treatment countrywide and since then number of people taking the drugs has grown from 150 in January 2002 to 117,045 in December 2008. In 2003, 85% of Batswana1 lived within 15 kilometres of a health care facility that offers free and confidential testing. See Exhibit 1 for a time line of HIV/AIDS events in Botswana 1985 to 2015.

Data comprises in depth video-taped interviews: April 2006 in Botswana of two participants from The 2005 Miss HIV Stigma Free Beauty Contest; six participants in 2006 Mr Positive Living Contests; Mr Positive Living 2008, six HIV/AIDS experts working in the public health sector; a national leader of a PLWHA support group; a Pentecostal pastor, a volunteer youth leader and six non-infected consumers. The 2006 Mr Positive Living Contest and related workshops and events were video-taped. Subsequently we regularly collect data via email and telephone conversations and in Spring 2009, a second round of interviews was conducted with five of these respondents plus the 2008 Mr. HIV/AIDS Positive Living. Since 2006 we have collected over fifty related press articles and transcribed videos produced by the BBC, Botswana TV and home videos made by informant’s families. All interviews and footage are transcribed and described in full. Materials in Setswana were translated into English by a native Setswana speaker. The authors individually and together watched all the video footage and read the transcripts. Throughout this interactive process we structured and coded the data/quotes according to theory. A Batswana research assistant with over eight years experience in medicine, public health and HIV/AIDS in Botswana reviewed our findings for factual reliability and face validity.

**FINDINGS**

Consumers undergo a radical self-transformation to qualify to become spoke-models for HIV/AIDS Positive Living and activists of PLWHA community. This transformation process is characterised by normalisation, a process whereby the chronically ill incorporate management of their condition into their everyday routines so as to live healthier and more productive lives (Joachim and Acorn 2000). Three phases of normalization typify this process; i) Facing The Worst, ii) Walking the Talk, and iii) Talking the Walk.

**FACING THE WORST**

Facing the worst involves the first and arguably most difficult step in Positive Living, namely, taking a HIV test and learning one’s positive status. Two approaches typify this phase: concealment and acceptance.

Concealment. Concealment, a normalization strategy, involves people avoiding stigma and alienation by hiding attributes from others that contravene the norm (Goffman 1959; 1971). The concealment strategy involves tactics such as not admitting to the affliction, making extraordinary efforts to maintain a normal appearance, and keeping up with others in spite of suffering (Royer 1998). This reflects people’s strong need to fit in with healthy people. Clearly the testing is a critical event and the respondents remember the day they tested. “I tested for HIV in 5 April 2001; I can never forget that date, because it was another defining moment for me” (Amogelang). “The 17th of April, 1993 I took the test and the results were released on the 28th of April, 1993. That is when I learned about my positive status. I was put on medication and began to get better” (Andrew).

Consumers typically test after prolonged and highly alarming physical ailments. “I used to be young and vibrant sexually active.

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1The term Batswana denotes a person who is a citizen of Botswana.

2All informant names are pseudonyms.
I was living in South Africa. I used to drink alcohol, young and vibrant. I was raped [but I didn’t check after the rape]. In 1997 I had herpes-shingles and the doctor said I should just take care of myself and use condoms. And I thought: “Why should I use condoms?” This attitude suggests that even after unusual illnesses and doctors’ advice to test, consumers continue to deny their risk.

Some consumers conceal their illness experience by explaining their motivation to test as a spiritual revelation. “I quickly dropped into the traditional doctor who threw down divination bones but to no avail. I tried several to know avail. [Then the spirit within spoke to me] “You have tried little tricks but to no avail. Don’t you recall this HIV thing?” It came to my mind and I said “Ah! I never felt sick. This must be the thing. Then I went for a HIV test” (Paul). Others deny their illness even when a close family member dies. “My brother was really sick before he went for a HIV test. It was too late” (Andrew). Both these cases were before universal access to ARV treatment was implemented. Researchers find that amongst HIV+ people, denial is a psychic numbing that protects the self from being over-whelmed by excessive amounts of anxiety (Courtney, Merriam, and Reeves 1998).

Some consumers are confronted by considerable reluctance by others to believe they are HIV+; especially if they are asymptomatic, for example they can accuse them of working for the government (Physicians for Human Rights 2007). Keneilwe, Precious’s mother explains: “When she got better from the bedridden state …They thought “No,” the government must have bought and paid her to advocate; why isn’t she looking sick, wasted and not altered in any way?” Such views are evidence of another denial strategy, in which Batswana consumers associate the disease with negative ideas about the modern state; associations with deadly disease, bad western influences and promiscuity, thereby contravening traditional Botswana cultural norms of morality and disease causation (Heald 2006).

Acceptance. An acceptance strategy is another normalization strategy which reflects the polyphonic narratives of Ezzy’s (2000) HIV+ informants. People focus on living in the present and recognize that new treatments may not be able to help everyone. They accept the finitude of human existence…with one respondent saying: “Everyone’s dying darling” (Ezzy 2000; p.613). The HIV+ status of Magic Johnson can speed acceptance. “They showed me these tablets— ‘Combivir’ and said ‘it’s unlike before when you are positive—you can be given antiretroviral medication. You’ll be just like Magic Johnson,’ I said, ‘Okay. Well let me go have the test’” (Precious). A US study found that testing rates accelerated enormously after Magic Johnson disclosed his HIV+ status and taking of ARV (Tesoriero et al. 1995).

Some consumers are motivated to test by public health messages and media reports that raise awareness of their disease risk. “I just took the initiative to do such [to test] urged on by what I regularly heard on the radio, TV-about changing partners. When you visit health clinics they talk a lot about HIV. So considering my life style is what made me find the courage to take the plunge and test. I wasn’t exactly an innocent and careful boy, you know” (Otsile, smiling). The ability to accept one’s risky lifestyle makes a positive diagnosis less shocking (Courtney, Merriam, and Reeves 1998); although consumers know their inability to keep their positive status a secret is likely to expose them open to stigma. “I knew how naughty and careless I lived prior to this, so I kind of expected what was coming. After knowing that I’m HIV+ the first thing that came to my mind was ‘what will people say?’ because obviously I’m going to share it with somebody because I can’t really live with it alone, and somebody is going to tell the other one” (Otsile).

Female consumers may more readily test if they are not living with a male partner. “I tested for HIV in 1996, and turned out HIV negative. I used to read books and magazines published in South African magazines about people living with HIV” (Amogelang). Such actions suggest some consumers; albeit a very small group can be open testing even if testing is relatively inconvenient or very few others have tested (See Exhibit 1). However later they may delay retesting because their sexual partners are reluctant to do so.
“It really took me a long time to do the (re)test because my partner at the time kept procrastinating. It was probably, just approximating, nearly two years since I had wanted to test” (Amogelang). A Botswana HIV/AIDS expert attributes this specific behaviour to patriarchy: “Women are looked at as kind of inferior beings. The man is in control and he is so macho that he doesn’t feel the epidemic” (Itumeleng).

WALKING THE TALK

Walking the Talk involves efforts to incorporate the values and norms of Positive Living into everyday life for the rest of one’s life. HIV+ consumers understand the extensiveness of this behavioural modification project, admitting the process takes considerable time. “The overall change is not an easy thing. [Positive Living] is not an overnight thing. You can achieve several things within a long while” (Christopher). Walking the Talk is evident when consumers begin exerting considerable control over disease symptoms and outcomes. Mastery is the normalization strategy that typifies this stage, tactics including developing lay expertise, generating positive social comparisons (Royer 1998), and ignoring the negative aspects of their condition as much as possible (Royer 1998). A more extreme form of master includes an overconfident certainty about how long one will live and a belief that new effective treatments will always be forthcoming (Ezzy 2000).

Coping with Stigma. Up until recently, HIV+ positive consumers were severely stigmatised in Botswana (Physicians for Human Rights 2007). “I was at a club, a girl, she was pointing at me, ‘Look she’s the one; she’s the one. She’s HIV+. I think they were thinking I was not supposed to be at the club’” (Amogelang). HIV+ consumers can reduce stigma by elevating themselves above other consumers who stigmatise them. A common approach is to assert that people who stigmatisate others for their HIV+ status are often people who have not had the courage to test. “If they are pointing their fingers at me, they don’t know their status” (Donald). They assert that as a result people can manifest AIDS related illnesses. “Many people who have been stigmatising to other people, I saw them to the hospital, critical sick” (Joseph). They can appeal to notions of Christian sisterly/brotherly love when condemning such uncharitable actions. “It’s very bad because Jesus loves us, God loves us. He loves everyone, whoever you are. You must accept that any human being is your brother, is your sister, is your mama, is your child” (Joseph).

HIV+ consumers can reclaim their place in humanity by rejecting a victim status. “I’m not a victim, because a victim is powerless. I’m nor a sufferer because suffering is nothing but a helpless prayer. I’m not a statistic because statistics are nothing but numbers. I’m a human being with flesh and breath.” (Precious quoted in Colours Magazine Issue 67). They can counteract self-stigma by highlighting the advantages of knowing their status and access to life-saving treatment. “The good part is living, knowing my status. The worst was fear and blame—I didn’t protect myself” (Andrew).

Some consumers reduce stigma by likening HIV/AIDS to other serious chronic illnesses. “I realised that being HIV+ is like being infected with any other infection” (Otsile). They reduce associated self-blame by attributing the cause of their infection the forces far beyond their control. “I must accept. As much as many other illnesses are being handled that are brought by nature….This is just a condition I acquired. I couldn’t do anything because I never made an application to it. But then as fate would have it I got struck down the line” (Paul).

Sometimes consumers fight discrimination by challenging authority. “I actually said to them: ‘If someone else had cancer you would give chemo to them–now just because I have the HIV virus you won’t give me the same privilege’ (and) look I’m still alive” (Precious). Similarly they can counter stigma by taking the opportunity to demystify the disease in other consumers’ minds. “Yes they did try to discriminate against me but I countered by seizing the moment to let them know what HIV was really” (Amogelang). Other times consumers can quietly accept stigma while at the same time refusing to hide their condition. “If I go for a job and I include documents that show I am HIV+ leads to me not being accepted. It used to pain me before, but after sometime I just acknowledged and normalized in order, not to pain myself with such rejections, urging myself to just continue living life as it is and continue to advocate for living with HIV” (Tau).

PLWAs typically achieve self-acceptance through the acceptance of others, including other HIV+ consumers in support groups. “Just seeing other people who are living with HIV can relieve one off the burden they carry from receiving their results. Most of us have gone through the same stages and ordeals so we can help and encourage one another through difficult times. So we just share the experiences, I mean that’s how we help one another” (Amogelang). Talking with others is very important, facilitating the reconstruction of shattered assumptions, and reclaiming the control lost through the diagnosis (Courtney, Merriam, and Reeves 1998). “After meeting with the leader of the support group, she told me she herself is HIV positive. That she is public and open about her positive living with HIV for many years. That encouraged me to be open and tell my friends about my HIV positive status” (Otsile).

Normalizing Disease Treatment. Consumers have difficulty taking ARVs regularly (Weiser et al. 2003). The erratic nature of everyday life, especially for poor people in Sub Saharan Africa, means some consumers cannot predict their whereabouts on a daily basis (Physicians for Human Rights 2007). The stigma associated with HIV means they tend to prefer taking their medication out of the sight of others, for example at home. “I’ve been taking them about 4 times a day for 3 years. So that requires adequate time management…I could be held up somewhere away from home... (And) could do be forced to abandon whatever I would be doing and rush home to take the medication” (Otsile). Other consumers minimise the effort associated with taking medication. “I’m taking the ARVs. It’s more like food. You are eating food in order to live. It’s a normal thing that I take at eight o’clock” (Christopher).

The buddy system in Botswana, which comprises a network of consumer companions (Gammonley 2006), involves experienced consumers helping other consumers one-on-one to adhere to their treatment schedule. “The buddy operation is whereby you give a sick person love, care, and support. You make time to remind and to visit your client-to check how on well he or she is keeping up” (Gammonley). The buddy system in Botswana, which comprises a network of consumer companions (Gammonley 2006), involves experienced consumers helping other consumers one-on-one to adhere to their treatment schedule. “The buddy operation is whereby you give a sick person love, care, and support. You make time to remind and to visit your client-to check how on well he or she is keeping up” (Gammonley). Some peer-to-peer partnerships result in benefits for both parties; less hospitalisation, improved medication adherence and higher satisfaction with life (Solomon 2004). Not surprisingly consumers can find adjusting to safe sex difficult. “It was hard for us to change our behaviour, especially using condoms” (Boitemelo, wife of Joseph). “In the beginning I was worried she is falling in love with someone but in the end I heard what the counsellors said–what they are teaching us. I started to talk to my wife: ‘It’s better to put ourselves in a good mood, use condoms instead of using flesh to flesh because flesh to flesh is no good’” (Joseph). In patriarchal societies, such as Botswana, condom adherence may be especially difficult. A widespread saying in Botswana, berides use of male condoms: “A sweet is never eaten with the wrapper-you have to uncover the sweet and then it becomes–sweet” (Helle-Valle 1999). Other consumers sense that people blame, ARVs for promiscuity. “We have a tendance to
TALKING THE WALK

Talking the Walk involves volunteering for, and qualifying to, become PLWA spokes-model/activists. Three activities characterize this phase: 1) Self Transcendence, and 2) Staging Normalization, and 3) Temperered Radicalism.

Self Transcendence is the capacity to extend oneself beyond personal concerns and pursue broad social purposes and activities without devaluing the self (Coward 1990). Consumers are triggered to transcend themselves after experiencing revelations, in much the same way as Kozinets and Handelman’s (2004) activists. They link a newfound commitment to others to their spiritual beliefs. For some consumers, these transformative moments occur after failed attempts at suicide. “That was a turning point. It was like God refused to let me die. It was a turning point in my life. I started becoming the new Precious. I saw other people living with the virus and I thought, why can’t I be more like them? I got basic training in leadership and public speaking. I think it was my calling, because I wanted to share my message with the whole of society (Colours Magazine Issue 67).” They explain their activities in spiritual terms. “[Precious] was passionate about starting cancer club, saying that shepherd does not have to expect anything in return.” (Precious’s sister). Other consumers can liken them to self-sacrificing spiritual figures, such as Jesus. “I was pleased because she chose to be a sacrificial lamb, a sacrifice to help teach and sensitize the community and nation at large” (Keneilwe, Precious’s mother).

Others link their revelations to more practical matters, such as the urgent need to reduce denial of the disease’s existence. “In 2003 it dawned on me that, I am a youth, and would like to be exemplary and sensitize the up and coming youth that the virus that is always being talked about is indeed out there. So I told my immediate social group that I wanted to publish my status because I want my voice to be heard, give HIV a face in the community and help them realize and see that HIV is life and amongst us” (Tau).

Some consumers appear driven by heroic patriotism. “I want to help the nation. I wanted to put men at the forefront to show not only women are infected by HIV & Aids (Andrew). “I’m a hero forever because I will live a normal life and my disclosure has saved other people” (Joseph). Significantly consumers must ultimately be driven by passion rather than hope of financial reward. “I was crowned the first Mr. Positive Living in 2006, but my aspiration and intentions went on to never be fulfilled, mainly because these people who were running the Mr Positive Living, told me that this was just a pilot project, so it does not have funds” (Tau).

Staging Normalization. Consumers understand the importance of public accountability to being effective role models of Positive Living. “Those young men (Mr Positive Living contestants), who are in the pageant, if they don’t change their behaviour, people won’t believe them. If they go back and become drunk, people won’t believe them… [They] have to be an example to people of what is supposed to be happening” (Donald, founder & director of the organization of Mr Positive Living). They also understand its reciprocal benefits for themselves. “To declare my HIV+ status publicly, to me it was a challenge because I was not living a safe life” (Precious). They become more motivated to practice what they preach. “Before [Precious] went public with her status she was a naughty girl. She used to go out to the clubs, she was young and vibrant. But now she is my lovely daughter, she obeys me, she stays at home…. before she used to be naughty and off leash” (Khumo, Precious’s mother).

PLWAs realise that drawing on their experiences helps them to connect with members of their target audiences and dispel some of the myths surrounding HIV: “What I’ll do is tell them of my experiences living with HIV AIDS and the consequences of living with HIV AIDS and tell them that HIV AIDS is not only meant for old people. Even a youth like me—I will use myself as an example—I’ve been living with it” (Otsile). They believe that they can appear more credible to their PLWAs than experts: “There are consequences of not adhering to medication. She or he (HIV + positive consumer) will take whatever I say, unlike the trained counsellor or the doctor that I can assure you. We are the people living with HIV/AIDS” (Precious). Consumers learn to articulate their experiences via public speaking training seminars given by COCEPWA (Coping Centre for People with Aids). They also regularly attended workshops by COCEPWA where they develop lay-expertise in the disease and its management.

Tempered Radicalism strategies recognise that chronically ill or disabled people face a dilemma (Royer 1998). Alternatively they can seek to cover up and treat their ailments so that they can participate in everyday life. However, simultaneously, they need to demand much more financial, medical and emotional support from the government compared to the “normal population.” Particularly the HIV/Aids health movement must collaborate with authorities to secure access to ARVs (Epstein 1996/ibid). HIV+ activist s can strive to motivate PLWAs to make the best use of the resources supplied by the Botswana government. “It is sad that all the time when the national budget is announced…All our revenue goes to AIDS [and] we refuse to adhere to medication-also refusing to work for ourselves, pretending to be sick. My friends we are not sick, we live with the virus. As PLWA we have [sadly] a dependency syndrome tendency,” HIV+ spokes-model/activists are therefore different to radical anti-consumption activists who think that they must always aggressively confront their adversaries, otherwise they cannot convince non-activist consumers and the corporate elite (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). HIV+ EHM activists have a much more demanding activist role as they need to be knowledgeable of, understand, and deal with multiple players in a highly socio-politicised contested field. They cannot isolate or detach themselves from other consumers, scientists, health care providers and politicians because they depend on them to live.
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ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the concept of “consumption competence” at the heart of Service-Dominant Logic and the co-creation process of value. In order to examine the issues related to this emerging concept, the research methodology was divided in two parts. In the first one, we introduced a longitudinal ethnography research (2005-2007) based on participant observation and in-depth interviews with employees in a French business energy supplier called “Utility X.” This choice was the best means to understand how do managers in the energy sector consider their customers: are clients represented as active actors or as passive actors within their own consumption experiences. The second part of this research based on in-depth interviews conducted in 2009, involved a group of 10 customers of “Utility X.” The objective of these interviews was to emphasize the consumer’s activation of his competencies in the energy sector. This methodology was applied in order to get crossed glances on the concept of the “consumption competencies” emerging in the energy sector. (Keywords: Competence, energy sector, company representation, consumer education, operant resources)

INTRODUCTION
The role of the “competent” consumer is at the heart of the Service-Dominant Logic perspective (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Indeed, it suggests that the creation of value is the result of a combined effect of “operant resources” (Baron and Harris 2008), defined as a set of knowledge, skills, expertise and ability, activated by both the company and the consumer (Vargo and Lusch 2008b). Although the marketing research contributes to enhance the figure of the “creative customer” who is expert and competent within his consumption experiences (Cova and Cova 2009a), there is a need to clarify the firm’s representations of the customer. How are these narrative discourses internalized by both professionals and today’s consumers? Do the consumers and the companies share the same definition of the consumer competencies needed to play an active role in the co-creation of value with suppliers?

First, we suggest that the concept of “operant resources” does not seem relevant enough to report completely the dynamics related to the realization of these tasks from the consumer point-of-view. This consists of a number of heterogeneous elements among which the structures, the contents, the links that they maintain remain relatively vague. The notion of competence seems to be more relevant to re-articulate the diverse elements composing the concept of “operant resources.” In this exploratory research based on interaction with both professionals and customers, we propose to merge the data on the competencies activated by the consumers with the company representations of the “consumer competency.”

This crossed glance approach leads us to underline the existing gaps between the representations of the company and the competencies activated by customers within their consumption experiences in the energy sector. Finally, we will discuss the idea according to which the existence of these discrepancies should invite the companies to build analytical frameworks allowing them to get out of their partial and limited representations of customer competencies in order to include within their policies a relevant consumer education approach to empower their customers.

THE LITERATURE
The Figure of the Competent Consumer at the Heart of the Value Co-Creation Paradigm
The service dominant logic paradigm, places the customer and the company at the same level in the co-creation process of value (Vargo and Lusch 2008a): the customer contributes and participates in the creation process of value by activating the operant resources defined as a heterogeneous set of knowledge, skills, expertise and capacity (Vargo and Lusch 2008b) among which the structure, the contents, the links which they maintain remain relatively vague. The notion of competence seems to be more relevant to re-articulate the diverse elements composing the concept of “operant resources.”

The notion of competence is defined in some research studies in the management field as the result of the mobilized knowledge, the know-how, the social skills, as well as the activation of all these resources (Le Boterf 1994). In the Science Education disciplines, the competence is represented as a device allowing the individuals “to deal with complexes situations, to create a fitting feedback without seeking a predefined solution” (Perrenoud 1999). These studies around the notion of competence and its managerial implications have been carried out to better understand the prior concept of “Knowledge Marketing” argued by authors in marketing (Curbatov 2003) or more recently, the research focusing on young consumer competencies which describes 12 dimensions linked to the young consumers’ usage of new technologies. In her works on teenagers, Batat (2008) described 12 dimensions of young consumers creative capabilities related to the use of media and new technologies to improve their consumption experiences. She defined the concept of the “consumption competence” according to 12 dimensions: (1) good managing of pocket money, (2) making good decisions, (3) using Internet and blogs to improve their consumption skills, (4) dealing with salespeople, (5) seeking appropriate assistance and advice, (6) comparison shopping, (7) controlling impulsive purchasing, (8) innovation by consumption and usage, (9) ability to transgress, (10) Internet risks consciousness, (11) consumer’s moral consciousness and (12) ecological consciousness. Even though marketing researchers begin to consider the customer in terms of his competencies and not only in terms of his needs, the concept of the “customer competencies” has not been conceptualized by the authors in the consumer behaviour field (MacDonald and Uncles 2007). Consequently, the first question that came to our mind is about the definition of the notion of “consumer competence.” How is this competence perceived in the consumption process such as purchasing a product, a service, or living a consumption experience?

A Conceptual Definition of the Consumer Competence
In order to enrich the conceptualization of the consumer competence, Bonnemaizon et al. (2010) based their research on the literature in the Human Science disciplines such as Education and Management science. These works emphasized the necessity to distinguish between the competence as a “result,” a particular alchemy, a specific combination of a set of relevant resources to deal with a given situation, and the competence as a “process” of mobilizing different resources. In other words, the definitions of the competence emerging in both management and education science, lead us to conceive the consumer competence as:
The mobilization of consumer' personal resources. Arnould et al., (2006) provide a very helpful categorization of consumers' operant resources. They are: physical resources (physical and mental endowment: energy, emotion, strength), social resources (family relationships, consumer communities, commercial relationships) and cultural resources (specialized knowledge/skills, history, imagination). Other authors talked about the communicational and the notional resources (Mottet 2007).

This mobilization might be declined into various and diverse competent behaviours linked to the situation where the consumer is involved in his interaction or not with the company. Those competencies in action include:

a) The cognitive competence linked to the capacity to decode the discourses and the advertising messages of the companies (MacDonald and Uncles 2007), as well as to the cognitive efforts emerging in the purchase process: the information-seeking process, the creation of meanings, and the awareness of consumer' rights and duties (Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Passebois and Aurier 2004). We can find this kind of competence in the education science disciplines under the vocabulary of “cognitive competence” and the notion of “informational competence.” These two concepts are defined as the capacity to identify the nature, the impact and the available sources of the required information. Furthermore, both terms reflect also the efficient way to search information and the efficacy of this process through reading, understanding and memorizing information. The cognitive competence of the consumer is therefore represented by the consumer' capacity to read, interpret, memorize and organize the information about the company offers (product and service).

b) The instrumental competence in the consumer behaviour field is represented as the capacity of the consumer to manipulate the tangible products before, during and after the consumption process. These tangible products might be the tools which constitute an integral part of the consumer environment such as computers or software (Tricot 2006), the online tools such as social media YouTube, social networks Facebook and Twitter or the tools provided by the companies such as interactive platforms and Internet Websites, which allow him to create his own product. This definition joins the definitions proposed by some researchers in marketing who privileged a large approach. According to their approach, the instrumental competencies of the consumer emphasize the coordination of the usages, the master of a technique or a technology, and the knowledge needed to achieve a task (Lüthje 2004). The instrumental competencies may also emerge by using a number of social resources such as friendships, professional and social networks or online networks (MacDonald and Uncles 2007) to achieve a given objective.

c) The competence linked to the product/service or media usage. These competencies allow the consumer to express himself and give his feedback on the media, the product and the service provided by the company. In marketing, these competencies have been studied by researchers such as Von Hippel (1978; 1986; 1999; 2005) and Béji-Bécheur and Gollety (2007) or more recently by Berthon et al. (2007). These competencies are very close to the concept of the meta-cognitive competencies (Mottet 2007), which reflect the activation of the creative capacities: creation of new representations, new knowledge, heuristic solutions to the practical questions on consumption, and deviations/creations of new meanings. Even though, we tried to classify the customer competencies into categories for a better understanding of the customer activities generated by the purchase process, the product usage and the consumption experience, it is obvious, that in reality, these competencies are not mobilized in an isolated environment but they depend on different elements (the instrumental competencies) depend on the prior knowledge on the functioning of the technical tools (notional resources) and on the capacity to activate them (the accumulated cognitive competencies) according to the context and the consumption experience of the consumer.

The concept of “operant resources” which consists in some number of heterogeneous elements does not seem relevant enough to report completely the dynamics of the realization of these tasks from the consumer perspective. Thus, we argue that the notion of competence seems to be more relevant to re-articulate the diverse elements composing the concept of “operant resources.” If marketing theories accept the idea of a “competent” customer, is it the case in the managerial sphere? And if yes, do customers activate those perceived competencies? Now, we propose to merge the data collected on the competencies activated by the consumers with the way companies and professionals perceive the customer competencies. This crossed glance on the perception of the competence leads us to highlight the gap between the company representations and the competent behaviour of the consumer.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory research involving both consumers and professionals was considered to better understand the way the consumers are perceived by professionals as well as the consumers’ activation of their own competencies developed within their consumption experiences. Therefore, the methodology was divided in two parts.

In the first one, we introduced a longitudinal ethnography research (2005-2007) in a French business energy supplier called “Utility X” (Bonnaemaizon 2008). This choice was the best means to understand how do managers in the energy sector consider their customers: are consumers represented as active actors or as passive actors within their own consumption experiences. This context seems relevant because the energy sector in France is facing major challenges such as customer orientation, environment protection and competitive offers. The second part of this research based on in-depth interviews, involved a group of 10 customers both male and female (Cova et al. 2009). The objective of these interviews was to understand the consumer’s activation of his competencies in the energy sector. This methodology in two parts focusing on both consumers and professionals was applied in order to get crossed glances on the concept of the “consumption competencies” emerging in the energy sector.  

Research 1: An Ethnography Research in a French Energy Supplier “Utility X”

Given the exploratory nature of this study, an ethnography research was considered to be the most appropriate methodology to address the research objectives. In an ethnography research, the data sources are supplemented by data collected through participant or non-participant observation. Ethnographies usually require the researcher to spend a long period of time in the field and emphasize detailed, observational evidence (Yin 1994). By choosing, ethnography in “Utility X” group rather than a qualitative research based on focus groups or in-depth interviews, we have been able to provide managers and marketers with a relaxed and a friendly environment to conduct the study for 3 years from 2005 to 2007.
We began our ethnography research by observations and seeking to internalise all that we are seeing and learning, recording everything we observe, e.g. behaviours, activities, events, goals the managers are trying to achieve and our feelings as researchers as well as those feelings we observe in our subjects. Therefore, spending time observing “Utility X” employees and getting to know them is a great way of accessing their private world. If they accept you and get used to you they will relax and reveal much more about themselves and their managerial practices. By observing “Utility X” employees in their company, we developed some outcomes regarding their managerial practices when dealing with customers. This exploratory method based on observation and interaction in a social and a managerial context of the company was an opportunity that is not attainable by any other research method. We point out that these data collected through participant or non-participant observation and put in a diary were supplemented by in-depth interviews. The details of this methodology are not taken into account in this paper because almost findings presented in the following session are done through a multidisciplinary literature on the consumer constant evolution (Pidgeon 1991): in our case, the comparison has been done through a multidisciplinary literature on the consumer competencies in order to set out similarities and divergences regarding the concept of “consumer competence” developed by Utility X’s employees.

A convenience sample of 30 employees was obtained through a snowball sampling technique. Using this process, initial informants provided names and email addresses of their colleagues for the researcher to contact them. These interviews take the form of a conversation between the informants and the researcher, guided by a general structure rather than an exhaustive and pre-established list of items and topics. The task of the researcher is to prop the informants and encourage them to involve themselves in the conversation. In our research, the objective was to understand and explore the professional’s representations of the consumer in the energy marketplace. This leads us to ask the energy market actors questions about their managerial and marketing practices as well as their customer relationship management. Therefore, our interview guide was divided into four principal sections. The first part focused on the relationship between the company “Utility X” and the consumer, the second part illustrated company’s knowledge about consumer, the third part pointed out the scattering information process on consumer’s experiences and finally the last part of our interview guide focused on the company reaction to consumers’ outcomes. The length of each interview was about 35 minutes to 120 minutes. These interviews combined formal and informal discourses about the managerial practices and the consumer representations in the “Utility X” group and provided us with nearly 300 pages analyzed through a content analysis method.

The data analysis process aimed at bringing meaning to managerial representations of consumer using an abductive logic, which consists in comparing collected data with theoretical constructs in constant evolution (Pidgeon 1991): in our case, the comparison has been done through a multidisciplinary literature on the consumer competencies in order to set out similarities and divergences regarding the concept of “consumer competence” developed by Utility X’s employees.
The findings of the first part of this study give us evidence about the consumers’ representations in the company’s strategy. This study shows that these representations are in fact a set of recognized or unrecognized customer competencies. Although internal insights showed new trends emerging in the consumer practices thanks to Web 2.0 that gives the consumer the feeling of empowerment, professionals in the energy sector still considering him as not capable to co-create value with suppliers and at least he might be competent because of his capacity to organize the company’s resources. The data analysis revealed that there are four categories illustrating the customers’ representations in the company’s strategy. This study was based on a narrative storytelling methodology as described by Bruner (1990) in the United-States and Bertaux (1997) in France. The aim of this methodology is to develop a comprehensive framework of the consumer’s past experience with the brand by asking the consumers to describe their experiences and their life. The narrative storytelling involves a strong dominant of consumer introspective. The narrative discourses of the consumers were collected using in-depth and interactive interviews (Gubrium and Holstein 2003). These interviews were conducted in a confident climate involving both the researcher and the customers. This approach allowed us to produce 10 narrative discourses involving 10 individuals. The participant’s profiles are described in the figure 2.

The analysis of the 10 narrative discourses followed the interpretative protocol to decode the data collected according to the thoughts of the consumers interviewed, their attitudes and their behaviours as well as their perception of the competencies activated within their consumption experiences.

**FINDINGS**

**Professional Representations of the Consumers’ Competencies Within the Energy Sector**

The analysis of the data highlighted the fact that the “Utility X” employees perceive their consumer according to four profiles: (1) myopic, (2) ignorant, (3) uncreative, and (4) organizer of company resources.

**The “Myopic” Consumer**

The “Utility X” informants argued that their customers ignore the change that happened within the French energy sector. In addition, they confirmed that their clients are unable to distinguish between “Utility X” electricity offers and “Utility Y” which is an additional gas offer of “Utility X.” These customers are not keen on searching a bargain by comparing “Utility X” offers with the offers of other energy suppliers. Therefore, “Utility X” informants talk about “consumer inertia” within the electricity sector. However, there is a need to distinguish between “Consumer inertia” and “consumer loyalty.”

Inertia shows that sometimes, it is easier for customers to put up with a mediocre supplier rather than go to the difficulty of switching to another. Customers just tend to put up with poor service and results, as long as it doesn’t get too bad. They just keep “rolling” along. The informants argued that there are diverse reasons, which enhance customer inertia for example: consumers are often afraid of unknown, the cost of exit barriers associated with switching supplier, the lack of price competitiveness and less appealing offers comparing to “Utility X,” and of course the high level of customer trust.

“We realized that in a mass market situation, it’s not the same it appears in B to B market, it’s rather profound trends: you don’t lose 10% of market shares in three months; when the market of professional customers opened in July 2004, we didn’t lose 10 or 15% in three months, we lost 1.8% 1 year later” (Informant 4, Commercial Department, 08/31/2005).

This kind of inactive consumer is not concerned about the energy market shift, which reflects a completely open retail energy market in Europe as well as a deregulation in the electricity sector. This shift might be a source of customers empowerment through given them the power to choose among additional references and compare offers. Consumer’s inability to use his integral power to make choices and even search a bargain is a direct consequence of his low level of awareness and knowledge about the energy market deregulation. We can make the hypothesis that employees

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1“Utility X and Utility Y was a unique firm who has benefited from a monopoly situation before the start of energy sector deregulation process.”
do not consciously provide relevant information to empower their customers, in particular high valued consumers. Indeed, they don’t give them a clear and global vision of the market energy situation or information and details about the interesting offers to retain them.

“In my opinion, this customer notion in customer’s mind will be progressive, because the evolution of the electric system that we have to cope with is a little bit complex, and a couple of years will be necessary for the customers to make a difference, primary, between Utility X and Utility Y),” and secondly let us say, between the regulated market and the unregulated one” (Informant 19, Strategic Marketing Department, 02/23/2007).

Some informants used the metaphor of transitology to express this trust by comparing the consumer with the shift from the communism to the capitalism, with the democratic transition experimented by the populations of Europe of the former Eastern bloc: the setting of the freedom is not a decree, it has to be learnt. Inertia is described as the fact that consumers hesitate to change “world” by custom, by comfort, by fear of the stranger or of an attractive but dangerous freedom: consumers are perceived as having some difficulties to assert customer’s status, which is the opening on the competition confers to them and to use the right to choose this status supposes.

“This fear, this apprehension to leave Utility X, it seems like the east communist power, where people, they had the freedom, but they did not really leave it because they were afraid (laugh); thus there are some who stay with Utility X, because “I am out of order, we are on Saturday evening, I am not sure another competent company can go to repair my electric system, I prefer to stay with Utility X” (Informant 7, Commercial Department, South West of France 29/09/2005).

The metaphor of married couple is also used to describe the influence of a sustainable relationship enhanced by everyday life, which creates habits and reassurance. If the customer can change to another supplier and that this possibility highlights some negative aspects of the relationship with “Utility X,” which could be an alibi (a pretext) to switch, these are not enough important to make such a decision.

“I would say, we are a couple, here we are, I try to imagine our customer relationship like a couple, it has been years since we live together, everything is ok between us, but at the end of 7 years... “it has been 7 years since I tell you to close the tube of toothpaste and at the end of 7 years you don’t make it, today, I have the opportunity to go away, to see somewhere else what it takes place, so nor you close it now nor I go to see somewhere else.” Naturally everybody is clear enough to realize that the fact that the cork of the toothpaste tube stays here, is not going to cause the break; but on the other hand, every morning, it will be the same: “be careful I go to see somewhere else.” In my opinion, the customer is going to cope with this situation” (Informant 23, Operational B to C Marketing Department, 12/06/2007).

Other informants suggest that the customer did not use his rights to choose because he couldn’t give his point-of-view on the deregulation phenomenon, which is above all the result of the economic ideologies. He is perceived as really reluctant to change and try to display his resistance by keeping the same behaviours.

“Before consuming in a competitive marketplace, Utility X customer is beyond all the facts a consumer of electricity. Inquiries on these consumers, quite as their representatives, consumer associations, show that most of them are hostile to the market deregulation, the point which would make it acceptable, would be a decrease of electricity price; but this will not happen” (Informant 19, Strategic Marketing Department, 23/02/2007).

This cognitive aspect of consumer’s incompetence is related to the strong position of “Utility X” group in the energy market: the consumers are considered as passive actors; they show a high level of dependency on their unique supplier “Utility X” who obviously has a good image among French consumers (French’s favourite enterprise), has a significant consumers database, offers interesting rates, and is not obliged to cope with aggressive competitions in the energy market. This perceived balance of power in favour of “Utility X” is linked to the huge level of schizophrenic mindset of our “Utility X” informants: “Utility X” marketers have to accept the rules imposed by the competitive game in the energy marketplace by leaving their consumers who might search another energy operator such as Poweo in order to avoid the abuse of a dominant position of “Utility X” in the French energy market.

“We have to explain to our collaborators that we should adopt a posture which leads us to lose customers, and it’s suitable for us right now in the professional marketplace where professional actors such as Poweo and its CEO, Beigbeder, says that he has much more customers. But it’s clear that this posture is really specific” (Informant 5, Commercial Department South West of France, 28/09/2005).

Moreover, the market actors in the energy business are convinced that:

- Consumers do have an insufficient knowledge about the energy sector offers and also about their usages (consumer as an “ignorant” actor).
- They are not able to express their energy needs and they are uncreative in terms of consumption practices and usages. Consequently, they are not considered as a creative source to help the companies to improve and adapt their offers (the “uncreative” consumer).

Consumer as an “Ignorant” Actor

The cognitive dependency of the consumer is enhanced by the firm’s judgement and the way “Utility X” actors represent their consumers. According to our informants, the consumer seems to be anxious in particular situations e.g. when he calls an energy operator because he was incapable and powerless to resolve the problem by himself. In fact, it seems like a patient who can’t rationalize his symptoms and tries to call his doctor to be reassured. In our case, the customer expects his company “Utility X” which is a unique and a powerful energy supplier on which customer’s personal and professional life are dependent, to find a solution to his problem. Therefore, “Utility X” professionals perceive the customer as an ignorant actor because of his lack of knowledge and also the low level of his acquaintance with the energy field within his consumption experiences.

“The customer, he does not exist, what I want to say it is that it is a prospect in power but he ignores himself, he doesn’t know what he wants, when we ask him questions, he doesn’t...
know anything” (Informant 13, Strategic Marketing Department, 19/12/2005).

Sales people and marketers argue that client requirements such as “information requests” reflect the customer dependency on “Utility X” expertise.

“The customers use badly their heating. The outgoing calls are the opportunity to carry out some advices but customers don’t respect them and come to complain about it then [...] When we discuss with customers, we manage to demonstrate to them without they seek to question everything, that the amount of charges considered excessive by them, is in fact the result of a misuse of their devices or an uncontrolled use” (Informant 10, Call Centre in Reims, East of France 14/10/2005).

Furthermore, the informants emphasized the fact that the customer does not master all the stakes of the purchase process in the energy sector. First of all, the customer starts searching information by building up technical knowledge, then elaborating his own knowledge by sorting out information and finally choosing his energy supplier.

“Fundamentally, it is consumption not a purchase. One day, the consumer can make the decision to change his supplier of electricity, but he has never be involved in a purchase process, in a marketing sense, that is, ‘I know the market, I take the information, I compare, I decide’” (Informant13, Strategic Marketing Department, 19/12/2005).

The “Uncreative” Consumer

Another representation reflects the lack of consumer creativity in the energy field. Indeed, the energy sector is not considered as a domain that requires customer’s involvement. Thus, customers are not very demanding and they are not aiming at any offer (product or service) in particular. Therefore, the consumer is not perceived as a source of innovation for the company because of his situation of user who did not settle the question of his needs which maybe are hidden, tacit, hardly expressed, or unexploited by marketers.

“The customers when you manage to convince them to participate to a focus group, they answer you, they make efforts to answer you, but generally, they are not very creative, it’s turns very fast in the science fiction” (Informant 13, op.cit.).

The “Utility X” informants perceived their consumers as being not able to express their needs regarding the company offers (products and services). Further more, “Utility X” marketers argued that the lack of creativity and innovation of their customers reaches a significant level.

The “Organizer” of Company Resources

In 2004, “Utility X” group recruited a marketing director coming from the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector in order to improve the public marketing policy of the company. Indeed, he was an ex-marketing manager of Wanadoo and he worked for Club Internet from 2002 to 2004. As a result, the multi-channel strategy has taken a decisive turn. In addition to the traditional channels such as telephone, mails, sellers on spots and in stores, the Internet channel development became a strategic point.

The main interest of using Internet channel is to create and establish a link between customers and help the company to control the management charges such as in the banking sector. Thus, the multichannel strategy helps the firm to move away all the operations with low added value (index relay, account management, information requests) towards automatic channels. In addition, this strategy also consists in leading high valued consumer towards sales people to get a benefit from one-to-one services and orienting low valued customers towards channels, which are less costly to manage this type of consumer. The “Utility X” actors represent the consumer as consciously capable to manage and organize these channels. Therefore, the “multichannel consumer” role (Belvaux 2006) enables them to legitimate strategic choices in terms of management costs as showed in the verbatim below.

“Not valued calls (transmission of the index consumption) must be transferred on internet. [...] a survey launched by IPSOS (French marketing studies agency) which shows that 62 % of the customers were at first on Internet to research information about products offered by companies. Concerning the starting of electric system for example, some experimentation showed that it was more relevant to make it on internet. It is necessary to think of all which is going to take place with mobile phones, all the companies are developing these technologies, it’s the choice that we made but the customer also really want this kind relationship through Internet” (Head of Operational Marketing Department during a meeting located in R&D department, 10/06/2006).

The first part of our empirical work revealed the consumer incompetence as perceived by “Utility X” actors. This incompetence might be explained according to three dimensions:

- The cognitive dimension related to the incapacity of customers to get power of choice because of their ignorance of the market deregulation and the new position of their supplier “Utility X” in the market energy,
- The instrumental dimension linked to the consumers’ inability to express their needs because of their lack of technical knowledge regarding the energy offers,
- And the incompetence related to the product usage, which reflects the uncreative way when the consumers are dealing with the energy offers (products or services).

However, the “Utility X” professionals recognize him some “ideal” competencies such as the ability to use channels, which legitimated the firm’s strategic choices: the notion of competence as perceived by our “Utility X” informants is however, limited to the organization of company’s resources by the consumers.

Consumer Activation of Consumption Competencies Emerging in the Energy Sector

The second part of this research carried out among the customers of the energy supplier “Utility X,” emphasized the gap between the professional perception of the customer potential and the competencies developed by customers within the energy sector. It highlights the fact that “Utility X” has just discovered after the establishment of a multi-channel strategy that its customers were not prepared to mobilize all the channels provided by the company. However, some of them knew how to make efficient their personal effort to resolve their problems. Thus, if this second research reinforces the idea of different forms of cognitive, instrumental and usage incompetency, it focuses also on the consumption competencies activated by these customers and not anticipated by the firm.
Consumer’s Incompetence

Consumers are incompetent in some areas:

- **Instrumental incompetence** in understanding everything relayed to the contract signed with the company. Consumers usually do not know, or do not make the effort to know, how their contract is drawn up. In general they take it over from the former tenant or owner and view the operation as automatic and simple (“a switch”).

- **Cognitive incompetence** involving the customer knowledge of “Utility X” and other energy suppliers. His poor knowledge of today’s energy market actors has an impact on his ability to choose. “I switched to Utility Y because that’s where my brother-in-law works” (Jérôme, 32). He is incompetent in terms of knowledge about offers. In addition, he is not very familiar with the content of the company’s website. Almost customers emphasized the fact that the website is clean, clear and well done but they ignore the offers and the service presented on “Utility X” website. They even have poor knowledge of the key services offline.

- **Usage incompetence** when interacting with a “Utility X” consumer service operator on the phone, the consumers remain focused on their problem and very quickly get bored in their interaction with the “Utility X” employee. They are much more competent (or polite? but that is a use skill) in the face-to-face interaction with a technician at home. They are overall incompetent to circulate through the various channels to reach “Utility X,” even though that incompetence has to do with the telephone’s weight as a historic means of communication. Whereas the first research highlights the fact that “Utility X” believes in the role of “Multichannel consumer,” the most surprising result of the second research is that the consumers use only the phone and ignore all the other communication channels, from the most traditional (agency) to the most advanced (website). A previous “Utility X” internal survey sheds light on the findings: the phone is the most commonly used means of contact. It is considered as fundamental and often has an exclusive character (if the transmission by post of contractual documents is left out). In other words, it is the only means used by the customers to reach the company. The consumers told us that the phone is the best means of communication because “it’s instantaneous.” They often compare it to the agency, which seems to be a slower and, above all, more time-consuming way to solve problems with “Utility X”. “I’ve got better things to do than go down to the agency;” “I never went to see Utility X directly albeit the local headquarters are 200 metres away on A Street” (Maha, 23). Another point in these results is that the consumers are less worried with “Utility X” energy suppliers comparing to the other industries such as banking, insurance and telephony (even former State operators) because of the strong feeling that they might be robbed. With “Utility X,” “you always get your money back no matter what” (Jérôme, 34). For these customers, the bill might be nearly incomprehensible but it is still easier to understand than the phone bill. The result is an economy of means to solve a problem with “Utility X” because the risk of losing money is considered zero. Consumers “know” that “Utility X” is not trying to rob them. Of course, “Utility X” is not always able to solve the problem but this is not risky for them. If worse comes to worst, “Utility X” will reimburse them when it finds a solution. There is no need to travel or to use various means of contacting them for that. Moreover, “Utility X” consumer service phone representatives clearly tell people like what a young lady in our sample said: “if a monthly estimate is too high it’s even better for me. If they take out too much money during the year I shall be happy to get it back at the end of the year: Utility X is a kind of bank” (Maha, 23). In her words, “Utility X” seems to act like the tax office, which gives refunds if it has withheld too much money from a person’s salary. The message is clear: don’t worry; you always get your money back with “Utility X.” You just need a little time and patience!

Unacknowledged Consumer’s Competence by the Firm

In general, consumers feel competent but say that “Utility X” does not acknowledge their competencies. Consumers have:

- **Instrumental competence** to decode the bill (“indigestible” according to them), check it and look for (and find!) mistakes. Consumers often feign incompetence, which gives “Utility X” the impression that they really are. That is a consumer ploy, and not naïveté, whose aim is to “cheat” “Utility X” employees. They are willing to pretend that they are incompetent in order to “scrounge something.” Most of the time customers know they have gone past their limit and are aware of other special actions but expect the employee to “make a commercial gesture” to respond to their real or feigned naïveté. Other times they blame the operator before admitting they have gone beyond their limit. After a discussion with an employee customers usually end up admitting they cannot “cheat” and must pay.

- **Cognitive competence** involving expectations of sustainable development and the control of energy but that are neither organized nor structured in the same way as Utility X’s knowledge. That explains why both the customer and the customer service representative have the impression that the other is incompetent. Customers have cognitive competencies with regard to choices they do not take advantage of because electricity and “Utility X” are not priorities compared to other problems requiring them to make choices.

- **Usage competence**, which seems limited to the use of the phone as the only way of reaching “Utility X.” But in that case consumers know how to get rid of an incompetent hotline operator or ring another hotline. Besides, they deploy specific usage competence, to pass the problem on to a third party and rank the problems they come across in the same situation (moving, new construction, renting, etc.). Throughout its multi-channel strategy, “Utility X” seems to increase the possibilities of contact with customers, but in the event of a problem the latter seem to do all they can to re-intermediate the relationship and avoid contact. It must be pointed out that some consumers are not in direct contact with “Utility X” and do not seek it. Others, in direct contact with “Utility X” through the bill and monthly payments, seek the intermediation of a more knowledgeable third party to interact with the company after unsuccessful attempts to contact it by phone or face-to-face. They solve their problem not by using
A typical situation is when customers join forces to put pressure on “Utility X.” For example the case of this customer (Elios, 48) who was having a new house built in April 2006. He contacted “Utility X” by phone to make sure he would “have power by August.” The problem was that some work needed to be done to bring the electrical cable to the house: “they had to dig a ditch across the road!” he said. “Utility X didn’t warn us until August that a private company had to do the work but that this was only done for companies or emergencies.” At that point Elios decided to contact his new neighbours, who were also having a house built, to put pressure on “Utility X.” “At the end of August,” he said, “we made a joint request... After making many phone calls and putting some light pressure on Utility X we got our first appointment with a technician, who came right out to the site. Guess what? They started digging the ditch a few days later and the next day we had the satisfaction of seeing them lay the cable. Who knows how long we would’ve waited if all our neighbours hadn’t pulled together” (Elios, 48).

**DISCUSSION**

The results of this study illustrate the huge gap between the company representations of its customers and the way these customers mobilize the resources provided by the company “Utility X.”

If the marketing studies that share the Service-Dominant Logic point-of-view, underline the importance of the customer participation in the creation of value through the mobilization of various resources including the commercial resources, the understanding of the factors that facilitate customer participation and involvement is superficial. Indeed, most of these works and those that revealed positive correlations between the customer participation and the brand loyalty suppose that the customer is perceived as being all the time competent (Sobhy et al. 2009). We support the idea that the competence results from a social construction and emerges from the actors’ representations (Dejoux and Dietrich 2005). The identity of the competent consumer builds itself within the relationship the consumer maintains with the company: then he can realize that he is competent only if the company recognizes him as such. Recognizing the “consumer competence” means not only admitting it but also, in the case of the incompetent consumer the company should provide him the commercial resources to develop it (Sen 1985). Therefore, we argue that the consumers need to learn more about the consumption practises and the suitable behaviours to get empowered and be able to contribute to the creation of value with the supplier (Bitner et al. 1997; Meuter et al. 2000). Consequently, there is a need for an education policy to help the customers to become more active within their consumption experiences especially in the energy domain.

We can argue that all the customers are not equal in terms of using technologies to improve their consumption competencies (Dujarier 2008), especially in the energy sector. We can then point out the vulnerability of the customer when dealing with the energy offers (products or services). This consumer vulnerability concept provides a unifying label for a variety of studies focusing on the social consequences of consumption for different populations in a wide range of marketing contexts (Baker et al. 2005). Indeed, the consumer vulnerability has been defined in various ways. Most authors agree that all consumers can expect to be vulnerable at some point of their lives according to the consumption field they are involved in. Consequently, consumer policy should focus on empowering vulnerable consumers to facilitate the movement away from vulnerability. We believe that a first step in helping vulnerable consumers develop abilities to handle lack of knowledge and experiences in the energy domain is to recognize these cognitive, instrumental and usage incompetence that they are largely self-generated and can therefore be self-managed. A second step is to provide consumers enough accurate knowledge to develop an adequate picture of risks. Knowledge alone is not sufficient to ensure appropriate action, but it is a vital component to any program to enhance consumers’ education. Therefore, marketing and policy responses must be against promoting or facilitating learned helplessness and for empowerment by assisting people to develop competencies that foster optimal consumption. The results of the study emphasize the need for changing the current focus on consumer education and consumer policy. A shift from the present emphasis on the vulnerable consumer to a more inclusive agenda would maximize the engagement of “active” (Bianchi 1998) consumers in driving innovation and success in the economy at large.

Besides, we can notice that consumer education is mainly envisaged in marketing literature through the methods used by companies to improve the competence of the consumer without taking for granted the other learning sources or resources (forums, blogs, social networks for example) in which the consumers develop his competence (Batat 2008; Sobhy et al. 2009) to appropriate products or services and contribute to their value. Recognizing the consumer competencies, means admitting the fact that these competencies did not emerge only in commercial resources provided by the company but also in the personal resources of the consumer, which do not enter the usual mental models of the company. Thus, companies that want to develop a consumer education policy should beforehand elaborate frameworks that enable to understand the knowledge, know-how or the expertise, which their consumers require; the way the consumers acquire them or not in order to build associated learning curves (Hilton and Hughes 2008).

**REFERENCES**


Consumer Experience of Value Creation: A Phenomenological Perspective
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ABSTRACT

While consumer experience seems to be implicitly and inextricably tied to value creation and co-creation, to date, there has been limited research on how consumers individually and collectively experience value creation. The aim of this article is to propose a framework to examine the consumer experience of value creation from a phenomenological perspective. Following a review of the extant consumer experience and consumer value literature, an integrative conceptual framework is presented in order to provide an initial lens to guide an analysis of consumers’ experiences of value creation. The framework recognises that individual and collective consumer experiences of value creation are multiple, dynamic, individually and socially constructed and that different experiences of consumer value emerge in different consumer contexts over time. The proposed operationalisation of the framework is then discussed in the context of the consumption of an iPhone application which provides an interesting context of value facilitation by Apple, iPhone application developers and other iPhone users. Operationalising the framework in different contexts will assist researchers in better understanding the extent to which the consumer experience of value creation and co-creation ranges from the experience of negative consumer exploitation to a more emancipatory and positive experience.

Keywords: consumer experience, value creation, value co-creation, consumer value, phenomenological perspective

INTRODUCTION

While consumer experience seems to be implicitly and inextricably tied to value creation and co-creation, to date, there has been limited research on how consumers individually and collectively experience value creation (Graf and Maas 2008; Sandström, Edvardsson, Kristensson and Magnusson 2008). Indeed, the recent discourse around service-dominant (S-D) logic has refocused attention on consumer experience with the premise that “value is uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary” (Vargo and Lusch 2008, p.7). However, the proponents of S-D logic have not elaborated or debated the phenomenological nature of consumer value. Other scholars have questioned some of the implications of the prevailing S-D logic and other managerial and marketing discourse around value co-creation for consumers and organisations (e.g. Zwicky, Bonsu and Darmody 2008; Cova and Dalli 2009). In addition, much of the contemporary discourse around value creation does not integrate or acknowledge the extensive research within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) on consumers’ value creating competencies, choices, practices, motivations, and marketplace resistance (c.f. Arnould and Thompson 2005; Arnould, Price, and Malise 2006).

The aim of this theoretical article is to present a framework to examine consumer experience of value creation from a phenomenological perspective. The paper begins by positing that the phenomenological perspective is a useful lens for understanding the consumer experience of value creation. When adopting a phenomenological perspective, we seek to understand the consumer experience of value creation as opposed to uniquely focusing on organisations’ attempts to embed value in their market offerings or their efforts to appropriate value from the immaterial and often unpaid labour of consumers for the organisations’ own commercial benefit.

Following a review of the extant consumer experience and consumer value literatures, an integrative conceptual framework is presented in order to provide an initial guide to study consumers’ experiences of value creation. The framework recognises that consumers are active and proactive players in the value creation process who can individually and collectively influence where, when and how value is created. The potential operationalisation of the framework is then discussed in the context of the consumption of an iPhone application which facilitates consumer to consumer service provision. The chosen context provides an interesting illustration of how Apple and iPhone application developers can facilitate consumer value creation, as well as illustrating individual and collective value creation by iPhone users.

Much of the prevailing marketing and management discourse presents value co-creation in a positive light. However, there is also a growing concern that contemporary value co-creation discourse legitimises the exploitation of consumers’ immaterial labour which is then appropriated by organisations. Operationalising the framework in different contexts will assist in better understanding the consumer experience of value creation and co-creation over time and will provide insights as to whether consumers experience value creation as exploitative, emancipatory or as something much more complex, ambiguous and contradictory.

ADOPTING A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Within the marketing discipline, consumer research is one of the fields that lends itself most readily to using the phenomenological approach (Svensson 2007) as it allows exploration of consumers’ hedonic and emotional reactions and their senses, thoughts and feelings in relation to their experiences (Hirschman and Holbrook 1992). In this paper, we adopt a phenomenological perspective in order to explore the consumer experience of value creation as opposed to uniquely focussing on the organisation’s attempt to embed value in a company’s market offering or on their attempts to appropriate the various types of value created by consumers. Phenomenology justifies consumers’ subjective experiences as data (Goulding 2005) as opposed to external observations of consumers’ actions or behaviours. It is accepted that individual and collective consumer realities and experiences may be multiple and both individually and socially constructed (Shankar, Elliott and Goulding 2001). It is also acknowledged that amongst a group of consumers and indeed within the individual consumer, some voices or aspects of particular consumer or consumption experiences might become dominant and, as such, start to reflect a specific type of experience within a group.

While many streams and schools exist within phenomenology, in this paper the ontological perspective of existential phenomenology is adopted. Existential phenomenology, rooted in the works of Heidegger (1962/orig. 1927), Sartre (1962/orig. 1943) and Merleau-Ponty (1962/orig. 1945), provides a useful lens for studying consumer experience (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). Developing Heidegger’s notion of the totality of the “human-being-in-the-world,” existential phenomenology acknowledges that it is the individual, in this case the consumer, who constructs his or her reality (Thompson et al. 1989; Hirschman and Holbrook 1992). According to Heidegger, Dasein or one’s “being-in-the-world” is not solely restricted to present consciousness but also draws from the past and projects towards the future (i.e. experience is trans-temporal in nature) (Hirschman and Holbrook 1992). Furthermore, existential phenomenology helps us understand the reflected and
unreflected nature of consumer experience as it is lived and as it emerges from the consumer's context and social world.

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

The phenomenon of experience was largely ignored by marketing scholars from the late 50s up until the early 80s due to the prevailing focus on the cognitive rational view of the consumer (Addis and Holbrook 2001; Holbrook, 2006). The cognitive view of consumption regards consumers as goal-directed individuals who are consciously involved in information search, processing and evaluation in relation to the purchase and use of a particular product or service (Frow and Payne 2007; Payne, Storbacka, and Frow 2008). A renewed focus on "experience" occurred following Holbrook and Hirschman’s (1982) exhortation to academics to move (once again) beyond the cognitive view of consumption towards the consideration of the experiential aspects of consumption. The experiential view of consumption focuses on the non-utilitarian aspects of consumption such as consumer context, emotions, symbolism etc. which may or may not be goal-directed with "value (seen to) reside(s) not in the object of consumption but in the experience of consumption" (Frow and Payne 2007, p. 91). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) promoted the experiential perspective as being "phenomenological in spirit," with consumption viewed as a "primarily subjectively state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses and aesthetic criteria" (p. 132). Interestingly however, they did not promote the experiential aspects of consumption at the expense of a more rational perspective but rather as a complimentary one.

A central tenet of experiential consumption is that "consumers are not only consumers; consumers act within situations; consumers seek meaning and consumption involves more that just purchasing” (Carù and Cova 2007, p.5). As consumers adopt and play various roles within their lifeworld while pursuing their various life projects, they are never solely influenced by a particular consumption context when consuming a particular product or service. It is necessary therefore to consider the various other actual or possible influences on their current or future activities and motivations within their lifeworld contexts (Carù and Cova 2007).

Adopting a longitudinal perspective to study consumer experience recognises that consumers’ interpretations of their experiences of different phenomena may change over time (Addis and Holbrook 2001). Carù and Cova (2007) discuss Arnould, Price and Zinkhan’s (2002) continuum of consumption experiences which includes pre-consumption experiences (e.g. planning for and imagining the experience), the purchasing experience, the core consumption experience, remembered consumption experience and nostalgia experiences (e.g. which involves reliving or reconstructing past experiences). Seen from the existential phenomenological perspective, the phenomenon of consumer and consumption experience is therefore dynamic, mutable and emerges from specific contexts (Thompson et al. 1989; Arnould et al. 2006).

The role of organisations and consumers in co-creating consumption experiences may also vary widely. Carù and Cova (2007) highlight a second continuum of consumption experiences, ranging from those consumption experiences which are largely “constructed” by organisations to those experiences that are co-created between consumers and finally those consumption experiences that are independently constructed by consumers. In relation to those consumption experiences which are largely constructed by organisations, the role of the organisation is to “stage” a consumption experience which will in turn be deemed to be able to deliver extraordinary experiences to passive consumers (Pine and Gilmore 1998, Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999; Schmitt 2003; Sandstrom et al. 2008), for example the Disneyland theme park experience. Such a perspective embraces the value-in-exchange notion, where the consumption experience is believed to result in some type of “emotional induction” (Carù and Cova 2006, p.4) and pre-determined or pre-determinable transformation in the consumer. The delivery of the consumer experience becomes “objectified” as opposed to being something that spontaneously emerges from a specific context or something that is under the deliberate control of the consumer.

In relation to those consumption experiences which are co-created between consumers and the organisation, the organisation provides or suggests value propositions to consumers. Value propositions are either accepted by consumers who then passively or actively engage with the organisation to co-create value (e.g. user driven innovation). Alternatively, the value proposition may be creatively used by consumers in unanticipated ways. Equally, value propositions might be partially or entirely rejected by consumers resulting in some cases in anti-consumption or consumer resistance behaviours.

When we begin to consider consumption experience as being largely constructed by consumer(s) i.e. where the consumer organises his or her own experiences which may not involve direct interactions with the organisation, a far richer understanding of consumers’ lifeworld emerges. Many consumption experiences are collectively created, experienced and shared by consumers as opposed to just being experienced by individual consumers (Arnould et al. 2006; Tynan and McKechnie 2009). In addition, as consumers become increasingly interconnected, they may be willing to share their experiences with other consumers (Borghini and Caru 2008). However, there is much debate but limited empirical evidence as to the degree to which consumers may actively wish to share or co-create value with organisations or consider that the value they create should or should not be appropriated by organisations and if so, on what terms (c.f. Zwick et al. 2008; Cova and Dalli 2009).

UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMER VALUE AND CONSUMER VALUE

Having explored developments in the consumer experience literature from a phenomenological perspective, it is also useful to explore developments in the consumer value literature. While it is clear to us today that the terms customer value and consumer value have become overarching concepts within the management and marketing literatures with multiple meanings and perspectives, a review of the literature reveals that value can be broadly seen from the vantage point of the consumer (customer) perspective or from the organisation’s perspective (Smith and Colgate 2007). However, even when a customer or consumer perspective of value creation is adopted, many authors and practitioners are typically concerned with the economic notion of the customer or purchaser of economics offerings who can be manipulated through the delivery of some sort of embedded value in the form of a market offering.

In their recent systematic review of the consumer value literature, Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) note that many of the earlier studies on consumer value utilise various cognitive approaches to examine how consumers perceive and evaluate value, conceptualising consumer value as a uni-dimensional construct (e.g. Monroe 1979; Zeithaml 1988). Many of these earlier studies were rooted in the economics or strategic management literature and focussed primarily on the utilitarian and economic aspects of consumer value. Such approaches assumed that organisations, customers and consumers perform different pre-determinable roles in relation to value co-creation, with companies supplying the product or service offering with ‘embedded’ value at a profit in order to generate value for shareholders and customers or consumers are just buyers and users (Priem 2007; Graf and Maas 2008). Adopting a value-in-exchange perspective implies that organisations are
omnipotent in relation to what constitutes value for customers and consumers. Such a position assumes that organisations are able to deliver market offerings with embedded value to passive customers and consumers through the consumption experience or market offering (Ramaswamy 2006).

Many such uni-dimensional studies of consumer value are too “narrow,” “arcane,” and “too simplistic to explain how consumers might experience value creation in that they ignore the multi-dimensionality of the (consumer value) construct” (Sanchez-Fernandez, Iniesta-Bonillo and Holbrook 2009, p. 97). In addition, little insight is provided as to how consumer value creation might be improved, how consumer value is co-created between the buyer and seller (Moller 2006) or more critically whether consumers experience value creation as a form or exploitation, emancipation (c.f. Zwick et al. 2008; Cova and Dalli 2009) or indeed whether mutual learning occurs as posited by Jaworski and Kohli (2006).

Furthermore, many authors argue against an excessive concentration on value-in-exchange implicit in such approaches and advocate an alternative focus on value-in-use (e.g. Grönroos 2008, 2009; Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). Within the value-in-use perspective, value is seen to emerge from consumers’ processes, practices and activities, with consumers seen the ultimate creators of value (Grönroos 2008). Value-in-use thus becomes “a phenomenological experience perceived by a customer (consumer) interacting with products/service bundles in use situations” (Woodruff and Flint 2006, p. 185). According to Grönroos (2008), organisations can facilitate value creation through the delivery of value propositions or promises, as well as through their direct and indirect interactions with the customer’s (consumer’s) processes, practices and activities. Alternatively, organisations can become actively involved in consumers’ value creation processes and practices i.e. value fulfillment. Recently, for example, Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) identified twelve categories of collective consumer value creating practices present in a number of brand communities which they studied under the broad categories of social networking, community engagement, brand use and impression management. They also posit that organisations might facilitate and encourage such practices in order to facilitate value co-creation with consumers as well as consumers’ independent value creation practices.

Penaloza and Venkatesh (2006) argue that Vargo and Lusch’s (2004, 2008) exhortation to replace value-in-exchange with value-in-use represents an unnecessarily polarised and polarising position. While value-in-exchange can only exist if value-in-use has been created or emerges (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004; Grönroos 2006, 2008, 2009), Penaloza and Venkatesh (2006, p.302) present a convincing argument for conceptualising “value as created in exchange and simultaneously and sequentially in use.” Both exchange value and use value are seen as constituting sign value i.e. systems of socially and institutionally constructed shared meanings between consumers and organisations (Venkatesh, Penaloza and Firat 2006). Such a perspective recognises the economic or utilitarian notion of “what” and “what for” in consumption as well as encompassing the notion of individual and collective subjective experiences of value creation and value-in-use. Value co-creation between the organisation and consumers is therefore seen to emerge from various shared and contested meanings mutually negotiated in the marketplace (Venkatesh et al. 2006).

More recent studies of consumer value, which build on the consumer behaviour and psychology literatures, assist in further illuminating the emergent nature of “value created in exchange and simultaneously and sequentially in use” (Penaloza and Venkatesh 2006, p.302) by embracing the context specific and multi-dimensional nature of the consumer value construct (e.g. Woodruff 1997; Sweeney and Soutar 2001). Such studies recognise consumer value as a highly complex, ambiguous, cognitive-affective higher level construct (Graf and Maas 2007). However, while such approaches overcome the excessive concentration on utility which characterised earlier approaches, within the experiential perspective there is a lack of agreement with regards to the components of consumer value beyond what can be observed and the nature of the relationships between the components. Indeed, adopting an existential phenomenological perspective would suggest that it is the consumer experience of value creation itself that constitutes consumer value in a specific point of time in a specific context. Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonilla (2007, p. 444) conclude that consumer value: implies an interaction between a subject (a consumer or customer) and an object (product or service); is relative by virtue of its comparative, personal and situational nature and is preferential, perceptual and cognitive-affective.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER–THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE OF VALUE CREATION

Consumer value is derived from the “interactive relativistic preferences which shape the essence of the consumption experiences that underlie the creation of all customer (consumer) value in the sense that products perform services that provide the relevant value creating experiences” (Holbrook 2006, p. 715). However, while consumer experience is implicitly and inextricably tied to value creation or co-creation, to date, there has been limited research on how consumers individually and collectively experience value creation (Graf and Maas 2008; Sandström et al. 2008) and in particular whether consumers experience value creation as a form of exploitation, emancipation or as something more ambiguous and much more complex.

Among some of the existing studies is Arnould et al.’s (2006) framework outlining a cultural resource-based theory of the consumer which illustrates how firms use resources to co-produce value propositions and how consumers use their resources to create value-in-use as part of fulfilling their life projects. In their framework, they highlight the temporal and dynamic nature of value creation, which is also impacted by consumers’ interactions with other consumers and other firms. Another useful study is Sandström et al.’s (2008, p.121) recent conceptual framework emanating from the services marketing literature, which attempts to link consumption experience or what they term service experience to value-in-use. They view consumption experience as including both functional and emotional outcomes (or company and consumer goals in Arnould et al.’s (2006) framework) which are always individual and unique to each individual consumer, context and situation.

Building on the extent consumer experience and consumer value literature reviewed, we propose an integrative conceptual framework as an initial lens or guide for examining the consumer experience of value creation from a phenomenological perspective (Figure 1). The integrative framework seeks to address the strengths of each of the existing frameworks reviewed while also addressing their various weaknesses. Grönroos’s (2008) framework for examining value creation from a value-in-use perspective and Arnould et al.’s (2006) Firm and Consumer Resource Interaction framework provides the foundation for the integrative framework by outlining the respective roles of the consumer and the organisation in enabling value creation and co-creation. However, the discussion of firm and customer operand and operant resources is not included as S-D logic is not a central discourse to this perspective and paper. Indeed, it is posited that if an existential phenomenological perspective is adopted then it is only that which becomes figural in consumers’ narrated experiences, including those experiences revealed using...
FIGURE 1
A FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE OF VALUE CREATION

projective techniques, is the consumer experience of value creation for those particular consumers. Classifying such experiences and interactions as operand or operant does not provide further insight into the phenomenon being examined.

Caru & Cova’s (2007) continuum of consumption experience can be neatly overlaid on Grönroos’s (2008) framework, reflecting the notion that consumption experiences can be predominantly “controlled” or constructed by the organisation or by consumers themselves. Indeed, “the role of the firm changes in each stage of the continuum: from a company pursuing almost a traditional product or service marketing approach to a company adopting a holistic and immersive experiential marketing approach (thus providing immersive experiences, whereby a consumer dives into an experience that is fully developed in detail by a company), passing through a co-creation stage, in which a company provides the consumer with the basic platform and raw materials that are then being used by the consumer to mould and obtain his/her own experience” (Gentile, Spiller, and Noci 2007 p. 397).

The addition of Sandstrom et al.’s (2008) framework emphasises value-in-use or the value created in exchange and simultaneously and sequentially in use which emerges from the consumption experience. The value created by consumers may be influenced by and derive from the activities and practices of many actors within the consumer’s lifeworld, including other consumers e.g. in a brand community (Schau et al. 2009, Arnould et al. 2006) and/or multiple organisations (Arnould et al. 2006). Sandstrom et al. (2008) categorise the organisation’s value proposition into functional and emotional dimensions. The individual consumer and situational filter within the Sandstrom et al. (2008) framework could be seen to refer to the consumer(s) relevant phenomenological frame of reference at a specific point of time in the particular consumption context. Furthermore, the functional value proposition might be considered to broadly relate to the notion of economic value in Sanchez-Fernandez, Iniesta-Bonillo and Holbrook’s (2009) consumer value framework while the emotional value proposition might be seen to include hedonic value in Sanchez-Fernandez et al.’s (2009) framework. However, both economic (functional) and hedonic (emotional) value constructs are viewed as self or individual consumer orientated constructs. The integration of Sanchez-Fernandez et al.’s (2009) consumer value framework further develops the alternative view that value propositions may include individual, collective, extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions. The value that emerges during the consumption experience will depend on the consumer(s) situation, context and phenomenological frame of reference. The addition of Arnould et al.’s (2002) continuum incorporates the various firm and consumer activities and roles before, during and after the consumption experience. The framework also recognises that the consumer experience of value creation in a particular consumption context is situated in consumers’ lifeworld contexts.

DISCUSSION

Woodruff (1997) exhorts marketing scholars to develop “variations in customer value theory to help us understand how customers perceive value in different contexts” by delving “deeply into the world of customers’ product use in their situations” (p.150). In this article, we present a new framework for examining the consumer experience of value creation from a phenomenological perspective (see Figure 1). To date, all of the various frameworks reviewed and integrated into the framework presented have not been tested empirically, with the exception of Sanchez-Fernandez et al.’s (2009) framework which examined consumer value in services in the context of diners in an Australian restaurant. Thus the operationalisation of the framework in different contexts will contribute to its induc-
tive adaptation and further conceptual and empirical development.

For the proposed operationalisation of the framework, a narrative analysis could be undertaken in order to analyse the verbal and digital narratives (eWOM) relating to i-Phone application users (i.e. consumers) experiences of value creation. Specifically, the study could examine how i-Phone users co-create a specific i-Phone application with a particular application developer in order to facilitate consumer-to-consumer (C2C) exchange within a specific community of users of the application. Consumers reveal their experiences of value creation in different contexts through personal narratives which convey the phenomenologically determined meaning and sense making of their subjective experiences and realities (Polkinghorne 1988; Shankar et al. 2001; Webster and Mertova 2007). Within the narrative structure, the interdependence of events, their importance and structure will make the temporal, spatial and character details relating to consumers’ experiences of value creation in relation to the development and consumption of the iPhone application explicit to the consumers concerned as well as the researcher (McKee 1997). In accordance to the phenomenological perspective, consumers’ experiences of value creation are viewed as subjective as opposed to objective realities which are co-created between the storyteller (consumer), the interviewer and/or the reader.

The proposed empirical study could employ offline and online phenomenological or lifeworld interviews to explore the individual and collective consumer experiences of value creation in relation to real-time C2C i-Phone application development and use. In addition, Event Based Narrative Inquiry Technique (EBNIT) (Helkkula and Pihlstrom, 2010) which combines Narrative Inquiry principles and Critical Incident Techniques (CIT) could be used to analyse the consumer narratives obtained through various online and offline phenomenological interviews as well as the blog postings of the community of application users who were involved in developing the i-Phone application with the iPhone application developer. In addition, the narratives relating to the i-Phone application users’ consumption of the application could be examined using EBNIT in combination with metaphor elicitation. According to Helkkula and Pihlstrom (2010), metaphors combined with lived critical and imaginative events help illuminate consumers’ imagined future, current and past experiences of value creation. Furthermore, metaphors assist in soliciting and interpreting unspoken, tacit knowledge relating to consumer experiences. In addition, the longitudinal perspective provided by consumer blogs could reveal how the community of application users individually and collectively experience value creation in relation to the iPhone application in their lifeworld contexts and intersubjectively influence and make collectively sense of such experiences.

CONTRIBUTION

The first contribution of the proposed operationalisation of the integrative framework will be an improved understanding of the consumer experience of value creation from a longitudinal perspective. Increasingly, organisations are recognising that “the consumer is no longer a devourer of value but a producer of meanings, life experiences, identities and value” (Firat and Dholakia 2006, p. 140). Both previous and future anticipated experiences are mutable and embodied in our current experiences thus necessitating a longitudinal view of the consumer experience of value creation. In addition, both the tacit and explicit nature of consumer experience needs to be considered within such a longitudinal perspective.

The second contribution will be an improved understanding of how consumers, both individually and collectively, create and co-create value in different contexts. It is recognised that consumption “is not isolated from the rest of the consumer’s world rather
it is embedded in that world, the product (or service) is closely related to the person’s feelings, other products, relationships of the person, the consumer’s society, the consumer’s whole life world” (Addis and Holbrook 2001, p.62 ). Penaloza and Venkatesh (2006 p.311) forcefully advocate consideration of consumer context and call for a “re-centering on consumers in the contexts of their lives in order to better understand the subjective meanings and values of consumers and better appreciate the place of market activity in their lives.” This however does not deem it acceptable for organisations to engage with consumers to co-create value and then to unilaterally appropriate their immaterial labour for their own commercial objectives (c.f. Zwick et al. 2008; Cova and Dalli 2009). An ongoing meaningful dialogue between consumers and organisations on consumers own terms is required in order to negotiate the terms of engagement or indeed non engagement on behalf of both parties (Jaworski and Kohli 2006).

The third contribution is an improved understanding of the role of the organisation in relation to value co-creation. Within the framework presented, the organisation’s role is one of facilitating value co-creation (Prahala and Ramaswamy 2003). In order for organisations to co-create value propositions which are meaningful for consumers, they need to understand past, current and anticipated individual and collective consumer experiences of value creation within consumers’ social frameworks and contexts, or using Heidegger’s (1962 [orig. 1927]) terminology, the ‘totality of the human-being-in-the-world’. It is necessary for organisation to appreciate how consumers share and negotiate meanings in the marketplace by considering the complex sign value derived from value-in-use and value-in-exchange (Venkatesh et al. 2006). Both parties shape the conversation and should mutually agree what the nature of value proposition and value co-creation process should or might be (Jaworski and Kohli 2006).

**CONCLUSION**

In this paper we have presented a framework to explore the consumer experience of value creation using a phenomenological perspective. Viewing the consumer experience of value creation through the lens of existential phenomenology may initially appear problematic. This results from the logical extension of existential phenomenology’s proposition that we as individuals and consumers inhabit our unique phenomenological worlds and are in a constant state of “becoming” and continuously adding to our “stock of knowledge” which accumulates and changes over time (Thompson et al. 1989). Following this thought process might lead to the conclusion that all human experience and by extension, consumer experience, is non comparable (Hirschman and Holbrook 1992). However, due to the inter-subjective nature of consumer experience and the “limits or horizons within which all these unique existents fall, there are structures (or themes) that can be discerned in all” (MacQuarrie 1972 cited in Hirschman and Holbrook 1992, p. 42).

The central focus remains that what is experienced by consumers, both individually and collectively, is the consumer experience. The underlying imperative of this proposition is that there needs to be mutual respect shown by organisations and consumers who engage in value co-creation in order for meaningful dialogue and negotiation of the terms of engagement for successful value co-creation, as judged by the consumer, to occur. The value created by consumers, independently or in conjunction with organisations, is what is present in consumers’ individual and collective experiences and can only be partially shared or partially appropriated by organisations on the consumers own terms. It does not exist as low hanging fruits of consumers’ immaterial labour to be plundered and appropriated by organisations exclusively for their commercial gain.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, consumer researchers have highlighted the active, productive and “unmanageable” consumer. From this perspective, consumers demonstrate active roles, in which they contribute to both production and consumption. Consumers can exert control over their own consumption (e.g., Firtat al. 1995), co-create value (e.g., Arvidsson 2005), or function as working consumers (Cova and Dalli 2009; Zwick, Bonsu, and Darby 2008; see also Gabriel and Lang, 2006). Thus, the boundaries are blurred between producers and consumers (Arvidsson 2005; Firtat al. 1995; Pettinger 2004). Not only does this affect the role of consumers in the ecosystem of consumption, but also corporate business strategies for dealing with active and powerful consumers.

Prior brand culture studies investigated consumers’ individual and collective projects such as self-identity, consumption experience, group identity, and continuing learning process (e.g., Fournier 1988; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Cova and Pace 2006; Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder 2009); however, there is growing interest in investigating how consumers co-create brands. While consumers may perform a role in co-creating a symbolic meaning of brand, questions remain over how consumers acquire and achieve this role of brand co-creation successfully in the marketplace. Although Muñiz and Schau (2005) demonstrate brand co-creation through the religion-like myth of stigmatic branding, we provide an additional perspective of brand co-creation through a basic drive of consumption—“fear” within sub-brand communities. Therefore, we draw the concept of spirituality along with brand culture (Schroeder 2009) in order to understand the active role of consumers in brand creation within an important, but overlooked domain.

This study proposes to show how consumers are put to work within the working consumer concept through spirituality and brand culture. We begin the paper by drawing together several concepts, including working consumers, brand culture, and spirituality, to provide a conceptual framework. We then describe a netnographic study of an amulet community. We explore how a collective group of amulet consumers co-create the spirituality of consumption, which contributes to create an individual’s “faith” in order to counter fear, from Palungjit.com [http://www.palungjit.com]. Finally, we provide an interpretation of working consumers building brands through spiritual experience. We found that consumers take the role of brand co-creators through the spirituality of consumption. In this sense, the “product” created by producers is spiritually transformed by consumer agency (Borgerson 2005). We also demonstrate how spirituality emerges and relates to consumption and helps to co-create brands.

“Working Consumers”: An Active Role of Consumers

Cova and Dalli (2009) argue that the active roles of consumers can be seen from different research streams such as consumer tribes, service dominant logic of marketing, and consumer empowerment. Although these research streams are demonstrated in different approaches, their convergence is that consumers can co-create value with companies or other consumers (Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder 2009). This value co-creation leads to the focus of consumers as workers (Arvidsson 2005). Cova and Dalli (2009) propose working consumers as an alternative idea of value co-creation that consumers employ immaterial labor as a set of competencies or resources to co-create value with companies or other consumers.

In this context, there is an overlap of production and consumption whereby consumers can play, consume or work. For example, in an online consumer auction site, eBay, individuals can engage the online community as producers/sellers and consumers/buyers. In these roles, individuals require skills and knowledge for posting competitive selling points or searching for reliable vendors (e.g., Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2010). Besides earning monetary benefits and exchanging goods from an auction, individuals can confer and earn status from their immaterial labors (Houser and Wooders 2006).

However, while the working consumer concept has sparked debate and discussion, it still lacks supporting empirical evidence. Thus, we seek to extend value creation from working consumers through brand culture and spirituality in order to understand how consumers can co-create brand value in the context of working consumers.

Brand Culture

A brand culture perspective reveals how branding has opened up to include cultural, sociological, and theoretical inquiry that both complements and complicates economic and managerial analysis of branding, and supports the contention that culture and history can provide a necessary contextualizing counterpoint to managerial and information-processing views of branding’s interaction with consumers and society (Schroeder 2009). Like working consumers, brand culture emphasizes how consumers, employees and companies play important roles in co-creation of brands (Schroeder 2009).

Within brand culture, brand value creation emerges from three sources: producers, consumers and culture (Schroeder 2009). In this process, consumers interact with cultural processes of myth-making, storytelling and appreciation to create and defend brands and their cultural meaning (e.g., Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder 2009). Holt (2004) similarly proposes cultural branding in his book How Brands Become Icons. He employs “mythmaking” as a core concept to create the cultural branding through consumer experience, storytelling and symbolic meaning. Thus, a cultural approach to branding refers to the cultural codes of brands—history, images, myths, art and theatre—that influence brand meaning and value. From a brand culture perspective, brand value creation differs from conventional branding. Brands are viewed in terms of culture, myth and history rather than through the differentiation of products and services.

Spirituality

In this section, we draw upon the concept of spirituality to shed light on an important, yet often overlooked, cultural dimension of brands, consumer behavior and value creation. Spirituality is recognized as one of the important consumption motives. Its emergence and forms are similar to the cultural production which can provide different symbolic meaning depending on the consumption context (Skousgaard 2006). Nevertheless, the limited research on spirituality and consumption restricts the understanding of the dynamics of spirituality in the marketplace (e.g., Gould 2006; Rindfleish 2005; Skousgaard 2006).

Spirituality has been found to be a unique component that influences people’s lives. It can take the form of religious or non-religious beliefs and behaviors, and it involves the accumulation
of skills, practices, artifacts and qualifications that consumers can acquire during their spiritual journey individually and collectively within a social group (Skousgaard, 2006). For example, psychological research has shown that spiritual faith can enhance patients' ability to cope with serious and chronic illnesses (e.g., Brady et al. 1999; Miller and Thoresen 2003). Furthermore, in primitive cultures, spirituality was found in everyday lives through the binding of production and consumption processes (Swanson 1960). Kovet (1991) argues that it is the separation between these two processes that leads to the diminishing of the spirituality inherent in preparing and using objects that sustain and enhance the living.

The spiritual consumption can act as an essential cultural marker that allows consumers to create cultural and social distinctions among themselves in competition for symbolic power, or recognition, within a specific subculture (Muniz and Schau 2005; Rindfleish 2005; Skousgaard 2007; Verter 2003; Ward 2003). Thus, acquiring spiritual experience can provide valuable cultural resources for social construction of meaning (Besecke 2001). We argue that spirituality has the potential to help explain the dynamics between the self, consumption process and brand. This study aims to demonstrate how consumers can become involved in the value co-creation process by sharing, exchanging and empowering their spirituality.

CASE BACKGROUND: AMULET CONSUMPTION IN THAILAND

Thailand is one of the world's largest producers, sellers and exporters of amulets, which are available in almost every Thai city and village (CNN 2009). Amulets have formed an important part of Thai cultural society since the 19th century, and wearing amulets is quite common among contemporary Thai Buddhists. Although the traditional value of amulets is to realize the praise of Buddha and strengthen Buddhism, Buddhists also wear amulets to show respect for venerable monks. Moreover, many Thai Buddhists possess amulets to achieve two main goals: (1) creating benefits--wealth, charm or success, and/or (2) acquiring protection--from death, injury or illness (Payomyong, 1986).

It is worth noting that an amulet's brand name often indicates its producer, geography of origin, history, symbolic meaning, knowledge and myth (Triyumpawai 1965). Thai consumers usually obtain their amulets at Buddhist temples after making a donation or by perusing amulet stalls in open-aired markets where an amulet may cost as little as 30 baht (US $1) to as much as 3 million baht (US $100,000) in the case of an antique or a rare amulet.

Amulets come in all styles and shapes. They can be made from a variety of materials including gypsum, clay, metal, wood, bone or plaster (Figure 1). The ingredients often include sacred ashes from incense, colored dust from a temple's bricks, and venerable monks' hair or bones. Evolving from the original forms of the image of Buddha, amulets today come in many different styles such as lockets, statuettes and coins.

To produce amulets, producers need to follow an ethical code of conduct. Under the Buddhist code of conduct, producers of amulets may not promote or advertise the objects to consumers, thus limiting their duties primarily to the production process. In many cases, venerable monks produce amulets. Although the code of conduct does not absolutely prohibit a marketing role for producers, an infringement can damage one's trustworthiness and reputation. The duty of being promoters and brand creators are often managed by consumers. Therefore, the context of amulet consumption can provide a compelling case for understanding how consumers assume the role of brand co-creators.

METHODOLOGY

We propose to understand how consumers are put into the role of workers to co-create brand through their spiritual experience from an online community organized around amulet ownership: Palungjit.com. This site is one of the most popular online Buddhism communities in the world, with 290,171 members as of December 2009 (Palungjit.com 2009). We conducted the empirical netnographic study by observing two sub-brand communities: Kruba In (1,987 posts since January 2009, with 61,203 views) and Luang Pu Moon (3,219 posts since April 2007, with 203,320 views). The term “Kruba” (or “Master”) is used to address a venerable monk in the North of Thailand, whereas “Luang Pu” is used to address a senior venerable monk in general.

We chose these two online amulet communities for several reasons. First, two of the co-authors have a great deal of experience in the amulet phenomenon. Second, the intersection of spirituality and commerce found in these communities provide a useful case for studies in brand culture. Third, the online fora provide much discourse around consumption, brands and spirituality. Finally, amulet producers generally refrain from marketing or branding their amulets--thus amulets offer intriguing objects of consumer co-creation.

We employed different perspectives of analysis in this study through the lens of identity—with a focus on the cultural dualisms of masculinity and femininity and insider and outsider. One co-author
of this article is a male member of these sub-brand communities, while another is female. We employed participant and non-participant observation to collect data of working consumers as “recognized cultural members” (Kozinets 2002) by gaining permission from a community administrator. We also used personal messaging (PM) to follow up on additional data from prominent informants.

**FINDINGS: BRAND CO-CREATION THROUGH THE MYTH OF AMULETS**

In general, we found that consumers obtain the promotional roles and employ different spiritual strategies to co-create myth of venerable monks and brand value of amulets. In this section, we present the findings by demonstrating the process of brand co-creation through spiritual experience.

**Process of Brand Co-Creation through Spiritual Experience**

After reading and participating in these communities, we developed a framework to demonstrate a process of brand co-creation through myth-making and the production process that form and co-create a spiritual experience. As presented in Figure 2, the findings are divided into two levels: (1) a collective level, and (2) an individual level. Those myths are employed to co-create brand value within each sub-brand community. The spiritual experience is collectively formed to solve an individual’s life goals—by influencing the motivations that derive from fear and desire.

On the individual level, the linkage between faith and fear leads to desire and drives consumers to achieve their life goals. We do not consider consumer fear as an emotional aspect of the consumer experience (Havlena and Holbrook 1986). We instead view fear and desire as “Kilesa” (Wattanasuwan and Elliott 1999) or Buddhism moral’s drive of consumption. We found that consumers consume amulets to eliminate their fear of poverty, loneliness, death and any harm as mentioned in the following section. Faith is believed to modulate individual’s motivations—the primal ones of “fear” and “desire.”

On the collective level, working consumers need to sacrifice themselves by supplying effort and financial support. They are the key in joining spirituality and the production process to co-create the brand through myth-making stories. Their efforts enhance the faith of consumers that generates their desire in particular amulets. This faith is a collective benefit, but also an individual’s own, from spiritual experience—their belief toward something that can help them achieve their life goals. In this context, spiritual experience is accumulated and delivered through objects (amulets) as faith that consumers believe a particular amulet can facilitate achievement of their life goals.

**Spiritual Experience.** The spiritual experience discoursed in the communities is authentic experience with each venerable monk: personal meeting, sign, benefit, miracle and so forth. The spiritual experience is usually shared within the community by forming or co-creating the myth of venerable monks through the objects—amulets. The spiritual experience as a way of brand co-creation is formed in several different ways.

First, the **Myth of the Buddhist Saint** revolves around unpreserved bodies and relics. The myth of the Buddhist Saint can be evidenced from the venerable monks’ unpreserved bodies when they pass away. Unpreserved bodies of venerable monks tend to be kept in a clear coffin for their disciples—and other Buddhists—to worship. However, some bodies are cremated at a later date—Kruba In’s body was contained in a clear coffin for four years before he was cremated in 2007.

Both Kruba In and Luang Pu Moon are believed to be Buddhist Saints because of their unpreserved bodies. However, Luang Pu Moon’s disciples do not employ this myth as brand co-creation, while Kruba In’s disciples do. Members share the myth of Kruba In and also exhibit pictures of his unpreserved body. After Kruba In’s death, his hair and bones became relics, which is a symbol of becoming a Buddhist Saint. During the production process, some parts of the relic were mixed as the key ingredient to produce the valuable Kruba In amulet series. The following post is an example of the myth of the Buddhist Saint:

“…after discussion with Khun Numtip yesterday, I went home to look in a casket which I kept Kruba In’s hairs...
Co-Creation through Fear, Faith and Desire

As mentioned in the post above, Wannabexcite shares the myth of the Buddhist Saint’s relic through Kruba In’s hairs from his collection. Numthip, a fellow member, posted his collection of hair relics to support Wannabexcite’s post as shown in Figure 3. Moreover, another member, Chakapong, has supported this discussion by posting Kruba In’s cremains, which have evolved into relics in crystal form.

Another post from Specialized also extends the myth of the Buddhist Saint. Specialized claims he witnessed Kruba In’s golden body in his dream, which he later found that his dream became true: Kruba In’s disciples had coated pure gold layers on his unputrefied body before he was cremated (see Figure 4). In Specialized’s dream, Kruba In was sleeping in his bedroom. Posts from Wannabexcite and Specialized are the co-creation of the myth that is evidenced through the relics and unputrefied body. These posts contribute to collectively increase the belief and faith in these particular venerable monks.

Second, the Spirituality of Amulets: supernatural power of creation and protection. As mentioned earlier, amulets are believed to benefit possessors in two major ways: creation and protection. These benefits cited in an amulet’s myth are the prominent spirituality that is believed to exist in nearly all amulets. This myth shows how consumers consume the spiritual experience from their venerable monks.

(1) Creation of Benefits. Most consumers desire to become rich. To gain financial benefits, some believe that possessing amulets will help them gain the experience of spirituality as shown in the following post:

“My friend told me that Luang Pu Moon’s amulet is the best for bringing fortune and good luck. I had a business problem with my sales volume shrinking … since I got this amulet, my sales have dramatically increased” HAWAIIO (April 30, 2007).

HAWAIIO shares her direct spiritual experience from the Luang Pu Moon amulet that she obtained following her friend’s suggestion. She mentions that the Luang Pu Moon amulet helped increase her sales. In the following post, another member supports HAWAIIO by mentioning his lottery success:

“… I began collecting Luang Pu Moon amulets after reading Luang Pu Moon’s biography and his supernatural power … I have won the lotto 5 times in 4 months (I had never won before). … I am very lucky because of Luang Pu Moon’s extraordinary power … not only obtaining good fortune, but also having a good job, family life …” Piccachoo (February 22, 2008).

Piccachoo supports HAWAIIO’s post on the contribution of spiritual experience from Luang Pu Moon amulets, which gave him luck to win the lottery. These stories strengthen members’ belief in the mythical power of the amulets, which they believe can help them succeed in obtaining their desires, particularly on these two cases of gaining financial benefits.

(2) Protection. Another contribution of amulets is the protection of possessors from any harm. This benefit is one of the basic goals for any humans. In the following post, a survivor’s friend described this myth of amulets following an accident:

in for worshipping. Some hairs have evolved into clear crystal…” Wannabexcite (February 6, 2009).

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“…she was driving and dozed off…she heard a sound ‘Wake up.’ She then woke up and hit the brakes, but it was too late. Her car crashed into a truck…this is a miracle from her Kruba In’s amulet, which protected her from major injury…” Wannabexcite (January 26, 2009).

Wannabexcite extends this myth by attaching pictures of the accident and telling the story of the survivor from the car with pictures showing the crashed car. Many members believe Kruba In’s supernatural power, or “Baramee,” saved this survivor’s life. This story contributes to the collective accumulation of the strength of the myth of amulets—that they can save people from harm, one of the most basic fears of all humans. Venerable monks and amulets embody faith that consumers believe.

(3) Supernatural Power: The myth of supernatural power spreads through word-of-mouth by disciples who have direct spiritual experiences. This myth can reinforce the spirituality and faith in amulets because many members believe the supernatural power of venerable monks can be transformed into amulets. Moreover, the greater such power a venerable monk obtains, the greater power his amulets have.

Supernatural power tends to emerge in the form of a miracle or portent. On one occasion, for instance, Kruba In told his visiting disciples, who were preparing to leave, to stay at the monastery a bit longer, though he offered no reason. They later learned that a chemical explosion had occurred on their exit route at the same time they were preparing to leave. This incident has made them believe in the venerable monk’s supernatural power.

Production process as value proposition. In this study, we found that the production process plays an important role as a value proposition: a promise from producers to customers that products or services could help them create value for themselves (Vargo and Lusch 2004). The evidence from our empirical study found that the production process of amulets, including incantation, material, quality, and quantity, could play a role as brand identity and a source of brand co-creation. Members can extend the discussion and co-create symbolic meaning of amulet consumption—as also found in the Apple Newton brand community (Muñiz and Schau 2005). We believe this process is the key discourse in this study. Moreover, we demonstrate the additional process of myth making through “endorsement” and “exhibition” that consumers employ to co-create the myths of Kruba In and Luang Pu Moon.

First, an endorsement process characterizes brand co-creation through the myth of amulets by having other great venerable monks, amulet specialists or other prominent people involved in endorsements. In Kruba In’s discourses, the endorsement is used as the brand co-creation to increase the spirituality of Kruba In disciples and amulet possessors. For example, Krid99 posts many quotes from the greatest venerable monks, who are very well known and highly respected by millions of disciples, to endorse Kruba In as seen below:

“…you should go to worship Kruba In at Chiang Mai, and learn from Kruba In. Kruba In is the great venerable monk…Luang Por Kuay Chutinnataro, Wat Kositaram, Chainath” Krid99 (January 20, 2009).

“…Kruba In had a pure mind (attaining nirvana) by Kruba Jao Chaiewongsapattana, Wat Priputtabat Huay Tom, Lumpoon” Krid99 (January 20, 2009).

Krid99 quotes Kruba Jao Chaiewongsapattana, who mentioned having a pure mind—attaining nirvana. This means Kruba In released himself from the samsaric cycle, which is explained by Wattanasuwan and Elliott (1999) as the cycle of birth-death-rebirth. Only a person with good morals, a pure mind, and a good meditation practice can attain nirvana and be freed from the samsaric cycle.

This kind of endorsement is also found in Luang Pu Moon discourses when members presented Luang Pu Moon amulets to other venerable monks. The following post from a member is an example of this endorsement:

Ruk Pu mentions that Luang Pu Moon can employ supernatural powers to reinforce the production process. This is one of the myths that employ the production process into brand co-creation. This myth has co-created Pra Kring Jareonlap, one of the amulet series of Luang Pu Moon, into the most wanted and expensive amulet of his series (35,000 baht or US $1,000) (Palungjit.com 2009).

Myth-Making. Spiritual experience discourses are the interaction, sharing and co-creation of supernatural power that benefits possessors in their life goals of creation and/or protection. In addition, this process of myth storytelling praises the glory of venerable monks and also co-creates symbolic meaning of amulet consumption—as also found in the Apple Newton brand community (Muñiz and Schau 2005). We believe this process is the key discourse in this study. Moreover, we demonstrate the additional process of myth making through “endorsement” and “exhibition” that consumers employ to co-create the myths of Kruba In and Luang Pu Moon.

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With reciprocity and voluntarism (Mathwick et al. 2008), members respond to other members when they ask for information or help. Furthermore, the evidence can be seen from Wannabexcite's collections. Instead, they are willing to provide amulets free or at their faith in venerable monks. Although their discourses and knowledge, time, effort, and amulet collections, etc., to strengthen their faith in venerable monks. Although their discourses and participation may influence increases in amulet prices or the desires (Kilesa) of possession, they do not intend to sell their amulet collections. Instead, they are willing to provide amulets free or at cost. Furthermore, the evidence can be seen from Wannabexcite's response to other members when they ask for information or help. With reciprocity and voluntarism (Mathwick et al. 2008), members have chances to collect amulets and learn more about the brand story and myth of venerable monks. For working consumers like Wannabexcite, the more work they do, the prouder they are and more satisfaction they gain. These actions contribute to form the myth of brand value.

Moreover, free riders take advantage of entering the website to acquire valuable information without participation in the online community. This research therefore may face issues of validity and reliability of the storytelling from the online community. However, we attempt to choose sub-brand communities that have no business dealings or commercial transactions other than donations. This is important because to develop the spiritual experience, we found that sharing, giving and sacrificing are the main objectives of working consumers. These are important factors to support brand creation because consumers are forming the co-consuming group to achieve collective goals instead of the goals of a particular entity.

Further studies could investigate the spiritual experience and myth of brand co-creation in non-religious related communities in order to develop the strong conceptual framework of spiritual experience. Another avenue is to link spirituality with “terror management” theory, which has been used in several consumer research studies (e.g., Arndt et al. 2004; Bonsu 2003; Rindfleisch and Burroughs 2004). Future research may require quantitative inquiry to investigate the relation among faith, fear and desire toward consumption.

**DISCUSSION: SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AND CONSUMPTION**

The findings show that consumers can collectively co-create brands by employing spiritual experience, production process, myth-making and sacrifice to form faith toward brand. This study provides an additional perspective of faith creation presented by Muñiz and Schau (2005) as we demonstrate the collective co-creation process against an individual’s fear from sub-brand communities. This study also adds endorsement and exhibition into Muñiz and Schau’s (2005) storytelling of myth-making. Moreover, this study also provides another perspective to understand consumer behavior by employing insights from Buddhist morality.

We conclude that, in general, most consumers have fears such as loneliness, poverty, injury and death. The spirituality discourse can transform fear into faith. In this way, faith is a belief in something that can assuage fear as well as arouse desires that Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003) mention as a passion for achieving their life goals. Fear can also generate desire or individuals’ life projects. For example, some consumers are eager not to be viewed as unstylish among their peers. They may then buy fashionable clothing. On the other hand, faith is the consumers’ belief in brands or objects that can be employed to achieve their life goals or as identity projects, i.e., employing objects to construct their “self” (Belk, 1988) or collecting identity such as in the spirit of Liverpool FC fans (Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder 2009).

The spiritual discourses in the community can strengthen brand value and arouse members’ desires to possess the products. In this context, consumers have faith through the myth-making stories. They believe amulets can help them achieve their life goals—riding them of their fears or achieving their desires. Myth-making is co-created through the sharing of direct worship or face-to-face meetings with venerable monks, as well as the history of each amulet’s production and acquisition. Moreover, the production process can be used as value proposition to co-create the myth of brand. Consumer discussions also strengthen brand value through history making of brand co-creation, whereby consumers tend to share their spiritual experiences with the collective group.
In this spiritual aspect of consumption, myth plays an important role to co-create brand value through storytelling within the community (Muñiz and Schau 2005). This process is the sacrifice that members participate in as they co-create the spirituality of consumption without expecting of monetary benefits in return. As mentioned by Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder (2009), sacrifice can clarify Cova and Dalli’s (2009) question why consumers co-create without getting paid for their efforts. It may be that whenever consumers get paid, their co-creation of myth and spiritual experience are not reliable, and the discourses are devalued.

In the case of the Thai amulet market, cultural codes of brand, myths, history and storytelling can be seen through the process of the collective community. This involves not only how brands interact with culture, but also how brands interact with both culture and the collective consumers in order to co-create brand value (Schroeder 2009). This is similar to the way consumers employ objects to create symbolic meaning in their consumption (e.g., Miller 1998).

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Social Comparison of Less Than Ideal Images in Television Advertising: An Exploratory Study of Masculine Gender Identity

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There is a growing body of research regarding women and men that supports “the belief that advertising imagery may have broad social consequences” (Gulas and McKeage 2000, 17). The objectification of females has been the focus of much research that arose out of concern for the depiction of ultra-thin models that might encourage anorexia among females; however, the emergence of research regarding masculine gender identity with particular emphasis on comparison to ideal male body image and its relationship to advertising is more recent (Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia 2000).

The ideal male image as portrayed in the media has traditionally been associated with power and independence, among other qualities. For example, Aubrey and Taylor describe the ideal male as portrayed in magazines as “muscular, wealthy, and prestigious” (2009, 29). Such attributes regarding size and masculinity go beyond the media as standards including rugged individualism, adventurous spirit, risk taking, and displays of physical prowess, and having a high degree of personal autonomy are ascribed to successful males (Kimmel 1996).

Agliata and Tantleff-Dunn (2004) report that men became depressed and dissatisfied with their bodies when exposed to advertisements depicting muscular idealized male images. Such findings assume that the ideal muscular image of contemporary masculinity is one that males desire to emulate, but perhaps cannot. The presence of attractive male models, sports figures and celebrities in advertisements represents this societal ideal. However, what happens when less than ideal images, like the cavemen who appear in a long-running U.S. advertising campaign, are represented? If looking at unattainable idealized images is depressing, then looking at less than ideal images should be uplifting or at least provide relief regarding the feeling of having to live up to the idealized other. In this article, I present research into the impact on male consumers of advertising that presents less than ideal images of masculinity in television advertising. I seek to investigate the ways in which males compare themselves to images in advertising of cavemen, wolves and men publicly humiliated with their pants down. This research contributes to our understanding of the role of advertising in contemporary society with particular regard for the impact it has on masculine gender identity.

Multifarious Representations of Masculine Gender Identity

Alperstein (2006) posits that less than ideal images began to proliferate in US and UK advertising during the mid-1990s, a trend that may be rooted in societal changes regarding men’s roles. Traditional masculinity, represented by images of masculinity and strength, gave way to a more volatile gender identity that wavers between the traditional and the new. Barbara Ehrenreich describes in The Hearts of Men (1983) how the ideology of man as breadwinner shifted toward a newer consumer role in that some respects serves as an emancipatory fantasy. Holt and Thompson refer to such fantasies as “pleasurable tensions” (2004, 426). Advertising, as a symbolic form of consumption serves to feed such fantasies or tensions by representing shifting norms. As a reflection of a changing symbolic meaning system men are beckoned to utilize advertising as one means to manage their identity. Patterson and Elliot suggest identity management, and in that the inversion of the male gaze, provokes the following psychological reflection: “when the gaze is turned on itself, men are more likely to move through a range of responses such as rejection, identification and desire” (2002, 241). Schroeder and Zwick counter that the gaze has not so much become inverted but rather expanded [sic] (2004).

As several standards regarding masculine gender identity co-exist, it is likely that advertisers will push boundaries in order to develop creative deviations that invite elaborations on the part of male consumers. In this way Schroeder and Zwick conclude that advertising representations may be analyzed at the intersection of representational conventions, changing definitions of target markets, and cultural politics of gender (2004, 29). Such representational complexity renders masculine gender identity problematic, as male consumers must work through various images that range from the ideal, which traditionally constituted its strength and thus legitimized its hegemonic status, to the less than ideal, which may be indicative of an acutely troubled psychology of the male.

Social Comparison

What I have set out to do in this study is investigate how male consumers of advertising compare themselves to less than ideal images of masculinity. Such consumer responses fit within the rubric of social comparison, a field of research that examines psychological phenomena initiated by the presence of at least one “other” (Staple and Blanton 2007, 2). The other to which Staple and Blanton refer can be “actual, imagined, or even implied,” making consumer responses to images of masculinity in advertising a prime arena in which to see this theory at work (2007, 1).

Much research has taken place since Festinger (1954) developed the theory of social comparison that described comparing oneself to another as a basic human need. Over the years, the theory has been expanded and revised to go beyond self evaluation to include self improvement or enhancement, varying degrees of interest regarding social comparison among individuals, and consideration of an individual’s social environment (Wood 1989). With regard to the latter, social comparisons are influenced by social environment when one makes upward (someone who is better off), downward (someone worse off) or lateral comparisons (someone like me). Considering an idealized image—celebrity or sports figure—prevalent in advertising, one would expect that comparisons would be made in the upward direction, although it is clearly possible that the consumer will evaluate the idealized image as one that is unattainable (Hirschman and Thompson 1997). Viewing images of those less fortunate, however, directs comparison downward, leading consumers to feel superior to others (Dreeze and Nunes 2009). Complexity grows when one considers that a viewer could evaluate an image of an inferior other as beneath him or worse off than him, and therefore the evaluation might be self-enhancing. Depending on the ways in which individuals construe the comparison, there may be strong identification with the objectified other, in which case the comparison may be downward, perhaps threatening self-esteem or upward depending on the context of consumption. Generally, however, research has found that “downward comparisons tend to be self-enhancing while upward comparison are generally threatening to well-being and self-esteem” (Lyubominsky and Ross 1997, 1141).

The social costs extracted through the social comparison of advertising images among females have been demonstrated, however, a full understanding of the impact of advertising images among males has yet to emerge (Richins 1991; Martin and Gentry 1997). Research has indicated that cross-sex comparisons are an important part of the social comparison equation, for example when...
a male looks at the advertising image of a very attractive female and evaluates her as someone with whom he would have no chance of developing a relationship, perhaps threatening his self esteem (Aubrey and Taylor 2009). There is, however, no research that focuses specifically on downward comparisons to less than ideal images of males in advertising. The current study is conducted with the goal of describing and explaining how males use less than ideal images from television advertising for social comparison and in the process to negotiate their masculinity. It is intended to complement other research that has focused on idealized advertising imagery with interest in the construction of masculine gender identity. Specifically, the research addresses the following questions:

1. How do men compare themselves to the representation of less than ideal images in television advertising, particularly when they are portrayed as cavemen, wolves or in other socially embarrassing ways?
2. How do men negotiate the meanings of those less than ideal images given their complex and contradictory nature?

METHODOLOGY

In-depth interviews were conducted with twelve respondents; each interview lasted approximately one hour. The respondents were a purposive sample of undergraduate male college students ranging in age between 18-22 years who were recruited based on having no special interest in advertising or marketing. A purposive sample such as this is deemed appropriate for an exploratory study of responses to television advertising because of this cohort's involvement in brands. Peterson’s study of the use of college students in social science research found that college students were “slightly but consistently more homogeneous (less variable) than those of nonstudent subjects” (2001, 458). The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Expanding
on the procedure advocated by Mick and Buhl (1992), informants were provided the opportunity to respond to six advertisements in a way they might derive meaning from viewing television advertisements in real viewing settings, but was not meant to mimic actual television viewing (Figure 1).

The advertisements featured products that ranged from auto insurance and fast food to beer and soft drinks, the messages of which were directed toward male consumers. Respondents were asked about their general reactions to the commercials in order to elicit their understanding of the advertiser’s message and their interpretation of the message, with particular interest in the ways in which respondents compared themselves to the key images in the commercials. Additional questions related to the respondents’ generalized attitudes toward advertising, and there were questions regarding the respondents’ self-perception with particular regard for body consciousness.

The questions were similar to those utilized by Mick and Politi (1998) and replicated in Phillips’ (1997) study. Similar to previous research, the objective was to elicit the “meanings of visual advertising images” (Phillips 1997, 79). While these previous studies were not concerned with gendered interpretations, gendered meanings are the interest of this present study. Therefore, additional questions were developed in order to ascertain dimensions of social comparisons. Analysis follows the approach taken by Elliot and Elliot (2005) in their study of the idealized images of male body in advertising, which is based on pattern coding techniques. Such techniques, which were developed by Miles and Huberman, look for recurring themes that are explanatory in nature, what the researchers refer to as “repeatable regularities” (1994, 69). Analyzing emergent patterns allows the researcher to describe and explain the phenomenon under study in order to provide greater understanding of some of the ways in which social comparison theory may be applied to the interpretations of television advertising by male viewers.

**FINDINGS**

**Emergent Themes**

Awareness of the “everyman” or average quality of the key figure. Respondents overwhelmingly expressed their awareness and understanding of the average qualities of the key figures in the advertisements they viewed. This was something to be celebrated and appreciated. Reflecting on the Pepsi commercial featuring comedian Dave Chappelle, who in the context of the commercial is stripped of his pants by an errant vacuum cleaner, respondents expressed their awareness of the contradiction between the character’s average physical qualities and his social role in the commercial.

I wouldn’t say he’s muscular (speaking of Dave Chappelle). He’s relatively skinny and he looked like he’s about average height. He’s not like a completely attractive person. And he’s not handsome the way a male model would be. He’s recognizable…a lot of people know him. He looks like he’s in an everyday situation. For a lot of commercials there are super models and you’re sitting there saying ‘Oh, not everybody looks like that’, so it’s good to see a normal average looking guy drinking Pepsi, so people can relate to it.

In a long-running campaign for GEICO auto insurance that features cavemen to illustrate how easy their online service is to use, one respondent commented:

Other than their faces, I’d say they looked like normal males. They looked lean and average size, around 6 ft. I’d say. I think the fact that from the neck down they looked completely normal, like a normal man, and then up there was the really ugly face…the beards and really long hair.

In addition to cavemen, men are depicted in the advertisements as lower animals such as wolves, as was the case with the commercial for the Honda Pilot, featuring a man who demonstrated wolf-like behavior. Respondents focused on his behavior and physical appearance.

The man in the Honda commercial looked average…flabby. I wouldn’t say his body mass index is over 30, not obese. He’s bald. I remember that. He was out of the shower shaking water off his head. He had a little bit of a gut, but nothing you can’t hide under two shirts…just the average middle aged father with a family of four.

He has a good family. A nice house. A great car--a Honda. A reliable car. He didn’t have rippling muscles. He didn’t have a six pack of abs. It’s a nice change, because I don’t have to be reminded like every time I buy underwear that I don’t look like that. I think it makes me more acceptable.

In reference to the average qualities of the character in the Honda commercial, one respondent reported:

The family goes camping every weekend. That’s not something an upper class family would likely do. Middle of the road as they come. Just Johnny next door. Let’s call him Joe the Plumber. Very middle America. I’m as middle of the road as they come. So, I guess I do relate to the guy in that way.

Identification with aspects of the key figure’s lifestyle in the commercial--Breaking free. Although respondents may not have desired to look like the less than ideal images displayed in the commercials, they repeatedly expressed an appreciation for aspects of their lifestyle: eating in nice restaurants; dressing in nice clothing; and, enjoying the freedom that being a wild animal brings. In particular, the notion of breaking free repeatedly came up in responses to the commercial for the Honda Pilot identified above.

It does show that middle class is cool or okay. Acceptable. But the chance to break free, to be wild. It was almost as if Honda Pilot was an escape route from living your life.

I think it all comes back to that guy letting loose. Although we may have the nine to five job. Because we have medical and dental benefits. Because he has a wife and two kids to take care of. Responsibilities like that. There’s always a part of you that is relieved when you have the chance to break free. Let loose. Not be confined.

I look back at my nieces and see they don’t have a care in the world and that guy in the commercial (wolf-man) he didn’t have a care in the world, which is awesome. I wish everybody could be like that. At the same time, I don’t want to be bald. I don’t want to have a gut. I don’t want to have to be taken care of exclusively by my wife because I don’t know how to interact with people. The carefree attitude is kind of nice though.

Additionally as one respondent noted in response to viewing the cavemen in the GEICO insurance commercial: “I may not want to look like him, but I sure would like to dress like him or live like him or date girls like him.”
Dissociation from the key image in the commercial. As the procedure allowed for an initial selection from the six commercials that the respondents chose to discuss, invariably respondents chose the Adidas commercial featuring David Beckham. On the surface it might be assumed that as a sports icon David Beckham would be counted among idealized images, but in this particular commercial that is part of Adidas’ “Impossible is Nothing” campaign, Beckham is offered up as a sort of everyman, a late bloomer who suffered greatly prior to his emergence as a world-class footballer. While respondents were quite aware of Beckham, his prowess on the field, and his antics off the field, they also appreciated his average size and the casual apparel he was wearing. He was the most normal looking of the key images from the advertisements. In this way, the Adidas commercial served as a safe harbor for respondents who didn’t want to, at least initially and of their own accord, compare themselves to the other less than ideal images in the study. In selecting David Beckham respondents were dissociating themselves from images of wolf men, cavemen and images of humiliation.

It has been pointed out that respondents wanted to dissociate themselves from physical attributes of several of the key characters, but not necessarily aspects of their lifestyle. As the physical attributes were so closely connected to the lifestyle depicted, it was evident that a more complex process of interpreting the mixed signals the advertisements sent was being utilized. For example, as was the case of the cavemen, respondents could appreciate their dress and aspects of their lifestyle, but not their facial features, which were incongruent with the former. In comparison, a respondent said in reference to the caveman, “I’m a hairy person. But I wouldn’t want to be like him.”

I actually kind of feel bad for the cavemen. The ad is kind of making fun of them, saying that we as people think of cavemen as simple-minded...they invented the wheel! But other than that they didn’t do that much for us. You can’t help but feel bad for them. It says that cavemen are not smart.

I think women would like it because there it is—a man being stupid. The woman (in the Honda commercial) is taking the authority in the relationship. Guys laugh because it’s funny to see guys act like animals. And I think that’s why it’s effective. It’s a vehicle that’s useable (practical). Families have pets. The purpose was the guy was almost like the pet in the family. He was shaking off after the shower like a dog. He was chasing animals. When you hear the cat on the DVD, he excitedly looks around.

In reference to the Honda commercial, one respondent said:

I suppose there’s not much he can do about it (his looks). I don’t know how much judgment I can pass on how satisfied he is with his looks. If I were him, I would not be (satisfied).

Respondents consistently referred to the cavemen, wolves and images of humiliated males as dumb or stupid, unlike themselves. While they may have found appreciation in some particular aspect of the key image’s lifestyle, respondents often asserted they would not want to be in that position socially, be physically like that, or be as irrational in their own behavior. In other words, while the respondent might report that he is attracted to the opposite sex and therefore can appreciate how the caveman “gets the girl” in the Budweiser beer commercial, and because he likes to drink beer, he can appreciate the attraction to the beverage being advertised, respondents consistently said, “I’m glad I’m not like him.” Except for the image of David Beckham, these images are perceived to be physically unattractive, there is no desire to be like them and little desire to emulate them in most respects, except when it comes to lifestyle. It is through the food they eat, the girls that are attracted to them, the clothes they wear, and the freedom to be who they are that respondents find significance; otherwise respondents dissociated themselves from their physical attributes and public manners. When it comes to social roles and relationships, respondents reported less than ideal characters were not successful—they did not meet societal expectations based on traditional masculinity. Respondents were glad to be who they are, as the images reinforced that things could be much worse for them.

DISCUSSION

The respondents in this study, after viewing the six commercials and measuring themselves against the less than ideal images displayed, felt that things could be much worse. In other words, the key figures in the commercials set the bar so low as to provide space in which these respondents found comfort. When they compared themselves to the physical grotesqueness, public exposure, and lack of manners portrayed by key figures in the commercials, respondents felt a strong sense of relief that this was happening to them, not me. Not only do such commercials provide comic relief for the viewer, but also as respondents internalize those images, they are granted a form of recompense for what may be lacking in their own lives. Respondents may not “get the girl” or have big muscles, but they can laugh at those who have even less. To experience schadenfreude is not only pleasurable, it is a payoff that advertisers provide to males who gravitate toward such depictions. Social comparison theory is useful in describing the kind of self-enhancement that respondents experienced. Newer configurations of social comparison theory suggest that individuals would evaluate those less fortunate than themselves in a way that would have upward impact on their own self-esteem (Taylor and Lobel 1989). However, the three themes that emerged in the study suggest that the route to self-enhancement was not as straightforward as the theory suggests, as respondents provided complex readings of the less than ideal images and the social situations depicted in the advertisements. Respondents may not have wanted to look like those depicted in this set of advertisements, but they like to eat well and enjoy the fantasy of uninhibited freedom that beckons them.

Less than ideal images in advertising counter-balance traditional constructions of masculinity that operate in everyday life, making interpretation of those images tenable. To make sense of the less than ideal image, the viewer must understand the implausibility of the visual depiction; all of the respondents understood that the depiction of men as cavemen, wolves and in other situations that expose them to embarrassment are presented with a sense of humor. But the visual/verbal combination provides an opportunity for further elaboration. “The point is not that each message recipient will make all of these inferences, but that the advertiser’s choice of a message that signifies the opposite of what it at first appears to signify has a destabilizing effect that liberates a variety of meanings for consideration” (McQuarrie and Mick 1996, 443). Within this rhetorical complexity the viewer replaces the meaning conventionally linked to the visual/verbal expression—men lack intelligence or men have not evolved—with a meaning that is more in comparison with the individual’s own evaluation of himself. The multifarious ways in which advertising depicts masculinity that range from idealized images to less than ideal images work to destabilize and unsettle potential meanings for males who compare themselves to those images. Therefore, advertisements require work on the part of the male viewer: move in the direction of the less than ideal
image, for example, empathizing with his low status and lack of respect; isolate and identify with only one aspect of the less than ideal image, discarding or partially disassociating himself from that aspect of the image he finds distasteful; or, reject the image as he finds comfort in the fact that the image and the situation in which the less than ideal character finds himself is not me.

Alperstein (2006) described the repeated depiction since the mid 1990s both in U.S. and UK television advertising of less than ideal images as a rhetorical technique that advertisers use to contain and control male consumers. One must consider not only the presence of such rhetorical figures, but their repeated appearances in television advertising. In this way the more male consumers encounter the figure the more effective advertisements are at dislodging the self. In other words, the motivation toward “reading” the rhetorical figures is the little effort it takes to process the metaphor. Additionally, there is pleasure to be had in processing the advertisement’s content and in that its incongruity or deviation. It would, therefore, make sense that when it comes to products for whom males make up the dominant market segment that the utilization of a less than ideal image within a campaign and across campaigns may serve the purpose of metaphorically “spreading the word” about masculinity—an unintended consequence of advertising. The fluidity of male gender identity is made increasingly possible due to the multifarious ways in which males are visualized in television advertising and the ways in which males compare themselves to those images. Ritson and Elliot maintain that “cultural meaning is constantly in transit and the symbolic meanings of advertising are transported from culture, invested into the advertising text, extracted from that text by interpretation and then finally reapplied to the cultural world through the metaphoric sense making of the interpreter” (1999, 273).

Changes in society including the fashionable male and the stay-at-home dad are among the reasons advertisers construct as Hanke suggested a hegemonic masculinity that naturalizes “social and historical relations of power and privilege” (1998, 185). Hanke does suggest that studies of masculinity need to consider how that masculinity connects to “lived forms of patriarchy within everyday life” (1998, 186). Other research (Barthel 1988 and Clarke 1995) extends our understanding of advertising’s image of a “new man” and a “gayification” within advertising. Males depicted as less than ideal may not be such an odd representation when considered within the concept of an ambiguous, vague or ambivalent masculine identity as a potentially effective communicative device of advertisers. The mixing of idealized images and less than ideal images, along with other representations, opens up masculinity to multiple ways in which males subjectively interpret and thus compare themselves to images depicted in advertising. As such, the category, masculinity, is not one thing. As is the case with race and class, masculine gender identity may not be defined simply as that which is not feminine as masculine gender identity takes on various other cultural meanings and significance.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study is limited to college-age males who represent masculinity at a crossroads: these males have the privilege of living in a relatively homogeneous setting that is extremely social, while not in a life stage where presentation of self in the workplace greatly matters. Extending the research to consider somewhat older respondents may yield different results. The open ended nature of the in-depth interviews was helpful in delving deeper into respondents thoughts and feelings; future research may build on these findings to develop a survey instrument that may be applied to a larger sample. Future research might further benefit from applying social comparison theory to social networking on the Internet as it relates to the development of masculine gender identity. As one respondent reported that he spends so much time in front of his computer that his social network has become so artificial as to make it unnecessary to care what others think as he rarely presents himself in public. As masculine gender identity shifts between the traditional and newer constructions, it is important to look at the multifarious ways advertising re-presents masculinity to male consumers and the ways in which they respond to those images, idealized ones and those that are less than ideal.

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346 / Social Comparison of Less Than Ideal Images in Television Advertising: An Exploratory Study of Masculine Gender Identity

26 (1), 37-54.


The Fantasized Masculinity: The Narrative to Construct the Masculine Ideal in Fantasy Sphere

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary society, men have been encountering the major shifts in socioeconomic forces which threaten their masculinity and eventually contribute to the development of their anxieties. Apparently, men struggle to avoid these threats and maintain their masculinity. This article explores the potential threats to men’s level of their masculinity and investigates their consumption phenomenon in which they employ symbolic consumption to construct their fantasized masculinity in their imagery. The narrative interview with college is utilized to delve into informant’s experiences and feeling in their consumption fantasy. Interpretations conceptualize men’s fantasies in which they could accomplish their idealized masculinity through such consumption experiences as decoration, uniform violence, modification of car’s appearance and costume playing.

INTRODUCTION

Culturally, men are inevitably expected to perform the masculinity role (Eagly 1995). Masculinity is culturally incorporated with the image of achievement and independence. The former image can be accomplished through occupational achievement and performing successful breadwinner role. The latter is the emotional notion in which men are able to alleviate from any influence. If these two major characteristics of being masculine become threatened, their masculine self may diminish and their sense of self-worth may be affected. This study explores the circumstances in which men’s sense of masculinity is threatened and investigates their consumption practices offering them escapism in which stigmatized men refuse from threats and reconstruct their sense of masculinity in their fantasy. In contemporary society, major socioeconomic changes have challenged the masculine identities of many men (MacInnes 1998). Routinized jobs, workplace formalization, expectation of men’s wealth and sense of inferiority to social other are essential domains threatening to men’s masculine self. Men who have suffered circumstances of emasculation in the threatening environments have struggled to reaffirm their masculinity through consumption symbolism in their imagery (Martin 2004). The paper is intended to review the socioeconomic forces that potentially threaten men’s masculinity and investigate their symbolic consumption by which they employ to transcend them into the fantasy realm in which their ideal masculinity is constructed.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

According to the gender role, men are expected to maintain their masculinity (Kilmartin 1994). However, while attempting in doing so, men may experience threatening circumstances which could potentially condense their masculinity (MacInnes 1998). Thus, this study intends to depart from the masculinity construct and the theoretical background of potential threats to masculine self. In the interpretation, consumer fantasy as a consumption experience will be investigated in order to understand its operationalization in remasculinizing the self.

Dynamic of Masculinity

From sociological perspective, masculinity incorporates four major characteristics comprising of antifeminity; status and achievement; inexpressiveness and independence; and adventurousness and aggressiveness (Brannon 1976). Antifeminity is referred to the notion by which men are expected to avoid behaviors conceived as feminine. In term of status and achievement, men have to be successful in what they perform, in order to receive the respect and admiration from other, especially sport and work. So-doing is regarded as a mean to satisfy their self-esteem. For inexpressiveness and Independence, men are not supposed to disclose their emotional feelings but rather are expected to self-control, solve associated problems by themselves and inhibit illustrating any sign of weakness. Finally, men are supposed to be Adventurous and Aggressive and able to assume physical risks and handle violent situation. Basically, most men are raised to be unemotional, task and achievement oriented, aggressive, fearless, and status seeking (Kilmartin 1994). Ostensibly, men with high masculinity are able to exert greater influences on other than those with less masculinity and, eventually, also receive many social rewards such as social recognition of their excellence in occupation or sport. As such, they become empowered and achieve superiority in the social competition game (Watson and Helou 2006). On the other hand, men who do not have resources sufficient to perform masculinity roles are culturally criticized as unmasculine; some may be tagged as “sissy,” and may generally experience social stigmatization. Traditionally, men are expected to be dominant, independent, self-confident, assertive, strong, and ambitious (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). If all of these dispositions cannot be maintained, men’s sense of masculinity may be damaged. When male consumers encounter circumstances in which the masculine self is threatened, they experience a sense of personal meaningless (Giddens 1991) and powerlessness (Henry and Caldwell 2006) which could destroy their sense of masculinity (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). It could be noted that masculinity ideology is also constitutes by powerfulness, dominance and superiority over other men. In the continuous flow of threats to masculinity, men are struggling to maintain all these masculinity attributes in order to reaffirm their sense of masculinity.

Potential Threats to Masculinity

Threats from Organizational Formalization. In a workplace, one is not only expected to comply with an organization’s rules and regulations but is also forced to obey the supervisor’s commands (Koslowsky and Stashefsky 2005). Certainly, there is no exception for men under these circumstances because workplace factors even more strongly influence men’s psychological distress than women’s (Simon 1992). Under this pressure, men are likely to be forced to conform with all those formalizations and then lose their own power and individuality since their behaviors and attitudes are controlled by these organizational standardizations (Rahim 1989; Robbins and Coulter 2005). Since highly centralized organizations entails the creation of rigid rules and procedures, men possibly appears to encounter with the development of stress level because of lesser control and little flexibility (Sohi et al. 1996; Nasurdin et al. 2006). Empirical evidence also correlates jobs that are low in control and high in demands to psychological distress indicators (Karasek and Theorell 1990). Accordingly, men who work in the working environment in which the degree of control over other is relatively low and the extend to which they are expected to follow their leader’s command and regulations appears to experience psychological distress since their sense of independence and dominance are restrained.

Threats from Breadwinner Ideology. Men make sense of
masculine self by not only centering on developing competence and knowledge, and in some degree on physical prowess and athletic ability (Kahn et al 1985) but also focusing on performing the breadwinner role with the ability to level up the social status ladder and the responsibility as a dependable provider to their families (Caveliti 1989; Holt and Thompson 2004). Similar to this premise is the construct of machismo which is conceptualized in term of men’s self respect and responsibility (Diaz-Guerrero 1975). As such, traditional men are expected to approach the breadwinner ideal through an immense investment in professional area to produce monetary resources which could enhance the family well-being (Besen 2007). Even though, the role of a good provider is required to construct a masculine self (Gould 1974), it paradoxically appears to be harmful to the masculinity because breadwinner role operates to limit men’s internalization for the desired masculinity (i.e. independence, adventurousness) (Mitchell 1996) and the rebel side of masculinity (Holt and Thompson 2004).

**Threat from Expected Level of Wealth.** Gould (1974) ascertains the positive relationship between the size of paycheck and masculinity. As such, richness becomes one of indicative attributes of the level of masculinity. That is, the higher the income a man earns or the richer the man becomes, the greater degree of masculinity a man possesses. In the similar fashion, by encountering social expectations, men are anxious not only on achieving the breadwinner ideology (Holt and Thompson 2005), but also generating the economic capital which is employed to manifest their social status in the desired social group (Bourdieu 1984). If fail to do so, men could experience stress and anxiety about their lesser degree of masculinity (Kimmel 1996).

**Threats from Sense of Inequality to Other Men.** The traditionally established masculinity is incorporated with superiority and dominance (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). These masculine attributes could then be threatened by an activated social comparison with superior other (Wheeler and Miyake 1992). After an exposure to social comparison, ones may experience the contrast effect in which they become frustrated and depressed if they find themselves negatively discrepant from the comparison target (Blanton 2001). As such, if perceptually worse than their comparison target, men may encounter with marginalization and experience the perceived sense of inferiority to their counterpart. Finally, their feeling of superiority diminishes and the difficulty to create dominance may result.

**Fantasy and Consumption Symbolism.**

**Fantasy as Source of Escapism.** The consumption fantasy is regarded as “a break from established reality” which expresses itself in the arena of the imaginary (Todorov 1973 in Martin 2004). That is, when individuals encounter with societal forces threatening their self, they painstakingly seek the solutions to escape from threatening reality and create their fantasy sphere in which their desired self is peacefully fulfilled (Kozinets 2001). Possibly, once having been attacked by threats to their masculinity essential to represent manhood, men cope with this circumstance by immersing themselves into the fantasy stage in which they could also alleviate from masculinity-related anxieties (Luomala 2002) and also reestablish their masculine self. According to the review, consumption fantasy, by its nature, could be viewed as compensatory consumption in that the need for one thing (the fantasized level of masculinity) can be compensated by another (the fantasized consumption constructed in one’s imagination) (Grunert 1993).

**Fantasy Activation through Consumption Symbolism.** Epistemologically, ones make sense of themselves by consuming products and brands with symbolic meanings representing who they are (actual self image) and even who they desire to be (ideal self image) (Callero 2003). According to the premise of symbolic consumption, if men’s level of masculinity is likely to be weakened by different social pressures, they then struggle to look for the symbolic resources from consumptions to achieve the desired level of masculinity (Wattanasuwan 2005). However, fantasy does not totally secede from reality (Martin 2004; Sherry and Schouten 2002). This is because symbolic objects operate to mediate between the reality and fantasy (Zizek 1997). Accordingly, consumers employ symbolic consumption available in their reality to immerse themselves into the fantasy sphere. Thus, consumer experience is occasionally fused in the realm between reality and fantasy (Martin 2004; Sherry et al. 2001). By constructing the masculinity ideal, men, therefore, employ consumption symbolism to facilitate the access to the fantasy realm in which an incongruence between their actual and ideal masculine self is eliminated.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The study intends to investigate phenomenon of men’s consumptions in which they employ to escape from threats to masculine self and materialize their fantasy of masculine ideal in their reality. Particularly, the mechanism of how male informants employ various symbolic nature of product and brand consumed and explore the experiential and symbolic utility of their usage to relieve male consumers’ depressive emotion and restore their masculinity in their fantasy. Since Zizek (1997) considers fantasy as narrative, we employ narrative interview approach to better understand the complex world of lived experience of informants through their historical story which could unfold their personal meanings of a particular event and the complex motives that drive their behaviors (Polkinghorne 1995). Accordingly, we can shed light on the masculine attributes that prone to be threatened, understand the symbolic nature of product and brand consumed and explore the experiential and symbolic utility of their usage to relieve male consumers’ depressive emotion and restore their masculinity in their fantasy. Since this paper also scrutinizes the ideal self, employing collage with narrative interview helps uncovers preconscious thoughts and feelings and also allows informants to envisage their ideal self (Levy 1986; Rook 1988). I have decided to select men with varied demographic aspects, but all of them possess consumptions that are considered extreme and outstanding from other members in their social group (Ruangwanit and Wattanasuwan 2009). Hence, they appear to be active in looking for symbolic resources, particularly through mediated experience, for their self-projects (Gabriel and Lang 1995). Therefore they are a highly suitable group to be employed for exploring the symbolic meaning phenomenon. We purposively recruit four voluntary male informants who currently encounter with threats to their masculinity. Regarding types of informants studied, I purposively select informants who either involve themselves in relatively extreme forms of consumption or engage in an apparent self-transition (Schouten 1991; Mick and Buhl 1992). Since self-creation is a delicate project that many of us pursue gradually and subtly in our everyday lives, studying such informants presumably facilitates the discovery of the emergent themes that may be overlooked in the study of a mundane everyday self-creation (e.g., Schouten 1991). By doing so, we can also employ different ethnographic methods to understand their sophisticated consumption phenomenon. Such ethnographic methods as depth narrative interviews, informal interviews and observation are used in this study (see Table 1) (Elliott and Elliott 2003).

**INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The interpretations are made to explore masculine self-threats encountered by each informant and then investigate the phenomenon in which they consume their possessions to construct their fantasized masculinity.
Narrative of Yui: Fantasized Masculinity through Industrial Loft Décor in the Workplace

As mentioned earlier, the workplace is regarded as a location in which the masculine self is likely to be insecure. Yui is one of the shareholders of the firm and currently supervise entire sales and marketing functions. He has encountered with the circumstance in which his masculine self is intimidated in his workplace:

Yui: You know…. In the office, it’s so boring. I wanna resign myself 10 times a day, since I have to carry on many routine, administrative tasks…. it’s so boring. I rarely face with new challenges. I have lots of workloads myself and those of others as well since I have to solve their problems. Meantime, I have to be bounded by the rules and regulations posted by the office even though I’m in the top management position.

Performing his professional role appears to be an obstacle to maintain a masculine attribute of adventurousness (Brannon 1976). This is particular so when he has to encounter with routine operations and much workloads which provide him the recurrence of similar tasks overtime without novel challenges. Moreover, his presence in the office also appears to threaten his independence (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999) since he is circumscribed by the office’s rules and regulations. Ostensibly, boredom of mundane business activities and formalization are to arouse his desire to escape and then to construct the realm of where he could achieve the liberation or the desired level of independence (Martin 2004).

Interviewer: How would you deal with this boring situation?

Yui: The office interior décor. Have you noticed this Industrial Loft style (the interview was taken place at his office)? The entire office is solely decorated by me. Basically, other shareholders didn’t like this style but I have to fight with them and finally won. So I was the only one who was in charge in this job. I think I really like this job (a lot more than marketing and sales function).

Interviewer: did you have fun when you designed the concept and supervise the interior décor job?

Yui: Oh yeah…. definitely. I really did. Since it could relieve my stress from work. Like when I was bored with pieces of stupid, routine work, I would go to check out the decoration work. Well, it’s just like I could escape from the ruled and boring world and enter into another in which I’m empowered and can do whatever I want I normally controlled whether all the jobs had been done according to the designed concept. Anyway, it’s just like I can take an adventure since I didn’t exactly know what is going to be when it’s done.

The excerpt illustrates how much he struggles to be an amateur interior for his own office since being so creates strong arguments with other shareholders to obtain the privileged position in decorating the office according to his desire (Industrial Loft). In doing so, he could be empowered and is eventually able to exert an influence on both other shareholders and decorating workers to comply with his demand. Accordingly, his diminishing masculine attributes as evident in enormous workloads and formalization could be re-established by the office’s interior decoration in which he fantasizes of being more assertive, powerful and dominant (Meissner 2005). Moreover, his adventurous self is established since, as a risk taker, he does not ensure whether this decorative style could finally satisfy other shareholders’ preferences in particular or visitors in general. Similar to the subjects who ride on the Harley Davidson (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) contributing to their greater sense of masculinity, he could also enjoy the decoration fantasy in which he could restore this masculine self though both enhanced superiority and power over other powerful shareholders and greater degree of independence (Gilligan 1982) since his office’s interior design has been visualized independent of other’s influences. Unlike their investigation, however, his interior decoration appears to intertwine the established reality (formalization) and fantasy realm in his mundane circumstance (workplace) rather than completely escape from the reality. Thus, the consumers can fuse the realm between reality and fantasy in everyday experience (Martin 2004; Sherry et al. 2001).

Moreover, the decoration style of Industrial Loft is also employed to enhance the shrinking level of his masculinity.

Yui: Uhm…. I show you then. (The interview then took place in his office). This is my masterpiece in the office. I basically drew the conceptual decoration for this office. The style of this office called “Industrial Loft” in which most of decoration materials used are not hidden but rather apparently revealed. So you can notice that this office is different from other in which construction materials are hidden. But over here, I would like to show the structure and materials like bricks and steel.

Interviewer: if this office becomes a person, who would it be?

Yui: I would describe its characteristics then. He is obviously a real man !!!!! rustic and powerful. On the other side, he’s also smart, handsome, and ….. well good-looking. More or less, does it represent me? (laughing)…

The selected Industrial Loft style with displayed construction materials symbolizes the manliness for which he desires to possess. Imaginarily, with this rustic decoration style, he is allowed to reconstruct his sense of masculinity and ultimately become a macho man with the powerful attribute which is opposite to powerless emotions deemed inappropriate for men (Meissner 2005). Moreover, with this Loft design, he attempts to represent his self image of smartness, which could generally be achieved through developing competence and knowledge required to construct the masculine
identity (Kahn et al. 1985). Accordingly, the projected self-image of masculinity is achieved, in this fantasy realm, by consuming the symbolic meanings of the Industrial Loft style.

Observably, fantasy does not entirely secede from the established reality (Kozinets et al. 2004; Martin 2004). Rather, men would employ the meanings produced by different signs and symbols available in their reality to transcend into the fantasy realm in which their masculinity is repaired and eventually enhanced. This is particularly so in postmodernity where consumer society is bombarded with countless messages and images up to the level in which the image and reality become effaced (Baudrillard 1983).

Traditional masculinity requires the breadwinner ideology which refers to the notion that men are able to overcome challenging assignments and also subject to becoming a dependable provider (Cawelti 1989). However, breadwinner ideology could emotionally threaten their masculine self (Holt and Thompson 2004). The following excerpt illustrates how the Loft decoration is operated to reduce an informant’s frustration likely caused by performing breadwinner role:

Yui: I have been responsible for my family (his mom and two siblings). I think it’s time to do something for myself and it really comes from my desire to decorate this office in Loft style. More or less, I’m empowered and even liberated from lots of responsibilities.

Narrative of Bass: Fantasized Masculinity through Violating, Fashionable Uniform

Similar to the previous informant, Bass, serving the nation as a policeman, encounters with extremely formalized working environment which is harmful to his own power and independence; resulting in his threatened masculinity (Koslowsky and Stashefsky 2005). At his police station, compliance with his commander and observation to formal rules and regulations is mandatory. The following excerpt demonstrates how he adjusts his police uniform to liberate from self-threats and masculinize his self:

Bass: You know….. you might not notice that I’m violating the uniform regulation.

Interviewer: Really !! everything seems fine to me.. (the interview took place in his police station)

Bass: No..no Let see. I show you. Here is my name tag. Regularly, the police name tag is not supposed to have the English name on it. But mine has… (laughing).

Bass: Next !! Look at my shoe. This is not supposed to be a shoe stated in the uniform regulation. This one is quite different since it does not have the rope but the police one has. I think, for me, the police pair of shoe is too old to wear. Not stylish at all.

Interviewer: why do you do so? You know that it’s violating the rule, right?

Bass: Yeah, I do. But… common !! working here in this environment is extremely boring. Violating some rules that do not much affect with the performance is challenging and fun though. It’s kinda like I become a bit bad boy.

Since Bass has also been depressed in the highly regulated workplace, he, accordingly, struggles to fulfill his yearn for adventurousness to escape from this formalized space and reconstruct his masculine self in an imagery arena. Simply put, so doing could also operate as a mean to escape from the ruled world to where he could become independent of any formalization (Martin 2004). To reconstruct his masculine self, he evokes an imaginary of the fashionable bad boy, an opposition to the sacrificing police man, through a fantasy experience of altering some parts of his police uniform decorations (Martin 2004). It could be suggested that the minor alternation of highly formalized uniform not only allow man to challenge the limitations but also provides the symbolic meanings men employ to enter into the fantasy realm in which escapism from mundane experiences and the ideal masculinity can be fulfilled (Wattanasuwan 2005).

Narrative of Bo: Fantasized Masculinity through Enhanced Look of Automobile and Wine Consumption

During narrative interview, Bo’s desire of being affluent is significantly manifested through his explanation on his collage of ideal persons and objects greatly symbolizing richness and expensiveness:

Bo: Donald Trump is my ideal, indeed. He’s smart, sharp, powerful and especially rich. I wanna be rich and well recognized like he is…. Really !!

Regarding to his life narrative, he is not satisfied with his current level of affluence and unfortunately encounter with economic factors negatively affecting his business. Moreover, since running his parent’s business, he experiences the situation in which all major business decisions have to be made on his parent’s approval together with his everyday spending pattern is almost entirely manipulated them. These self-threats are also reflected in his collage which mostly associates with the rich ideals. Traditionally, men’s level of masculinity is tacitly yet significantly manifested by the degree of their affluence (Gould 1974; Kimmel 2001). That is, the higher the paycheck men acquire, the greater the degree of their masculinity appears to be. Unsurprisingly, this circumstance accelerates his yearn for richness and lavish lifestyle that could significantly symbolize an achievement (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999) and eventually enhance his masculinity (Kilmartin 1994).

In order to escape from this undesired stage of the threatened masculine self, he performs activities of symbolic consumptions; offering him the pathway to the fantasized realm. By approaching an imagery of a rich person (Trump), he acquires the products or brands parallel to a rich person’s possession or symbolizing wealth. Even if products or brands he acquires do not exactly resemble to those of the rich, the alteration of his possession could symbolize certain meanings allowing him to experience of acquiring the possessions similar to those of the rich and eventually to achieve the image of the ideal affluent.

Interviewer: In addition to required hard-working manner, what else do you do to get a sense of rich people?

Bo: Rich people suppose to have a luxurious sport car like Ferrari. Actually, I don’t have one. But don’t worry… I have a way. I have an old Mercedes and I have its look enhanced. I install a new set of sporty spoiler. So then my Mercedes become more luxuriously sporty….. a lot more sporty than the previously outdated look. So now… I feel like I’m driving Ferrari (laughing). don’t you think so?

Apparently, he employs his automotive toy to reconstruct his masculinity in his imagination. An automobile itself represents the manness (Belk 2004). Thus, an investment of men’s resources in an automobile considerably enhances the level of their masculin-
ity. His alteration of the old Mercedes appearance allows him to achieve two levels of imaginary masculinity. First, the modified version provides symbolic meanings by which he employs to experience an imagery of driving the sport car. According to the heroic masculinity model, attending the sport car racing empowers the subject and then liberates himself from his everyday mundane reality (Holt and Thompson 2004). Accordingly, the sporty decoration on the old Mercedes could enhance his adventurous attribute of masculinity. Second, his masculinity can be even improved up to the greater level. A new sporty version of his Mercedes offers him an access to the ideal image of the affluent. The modified look provides him the fantastic experience of driving Ferrari by which he evokes the sense of achievement and affluence (Martin 2004). Ostensibly, his masculinity is reconstructed and leveled up in the realm of an imagination of affluent masculinity. Moreover, imitating the affluent’s lavish lifestyles also serves to the realization of his affluent masculinity:

Bo: You know what… when sipping the expensive wine, even not often, it gives me a feeling that I am rich and hi-so (high society).

He perceives sipping of wine is the lavish activities symbolizing the lifestyle of affluent (Wattanasuwan 2005). Since symbolic structure could conduit between reality and fantasy (Zizek 1997), consumption of wine allows him to enjoy the affluent lifestyle in which his sense of affluent masculinity is enhanced in his own fantasy. Driving the modified-look Mercedes and sipping the wine empower him to transcend into an imagined community (Anderson 1983) in which he could imaginarily associate with affluent others who live up with lavish lifestyles to reestablish his fantasized, affluent masculinity (Kimmel 2001)

Narrative of Draft: Fantasized Masculinity through Costume Playing

According to the narrative interview, he illustrates the fatigue signs (through facial expression and tone of voice) when he compares himself with his friends in the college. This is because, when comparing to his friends, he perceives that he is relatively lower attractive and less smart than them. Apparently, his sense of inferiority becomes salient. This is particular so when he views himself deviate from this specific comparison target:

Draft: He’s pretty smart and also tricky…. While he’s good looking as well. I’m just plain when compared to him.

According to the social comparison theory, this phenomenon is regarded as “contrast effect” by which ones may experience depressive symptoms after an exposure to the social comparison with the superior comparison target (Gordijn and Stapel 2006). Experiencing so could destroy the sense of superiority and dominance essential to the sense of masculinity (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999):

Draft: when working on the group project in the college, I normally stay quiet and do not make any comment, since I’m not sure whether they would accept my comment then. I used to propose my comments which seemed to be rejected. So I’m not going to do it then, since I am not feeling really well when I am rejected. So… I rather stay silent.

According to his collage, one of the photos represents the character in Japanese manga:

Draft: His name is I-Zen. You see…!! He’s good-looking, smart and very tricky. He’s a leading character in this comic. He’s successful in all things he plans to. He’s also powerful so he could dictate people around him.

Obviously, I-Zen is his masculine ideal since his desire to become a person similar to this cartoon character is highly intense. Cosplay operates to fulfill his desire:

Interviewer: What do you do to become like I-Zen?
Draft: That’s easy !! Have you heard “Cosplay”? It’s an activity in which I could dress as a cartoon character I like. So, I wanna be I-Zen….I dress like him.

Cosplay activity is a social gathering in which he could evoke the fantastic cartoon character that he desires to become through dressing its costumes and accessories (Martin 2004; Wattasuwan 2007). With this activity, he evokes the fantastic imagery in which he could acquire I-Zen’s masculine attributes Martin 2004). Moreover, his masculinity is significantly intensified while he cosplays I-Zen character during the event:

Draft: For cosplaying, I have to produce I-Zen costume by myself. Basically, I need cosplay with other who cosplay other characters in the same comic. So when the event comes, we will cosplay as a team.

Interviewer: What are other characters?
Draft: They are all I-Zen’s followers and his opponents. Anyway, he’s the smartest one in this manga.

Interviewer: What do you guys do in the event?
Draft: Costume contest and photo shoot (we have to imitate our own character’s posture).

Interviewer: Since you cosplay in a team. Who’s the leader of the team?
Draft: Of course, it’s me!! I’m responsible for setting all the posts for photo shooting. I also consult on other team member about their costume. I even recruit the team members too. Every team member gotta listen to me and follow my instructions.

Interviewer: How do you feel when you are I-Zen?
Draft: Very much enjoyable. I could control people. They have to listen to me. They do what I want them to do. Everything is upon my approval. I’m so much powerful!!

In the cosplay, he is allowed to break from his establish reality (Todorov 1973) in which his masculinity attributes are challenged and enter into the fantasy world in which he could dominate other team members and also acquire superior qualifications. For Draft, the cosplay activity, when involving, is viewed as a vehicle to materialize his masculine ideal in his fantasy (Wattanasuwan 2007). It is where he can immerse himself into the carefully selected masculine character of I-Zen which symbolizes masculinity attributes of power, dominance, adventurousness, intelligence, handsomeness and superiority (Brannon 1976; Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). By achieving these masculinity attributes, Draft does not only
imitate I-Zen costumes but also his behaviors and traits associated with masculinity roles (Sherif 1982) while under his fantasized cosplay. Cosplay then operates to transcend him into the fantasized utopia in which he could be empowered to fulfill his own masculinity roles that could not otherwise be realized in his stigmatized reality (Kozinets 2001). As such, the cosplay utopia allows him to escape from stigmatization caused by social comparison and empowers him to reconstruct his masculinity through employing masculinity-like symbolic resources available in the simulating world (Wattanasuwan 2007).

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In contemporary culture, men, who formerly enjoyed a number of social privileges because of their hegemonic masculinity, are increasingly challenged by an immense number of threats to their masculinity, resulting in a development of their anxieties (MacInnes 1998). Such masculinity threats as high working responsibilities (Besen 2007), formalized workplaces (Robbins and Coulter 2005), expectation of their richness (Gould 1974) and sense of inferiority to other men (Gordijn and Stapel 2006) all challenge men’s masculinity and inevitably contribute to the development of their frustration. Thus, the degree of their masculinity may diminish (Sherif 1982; Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). Given their desire to relieve their tension, men, however, are not able to entirely escape from their reality currently threatening to their masculine self. As such, the appropriation of symbolic meanings, associated with masculinity and also available in their space of reality, in their fantasy could serve men to liberate from these unmasculine circumstances and reconstruct their masculinity. Simply put, through the masculine fantasization, men do not only employ the symbolic meanings of the consumed but also immerse themselves into the imaginary world in which they could employ those particular meanings to accomplish the projected self-image with desired masculine attributes. As such, it could maintain that the fantasy of ideal masculine self can be materialized in men’s reality because the symbolic structure mediates reality and fantasy (Zizek 1997).

Fantasizing Masculinity through Men’s Extended Self

It asserts that consumers normally extend themselves into their possessions which, in turn, represent their self-image or reflect their ideal self (Belk 1988; Hart 1992). As such, the extended possessions of men’s ideal masculine self (Office, uniform, enhanced look automobile and cartoon character’s costume) could operate to transcend them into their utopia, yet located in their reality, in which their masculine ideal could be potentially established. Finally, men are able to establish their fantasized masculinity in their threatened masculine self reality by appropriating of their extended possessions’ symbolic meanings. As generally held, the construct of self is multifaceted (Callero 2003). The ideal masculine self is one of facet of men’s self and can be regarded as the fantasized self when men attempts to construct this ideal in their fantasy through employing consumption symbolism that operates to consolidate reality and fantasy.

REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenal growth of social media has transformed the way we communicate and interact, described by Deighton and Kornfield (2007) as a “digital interactive transformation in marketing.” According to them, Blogs have become a part of the “non-marketing” communication paths, or new traffic lanes, not built for the convenience of marketers but for consumers. However, despite the profound implication of blogs for marketing communications, it is surprising that there exist very little theoretical and empirical studies, if any, on this emerging social phenomenon (Mutum 2009).

Blogs are early adopters of technology; are active, multi-tasking Internet surfers, they trust other bloggers and are more open-minded than the average online consumer does (Forrester 2006) and it is very likely that the perceived interactivity of the blogs is an important driver for blog usage. However, despite the fact that various authors acknowledge the importance of the interactivity construct, there is no consistent definition and conceptualisation of the construct (Heeter 2000; Jee and Lee 2002). Moreover, the existing definitions are focussed on the consumers’ interaction with a website and are not really applicable in the case of blogs where blog users are talking to the blogger and with other blog users as well. Perceived interactivity is more than the human-machine and human-message interactions. There is a need to take the human-human interactions into account as well.

Given these gaps in the in terms of the role of interactivity, this study seeks to clarify the conceptualisation of interactivity, attempting a definition of the construct in view of the popularity of user driven social media, especially blogs.

Perceived Interactivity

Earlier studies on interactivity looked at the functional aspect—the human interaction with a web page, such as speed of interaction (Deighton 1996; Novak et al. 2000; Campbell and Wright 2008; Steuer 1992; Coyle and Thorson 2001). In marketing literature, several authors have pointed out the importance of focusing on the perceived interactivity rather than the actual interactivity facilitated by interactive technologies (Wu 1999; McMillan and Hwang 2002; Sohn and Lee 2005). Perceived interactivity is thus subjective or experiential and differs from the actual, objective or structural interactivity (Wu 2006). According to Schmaan et al. (2001), it is the consumer’s choice to interact and thus it is a characteristic of the consumer and not a characteristic of the medium. As they pointed out, the medium is indeed important but it only serves to facilitate the interaction.

Among the first to incorporate the role of the user in conceptualising perceived interactivity was (Steuer 1992), who defined it as “the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time.” Also focussing on the website user, Cho and Leckenby (1999) defined interactivity as “the degree to which a person actively engages in advertising processing by interacting with advertising messages and advertisers.” Among the significant contributions of their study was their identification of two primary locations of interactivity, namely, human-human interaction and human-message interaction. Initially Wu (1999) defined perceived interactivity as “a two component construct consisting of navigation and responsiveness.” Later on, advocating a consumer’s perspective, he redefined interactivity as a “psychological state experienced by a site-visitor during the process of the interaction” (Wu 2006). One of the best definitions was given by Liu (2003) who defines interactive communication as “a communication that offers individuals active control and allows them to communicate both reciprocally and synchronously.” This definition takes the users of a medium into consideration and also looks at how they communicate and interact with the medium.

Issues with Existing Measures

The problem with these attempts to conceptualise perceived interactivity such as the perceived interactivity scales of Cho and Leckenby (1999) and Wu (1999) contained items which were deemed to have affective responses and/or behavioural intentions which may result in incorrect measures of perceived interactivity (Liu 2003). Among other studies, McMillan and Hwang’s (2002) measure of perceived interactivity underwent a formal process of scale development. However, it was pointed out that the scale was formative and as such, their use of traditional scale development might not be appropriate (Wu 2006). An appropriate measurement model should be reflective, where the observed indicators are assumed to be caused by the latent variable. Even though the dimensions of perceived interactivity identified by Wu’s (2006) was similar to that of McMillan and Hwang (2002), Wu (2006) was opposed to using the term “two-way communication”. According to him the term can mean different things in different contexts and he used the term “perceived personalisation” instead.

Multidimensionality of the Perceived Interactivity Construct

Most authors now agree that perceived interactivity is a multi-item scale and is multidimensional (Cho and Leckenby 1999; Wu 1999; Liu 2003; Wu 2006). Liu (2003) conceptualised and tested perceived interactivity also as a multidimensional construct and the 15-items represents three correlated but distinct dimensions, namely, active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity. It was argued that interactivity can lead to affective or behavioural responses but should be separated from those consequences. However, communication on blogs is not just two-way, between blog visitors and the blogger but also happens between blog visitors as well talking to each other via comments or on specific widgets for that purpose if provided. On the other, Wu (2006) identified three dimensions of interactivity, namely: perceived control; perceived personalization of the site and perceived responsiveness. One of the component items of the perceived responsiveness dimension was, “I could communicate in real time with other customers who shared my interest in this website.”

Item Generation

The perceived interactivity construct developed and verified by Liu (2003) was found to be the most relevant to blogs than other existing interactivity measures. The scale was developed to measure the interactivity of websites, and it consists of 15 items, most of which were derived from McMillan (2000). Two more items were taken from Wu’s (2006) perceived interactivity scale making it a total of 17 items to measure the perceived interactivity construct.

Content Validity and Pretesting

Prior to the actual survey, interviews were conducted with five PhD students in a Business School in the UK, who fulfilled the criteria of the sample (i.e., they were blog users) with regards to the clarity of instructions and statements. Changes were made to the statements to reflect that fact that the items would be used to
measure the perceived interactivity of blogs and not static websites. The languages of the statements were also simplified based on the feedback from the interviews. Following this, two experts in marketing communications and consumer behaviour further evaluated the items for content validity after which further changes were made to the items in order to make them more parsimonious.

A pilot test was then conducted. Emails were sent out to 358 Ph.D. students in a UK University, inviting them to take part in the online survey. The only criteria were that they had visited a blog in the past year. A total of 86 completed responses were received which were used for the pilot test.

Based on their feedback, two statements were dropped from the interactivity construct. These were “While surfing the blog, my actions decided the kind of experiences I got” and “When I clicked on the links, I felt I was getting instantaneous Information.” In the context of the conceptual framework that has been developed, the final interactivity construct comprises of 15 items-13 adapted from Liu (2003) and two from Wu (2006) (see table 1). Four of the items were reverse scored (starred).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. It might be worth mentioning here that Wu (2006) used a five-point Likert type-scale in his study while (Liu 2003) employed a 7-point semantic differential scale.

### Sampling Procedure and Data Collection Method

The survey was conducted over a period of four months ending 31st of December 2009. This research is concerned with blogs on the Web in general, and not just some specific blogs. Unlike previous studies which involved manipulating websites to control the access to information, this paper looks at how different consumers perceive the interactivity of the blogs they visit quite often.

### Table 1

Perceived Interactivity Items

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Original Item</th>
<th>Modified Item</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Liu (2003)</strong></td>
<td>I felt that I had a lot of control over my visiting experiences at this website’.</td>
<td>I felt that I had a lot of control over my visiting experiences at this blog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>While I was on the website, I could choose freely what I wanted to see.</td>
<td>I could choose freely what I wanted to see on the blog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>While surfing the website, I had absolutely no control over what I can do on the site.</td>
<td>I had absolutely no control over what I can do on the blog.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website is effective in gathering visitors’ feedback.</td>
<td>The blog is effective in gathering visitors’ feedback and comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website facilitates two-way communication between the visitors and the site.</td>
<td>This blog facilitates two-way communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is difficult to offer feedback to the website.</td>
<td>I felt that it is difficult to offer feedback on the blog.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website makes me feel it wants to listen to its visitors.</td>
<td>I felt that the blog wants to listen to its visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website does not at all encourage visitors to talk back.</td>
<td>I felt that the blog does not encourage visitors to give feedback.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website gives visitors the opportunity to talk back.</td>
<td>The blog gives visitors the opportunity to give feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I clicked on the links, I felt I was getting instantaneous information.</td>
<td>Clicking on the links gave me information quite fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I was able to obtain the information I want without any delay.</td>
<td>I was able to obtain the information I want without any delay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website was very slow in responding to my requests.</td>
<td>The blogger was very slow in responding to my requests*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting information from the website is very fast.</td>
<td>Getting information from the blog was very Quick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wu (2006)</strong></td>
<td>I could communicate with the company directly for further questions about the company or its products if I wanted to.</td>
<td>I felt that I could communicate with the blogger directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I could communicate in real time with other customers who shared my interest in this website.</td>
<td>I felt that I could communicate with other visitors to the blog.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The targeted sample comprises “blog users” who are defined as, consumers who visit blogs regularly—at least once a week. Respondents of the survey were asked to choose a blog they visit regularly and respond to the questions keeping that particular blog in mind. In order to ensure a high response rate, various personal blogs in the UK, the US and Malaysia were randomly identified and the bloggers were approached. The only criteria were that they should have an average number of visitors of 100 per day. The bloggers were asked whether they would be willing to promote the online survey along with a link to the survey. Some of these bloggers were also offered financial incentives, for example, US $5 for the post and US $1 for every completed questionnaire from their unique link. In the end, nine bloggers agreed and they were provided a unique link to the online questionnaire. Blog posts along with links were also posted on three of the researcher’s own personal blogs.

Various incentives were offered to encourage blog users to take part in the survey. This included a £100 cash prize. Winners have the option of donating to a charity of their choice. Other prizes include 10 Amazon vouchers worth £10 each. Besides that, the researcher made a pledge to make a 50p donation to Cancer Research UK, for each completed survey.

**Justification for Using Online Survey**

The online survey method is gaining in popularity and was selected because it offers several advantages as compared to the traditional post method of data collection for both the researcher as well as respondents alike (de Leeuw 2008, p.113). In fact, this methodology was considered the most appropriate for this study.

---

**TABLE 2**

Characteristics of the Respondents and Blog Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or equivalent</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education (e.g., College)</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University First Degree (Bachelor’s Degree)</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years using the internet</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 year</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 years</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 9 years</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years and more</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours spent browsing blogs / week</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 hour</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 hours</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 10 hours</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20 hours</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 hours</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years visiting blogs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 year</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 years</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 9 years</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years and more</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you have a Blog?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years blogging</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 year</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 years</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 9 years</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3
Perceived Interactivity Scale Items and Factor Loadings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived</th>
<th>Perceived Communication</th>
<th>Perceived Responsiveness</th>
<th>Perceived Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The blog gives visitors the opportunity to give feedback</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This blog facilitates two-way communication between the visitors and the blogger</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blog is effective in gathering visitors' feedback and comments</td>
<td>.753</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that I could communicate with the blogger directly</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that the blog wants to listen to its visitors</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that the blog does not at all encourage visitors to give feedback*</td>
<td>.670</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that I could communicate with other visitors to the blog</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that it is difficult to offer feedback to the blog *</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting information from the blog was very quick</td>
<td>.888</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicking on the links gave me information quite fast</td>
<td>.864</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to obtain the information I want without any delay</td>
<td>.679</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had absolutely no control over what I can do on the blog *</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>.586</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explained variance (%) 31.76 17.77 11.71

* Reverse scaled items

not only because of its advantages relative to other methodologies, but in the case of blogs, may very well be the most effective method to collect data from the blog users.

The advantages of using an online survey method include faster collection of data and greater convenience to respondents and researcher alike (Bruner and Kumar 2000; Stevenson et al. 2000; Reips 2007, p.376). They are also more cost effective, have a greater visibility and accessibility than other survey modes as well (Manfreda and Vehovar 2008, p. 282, Reips 2007, p. 376). Furthermore, respondents perceive online surveys as more important, interesting, and enjoyable than traditional surveys (Stanton 1998). Some studies have shown that web-based methods are valid and sometimes generate higher quality data then laboratory based studies (Reips 2007, p.376; Birnbaum 2001; Buchanan and Smith 1999). Other advantages include ability to generate random order of items accessed by each respondent. This gives equal weight to all options and reduces the “primacy effect”–the phenomenon where there is a tendency for the first items presented in a series to be remembered better or more easily, or for them to be more influential than others. Online surveys thus help in alleviating question choice bias.

Characteristics of Respondents
A total of 427 completed responses were received out of which 409 were useable for the final analysis. Female respondents (72.8%) greatly outnumbered the male respondents (27.2%). It was interesting to note that most of the respondents were 25 years and older and fairly educated with more than 50% having at a Bachelor’s degree and higher qualification. Regarding their blog usage patterns, it was not surprising that a large number of respondents (66.7%) were bloggers themselves. It is interesting to note that among those who gave their occupation as other employee, included several housewives/stay-at-home-mums/homemakers. The detailed demographic and blog usage information of the respondents is provided in Table 2.

The sample size (409) in this study satisfies the criteria that a sample should preferably be more than 100 for factor analysis to proceed (Hair et al. 2006) and is higher than what is considered “comfortable” by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007, p.613).“at least 300 cases.” It is also considered appropriate to have at least five times as many observations as the number of variables to be analysed (Hair et al. 2006; Bryant and Yarnold 1995) and again the ratio is sufficiently high for factor analysis to be considered appropriate.

Principal Component Analysis
Following the test for communality, the item “The blogger was very slow in responding to my requests” was found to have a very low communality (0.276) and indicates that the factor model is not working well for that indicator and causes a problem in interpreting the factor on which it was loaded. It was thus discarded and Factor analysis was run again without the variable.

Running the principal component analysis with the orthogonal Varimax rotation approach, three factors were extracted. Only items with factor loadings of 0.40 and above were considered, which satisfies the criterion of 0.32 as a rule of thumb for the minimum loading of an item (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). Factor loadings above 0.4 are shown in Table 2.

This process used the Eigen value rule where only those factors with an Eigen value of 1.0 and above are retained. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.88 and this measure also indicates that factor analysis is appropriate (Malhotra 2004). The item “I felt that I had a lot of control over my visiting experiences at this blog” was found to load on more than one factor despite the rotation and was also dropped from the analysis.

Based on the conceptual attributes of items loaded on each dimension, the three dimensions were labelled as shown in Table 3, namely, Perceived Communication, Perceived Responsiveness and Perceived Control.

It is generally agreed that the extracted factors should at least account for 60 percent amount of variance (Hair et al. 2006; Malhotra 2004). In this study, the three factors explain 61.25 percent of the total variance.
and whether there are differences in the way that different groups interact over the internet. Future studies may look at the antecedents of this multidimensional construct and their effect on the attitude of consumers towards blogs as well.

REFERENCES


TABLE 4
Dimensions of Perceived Interactivity and Internal Consistency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Communication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Responsiveness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Control</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internal Consistency Reliability

The Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was used to test for the internal consistency or the internal consistency reliability of each of the dimensions. The alpha scores for two of the factors, namely, Perceived Communication and Perceived Responsiveness are above 0.7 (as shown in Table 4) and were considered to meet the requirements set by Nunnally (1978) and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). However, the alpha score for Perceived Control was quite low (0.507) and may have to be rejected, though other authors have allowed for lower Cronbach’s alpha values, for example, 0.6 in exploratory research (Robinson et al. 1991).

DISCUSSION

Given the profound implication of blogs for marketing communication and consumers, it was felt earlier definitions and conceptualisations of “interactivity” were too narrow. This study represents another attempt to operationalise and empirically test the perceived interactivity construct. Our conceptualisation of perceived interactivity not only expands on the work done by previous authors but also seeks to redefine and present a new conceptual framework in view of the increasing popularity of consumer generated media, more specifically blogs. Like Wu (2006) this paper takes a consumer’s perspective to look beyond the human-machine and human-message interactions, and add the human-human interactions—not just between blog user and blogger but also between the various visitors to the blog. Perceived interactivity is conceptualised as the psychological state experienced by consumers while communicating with other consumers, combined with the perceived responsiveness of the site along with their perceived control over their interaction.

The research does add positively to the understanding of perceived interactivity as a concept and to the understanding of the perceived interactivity construct as a vehicle for engagement with consumers via blogs from the marketing communications perspective. Unlike most previous studies that used students, this study involved a quite diverse group of blog users with varied demographic background and blog use experience. The results reveal three distinct dimensions of the perceived interactivity construct. Apart from the “perceived control” dimension, the two other dimensions of perceived interactivity show high internal consistency reliability. This can be considered quite significant result because previous studies on perceived interactivity have shown perceived control to be the most important and essential dimension of this construct (McMillan 2000; McMillan and Hwang 2002; Wu 1999; Wu 2006).

This study used the principal component analysis method of factor analysis and the model should be further tested using confirmatory factor analysis. This would facilitate checks for the validation of the perceived interactivity construct, more specifically the convergent validity and the discriminant validity.

This paper is part of a much larger study and there is a need to empirically examine each dimension of the construct in relation to other constructs. One area that needs to be investigated is with regards to the question why consumers interact over social networks and whether there are differences in the way that different groups interact over the internet. Future studies may look at the antecedents of this multidimensional construct and their effect on the attitude of consumers towards blogs as well.

REFERENCES


The Impact of Italianate on UK Consumers’ Brand Perceptions of Luxury Brands
Raffaella Paciolla, University of Westminster
Li-Wei Mai, University of Westminster

Abstract
This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of “Italianate” on UK consumers’ brand perceptions and brand preferences amongst fashion and food and beverage products. This study explores the relationship between the concept of country of origin and brand origin and their impact on consumers’ perceptions and preferences of “Italian” luxury brands, and attempts to identify the factors that influence their perceptions of these brands. The findings reveal that brand image, brand trust and brand experience are highly important in influencing the relationship between consumers and “Italian” luxury brands. Moreover, the perceptions of brand images and consumers’ attitudes are strongly influenced by the “Italianate” nature which is represented by a mixture of “Made in Italy” and “Made by Italian Creativity.”

INTRODUCTION
The concept of brand origin is different from the well-established subject of country of origin. Country of origin has more influence on fictitious brands than known brands. For fictitious brands, country of origin represents one of the most accessible information for judging the qualitative of a product (Hui and Zhou 2003). The brand origin is linked and integrated into brand image (Thakor and Kohli 1996). Consequently, it has been shown that Italy is connected with well known and high quality brands such as Armani and Gucci being ones of the most desired brands in the world thanks to their strong and unique brand images (ACNielsen 2006). Thus, country and perceived brand origin are important product attributes taken into account by consumers in making purchase decisions (Keller 1993). It is important for brand managers to understand the distinction between the two concepts that is connected with consumer perceptions. The association of brand origin has a direct impact on perceptions of the brand and ultimately, the image of the brand. (Jin et al. 2006, p. 285). Brand origin should be a distinct association that does not change with the change in manufacturing location. Brand origin stresses consumer’s perceptions of a brand relating to its origin, rather than where the product is actually produced. (Thakor and Kohli 1996). Therefore, it is interesting to conduct an empirical study on the association of Italianate and its impact on brand perceptions. This paper aims to investigate the impact of Italianate on UK consumers’ brand perceptions in relation to luxury brands.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Country of Origin
Country of origin or country of manufacture (“Made in”) has been considered as an extrinsic cue of a product, having a significant impact on attitudes and beliefs towards a product (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000). Country of origin can influence a consumer’s choice of a product, providing a halo effect to consumers regarding the quality, dependability, perceived risk and value for money, when more specific information is not readily available and consumers are unable to detect the true quality of the product before trial (Bilkey and Nes 1982; Han and Terpstra 1988; Janda and Rao 1997; Maheswaran 1994).

Consumers hold and use stereotyped images about countries in order to help themselves judge products from different countries (Lotz and Hu 2001). Those images are composed by variables such as typical products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and traditions (Nagashima 1970). Furthermore, the image of a country is represented by a series of dimensions that positively qualify a nation in terms of its production profile. The dimensions include: innovative approach (superiority, cutting-edge technology), design (style, elegance, and balance), prestige (exclusiveness, status of the national brands), workmanship (reliability, durability, quality) (Roth and Romeo 1992).

Some studies found that country of origin biases can arise for both developed and developing countries. Generally, products manufactured in high industrialized countries are perceived to be of higher quality and more prestigious than the ones made in less developed countries (Janda and Rao 1997). In addition, other studies have introduced the concept of consumer ethnocentrism that can be defined as beliefs concerning the appropriateness of purchasing products made in foreign countries (Lantz and Loeb 1996; Sharma et al. 1995). Highly ethnocentric consumers prefer products from countries considered as similar in terms of culture compared to products manufactured in countries with dissimilar culture (Watson and Wright 1999).

Although the country of origin concept has been widely studied and been seen as one of the most important external variables in influencing consumers’ attitudes and perceptions in the purchasing decision in an age of intensive international competition and globalisation, it has been argued that it is becoming increasingly misleading and confusing and should be replaced by a more appropriate brand origin concept (Thakor and Kohli 1996; Koubaa 2008).

Made in Italy
“Made in Italy” is internationally well-known for and strongly connected with design, fashion and food (Busacca, Bertoli, and Molteni 2005; Spinelli 2004). That is the reason why consumers and international operators trust buying and investing in “Italian” products. This is particularly true for European Union and other Western countries that share a similar culture, values and levels of industrialization as that of Italy. On the other hand, although some countries, such as Asian countries, culturally very different from Italy, in the past have shown some resistance in recognising the validity and high quality of “Italian” products, these and newly developed countries are starting to show a particular interest towards “Italian” products and brands. For example, Chinese consumers consider foreign products and brands from more developed countries, such as “Italian,” as indicating high social status and modernity (Assocamerestero 2006; Chadha and Husband 2006).

“Made in Italy” is not simply a label to put on products coming from Italy, but also represents other values. It reveals a consumer’s profile, characterized by sense of the material and immaterial values of the “product-system:” self-actualization and aspiration, utility, social position, emotional and identity investment (Spinelli 2004). “Made in Italy” represents the “Italian” reputation of being a world leader for producing products recognised for quality, design, excellence and durability (Confindustria 2008b; Istituto Piepoli 2004). Thus, the most powerful strength of the “Italian” production system has been in the capability of creating a unique balance among polarities apparently difficult to conciliate: tradition and modernity, aesthetic and functionality, hand-crafted and technology (Confindustria 2008a).
Brand Origin

With the globalization, a multitude of products, so called hybrid products, which are designed, branded in a country and yet manufactured in another country, has arisen in the marketplace. Thakor and Kohli (1996, p.27) define brand origin as “the place, region or country to which the brand is perceived to belong by its target consumers.” The perception of the country of origin of a hybrid product which cannot be defined purely by the “made-in” theory becomes critically important in evaluating brand image and quality of a product (Phau and Prendergast 2000). A brand possesses a certain value, known as brand equity, which is determined by the popularity, reputation, and associated beliefs of the brand (Aaker 1991; Kim and Chung 1997). One key brand association is the country from which the brand is originated, known as the brand origin (Thakor and Kohli 1996). In the case of luxury brands which promote the brand origin instead of country of origin, maximizing their brand equity, consumers perceive and evaluate the brand through its brand personality, origin cues, country ethnicity, brand name and consumer’s self-concepts such as status symbol (Aaker 1997; Phau and Prendergast 2000). According to Aaker (1997) if consumers trust the brand quality, the brand image is restored and will be strongly evaluated; the latter will not be influenced by the country of manufacture as brand characteristics will not change with a change in manufacturing location (Phau and Prendergast 2000). Relocating manufacturing processes can reduce production cost but at same time brings up the issue concerning consumers’ perceptions of product and brand value (Hamzauoi and Merunka 2006).

“Made by Italian Creativity”

In light of the trend toward offshore manufacturing by some Italian multinationals (Chadha and Husband 2006), the “Made in Italy” concept is gradually replaced by “Made by Italian Creativity” concept. Thus consumers’ satisfaction arises from owning a branded product which represents status, resonance, luxury and style thanks to high “Italian” creativity and brands image and is indifferent to the country of manufacture (Confindustria 2008b). The critical value to Italy comes from being a country where products and brands are designed instead of where products are manufactured (Assocamerestero 2006, Phau and Prendergast 2000).

In the fashion sector, it is widely agreed that creativity is the most important characteristic owned by “Italian” brands and products. For instance, as Prada makes pieces for some of its handbags in Turkey, Prada Group NV Chief Executive Patrizio Bertelli says he would like to insert a “Made by Prada” label on its products, in order to highlight peculiar Prada creativity and originality instead of the place of manufacture.

Moreover, handbag maker Francesco Biasia that started to shift production to China and Eastern Europe in the late 1990s, justifies that choice with a change in consumers’ tastes that cares more about creativity and not where a particular product is actually manufactured (Galloni 2005).

A survey conducted by Assocamerestero and 53 Italian Chambers of Commerce in 34 countries, shows that 93.5% of people interviewed (such as customers, international operators, media) consider “Italian” product quality the most important point of differentiation. Moreover, 87.3% of interviewees judge “Italian” products unique for their luxury connotation. 89% consider design and packaging as crucial, while 98%, especially in Europe and Japan, perceive Italy as the country where design and creativity were born. Moreover, 18% of those interviewed do not consider it fundamental that products are manufactured in Italy, but that they necessarily need to keep the proverbial quality, taste, design, promotion and communication, evoking the famous style (Assocamerestero 2006).

Relationship between Consumers and “Italian” Luxury Brands

According to Kim and Chung (1997), if a country is recognised for particular intangible assets that are shared by brands originating from the same country, in the design, fashion, food and beverage industries, brands originating from Italy tend to have similar brand images in terms of the perceived quality of product features. Thus, “Italian” brands base their names, personalities and values on prerogatives and origin cues that differentiate Italy in the world. As examples, Valentino means “sophistication and elegance” (Valentino 2008), Tod’s represents “understated luxury and impeccable taste” (Tod’s 2008). De Cecco and Illy signify “the geniuses of pasta between tradition and innovation” and “authentic Italian coffee” respectively (De Cecco 2008; Illy 2008).

Additionally, an international online survey conducted by ACNielsen on 21,000 consumers in 42 countries (including the UK) in 2005, reveals that Armani and Gucci are the most desired brands in the world thanks to their strong and unique brand images. According to Frank Martell, CEO ACNielsen Europe, those brands sell more than products, in fact they sell their image for which consumers are willing to pay. Consumers know to receive quality, sophistication and style, values without time with a global appeal (ACNielsen 2006).

Relationship between Consumers and “Italianate” Product Categories

In order to understand whether “Made in Italy” is more important than “Made by Italian Creativity” or vice-versa or whether both concepts have the same importance in defining “Italianate” connotations and consumers’ perceptions, it is fundamental to analyse the impact that the two concepts have on the specific product category in which “Italian” luxury brands operate (Irwin 2003; Bertoli et al. 2005). According to a survey conducted by Assocamerestero and 53 Italian Chambers of Commerce in 34 countries, interviewees perceive fashion (99%), design (94%) and food and beverage (90%) as the key excellence of the Italian economic sectors and luxury symbols of Italy in the world (Assocamerestero 2006).
Notably, brand origin/product fit represents the perceived competence of a country to design a specific product type within a particular product category. Thus, a country will be characterized by a strong brand origin/product fit when it is perceived as highly capable to design the product; the fit will be weak in the opposite case (Roth and Romeo 1992). Instead, the country of origin/product fit represents the perceived capability of a country to produce a specific product type. As, generally there is correspondence among country of origin and brand origin, there are countries that may have a weak brand origin image/product fit but a strong country of origin image/product fit (Roth and Romeo 1992).

Additionally, the impact of the country of origin depends on the perceived level of complexity of the product (Batra et al. 2000). Thus, it has been argued that country of origin and brand origin influence on consumers’ purchasing intention can be very high in connection to luxury products. In that case, country of origin would have a greater impact than price in product quality assessment (Piron 2000).

Moreover, according to Dubois and Paternault (1995), luxury products are chosen for their intrinsic meaning compared to what they are. In this sense, luxury brands can be considered as “less about the items being sold, and more about what the brand name stands for” (Ziccardi 2001, p.18).

It can be said that luxury products purchased or possessed by consumers have symbolic meanings and communicate social distinctions or values (Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Ger et al. 1993). Thus, it is possible to show “the difference of luxury consumptions between Confucian and Western countries: Western consumers tend to conspicuously consume luxuries because the products reflect their private preferences whereas East Asian consumers tend to consume luxuries rather because the products conform to their social norms” (Park et al. 2008, p.248). This is also true if a consumer’s age is considered. In fact, teenagers “are more likely to rely on luxury brands and products in order to symbolize status” (Phau and Leng 2008, p.69). Thus, such products are perceived as public goods assisting them in performing their desired role (Hamzaoui and Merunka 2006; Piacentini and Mailer 2004). The assumptions are inverted in the case of adult consumers (Phau and Leng 2008).

The consequence is that brand origin has a stronger influence for the public goods, which indicates that for products with fashion or status symbolic meanings, consumers are more sensitive to it than they are for more private goods that can be more connected with country of origin (Hamzaoui and Merunka 2006).

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to develop an understanding of the subject involved, qualitative and quantitative methods of primary research have been used. Two focus groups were conducted, one for each product category: (1) fashion, and (2) food and beverage. There were ten participants in each of the groups. The participants were recruited from London high streets and shops where luxuries goods are sold. The pre-screening criteria were to select people preferring/purchasing fashion products/brands such as Armani and Gucci and food and beverage products/brands such as De Cecco and Illy. The focus groups lasted two hours on average. The focus groups aimed to explore the meaning of “Italianate” in decision making process for each luxury product category. The discussions have unveiled the impact of cognitive and relationship variables such as brand image, trust, satisfaction and brand experience on purchases and preferences of “Italian” luxury brands. Moreover, the moderator also explored if attitudes and preferences are influenced by the country of origin and/or brand origin and how those concepts influence “Italianate” connotation for each product category.

Following the focus groups, two sets of questionnaires for each product category have been designed. The variables were derived from issues that emerged in the literature review and the analysis of information gathered in focus groups. From the literature review, it revealed that age is an important variable in determining consumers’ attitudes and perceptions. Particularly in fashion category where there is a distinct difference between teenagers and adults. Therefore, age is used as an important profiling variable in the questionnaire. Purposive sampling technique was used to select samples: 50 respondents prefer “Italian” fashion products, and 50 prefer “Italian” food and beverage products. The data were analysed using SPSS software.

**THE RESULTS OF ANALYSIS**

**Focus Groups Results**

The analysis of the focus groups highlights some important points about consumers’ attitudes towards and perceptions of “Italian” luxury brands.

**Fashion.** During the discussion it has emerged that in the luxury fashion sector, Italian brands benefit from a great awareness, being well-recognised and loved. In fact, the respondents have mentioned different “Italian” brands and mainly Armani, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada, Valentino and Versace along with some British and French brands among their favourite ones. The former are perceived as “Italian” because of their names and representing an elegant, classical, and at the same time, sexy, unique style and status symbol.

Brand names are considered very important in terms of trust because of their reputation, history, guaranteeing quality and symbolizing luxury. Furthermore, for fashion products’ nationality has largely been judged as fundamental in terms of trust and Italy has been evaluated as the most trustworthy country because of the promise of excellent quality and beauty of clothes. Thus, respondents have shown the unanimous perception that luxury branded clothes made in developing countries such as India and China could loose prestige, appeal and not be worth an expensive price. Thus, they have quietly agreed that both country of manufacture and country where the product is branded/designed are important and should be the same.

Moreover, during the focus group the counterfeit issue has been examined, being nowadays particularly important and dangerous for the fashion industry. Counterfeit products represent huge earnings for criminal organisations that damage brand images and make consumers of original products feel disappointed and underestimated. Moreover, asking which brands’ products they have noticed counterfeit the most, particularly French and Italian brands have been mentioned, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Prada.

Giving opinion on the importance of “Made in Italy,” all respondents have agreed that it is a fundamental assurance of long tradition of high and luxury craftsmanship. Moreover, “Made in Italy” should go along with “Made by Italian Creativity” in order to guarantee lasting appeal and success of “Italian” luxury brands. In fact, Italy is considered as a country that has made an identity in terms of design that cannot be compared with other countries. At the same time, “Italian” brands have been evaluated as highly dependent on the “Italianate” connotation. “Italianate” would guarantee an exclusive style and high quality craftsmanship.

Analysing point of sale’s impact on forming a valuable consumers’ experience, the respondents perceive “Italian” luxury brand’ shops like pieces of art with an excellent design and product display and a very professional and helpful staff. The whole is considered a crucial contributor of a highly stimulating and enjoyable shopping experience.
Food and Beverage. Through the discussion it has been possible to determine that “Italian” food and beverages such as pasta, pizza and coffee, are very much appreciated by respondents. Moreover, “Italian” food has also emerged to be one of the most preferred types food along with French, Japanese and Spanish. “Italian” food has been considered luxurious as particularly expensive and healthy, trusted and satisfying because of the use of very simple, fresh and natural ingredients, such as pure tomatoes and olive oil, that guarantee a high quality and great taste.

Moreover, Pizza, Mozzarella di Bufala, Parmiggiano Reggiano and Coffee are well-recognised and known as traditional, tasty and unique Italian products. The respondents have shown to know a vast range of traditional “Italian” products, drinks and brands: firstly, different kind of pasta, such as Tagliatelle, Vermicelli and Gnocchi, secondly, breads, such as Ciabatta and Bruschetta, thirdly, desserts, such as Tiramisù. Among drinks, they have mentioned Espresso and Cappuccino. Chocolate products and brands have been the most recognised and well-known. Moreover, after pasta and pizza, chocolate has been shown as the most preferred product with Nutella and Ferrero Roches under Ferrero’s brand name. Ferrero has also been one of the most recognised “Italian” brand names along with Barilla and De Cecco for pasta, Bertolli for olive oil, and Lavazza, Martini and San Pellegrino for coffee, alcohol and water respectively.

Then, the issue of “Italian Sounding” names was considered. Such names are perceived negatively and damaging purely “Italian” brands in order to take advantage of their resonance and image. Moreover, respondents consider those brands cheaper and do not believe that they could assure the high quality of “Italian” brands and most of them state to have never bought an “Italian Sounding” brand.

At the same time, Italian brands have been evaluated as highly dependent on the “Italianate” connotation. “Italianate” would guarantee positive feelings and expectation about quality and great Mediterranean taste and trust.

Analysing point of sales’ impact on forming a valuable consumers’ experience, respondents have shown that the most expensive “Italian” brands have been seen in “high level” supermarkets only, such as Waitrose. Moreover, they have perceived “Italian” food and beverage brands’ restaurants and bars as being very warm, traditional with many options on the menu and a very friendly staff.

Survey Results
Quantitative research has given the opportunity to provide a broad understanding on the issues that emerged in the literature review and qualitative research.

Fashion. The survey results show that the key target market for luxury fashion brands and in particular “Italian” brands is at teenagers (aged 15-18). In influencing consumers’ decision making process, brand name and country of origin are the most significant factors for teenagers and adults respectively. Considering “Italian” brands, brand origin represented by “Italian” creativity and unique design, has been evaluated as the most important factor followed by status symbol for teenagers (aged 15-18). In contrast, elegance and classicism and care for details represent the most important factors for adults (aged 19 and above). Those characteristics have been defining “Italianate” connotation and affecting consumers’ attitudes towards and perceptions of “Italian” brands. Furthermore, teenagers have demonstrated not to be concerned about “Made in Italy.” In fact, they do not consider it an issue if a product is “Made in China” or other developing country, as they buy the brand and the representing status symbol. However, “Made in Italy” is highly important to adults. In fact, they would not buy an “Italian” product made in China for example. The fact that teenagers mainly purchase for status symbol motivations can be seen in connection with the counterfactual issue. In fact, that issue has consumer underestimation as major consequence for teenagers and damage of brand image for adults. Additionally, both teenagers and adults prefer “Italian” brands compared with British and French ones. “Italian” brands are considered the most trustworthy in terms of quality and attractive in terms of design. In both groups, Armani has been defined the most popular and preferred brand.

Considering the importance that consumers give to point of sales in order to have a memorable shopping experience, shop’s design in particular has been evaluated the most positive element.

Food and Beverage. The analysis has showed that there is a certain age group balance between people that buy/prefer food and beverage products/brands.

Moreover, in evaluating various elements that consumers could consider in their decision making process, brand reputation and history and brand nationality have been equally perceived as fundamental in all population groups. Instead, country of origin has been defined the least important.

However, when respondents have given their opinion about “Italian” products/brands, the majority of them have evaluated “Made in Italy,” and so passion, tradition, high quality and uniqueness, as the most important factor that defines “Italian” food and “Italianate” meaning. In fact, those people would never buy an “Italian” brands’ product made in other countries as they think cannot be assured high quality of ingredients and competency in the making process.

Considering “Italian” food brands, Ferrero and Barilla have been the most recognised. Ferrero has been evaluated as the most popular brand by people between 18 and 35 years old. Barilla has been the most well-known brand by people between 36 and 60+ years old. Moreover, 60+ age group has also shown to recognise the De Cecco brand. Among beverage brands, Illy and Martini have been evaluated as the most recognised totally. However, San Pellegrino has appeared the most well-known brand between 26-45 age group, with Lavazza representing the most mentioned brand by 18-25 age group.

Considering “Italian Sounding” brands issue, the majority of respondents of all age groups have agreed that they would not buy those brands because they would not assure the same quality of authentic “Italian” products. Moreover, “Italian” food and beverage have been considered as the healthiest, tastiest and most satisfying compared to French, Spanish and Japanese. However, French food and beverage has been evaluated as the most luxurious.

To conclude, evaluating point of sales of “Italian” products/brands, all respondents have shown to be particularly satisfied by restaurants and bars’ menu variety. However, 26-35 age group has been mainly sensitive to the point of sale’s atmosphere.

CONCLUSIONS
Literature review and primary research has given the opportunity to have a better understanding of how consumers perceive “Made in Italy” and “Made by Italian Creativity” cues. Their relative importance has been shown to depend on the specific product category (fashion or food and beverage) in which “Italian” luxury brands operate. This evaluation has been very important in establishing “Italianate” role in consumers’ attitudes and perceptions. Moreover, it has been possible to identify influential factors and variables that contribute to the relationship between consumers and “Italian” luxury brands.

The findings of this research are largely consistent with the literature. It has been shown that country of origin influence on
consumers’ purchasing intention can be very high in connection to luxury products. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that brand origin has a stronger influence for public goods with status symbolic meanings. Consumers are more sensitive to it rather than for more private goods that can be more connected with country of origin (Hamzaoui and Merunka 2006). “Made by Italian Creativity” has been considered the most important factor that characterize Italian products/brands and “Italianate” core. However, “Made in Italy” has shown to have a different value when different product categories and age groups are concerned.

Considering the fashion sector and the public nature of the products, “Made by Italian Creativity” has been considered the most important aspect in the decision making process, especially for teenagers as they buy the brand and the representing status symbol. However, “Made in Italy” as well as “Made by Italian Creativity” is highly important to adults. In the food and beverage sector, “Made in Italy” and “Made by Italian Creativity” have been evaluated almost equally important in defining “Italian” food and beverage.

It is essential to establish a strong connection among relationship constructs represented by brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand attachment and how they are related to brand awareness and brand image. “Italian” brands have been characterized by a large brand name awareness and special image and reputation, capable to positively impact on trust, satisfaction, and attachment towards those brands by consumers. Moreover, emotional experiences, through “Italian” brands’ retail points, has emerged as crucial in determining lasting and interactive relationships with consumers. In fact, it has appeared a positive overall perception of “Italian” brands’ point of sales representing and offering the traditional, stylish and elegant “Italian life style.”

“Italian” brands have similar brand images in the luxury product category in terms of the perceived quality of product features. Thus, “Italianate” is made by brands’ names, personalities and values on prerogatives and origin cues that differentiate Italy in the world. Thus, “Italian” brands such as Armani, De Cecco and Illy are chosen as symbolizing the “Italianate” nature. This appears to be represented by the “Made by Italian Creativity” and “Made in Italy” mixture: “Italian” creativity, top design, originality and style, status symbol, luxury craftsmanship, elegance and classicism, care for details, passion, tradition, high quality and uniqueness.

Based on the finding of this study, marketers must not forget the importance of the perceptions of brand origin and its national identity because they represent a powerful source of brand appeal and image, determining and influencing purchase decisions. Thus, establishing the importance that “Made in Italy” and “Made by Italian Creativity” have in defining “Italianate” connotations, it appears that “Italian” luxury brands need to face with some issues and choices in order to keep and increase their success, also considering the specific product category in which they operate (Irwin 2003; Busacca, Bertoli, and Molteni 2006).

In terms of the limitation of this study, the focus groups participants and questionnaire respondents were from central London area where it is hugely cosmopolitan. Future research needs to select samples randomly in the whole UK. Moreover, it could be significant to take into account other London and UK areas where “Italianate” perceptions of population could significantly vary. Also, it could be valuable to compare consumers’ attitudes towards and perceptions of the two realities of “Italian” fashion: the already mentioned multinational companies renowned for their brands image that have mainly moved to delocalization, and small brands and companies specialized in quality and handcrafted production in Italy.

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Revisiting the Euroconsumer: Transnational History of European Coffee Consumption
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ABSTRACT
By way of a transnational history of European coffee consumption culture we explore and revisit the notion of a European consumer market. We developed a cultural history of coffee in Denmark/Sweden, Finland, Austria and Italy covering a geocultural variety of coffee consumption cultures. From these localized histories we identified a set of common themes defining the socio-cultural trajectory of the commodity’s biography. The common structures of the cultural history of coffee consumption culture facilitate the articulation of contemporary competition in European and national myth markets. The paper contributes to the cultural branding paradigm by adding the perspective of transnational history to contextualize national myth markets.

INTRODUCTION
With the globalization of markets and consumer culture, marketing and consumer research has been concerned with the issue of the existence of the global consumer versus marginalization of localized consumption cultures. Research about commonalities and differences among consumers across markets emerged from the prospect of the Single European market (SEM) in 1992—the Euro-consumer (see e.g., Halliburton and Huneberg 1993; Schmidt and Pioch 1996). European researchers started to look for “evidence” of the existence of “this elusive creature—the Euro-consumer” (Schmidt and Pioch 1996, p.15) in an attempt to find common grounds for standardization, and to juxtapose European with North American consumption patterns. More recently, in interpretive consumer research, focus has moved to identifying particularities of marketing contexts, which annuls some of the theoretical insights in the canons of consumer research. The plethora of lived consumer cultures, and a sense of the inadequateness of theoretical conceptualizations generated in Northern American cultural contexts to explain these, provoked calls for marketing and consumer culture theories that are attuned to specific Latin (Cova and Cova 2002), Celtic (Brown 2006) or Nordic (Kjeldgaard and Ostberg 2007) contexts.

In this article we attempt to bridge this divide of the particularistic local consumer cultures and the futile attempts to identify homogeneous consumer segments. While not exactly advocating a return to the ideas of the Euro-consumer we do note that across the sites researched in this project, there are certain commonalities that will lead us to suggest looking at European structures of common difference (cf., Wilk 1996). We argue that a transnational history approach to consumer culture may reveal structural commonalities of cultural meaning in market places otherwise hidden by an epistemology of contemporaneity and “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002).

Coffee consumption represents an interesting context to explore consumer cultural and market place glocalization from a historical perspective. Coffee history spans from the myth of the origin of European coffee culture in 17th century Venice, Oxford, and Vienna from which it spread across Europe in multiple local manifestations, to its contemporary cultural artefacts, ranging from the Espresso tradition of Italy to the practice of bulk drip coffee drinking in Nordic contexts. These early outcomes of glocalization have been shaped by a multiplicity of modernity projects and consequentially varied consumer cultures inscribed in local/regional mythologies of cultural identity. With the contemporary globalization of coffee consumption epitomized by Starbucks, historically glocalized European coffee consumption cultures are undergoing transformation. In this paper we trace the cultural biography (Kopytoff 1986) of the commodity of coffee to elucidate the historical trajectory of the commodity. Establishing this trajectory is necessary to understand the structures of marketplace meaning systems in the product category of coffee in the contemporary market place: “[...]it is the social history of things, over large periods of time and at large social levels, that constrains the form, meaning, and structure of more short-term, specific and intimate trajectories” (Appadurai 1986, p.36).

METHODOLOGY
Methodologically we draw on two approaches that are particularly suited to grasp the complexity outlined above. For the historical aspect we are inspired from the approach labelled “transnational history” (Iriye 2004). Basically this approach springs out of a dissatisfaction in historical circles with one-sided focus on historical research within particular nation-state context. A transnational history approach involves looking at how phenomena in a particular setting emerge in relation to developments in other settings. By identifying these relations and historical trajectories researchers are able to identify and understand socio-cultural historical phenomena beyond nation-state contexts (Ibid) avoiding a solipsistic or myopic perspective. Transnational history is part of an overall research strategy of this project to “follow the thing”–one of the tenets of multi-sited research (see Kjeldgaard, Csaba, and Ger 2006). Through this combination of approaches the paper seeks to uncover variations of outcomes and consequences of glocalization as well as exploring consumer cultural differences and similarities in Nordic (Denmark, Sweden, and Finland), Mediterranean (Italy) and central European (Austria) glocal consumer culture. For each site a cultural history of coffee consumption has been detailed. None of the researchers are trained historians so we have relied on a variety of academic and popular cultural histories in each locality as well as literature dealing with global and pan-European cultural histories of coffee. For each site we collected accounts of the cultural history of coffee, identifying main themes until there was a thematic saturation. While this does not cover an all-encompassing history it does represent the predominant representation of coffee history. As such we argue that this constitutes the contemporary representation of the collective memory (Zerubavel 2004) of the commodity. After reading and comparing the individual cultural histories we identified a number of common themes across sites. In fact, the similarity of the cultural histories of coffee across sites belies the often popularized claim of the differences of contemporary coffee consumption cultures (which might be the case in terms of the variety of practices).
HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF A EUROPEAN CONSUMPTION CULTURE

In this section we aim at giving a coherent description of the diffusion of coffee consumption practices throughout Europe. We discuss Nordic, Central, and South European contexts that are particularly rich in historical and contemporary coffee consumption practices and meanings, and provide insights into both, cultures of dominant as well as derivative coffee cultures.

Coffee and the variation in consumption styles of coffee over time has always been part of a negotiation of the local and the global. From an early exoticism over insertion into projects of nation-hood and politics, a symbol of local scarcity and global abundance in the mid-20th century to contemporary processes of Starbuckification. The history is presented under six sections: The Myth of the Origin of Coffee Consumption; The Function of Coffee-Medicalization and the mobilization of Labour; Coffee and Social Class; A Common History of Shortage: Bans and Embargos; Coffee and the Continuity of the Modern; and Coffee as Part of National Identity Projects.

Myth of the Origin of Coffee Consumption

Coffee as a consumption commodity entered the European context as the result of the increased trade that followed 15th and 16th century explorations of the world, colonial settlements and an increasing number of trade routes. The emergence of coffee culture in Europe coincided with the Enlightenment period and the emerging Western modernity (Ellis 2004; Taylor 2004). The importance of coffee consumption is evidenced by the plethora of myths surrounding the first place where coffee was served. While many like to place the origins of European coffee culture in Vienna, after the Turkish siege, it appears that the Italian coffee history dates back already to the 16th century when the explorers brought coffee, along with other exotic goods new to this part of the world, into the major Italian harbours. In 1570, coffee was introduced in Venice along with tobacco. The Paduan Prospero Alpino, a famous botanist and physician, enabled Venetians to learn and appreciate coffee because he described its characteristics in a book—De Planctis Aegyptii et de Medicina Aegiptiorum—printed between 1591 and 1592. Also for this reason, Venice was the city where coffee could rapidly be found in abundance even if, at the beginning, it was sold only at chemist’s shop and the price of the beverage was very high. Coffee became the object of trade and commerce also in consequence of travelers’ reports. In fact, for example Francesco Morosini, high judge of the doges' city and ambassador of the Venetian Republic to the Sultan, in 1582, through his report from Constantinople (what we today refer to as Istanbul), let people know that in the East there were a lot of public places where people used to meet each other and drink coffee. Still, it was not until December 29th 1720 that Café Florian opened in Venice to be the first Italian coffee shop followed by a rapid expansion of this type of public consumption institution by 1763 only Venice numbered no less than 218 coffee shop.

So while coffee might have been first imported to Italy and historians have found out about coffee houses being opened in Venice and Oxford in as early as 1647 and 1650, respectively (Menninger 2004), a more comprehensive coffee culture where public life migrated out to the coffee houses seem to have flourished in Austria before this trend took off in Italy. Austria also nurtures legends about the introduction of coffee to the country. According to a legend, the Turks left some bags full of coffee beans in Vienna at the end of the second Turk siege in 1683, and a well-respected envoy of the Austrian emperor was allowed to keep them and open the first Viennese coffee house by way of thanks for his bravery in the field. However, in the meantime this legend has also been declared untrue (Steinlechner 2008). In fact, coffee was first put on the Austrian map in 1665 when the Emperor Leopold I welcomed ambassadors of Sultan Mehmed IV in Vienna in order to sign a peace treaty. The Turkish delegates brought all kinds of foreign goods with them and gave Austrian citizens the possibility to marvel at them in their luxurious camps. They also served coffee to the locals and can thus be held accountable for the initial spark of interest in this drink in Austria (Heise 1996). Twenty years later, two Armenians founded the first Viennese coffee house in 1685 (Teply 1980). Despite the geographic distance from central Europe to the southernmost Nordic countries Denmark and Sweden, coffee drinking quite quickly made its way there and was introduced in the second half of the 17th century. In Sweden, for example, coffee was first recorded on a customs record in Gothenburg in 1685. The drink migrated north and made its way to Finland where it has its historical roots amongst the gentry of the 1730’s.

Apart from the discontinuities in the historical records of the first coffee houses in Europe, and almost independent of the origins of European coffee drinking and culture, myths of origin serve European attempts of appropriation of coffee as typically European. Despite the fact that its geographical origins are exotic; Eastern; oriental, coffee drinking as a cultural endeavour has been quickly absorbed by European nations, similar to tea, and other colonial products. Globalization, although denoted as a typical modern phenomenon has its roots in colonialization of nations, their commodities and produces. Although coffee has been brought to Europe rather than being forcefully acquired, European hegemonic empires have been quick in institutionalizing a cultivated and socially stratifying practice of coffee drinking in Europe. Myths of origin also reveal the power of social institutionalization. Those nations which were first in developing institutionalized and socially stratifying forms of coffee drinking, authentically claim their right on a national coffee culture today. The commodity of coffee and its consumption culture hence rapidly spread across Europe and developed into local contexts to become part of the definition of cultural identity representing an early example of the glocalization (Robertson 1992) of consumer culture. While we do see a geographic diffusion from particular cultural centres of Europe to other places, the diffusion have occurred at a remarkable pace given the transportation and communication facilities of the time. This puts into perspective contemporary hype of the instantaneity of diffusion of glocal consumer culture.

Coffee as Function: Medicalization and the Mobilization of Labour

When the new product coffee was brought into the consumer culture at the time, it appears that its role was initially contested and that it took some time for it to find its place in local food cultures. Coffee, and especially large quantities of coffee, quite evidently has certain effects on both body and mind and therefore coffee, to this day, has distinct links to other substances bearing these qualities, namely medicines. In Austria, for example, drinking coffee in social settings was not, as accounted for above, common until after 1665 when the first coffee house opened. Coffee, however, had not been totally unknown to Austrians before. Since the 16th century medical doctors had prescribed their patients coffee as a drug capable of curing gastro-intestinal diseases. The strong effect of coffee led fanatical Christians in Italy to question whether drinking it was in accordance with the Christian faith and whether the drink was only for unbelievers. Under the pontificate of Pope Clement VII they asked to ban coffee drinking. In order to make up his mind, the Pope asked for a cup of coffee and then said that it would have been a sin to let only unbelievers drink it. Thanks to the Pope’s approval, the success of coffee was assured and after...
this episode, coffee was also considered by some physicians as a medicine for its "therapeutic powers." Also, in Sweden coffee started out as more of a medicine than a social drink and it was placed on the pharmacy list of approved drugs in 1687, recommended for overall strengthening of the stamina. Later on as coffee drinking was spread amongst the upper-class in Europe throughout the seventeenth century, the habit trickled down to the lower classes who initially drank coffee mostly for its invigorating qualities, and to cure hangovers and flatulence.

In the Nordic context, the invigorating qualities of coffee aligned itself nicely with the ideology of protestant work ethics that highlighted the clarity of the mind, sobriety and the virtuousness of working hard (Andersen 2007). We can see that the appropriation of coffee by wider bodies of consumers was closely associated with the onset of industrialism and both the industrial and agrarian working day. Coffee became a consumption alternative as public authorities attempted to increase worker efficiency by discouraging the consumption of beer and stronger spirits. Coffee hence played a part in the mobilization of the industrial work force.

Drugs and stimulants, such as coffee, regularly made their way in the Leisure class first (Veblen 1994), where they are conspicuously consumed, requiring a certain connoisseurship and exclusivity. In order to preserve exclusivity, its consumption is contested and ceremonial, and restricted to specific forms of use. The functional qualities of coffee thus seem to have been emphasized both when coffee made its way into new territories and when coffee spread to new classes. Across sites, coffee has hence been interpreted in predominant cultural currents of the emerging European modernity—the medico-scientific discourse and the discourse of industrialization.

Coffee Consumption and Social Class

Throughout all the empirical contexts we can see how coffee trickled down through the social classes. It started out as an exotic drink for the royalty or the aristocracy, to be consumed in ritualistic settings on special occasions, and then spread to eventually become a drink for the working class where much of the more elaborate protocol surrounding coffee consumption vanished or was re-interpreted. In Austria for example, when coffee stopped being considered a drug it morphed into a semi-luxury food instead, and consequently became a drink that people liked to have on various occasions. The considerable increase in coffee houses and other places serving coffee contributed substantially to the diffusion of coffee to the bourgeoisie and the middle class (Menninger 2004). Similarly in Italy, by the late 18th century, elegant coffee shop like Caffè Florian in Venice became fashionable places to meet each other and talk about every kind of stuff. This aspect was very important for coffee success and men of culture were so fond of each other and talk about every kind of stuff. This helped create a culture of their own and presumably represented first steps of emancipation. Coffee hence was both part of the emerging cult of domesticity as well as a beverage in bourgeoisie intellectual salon culture (Goodman 1989). While coffee has followed a rather traditional trickle-down pattern in most contexts, Finland is somewhat of an exception as coffee was almost instantly consumed in high quantities amongst all social classes. As coffee became part and parcel of everyday life for a broad array of people in the Nordic contexts, it started to profoundly change important cultural categories such as the way the time of the day is divided. In Finland the growing popularity of coffee-drinking changed the daily routines and eating culture of the workers and countryside people. Coffee was prepared, served and consumed only at certain pre-determined times during a day. As a matter of fact, this still shows in the modern Finnish working life: the legislation guarantees two coffee breaks for every Finnish employee. In the 19th century coffee had become

men who enjoyed gambling and smoking. Only in the 1840s women started to go to coffee houses. They were seen as predominantly bourgeois locales where all kinds of court officials liked to spend their spare time. For the lower class it was much too expensive to indulge in coffee consumption in these locales (Steinlechner 2008). Viennese coffee houses reached their zenith during the fin de siècle period. During this time, politicians of all parties but also famous artists, thinkers and writers (e.g., Adolf Loos, Franz Werfel, Franz Kafka, and Arthur Schnitzler) frequented Austrian coffee houses and contributed to the cafés fame (Ferré 1991; Heise 1996; Wiesmüller and Maurer 2003). The most famous and traditional coffee houses still today enjoy the flair of the old Austrian monarchy and the famous litterateur scene.

In the Nordic countries the diffusion of coffee consumption followed a similar pattern. In Finland, coffee was initially drunk only on Sundays by the gentry and manor lords, but became more common amongst the bourgeoisie circles, peasants and workers in the 1870’s. Like the other contexts however, the process was not altogether smooth as drinking coffee was banned in Finland four times on economic, health-related and moral grounds. One particularity of the Nordic contexts is the attribution of coffee consumption to femininity. This stands in contrast to the more masculine attribution of coffee in central and southern Europe. In the Danish context, coffee in the bourgeois classes was appropriated by domestic consumption culture of women as something being served when social visits (Andersen 2007). Danish Enlightenment philosopher and playwright Ludvig Holberg proclaimed that “nowadays our wives and daughters are able to pay several visits in one day and come home quite sober.” Coffee here was given the role of the feminine drink in contrast to beer—the ideal drink for “a Danish man.” Coffee was aligned with the feminine and the (threatening) foreign. There are still a number of terms associated with female consumers of coffee such as jordemoderkaffe (trl. “midwife’s coffee”–very strong coffee) and kaffesøster (“coffee sister”—a woman drinking large quantities of coffee) and barselskaffe (coffee served visitors to a woman who has recently given birth). The Swedish term kaffemoster (“coffee aunt”—someone really fond of coffee) shows that this was not a unique particularity of Denmark. Historically, elaborated social aspects have been intrinsically connected with the Finnish coffee consumption culture, and also in Finland coffee played a particular role for women. For example, it was socially mandatory for well-respected housewives to arrange two grandiose coffee parties and a few smaller ones during a year. So called sewing society meetings (arranged at private homes) for women are a Finnish example of the latter kind of social occasions. Thus, coffee has played a role in facilitating the social interaction between women who were at that time tied up with the home sphere. This helped Finnish women to create a culture of their own and presumably represented first steps of emancipation. Coffee hence was both part of the emerging cult of domesticity as well as a drink item in bourgeoisie intellectual culture (Ferré 1991). In the beginning coffee houses likened clubs and were exclusively visited by
part of agrarian festivities and soon became part of the rhythm of everyday life—evidence of which still lives on through vocabulary such as “morning coffee, pre-noon coffee, afternoon coffee, evening coffee” in the Danish context. While coffee in the Nordic countries thus quite quickly became a rather common domestic activity it was initially seen as something signalling social status. And the domesticity of coffee consumption did not reign alone, as in many other European countries coffee houses were established. The Danish coffee house culture was influenced by Viennese tradition as places of art and poetry (Andersen 2007) rather than being hotbeds of revolution and commerce that were seen in France and the UK (Ellis 2004). Coffee drinking, and the coffee house as an important public institution that reflects the predominant economic-political discourse within national borders seems to unite European coffee tradition. National identities are built and re-built in coffee houses, reflecting the dominant mode of local political discourse. Nordic countries as democratic, pragmatic and open cultures rather define their local identity through peaceful and mind-opening coffee consumptionscapes; France and the UK, likewise fostered their dominant political attitude in discourse.

A Common History of Shortage: Bans and Embargos

Most markets experience shortages of coffee in connections with major political crises and wars. Particularly the Second World War is highlighted in the history of coffee (e.g. Pendergrast 1999; Ellis 2004) across sites. This collective memory lives on in contemporary popular accounts of the coffee history.

The high prices of coffee made it unaffordable for the biggest part of the Austrian population in the 17th, 18th and also 19th century. Therefore, coffee surrogates and substitutes were developed and consumed which contained just a small amount of real coffee, if any at all. Later on, the first and second world war left an impoverished Austrian population who could not afford coffee anymore. At the time of the reconstruction people turned to substitutes and surrogates made out of acorns, figs, chicory and other fruits and vegetables. Coffee surrogates became very common again and remained dominant in terms of consumption over real coffee until the 1970s (Steinlechner 2008).

The contemporary Finnish coffee culture has been markedly affected by the historical period of rationing (1939-1954) caused by the Second World War. During that time period, real coffee could not be legally sold in Finland. Finns had to settle for substitute and surrogate coffee. The substitute coffee contained a small proportion of real coffee mixed with, for example, chicory whereas the surrogate coffee did not contain coffee at all. All kinds of ingredients were used for the substitute and surrogate coffee: roots of chicory, dandelion and couch grass, wheat, oat, rye and sugar beet. Eventually, common people started to use these terms interchangeably. During this time period people were willing to pay a lot of money for real coffee. Legally, one could get hold of genuine coffee through winning in a coffee lottery.

Coffee, similar to other culture-determining produces and objects, is a commodity that links collective memory to significant economic and political events in that it reflects crisis and times of abundance. Coffee consumption, therefore, becomes symptomatic for the status of European nations, which pride themselves to have (some sort of) coffee culture or coffee drinking history. As national identity is closely linked to coffee drinking as a social institution, consumers turn to awful-tasting substitutes rather than stop drinking coffee. In a similar vein, coffee consumption practices could be interpreted as indicators for the closeness-openness of a nation to global influences. Political threats translate into attempts of re-localization of consumption practices and nationalist tendencies, whereas consumption globalizes in times of political and economic wealth. Radical Italianization of European coffee culture after World War II and European reconstruction bears witness of these processes of modernization.

Coffee: The Continuity of the Modern

In the 50es modernity conquered old traditions. With the enormous popularity of Italy as the Austrians’ favourite holiday destination came the increasing preference for Italian style coffee. This was seen in other cultural contexts as well such as the UK (Ellis 2004) and Denmark (Kjersgaard 1992). Especially in the Western and Southern parts of Austria, those sharing a border with Italy, Italian coffee bars added to the local, more traditional coffee places. Nowadays, Italian coffee drinks are served all over Austria and are perceived as equally authentic and high-quality as traditional Austrian coffee specialities. During the 1990s, Starbucks and Starbucksified coffee chains arrived in Austria and opened cafés in the biggest towns. However, Starbucks itself can still only be found in Vienna and has not managed to conquer less touristy places. At the same time, Austrian coffee tradition has enjoyed a nostalgic revival and is still well-liked by Austrian coffee lovers of all generations.

In the latter part of the twentieth century coffee cultures flowed, creolized and materialized in new forms as a global cultural economy emerged. The American diner concept entered Scandinavia in the 1930s to become the working class kaffebaar (Biering 2003) serving early morning coffee and lunch and came to epitomize Danish lunch culture (there are only a small number of these left). In the mid 1970s French inspired brasseries emerged in the urban Scandinavian centres and introduced Southern European coffee culture to the market (albeit in the French form—café au lait was all the rage in the late 1980s, early 1990s). In the 1990s Scandinavia saw the emergence of both the Starbucksified coffee cultural style and a connoisseurship style with the emergence of single bars and chains of coffee shops focusing on Italian inspired coffee brewing.

Even during the early history of Finnish coffee consumption, it was not only enjoyed at private homes. There were three cafés in Turku already in 1783. Traditionally Finns have favoured light-roasted coffee. In its simplest form, traditional Finnish coffee consumption moment outside home has been a plain lightly-roasted cup of coffee with sugar and cream (plus a bun) enjoyed in a café locating in the connection of a bus or gas station or a bakery. The globalization trends have diversified the forms of cafes and coffee drinking habits in Finland. Traditional bakery-cafes co-exist with modern coffee shop chains (e.g., Robert’s Coffee and Wayne’s Coffee) and independent coffee houses and the distinction between a shop and a café has blurred. For example, large hyper markets and furniture stores have established inside cafes offering fresh coffee and pastries.

Historically, across the sites investigated here, coffee has been at the core of the articulation— as representation and material manifestation—of the modern. This represents an interesting paradox not only in the continuity of articulating change (McCraken 2006) but the continuity of a particular commodity becoming appropriated for this articulation across time and places.

Coffee as Part of National Identity Projects

As mentioned earlier, coffee came to become symbols of cultural identity and nation-hood. In Italy, coffee history is related to early twentieth century innovation of espresso machines (Pendergrast 1999). This period coincided with the transformation of Italian society from an agrarian to an industrial one. Drinking culture suited better to the city than the countryside and for this reason the new coffee machines became a symbol of Italian modernization. Espresso could now be
considered one of the symbols of “made in Italy” in the world, and one of the most copied products. Good Espresso must be obtained by forcing adequately pressurised water through coffee powder and should not contain any additive or flavouring and should be free of any artificially added water. The Italian Espresso National Institute has introduced a certification programme to protect and promote the quality of espresso that is the result of a sum of the quality of coffee beans, the expertise of the coffee roaster, the technology of the coffee-machine and grinder-dispenser, and the skill of the barman. Italians usually drink only espresso coffee and do not consider “authentic” all the other kind of coffee.

Pre-roasted coffee started to gain ground in Finland in the beginning of the 20th century when numerous small roasteries were founded. In 1930’s, when the political situation in Europe grew tense, the feelings of patriotism and belongingness intensified also in Finland, and national symbols such as sauna, Suomi-neito (the national personification of Finland) and the Finnish flag appeared in coffee advertising. On the other hand, coffee was also advertised as exotic and exciting because of its origin. The best known character in the Finnish coffee advertising was the Paula-maiden. She was a dark-haired young lady wearing the Sääksmäki national costume and offered coffee from a big copper pot; she never drank coffee herself. Another firm introduced a male counterpart for the Paula-maiden: the exotic Pedro who resembled a Latin American. After the Second World War, coffee advertising prospered using meanings derived from the times of material scarcity. The themes of exoticism, festivity and luxuriousness were still observable in the Finnish coffee advertising of 1980-1990. Another coffee advertising discourse was related to creating an exotic and Latin atmosphere and emphasizing the strong, exciting and fruity flavour and aroma of coffee. Thus, in the Finnish coffee advertising, locality and distant cultural influences intertwined. Similar articulations of the national and the exotic was seen in the Danish context (Andersen 2007).

Across the sites, historically and contemporarily, coffee consumption is used to characterise local culture—that is, coffee serves as a food cultural manifestation of what it means to be Danish, Finnish, Austrian and Italian (for example, one of the sources for this article is titled “Coffee—the national drink of Denmark”). The commodity of coffee has hence been a common object onto which the “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983) of nations are built and articulated through various ways of drinking and practicing national coffee culture. The particular appropriation of the exotic through national idiosyncratic coffee consumption rituals and institutionalizations of coffee; embracing and appropriating the modern; adding to and influencing global coffee culture; are all ingredients for an imagined community of European coffee connoisseurs.

**DISCUSSION**

Coffee unites and differentiates Europe into nations and coffee cultures of consumption. Coffee drinking, although exotic in its origins, has been mythically established as typically European, socially institutionalized in various forms of consumption rituals and coffee houses. Our findings show that coffee consumption—similar to other stimulants and luxury goods—originally served as a means to social stratification and social interaction, deeply reflecting hierarchical versus emancipated European national cultures and working philosophies. While coffee consumption patterns define nations as “imagined communities,” coffee also unites through common European history. Political upheavals commonly re-localize meanings of coffee consumption. Modernization conquers old, local traditions and gives way to new, global trends, such as Italianization of European coffee consumption habits, while keeping the core local culture of coffee drinking.

While, as stated in the introduction, we do not advocate a return to the fantasies of the Euro-consumer flourishing in the beginning of the 1990s (see e.g., Haliburton and Hünnerberg 1993) we do want to raise a warning against the recent trends towards solipsistic views focusing on only the uniqueness of the particular contexts. Our study of coffee cultural history across several European sites point to several similarities at the structural level. Therefore, we suggest that it might be worthwhile to consider European structures of common difference (cf., Wilk 1996) that have been historically established. Our analysis of the various cultural histories of the coffee commodity reveals that the trajectory of the commodity of coffee is quite similar despite contextual specificities. The thematic structures discussed above have their root in a common trajectory of Western modernity (Taylor 2004) in which commodities and their marketing and consumption practices have reflected and followed continuities and ruptures from the enlightenment period, early industrialization and the late modernization of the late twentieth century. The very continuity of the presence of the commodity in the market place throughout a socio-cultural development which is often said to characterize change is striking. It seems like coffee is a “sticky object” that historically have become a material manifestation of cultural disruption—from the forming of revolutions in 17th century coffee houses to the formation of contemporary global consumer culture.

We argue that understanding the historical biography of a commodity—the strong ingrainment and prevalence as symbol of change in socio-cultural histories—aid in understanding the ground on which contemporary glocalization processes occur. The historical biography of the commodity prestructures the possible brand-scape meaning system in which contemporary brand competition can occur. Furthermore, since these cultural histories represent a cultural memory (Thompson and Tian 2008) they prestructure the possible meaning systems in consumer culture. Consumers, through socialization and media representations will draw on the sediments of the cultural history to interpret contemporary market offerings.

Furthermore, our analysis invites to a re-examination of the predominant debate on glocalization. One popular notion is that local cultures are influenced by external homogenizing forces but are re-interpreted to fit local cultural categories. The counter-argument is that, due to homogenizing forces of globalization, local cultures re-invent themselves. The core of both arguments is that local cultures are thought to exist prior to globalizing forces intruding. The analysis of coffee—and the near instantaneous diffusion and materialization in local narratives of identity—suggest that global cultural flows precede and are constitutive for local cultural expressions.

The common structures of the cultural history of coffee consumption culture facilitate the articulation of contemporary competition in European and national myth markets. The paper contributes to the cultural branding paradigm (Holt 2006) by adding the perspective of transnational history to contextualize national myth markets.

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Revisiting the Euroconsumer: Transnational History of European Coffee Consumption


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ABSTRACT
Drawing on data gathered from in-depth interviews with experienced eBay users living in the South of England, this paper accounts for how consumers’ interaction with eBay accelerates cycles of desire. It is argued that because eBay never ceases to signal new possibilities in finding desired goods, it sets in motion accelerated cycles of revelation, characterised by unexpected surprises and opportunities where desired goods can be acquired quickly. This however, undermines the possibility of pleasure associated with a state of desire by radically shortening the various stages of the cycle.

Despite calls for a more concerted effort to redirect consumer research into the arena of consumer desire or passionate consumption (Belk 2001; Belk et al. 2003; Belk et al. 1996), to date, conceptual or empirically grounded research remains marginal at best. Notwithstanding, several authors make a case for seeing consumption as being driven by internal, imaginative idealisations of objects of consumption and that it may very well be the associated pleasures of crafting daydreams and longing which lies at the heart of consumerism. Key themes can be twizzled out from consumer centred narratives on desire; that desire is a powerful cyclic emotion which delivers longing, pleasure, discomfort and disappointment (Belk et al. 2003; Belk et al. 1996; Campbell 1987; McCracken 1988). Belk et al. (2003) call this a cycle of desire, Campbell (1987), a “cycle of desire-acquisition-use-disillusionment-renewed desire” and McCracken (1988) describes this as a vicious cycle propelled by the chasm between lived and idealised reality, where a search for displaced meanings–idealised meaning purposefully removed from lived reality-traps consumers in forever wanting more goods, so idealised lifestyles or states of being be achieved. According to Belk et al. (2003), the cycle is accelerated by the desire to desire, the hope for hope, and the fear of being without desire, and is further animated by tension between morality and seduction. Desired objects require nurturing, they need to be animated to be luring; they need something akin to a prolonged courtship where an imagined future can be contemplated (Belk et al. 1996). This exploit in self-seduction fuels the intensity of desire itself, making longing and yearning as Campbell (1987, p.86) puts it “the main focus of pleasure-seeking.”

In the animation of desire’s cyclical movement, external sources like magazines are presented as sorcerers of desire and consumers, willing apprentices (Belk 2001) or “dream artists” (Campbell 1987) who enjoy the pleasures associated with daydreaming and yearning. In such relationship, the cycle is fuelled by consumers’ psychological energies, who, with the help of external sources, craft future scenarios of an idealised living or state of being once a desired object is owned. Previous research into marketing sources that feed flights of fancy, including window displays (Benjamin 1970; Falk and Campbell 1987), specialty magazines (Belk 2001; Belk et al. 2003), women’s magazines (Stevens and Maclaran 2005) and catalogues (Carrier 1995; Clarke 1998) has shed light on how consumers manufacture and inflame their desire for goods. While the use of media for consumer daydreaming is not new, the scope and scale of eBay probably is resulting in it becoming a significant resource for such activity. Even more than previous sources already studied eBay invigorates the “cult for the new”, through an always changing influx of goods. More significantly perhaps is the fact that eBaying is more than browsing activity but rather a composite of consumer practices, including temporary ownership of goods and actual material ownership through purchase, which here we call DVC. At one level, eBay may fuel desire by becoming a “knowledge project” (Knorr Cetina 2001) for its users or an epistemic object of consumption (Zwick and Dholakia 2006a; 2006b) which reveals itself progressively through interaction, use, examination and evaluation. That eBay is always in the process of being defined and acquiring new properties as it sheds old ones may make it a perennial source for things to potentially desire. Besides a resource for the imagination, DVC, makes a nexus between the ideal confinements of daydreaming located in the mind and material consumption and introduces an interim liminoid like state, that of the digital virtual, which plays a duplicitous role as a source to fuel desire and a platform for its actualisation. Such developments can be explained by locating them in what Rob Shields (2003) calls an “ontological tetrology” that reinstates the relationship between the virtual and material as real. In such a configuration there is an inseparability between the material and the virtual where the latter is a type of “ideality that must be performed,” or “actualized as material” (Shields 2003, p.4) in order to subsist. So, whilst daydreaming is pleasurable, it always seeks actualisation, be this through purchase of an expensive house or embarking on an exotic holiday. The digital virtual is also, to borrow Victor Turner’s (1988) famous dictum “betwixt and between,” where transgressive behaviour may take place that otherwise wouldn’t (Shields 2000; 2002), for instance succumbing to desires that may otherwise be seen as inappropriate indulgences.

As a magical source of enchantment eBay may intersect with a desiring subject in little known ways which require our attention. The basic question underlying this inquiry is what happens when consumer desire is mediated through a digital virtual space like eBay, where potentially what is desired can be easily found and had? In addressing that question, three related concerns are unpacked. To begin with, how eBay’s materially elusive nature and lack of ontological stability may frame the ignition, sustenance and consummation of desire. Secondly, if and how, its limonoid stature enables the actualisation of blocked consumer desires. Finally and perhaps more significantly, to explore what the framing of desire through a technology like eBay do to the experience of consumer desire itself.

RESEARCH METHODS
The purpose of the study was to obtain first-person accounts of consumers’ experiences of eBay to fuel and actualise desire for goods and their reflections on such experiences, so as to produce a nuanced narrative around global themes or patterns (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989; Thompson 1990). A series of in-depth interviews with 35 experienced eBay users who had volunteered to participate were carried out between September 2008 and November 2009, with the average interview lasting approximately 1 hr. 20 minutes. The pool of respondents, included participants from a range of ages and backgrounds living in the South of England who had described themselves as avid, or regular eBay users. Following interpretivist research conventions, the sample was small since the aim was not to attain a statistically representative sample or produce generalisable theory; rather, variation in experiences. Most interviews were carried out in respondents’ homes and in front of a computer logged onto eBay, so that they could refer to their past and more recent eBay activity. In total, 54 hours of data was interpreted. Data interpretation took place by way of a part-to-whole reading, made up of individual interpretation of interviews at an ideographic level, and then the identification of global themes across all interviews, which are now discussed (Thompson 1990; Thompson et al. 1989).
EBAYING AND THE ACCELERATION OF CYCLES OF DESIRE

In this section how consumers actually use eBay to fuel and actualise desire for goods is explored by mapping out key moments in cycles of desire as they run their course through eBay use—ignition, acceleration, re-ignition and satiation. We find that the material elusiveness of eBay, with its ill-defined contours and “in the making” ontological stature requires consumers’ psychological investment to animate its continuous unfolding nature, and that this, to begin with, is an activity which delivers emotional excitement. The search for things to want can be seen as a process of self-seduction, but over time it germinates seeds of discontent as it accelerates a cycle of desire and acquisition, producing satiation or disenchantment in some users.

Igniting Desire

Ebay can be seen as a trigger of dormant, unfilled wishes and sorcerer of new wants. It does so by awakening a desiring mode through the provision of hope that an elusive item at the right price can be found in its fluctuating landscape of goods. For almost all eBay users, and for some more than others, first experiences on eBay are often recalled as intense episodes of searching and monitoring activity galvanized by the hope that a desired item can be found—a childhood toy, an expensive motorbike wished for as a teenager. Similarly, for the collector of miniature aircraft or figurines, eBay signalled the possibility that a missing piece could be about to be listed. In both instances, eBay acts a catalyst for desires which could not be easily actualised through channels of material consumption like shops or car boot sales, because they were too difficult to find or expensive to afford. Linda’s use of eBay to find a long lost toy is illustrative of this.

Linda, a part-time working mother of two young girls recalled fond memories of playing with a Sindy house she owned briefly as a child, but one she had to part with. She was prompted to use eBay in part to source affordable toys for her children, but also in the hope that a personal golden past could be re-enacted through the acquisition of toys she remembered from her childhood.

“I had a Sindy house bought for me one Christmas and my dad tried to put it up and there were bits missing. He lost his temper and we took it back to the shop and I never got it. I was gutted and they got me this piece of cardboard, it’s in the corner actually over there, instead: Like I say, it didn’t have all the bits so my dad just took it back to the shop and they got me this cheaper one instead. I thought I wonder if they do those houses on eBay and I think I finally spent £50 on it last Christmas, having found it on eBay after searching for it for a while. I went a little crazy I couldn’t believe all those Sindy things could be found there.”

Desire within the context of this experience can be explained by summoning McCracken’s (1988) reading of displaced meaning. For Linda, ideals of a gentler and kinder existence are safely located in her childhood memories, this idealised reading of her past, where “she could happily play for hours” are bolted onto her Sindy house, making it a concrete bridge promising some form of meaning retrieval.

Ignition of desire for goods also resulted from consumers’ browsing activity, and here the use of eBay appears to fulfill similar functions to those attributed to other sources to enchant goods. Two types of browsing orientations emerged, one being narrowly focused on a particular known object, and a second underwritten by the chance of eBay producing an unknown something to desire. Two examples should help exemplify this, one involving Peter, a motorcycle enthusiast in search of a new bike and Mark, a self professed eBay addict who spent many hours a day browsing through eBay listings. Peter discovered as an adult that he enjoyed riding bikes after he took a driving test and found himself an eBay habitué of the Motorcycles section. At the time of the interview, he owned two bikes, but was looking for a retro-styled Triumph. He detailed his search in the following way:

“I would look at the picture and think what is that? It’s a Kawasaki, it’s only 125, I can ignore that. GS750, 1979, it’s too old. V-Strom, too new, too expensive, I’d be scared of dropping it. BSA, 1926, that’s a nice idea but I haven’t got a garage so I can’t store it. I’d look at the Triumphs and see 2007 Bonneville, one bid £3,000, that’s cheap, less than five miles from this location. Have I seen this one before and look through the pictures and think I don’t like the tank, that’s horrible but other than that it looks all right. Then read the description and see if they’ve given—So, yes, I’d look through the description and see what it tells me about it.”

Occasionally an item like the Boneville bike seizes his attention via its aesthetic quality. In these moments, he monitors his reaction to the object, wondering if it “speaks” to him by igniting daydreams and the possibility of a new self. For Peter as he later explained, the new Bike signifies the possibility of becoming a better rider.

The second mode of manufacturing desires is produced by a more aimless drifting where respondents navigate their way through a melange of stuff in search of something to want. Take Mark, a young father of two who drove trucks for a living and habitually checked eBay for things to want as illustrative:

“Every day I’m checking just in case there’s something on there I want and, of course, if it’s on a two day listing and I’m not on the computer I’ll miss it, it’s just one of those things. But it’s like having all the channels on the Sky TV looking through all of them if something’s better on the next channel. Like I say, remind you of your youth, so stuff you had when you were kid, you don’t necessarily have to buy it. You can click on and, of course, you type in the first letters of what you want to see and then it comes up with an inventory of all other things. You think, crikey, yes, I’ll click on that, I’ll have a look at that. Even when you sign out of eBay you sign out and it takes you to the front page, and there’s a little matrix of squares in the bottom left hand corner saying ‘you might also like.’ Of course, you can spend two, three hours just looking at different stuff.”

In this narrative, Mark simply jumps from one item to next, with navigation progressively revealing a never ending list of things to want. We may explain these modes of eBay use as fuels of consumer desire that require monitoring, interpretation and evaluation, in order to ensure that what is imagined can be actualised as a material purchase. Since eBay never stops signalling its possibilities—for Linda, the possibility that a Sindy house may be listed, for Mark that something desirable may appear—it sets up a cycle of revelation and discovery, always unclear and ill-defined; full of surprises and promises. We can see this hope that something to want is about to appear as a search for tangible bridges onto which to “hook” an ongoing daydream, whether this is for a perfect collection or an altered state of being or way of life. In this pursuit, respondents eagerly read incoming eBay alerts, logged onto eBay to browse at length through its listings, always keeping an eye on
their personalised eBay area where desired objects can be tracked. In describing such process, respondents frequently made the connection between eBaying and entertainment, with observations during interviews substantiating claims that the search for desired goods is a meaningful and enjoyable act of consumption.

This is best exemplified by Phil’s experience. Phil, a successful 27 year-old store manager working for a big pharmaceutical company describes how he became “OCD in trying to find every single piece that was ever made” to complete a collection of small figures that didn’t belong to him. During a two year period when he was a bit bored in a previous job [he] didn’t like much,” Phil searched eBay for Camberwick Green figurines his girlfriend’s mum collected. He recalls being on eBay “maybe half an hour, maybe two, have something to eat and then back on it again,” and how he felt “obsessed by it.” The obsession transpired in browsing practices that could produce the “cheapest” price, including setting up email alerts for every single piece as well as a complex database system to monitor the fluctuation of goods on eBay and identify gaps in the collection. The task was formidable as he had to source 150 pieces of a collection he was not very familiarised with, this sometimes included monitoring over 100 items at once.

“Thinking about it, it might have been that I was looking for when I was in my previous job when I was at work because I’d set up—you can set up for eBay to alert you when something is listed with a particular thing in the title. I had lots of items there in my eBay area at one point, like five pages or more. So I did this spreadsheet with all of the pieces and then I set up these alerts on eBay for each of the codes of each piece. So eBay would then email me or send me a message when something was listed.”

He later added how much he enjoyed finding items:

“Just finding them and especially if I found them spelt wrong or whatever, something obscure. If I found it a strange way that was more exciting than just finding it normally. The website was called fatfingers.com so obviously a play on people typing. Of course, by doing that because things were spelt incorrectly people searching for something specific spelt correctly it wouldn’t bring those items back because they were spelt correctly.”

We can see here a relational practice binding eBay and users like Phil and Peter, through the use of interactive tools, like email alerts and search engines which enable the actualisation of the imagined, like Peter does, when he looks for a superior bike, and for Mark, the possibility that things to want will come into existence as eBay’s catalogue morphs. These passages are also interesting as they elucidate the mode of engagement which drives the unfolding of eBay and the requirement to be constantly connected to the auction house in order to actualise desire through acquisition. This we can see producing, to borrow from Featherstone (1998), an enhanced sense of flânerie where greater control can be exerted over the search process, as items can be searched for at global scale and specified to the smallest detail, as Peter does, in determining the style of the bike he is after. Such practices end up generating changes in the cycle of desire, most notably in accelerating the speed in which desired items can be found and acquired.

Accelerating Desire

Ebay use accelerates the cycle of desire through three key practices: the quick acquisition of desired items, the removal of moral consequences attached to purchases and the temporary ownership of digital virtual representations of desired goods. To begin with, eBaying accelerates the cycle of desire by making the once rare easily found and the too expensive, affordable. For example, Chloe an academic tutor who liked good quality home furnishings, but lacked the financial means to acquire them revelled in describing how she was able to get expensive items at bargain prices.

“You wouldn’t get a wool rug that size for £70 in a shop and it happened to be one that had caught my eye earlier that day. So I knew what it looked like, I knew what it felt like, I knew the quality of the rug because I’d already seen it in the shop. I have done that before. I have seen something in a shop, maybe curtains in Laura Ashley or something, and I’ve thought, well, I can’t afford Laura Ashley’s prices. So I will literally write down the name in my little notebook, come back and have a look on eBay. You can bet your life you’ll get it.”

The necessary distance that had once separated Chloe from this expensive rug is abridged with the dissolution of a prohibitive tag line. What would have taken years to be found or saved for, can be found in minutes at an affordable price, with as little as typing in the correct search words. This ease is further supported with George’s experiences. George, a collector of miniature Ferrari cars and historic aircraft noted just how much easier it was to find collectables on eBay in comparison to sourcing them from stalls at Goodwood Events or Festival of Speed.

“I had a fairly clear idea of the exact thing I wanted so you can obviously type it into eBay and search for it, and then I might be looking for one with a particular colour scheme or a particular sticker on that was a certain race, something like that. Straightaway on eBay you get a whole page and you can say that’s not the one I want, that’s not the one I want but the one down the bottom of the page think, well yes, that’s the one. It’s just so quick and easy to compare very similar products like that from all around the world just with a few clicks really. It makes it so much easier. As the years progressed one car came out every year so it was growing by one car a year really but then when I started using eBay I could get two or three of the older ones as well. So in a very short space of time I got a lot more of the cars. Once it becomes so easy on eBay like it does it almost becomes an obsession. You think I’ve got that one now I’m going to get the next one and get the next one, so it very quickly allows a collection to grow I think like that.”

In this way eBay allows for the speedy completion of collections, by presenting users, as George explains with “cars to want”. Often respondents had started and finished two or three collections or like George were collecting two different ones at the same time. The process of generating a want is also accelerated. Leah, a 31 year old aeronautical engineer, who described herself as a bit of tomboy, had used eBay mainly to look for 1970s cars and objects from her childhood reflected on a particular incident when she bid for a ring (a category she is usually not interested in):

“I was going through jewellery and found a ring that I wasn’t looking for, didn’t know obviously existed and then found it on there and just thought I have to have it. I liked it that much I wanted it straightaway and was stuck to eBay for like the last 24 hours of the bidding to make sure I got this damned ring which I don’t wear anymore. At the time it was key that I had it and I found it. I wasn’t looking for it and then stumbled
across it and decided to buy it, and ended up spending £150 on something that I wasn’t actually looking for, it was like I had to have it now!”

As Leah’s experience shows acceleration has its own flavour of emotional climaxes, where consumers let themselves “have” what they desire. For Leah, the very speed in which desire is felt is accelerated and experienced intensely during a 24-hour period. Often caught in the excitement of the auction and the fear that a desired item may not appear again, users like Leah gave into seduction, suspending momentarily the kind of moral constraints which characterise expensive purchases such as these. For Leah this meant spending “good money” on something that is usually “not really her.” We can see a temporary suspension of dangers associated with high value purchases, including internal restrictions dictated by codes of morality which have blocked the actualisation of desire, where consumers let themselves have what their heart’s desires. Whilst such experiences may seem as exemplars of impulsive consumer behaviour, we cannot easily label them as such, whilst intense and powerful, there was a time, albeit brief where longing and anticipation is felt.

A second related practice through which desire is accelerated included experiences where anticipation is heightened through a liminoid state of “almost owning.” Martin, a software engineer with a penchant for leisure boats described how he played a complex game he termed eBay roulette:

“I came up with the game by accident by bidding on something to improve its price and then accidentally nearly winning it (I had to remove my bid) but then I thought on reflection that it gave me a buzz and I upped the anti a few times. I pick the items quite at random but quite often they are fantasy cars or boats. There was a stretch limo the other week that looked like a yellow American cab. It was on for about £15000. I bid it up a grand but it eventually went for about £20K not a roaring roulette success I know but enjoyed being the lead bidder for an hour or so. It’s almost like you own it for a brief period and you sort of buy it into its life story. That doesn’t work for everything but you can enjoy the possibility of ownership and being in the lead even if you know that you don’t want or can’t afford it if you did win.”

As temporary “almost owners” consumers give into the fantasy of an associated lifestyle, for Martin this included imagining “new situations and people you will come across if you had a stretch limo.” When asked to expand on the significance of such experience, he added that he liked entertaining the thought of owning an expensive car even though he knew it was an expense he couldn’t justify or afford. Here eBay provides a liminoid space through which users, like Martin, could transgress the boundaries of moral valuations dictating what is to be sanctioned as an appropriate purchase, including foreseen social consequences others will make or internal inhibitions restraining the actualisation of some desires, because they are deemed frivolous or irresponsible (Belk et al. 2003). In this way the negative anticipated social consequences associated with harbouring and giving into desire can be displaced, so that the pleasures associated with succumbing to desire through digital virtual ownership experienced.

Re-igniting Desire

The revelation that there were new objects to desire often emerged from the search activity itself, where the exploration of eBay presented consumers with potential things to desire by way of exposing gaps in a collection or new product complements. For example, Linda’s discovery that other Sindy items could be bought, was serendipitous. She tells us how just the act of typing in Sindy in the search engine made many options to want apparent:

“I just put in Sindy and then if you put a space and then ‘h,’ then it would bring you the options of horse, house. I was going to buy a Sindy caravan but that went for stupid money. There was a tent as well. I never had the tent when I was little and there’s a swimming pool. Yes, if you just put like Sindy. I think you have to put another letter, don’t you, before it brings up the list and then I put ‘s’ for swimming pool and of course clothes you put in. I just went mad once. I went through a real addictive phase of going and looking at Sindy things.”

In some cases, like Linda’s “addictive phase” eBay use produced small ad hoc collections of goods as the search often insinuated the existence of other linked items to be had. Similarly, Martin had accumulated three small boats this way, as well as Peter who was keen to complement the bikes he already had with a superior one.

Another common experience for eBay users was re-igniting desire through the sale of goods that had been desired but labelled “mistakes” once owned. Disappointment with once desired goods is a quick aftermath, borne out of the realisation that the actualisation of the ideally possible through material consumption, the dress, the watch and even a collection do not live up to what was imagined. This together with the possibility that a better item is about to be listed, swiftly reenergised a desiring state, where disappointment or boredom is transformed into anticipation, as desire is refocussed on another good. For Kelly, this involved a coveted top. Kelly is a 28 year old administrator who at the time of the interview was living in a shared accommodation with a close friend. Together they organised fancy dress parties, which Kelly thoroughly enjoyed as this gave her a chance to wear the “wildly eclectic outfits” she had collected from her visits to charity shops and eBay. Finding clothes is an enterprise she takes seriously as she puts it: “I kind of got bullied a little bit at school for being a bit different in the things that I wore. I’d like to wear things that were very striking, not necessarily fashionable.” She recalled an incident involving a top she wanted badly:

“I bought a really nice top with all of this pop art on it and it was a vest with a v-neck. I thought that’s amazing, I’ve got to have it. I bought it and it was one of those bidding wars when you’re waiting to the last two minutes and then you put the bid in because you want it so bad. Then you put your bid in and then someone else bids and it kind of makes you want it even more because you know that there’s someone else that wants it. I bought it and I paid over the odds for it because I was kind of stupid and wanted to outbid this person, the competitive edge again I guess. When I got it was a really horrible material and it was really unflattering. I had to mourn it for a bit because I loved it so much on the PC screen and I hated it when I got it, and so I had to go through like a mourning period where I couldn’t quite let go of it and I’d try it on a few times. After I’d come to terms with the fact that it was hideous I just sold it on.”

Whilst there is an attempt to make the purchase work through a period of mourning, the realisation that the top wasn’t “the one” sets in motion a series of linked episodes, where items are bought and sold on eBay promptly, producing something akin to promiscuous consumer behaviour practices (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth...
2009). Here disappointment or guilt over consequences attached to a mistake, “it wasn’t me” or “it was too expensive” are counterbalanced by the possibility that they can be sold off easily on eBay. For example, Steve, a young, recently married air traffic controller, who admired Steve McQueen and the fashions of the 60s and 70s, and in particular luxury watches, like the ones “McQueen also owned,” ended up buying and selling a few, in the search of “the one:”

“The first one I saw advertised on eBay and then contacted the seller and bought it from his place in Basingstoke. The second Rolex was one that I bought on eBay from a jeweller’s in northern England somewhere who were advertising it. I paid Paypal for and then sold that one on eBay. Then I bought another one, a third Rolex, and that was on eBay as well. I think that was from America because that was bought in New York and then I sold that on eBay as well… The first Rolex, the model was a Submariner and that was the one that the money being tied up in a watch got the better of me so I sold it. The next one that I bought was a Sea Dweller which is similar but slightly heavier, slightly thicker, and it didn’t quite sit well on my wrist. It was only because somebody at work had one that I thought that’s quite nice, tried it on but actually wearing it day in, day out, it just didn’t sit right so I sold that one.”

Steve’s experiences bring to the fore the ease with which “mistakes” can be sold off. The fact that he can recoup money investment enabled him to extend his search for “the watch” and appears to diminish moral restraints imposed in the actualisation of desire, producing interlinked cycles, where ownership is tentative.

Exiting Desire

Acceleration of consumer desire in some instances propelled a quick exit from a desiring mode, as if the intensity and speed with which desire is fed and actualised produce saturation for a product type in some users. Whilst objects acquired are not always disappointing once had, like Linda, who tells us of the wonderful time she has playing with her daughters alongside her beloved Sindy house, to obtain what one’s hearts desire with such speed, lessens the pleasures associated with wanting as well as re-configures the relationships consumers have with their desired objects, once owned. The forfeiting of the pleasure associated with a prolonged courtship with a good yet to be owned is captured by Samuel, an undergraduate student who had spent five weeks trying to find a designer shirt. He explains “the problem with eBay.”

“Well, it was the fact that I couldn’t have it and I had to look constantly. I mean I thought I’d found something and it was like nearly got it there but it’s just not there and I’ve got it here but it’s not just here. When I found it I just felt really happy and then I went on to the next one. Then you go onto the next product that you’re looking for because you’re always looking for something else. That’s the problem with eBay.”

Other problems often emerged from the ease with which idealised meanings or ongoing daydreams could be tested. John, a business entrepreneur, who used eBay to buy a collection of guitars he desired as a teenager, but only now could afford, eventually sold them off on eBay, having found that they didn’t “produce the desired sound,” or “didn’t have the right look.” At the end he was happy to pass it on to “a chap who could play better than him,” recognising that his daydream of being a teenage rock star was now never possible. For other users, this exorcism stemmed from a point where the excitement for a product type simply withers away. For instance, after Linda acquired a number of different Sindy toys, she felt they had enough, spelling an end to a six week period of monitoring. Problems often were transferred to users’ engagement with once desired goods producing something akin to an estranged relationship between owner and good. Take Ken, a recently separated man and IT contractor, who had bought a Speed Devil boat for a ridiculously low price:

“Well, my mental problem with the boat because it isn’t a £100 boat. If you buy one on a normal website at a normal time it’s probably a £6/700 boat. It costs £88 a year to insure it; it costs £45/50 a year for me to keep it at the club. The biggest problem I have with the boat is the fact that it’s so cheap because it’s my hobby and therefore I should spend money on it.”

Part of the problem as he explains of having acquired his boat at such a reduced price is that he feels that he should invest more in his hobby.

For many respondents the emotional highs experienced as once novice users are experiences which in themselves become a source of longing. For Phil once his Camberwick Green figurine collection was completed, eBay didn’t seem a compelling place to be; others, like Mark and Martin ended using eBay as one stop shop to buy more mundane things. There are however notable attempts re-enchant desire for commodities and eBay use. Martin for instance now finds the experience of selling more entertaining, as he explains his current selling phases is a result of him “running out of stuff to want or imagination to think of stuff to want.” Even the invention of eBay roulette is framed in terms of having run out of things to want: “I play when I can’t think of anything I want or can’t find a bargain usually Sunday afternoons.”

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this paper was to document consumers’ experiences using eBay as a site for fuelling and actualising consumer desire. In doing so, it was hoped that a nuanced narrative accounting for how eBay intersects with consumer desire could be arrived at. Drawing on a body of literature dealing with desire and consumer daydreams as the locus of consumption and conceptualisations of DVC (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2010), and digital technology as epistemic objects of consumption, (Knorr Cetina 1997; Knorr Cetina 2001; Zwick and Dholakia 2006a; 2006b), eBaying is presented as DVC, through which consumer desire is accelerated by the coming together of eBay’s unfolding, materially elusive nature and consumers’ own psychological investment in manufacturing desires and reacting to them in various ways. In fact, eBay’s stature as an epistemic object is instrumental in structuring what is desired—by always displaying the missing elements of a collection and expanding the universe of what could be desirable.

Just like consumers who found themselves fuelling their own desire for commodities by perusing specialty magazines (Belk 2001; Belk et al. 2003; Stevens and MacLaran 2005) eBay users are accomplices in their own seduction purposefully looking for things to want. As raw material to craft enjoyable daydreams of ownership, photographic representations of goods and their descriptions may not be as compelling materials as those retrieved from seeing and touching an item or being exposed to the more professionally crafted messages found in magazines. However, this is offset by the ways in which desire is intensified through the auction format which magnifies “mimetic desire” (Belk et al. 2003), as users can see how much demand there is for a good, but mainly, from the feeling of control it creates in its users. On eBay, the interplay of
imagination and possibility, fantasy and reality is energised by a perceived sense of greater control and autonomy in crafting pleasurable daydreams. The types of autonomous discourses discussed in Campbell’s work, awarding consumers the ability to “unhook” daydreams from real objects, are potentially enhanced on eBay.

In this narrative, eBay’s material elusiveness with its “in the making” ontological stature demands consumers’ psychological investment to animate its continuous unfolding nature. The need to further explore is such as Zwick and Dholakia (2006a; 2006b) explain not because eBay remains a stable absolute identity, but on the contrary, because its lack of ontological stability invites further exploration and evaluation. For eBay users interviewed, exploring and evaluating eBay entailed the adoption of search practices, that we may helpfully refer to as enhanced flânerie (Featherstone 1998), and within a taxonomy of DVC, it is this sharpened sense of autonomy which sped up cycles of desire. This, to begin with, is an activity which delivers much emotional excitement, where the flâneur-eBayer drifts through a landscape of commodities losing him or herself in enticing images, floating in a sea of new imaginings that generate new wants and maintain a dreamlike state of desire. This experience is punctuated with the dizzy heights of almost owning and giving into one’s desire, with users recalling the buzz the chance winning a desired object produces.

eBaying, like the avid perusal through specialty and glossy magazines, confronts consumers with things to want but that those things can be immediately had is a new development. For instance in Belk (2001), Stevens and MacLarán’s (2005) work, reading magazines in areas of interest is an exercise of fantasy consumption that seeks its actualisation through material consumption “some day in the future.” On eBay, the future can be as soon as the day after. This actualisation of what resides in the imagination through material consumption and DVC produce a literal acceleration in the course of desire. Here, acceleration, works beyond the purely metaphoric function ascribed in the literature (Belk 2001; Belk et al. 2003) to describe the actual contraction in the course of desire, with the distance between its ignition, consummation and re-ignition radically shortened. In Belk et al. (2003, p.343)’s original text, acceleration is described as a dynamic relationship between the various elements animating the cycle, including the desire to desire, hope to hope, fear of being without desire, tensions between seduction and morality, realisation of desire and the re-initiation of the cycle focused on a new object. Here, the sentiment of desiring for desire’s sake which animates the cycle is only partially forfeited through eBay use, as the acquisition of once desired items, represented in many cases, the start of a desiring mode for other linked items. Users suddenly discover that there is not only one but a range of possible “bridges to actualise displaced meanings” (McCracken 1988) or other possible items to hook an ongoing daydream onto (Campbell 1987; Belk 2001; Belk et al. 2003), thereby recycling the anticipation and excitement of pre-ownership quickly from one item to the next. In these accelerated cycles, guilt, disappointment all possible outcomes of acquiring what is desired, are effects which may be easily offset by a quick sale. So, a desiring consumer and eBay technology sustain each other, by transforming the contours of what is desired, and generating possible “new bridges” or by co-producing a chain of concatenated objects of desire to help achieve an idealised state of being or a perfect collection.

Acceleration of desire is not without problems. To begin with, the speed with which cycles of desire run their course on eBay may be robbing consumers of the pleasures associated with wanting (Campbell 1987). It is as if continued eBay use threatens the possibility to desire for desire’s sake (Belk et al. 1996; Belk et al. 2003) by way of giving users a platform for easy actualisation through virtual and material consumption. Easy actualisation revolves around acquisition only, and not around the more substantive promises of transformation which made those items mesmerizing to begin with. Hence, as a process of self-seduction over time it germinates seeds of discontent, as continued use, accelerates a cycle of wanting and acquisition, producing satiation transforming the once exciting search, into more mundane forms of consumption. When desire is experienced at the speeds of eBay; when desired goods can be wanted and had now, the long term courtship metaphor which has been used to describe consumer desire, where wanting rather than having is longed for, loses its explanatory hold, making the short-term affair a more telling trope: always exciting, intense but impossibly brief.

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the effects when a customer receives either less (under-reward), the same (equity-reward), or more (over-reward) service quality in relation to other customers present in same service encounter. Our results show that the under-reward produced less satisfaction and less repatronage intent than both equity-reward and over-reward. However, the over-reward did not produce more customer satisfaction and not higher levels of repatronage intentions than did the equity-reward. Yet in a transparent service encounter, one customer’s over-reward is another customer’s under-reward. Our results therefore problematize the notion of “the special treatment” in service encounters comprising several customers.

Marketing scholars have argued that it is beneficial for the firm to provide customers with special treatment, sometimes also referred to as preferential treatment—such as getting a better price, being placed higher on a priority list when there is a line, receiving more attention, and getting faster service than other customers. A special treatment thus implies that each customer does not receive the same from the firm; some customers get “more” while others get “less.” So far, existing studies have focused on the customer who gets “more,” and they indicate a positive association between (a) receiving special treatment and (b) customer satisfaction (Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998), customer commitment (Lacey 2007; Lacey, Suh, and Morgan 2007), increased purchases, customer share, and word-of-mouth (Lacey et al. 2007). Little, however, is known about the reactions of the customer who gets “less.”

Moreover, existing studies have dealt with the effects of receiving special treatment in terms of a socially isolated customer–service worker dyad, in which these two parties are left alone with each other in a classical moment of truth. In this situation, with no other customers present, and thus sidestepping an explicit basis for concurrent inter-customer comparisons, one may question how the customer who gets “more” from the firm can know that he or she is actually getting “more.” It should also be noted that many service encounters are not of this isolated type; many service encounters comprise customers who are either waiting to receive service or have just received service. Ordering and eating in a restaurant, being served by the cabin crew onboard an airplane, and having a haircut are typical examples. This social setting, we argue, deserves a closer examination, because it invites the possibility for the customer to compare what s/he receives with what other customers receive. And such comparisons are likely to make the special treatment problematic. For example, if every customer receives a special treatment, and when this is clearly visible for each customer, “the specialness” in the treatment may cease to exist. And when every customer does not receive “the special,” because it is allocated only to some customers, it may create less desirable effects for those customers who do not get it (and even for those who do get it).

In this paper, we re-examine the effects of providing special treatment in a service encounter by allowing for the customer to make an explicit comparison with other customers in the same situation. We thus argue that existing research has employed an under-socialized view of service encounters—particularly in the light of equity theory, in which it is stressed that individuals are almost programmed to assess their input/outcome ratio in relation to others’ input/outcome ratio and to use such assessments when they are forming overall evaluations (Adams 1963; Carr 2007; Lerner 1975). Moreover, in our view, providing “more” to some customers and “less” to others is one central aspect of service variability—and several authors have argued that service variability is harmful and should be kept at bay (Hoffman and Bateson 1997; Johnson and Nilsson 2003). This variability aspect, however, is concealed by empirical studies in which no other customers are allowed to be present.

More specifically, our purpose is to examine the effects on perceived justice, customer satisfaction, and repatronage intentions when a customer receives less, the same, or more from a service worker in relation to another customer (i.e., a comparison other) who is present during the same service encounter. We show that allowing for the presence of other customers indeed problematizes the special treatment as a means to boost customer satisfaction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Our point of departure is that the service worker can be viewed as an allocator of outcomes, and that s/he can allocate outcomes to customers along different lines with regard to what customers get in relation to each other. Moreover, we are interested in a service encounter in which the service worker provides a focal customer P with either (1) less than another customer O (i.e., O gets the special treatment), (2) the same as O (i.e., neither P nor O gets a special treatment), or (3) more than O (i.e., P gets the special treatment). In each case, the condition is that the service encounter is transparent (i.e., the allocation is visible for both P and O). We assume that these three ways of allocating outcomes affect customers’ justice perceptions differently and, in the next step, we assume that they would have different implications for customer satisfaction and for repatronage intentions. Below we provide conceptual arguments and develop hypotheses regarding the three ways of allocating outcomes.

From a conceptual point of view, we are influenced by equity theory. It states that a person P assesses his/her ratio of outcomes (what s/he gets) to inputs (what s/he contributes) against that of another individual O (Adams 1963; Ajzen 1982; Alwin 1987; Konow 2003). This assessment, which is thus based on social comparison, results in a justice perception. More specifically, if P perceives O’s outcome/input ratio to equal his or her own (equity-reward), then P will perceive that justice is at hand. If P perceives that the ratio is unequal, however, then P perceives that injustice exists. Two forms of injustice can be distinguished: under-reward (P’s outcome/input ratio < O’s outcome/input ratio) and over-reward (P’s outcome/input ratio > O’s outcome/input ratio). Thus, receiving more than others, given the same input, is a form of injustice; a central tenet of equity theory is that people are motivated in their social interactions not only by self-interest but also by a desire to establish or restore perceived equity and to reward or punish others for behavior they perceive as just or unjust, respectively (Konow 2003). This desire, in turn, may be predicated on a motivation to diminish wrangling and to encourage efficiency in exchange relationships (Zeadeck and Smith 1968). It may also be based on a need to believe that one lives in a just world—a belief that everyone deserves his or her fate (Lerner 1975).

The two forms of injustice, however, are assumed to be asymmetric, in the sense that the level of perceived justice tends to be higher for over-rewards compared to under-rewards (Adams 1963;
Ajzen 1982; Austin and Walster 1974a; 1974b; O’Malley and Becker 1984). This aspect of equity theory implies a somewhat egoistic individual; injustice is expected to be perceived as less salient when it results in a personally advantageous outcome (Wicker and Bushweiler 1970). Alternatively, it has been argued that over-reward is less of a threat to the perception that one can control situations sufficiently to ensure outcomes; therefore, it motivates action less severely than under-reward (Reis 1984). In a transparent service encounter context, then, in which special treatment can be both an under-reward and an over-reward, or not at hand at all (i.e., equity-reward), and in which both P and O are present, we hypothesize the following (P is the focal customer in our case):

H1a: P perceives an equity-reward as more just than either an under-reward or an over-reward.

H1b: P perceives an under-reward as less just than an over-reward.

Moreover, inequity theory it is assumed that justice perceptions affect the individual’s overall state of mind following an exchange. Copious studies, in different settings, have indeed demonstrated a positive association between various perceived justice variables and overall evaluation variables such as satisfaction (e.g., Colquitt 2001; Maxham and Netemeyer 2002). However, given that under-reward and over-reward represent different forms of injustice it seems imperative to not lump them together under the same aggregated injustice label when assessing the effects on overall evaluations. Here, we focus on customer satisfaction as a consequence of different types of rewards. More specifically, and in tune with previous empirical findings, we expect that (a) an under-reward produces less customer satisfaction than an equity-reward (Austin and Walster 1974b). Yet we also expect that (b) an under-reward produces less customer satisfaction than an over-reward, because of an egocentric bias. Several studies have shown than an over-reward is indeed producing more satisfaction (Austin and Walster 1974b; Sprecher 1992), more contentment (Austin and Walster 1974a; Sprecher 1992) and more happiness (Sprecher 1992) than an under-reward, while it also has been shown that under-rewards lead to more distress (O’Malley and Becker 1984), anger, and depression (Sprecher 1992) than over-rewards. So far, and with respect to the three types of rewards, we thus expect that under-reward is likely to produce the lowest level of customer satisfaction. In a service encounter in which the service worker is the allocator of rewards, and with respect to effects on customer satisfaction, we therefore hypothesize the following:

H2a: An under-reward produces a lower level of customer satisfaction for P than either an equity-reward or an over-reward.

Which type of reward, then, would produce the highest level of customer satisfaction: equity-reward or over-reward? Given a positive association between perceived justice and satisfaction, and given that perceived justice under equity-reward is higher than under over-reward (cf., hypothesis 1a), we would expect that equity-reward produces a higher level of overall satisfaction than over-reward. Such results are also reported by Austin and Walster (1974a; 1974b) and by Pričićard, Dunnette, and Jorgenson (1972) in a setting in which P and O work on the same task and are receiving compensation (i.e., payment) for work. However, in a setting representing a more distant relationship between P and O, Wicker and Bushweiler (1970) found no difference between equity-reward and over-reward (given that the inputs of P and O were kept constant) in terms of the effects on the overall pleasantness of the exchange situation. The same results appear in Hui, Au and Zhao (2007) for effects on customer satisfaction in a service setting. When the relationship between P and O is less close we therefore expect that the personal benefits of over-reward becomes less negatively charged, and we expect that these benefits pushes the satisfaction level upwards so that it approaches the (higher) level of satisfaction generated by equity-reward. More precisely, when there is less potential for P to experience guilt vis-à-vis O, because of a distant P-O relationship, we expect no difference in satisfaction between equity-reward and over-reward. In a service encounter in which the service worker is the allocator of rewards to customers who happen to be present in the same service encounter, and with respect to effects on customer satisfaction, we thus hypothesize the following:

H2b: An over-reward does not produce a higher level of customer satisfaction for P than an equity-reward.

Furthermore, equity theory contains also behavioral implications of P’s exposure to injustice (Adams 1963). For example, P may decrease or increase his/her outcomes and inputs, or psychologically distort them, to adjust for the tension that injustice is assumed to create. P may also choose a perhaps more radical option, which we focus on here: “leave the field.” That is to say, P may avoid further contact with an unjust allocator by turning to other exchange partners for subsequent transactions. Empirical research regarding this option is less common, yet some studies do show that there may be a link between different types of rewards and “leaving the field.” Sprecher (1992), for example, has shown that under-rewards lead to higher intentions to leave a relationship than over-rewards. Presumably, although this is seldom stated explicitly in equity theory as an additional behavioral option, justice may serve to encourage the individual to come back to an allocator for additional and future exchanges of resources. “Leave-or-return” behavioral options are in any case consonant with switching behavior (as a consequence of dissatisfaction) and repatronage behavior (as a consequence of satisfaction) in satisfaction theory (Fornell 1992). Given that the three different types of rewards affect customer satisfaction as stated in hypotheses 2a and 2b, and given that customer satisfaction in a service encounter positively affects intentions to come back again to the same service firm, we hypothesize the following:

H3a: An under-reward produces a lower level of repatronage intentions for P than either an equity-reward or an over-reward.

H3b: An over-reward does not produce a higher level of repatronage intentions for P than an equity-reward.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

We used a between-subjects experimental approach in which each participant received an under-reward (less service output than another customer), an equity-reward (the same service output as another customer) or an over-reward (more service output than another customer) in a service encounter. Thus, we manipulated outcomes and kept inputs constant (Austin and Walster 1974b; Leventhal, Weiss, and Long 1969; and O’Malley 1983 employed a similar approach) to allow for interpersonal outcome comparision. We employed a text-based role-play scenario to manipulate the reward levels; we asked each participant to assume the role of a customer who interacted with a service worker. Such scenarios have often been used in equity research (Huppertz, Areenson, and Evans 1978; Konow 2003; Wicker and Bushweiler 1970) and in service research in general.
We decided that the service encounter should take place in a café setting. The scenario described a very hot summer day and a relief-seeking customer who went to a café to buy ice cream and ended up in a line in which another customer, ahead of the focal customer, ordered exactly the same as the focal customer (two balls of ice cream, chocolate and vanilla, in a cup). Both customers paid the same price. Both customers also interacted briefly with the same female service worker who behaved in an identical way vis-à-vis both customers. Three versions of the scenario (they can be obtained from the authors) were created; the focal customer received either 25% less (under-reward), the same (equity-reward), or 25% more ice cream than the other customer (over-reward). In terms of service theory (cf., Grönroos 1998), the manipulation was thus focused on technical service quality (“what you get”) rather than functional service quality (“how you get it”). Each scenario version was followed by questionnaire items to measure the variables in our hypotheses, and the scenarios were randomly allocated to the participants (N=145; 57 men and 88 women, mean age=24) recruited from undergraduate students participating in business administration courses. There were no significant differences between the three treatment groups with respect to sex (χ²=1.09, p=.58) and age (F=0.26, p=.97).

We measured perceived justice in terms of systemic justice; that is to say, we measured the overall perception of justice provided by the service worker in the service encounter with items adapted from Beugré and Baron (2001) and Carr (2007). Our measure comprised six service worker-related items scored from 1 (do not agree at all) to 10 (agree completely): “The decisions she made were fair,” “Fairness seems to be an important object for her,” “She delivers good outcomes for all customers regardless of who they are,” “She is consistent in her dealings with all customers,” “She treats all customers in a balanced way,” and “She tries to meet all customers’ needs fairly” (Cronbach’s alpha=.90). To measure customer satisfaction, we asked the following question: “What is your overall impression of the café after this visit?” It was followed by three satisfaction items used in several national satisfaction barometers (Fornell 1992): “How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this café?” (1=very dissatisfied, 10=very satisfied), “To what extent does this café meet your expectations?” (1=not at all, 10=totally), and “Imagine a café that is perfect in every respect. How near or far from this ideal do you find this café?” (1=very far from, 10=can not get any closer). Alpha for this scale was .84. Finally, we measured repatronage intentions by asking the participants this question: “How likely is it that you would return to this café?” scored on a scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely).

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The means for the variables in the hypotheses in the three treatment groups are presented in table 1. We used three separate one-way ANOVAs to assess the hypotheses.

With regard to hypothesis 1, the ANOVA showed that the perceived justice means were not equal between the groups (F=51.31, p<.01). Post hoc tests (we used Scheffé’s test) showed, as stated in hypothesis 1a, that equity-reward produced a significantly higher level of perceived justice than both under-reward (p<.01) and over-reward (p<.01). However, in contrast to what we hypothesized in hypothesis 1b, the difference between the two injustice conditions, over-reward and under-reward, was not significant (p=.99). Thus, although the other customer (i.e., the comparison other) was a stranger in our setting, the participants did not display the expected reduced sensitivity to injustice in the over-reward case. Turning to hypothesis 2, the ANOVA indicated that all means were not equal (F=17.65, p<.01). The post hoc tests showed that the under-reward produced a significantly lower level of customer satisfaction than did the equity-reward (p<.01) and the over-reward (p<.01), thus supporting hypothesis 2a. Moreover, the over-reward did not produce a significantly higher level of satisfaction than the equity-reward (p=.65). Hypothesis 2b was thereby supported. As for hypothesis 3, the overall ANOVA was significant (F=13.67, p<.01). The post hoc tests showed that the under-reward produced a significantly lower level of intentions to repatronage than equity-reward (p<.01) and over-reward (p<.01), thus providing support for hypothesis 3a. The over-reward did not produce a significantly higher level of intentions to repatronage than equity-reward (p=.46), thus supporting hypothesis 3b. Intentions to repatronage, then, behaved in the same way as customer satisfaction. Indeed, as expected from customer satisfaction research, these two variables were positively and significantly associated in the aggregated sample of participants (r=.77, p<.01).

In addition, our data show that a failure to (conceptually and operationally) distinguish between under-reward and over-reward, which hitherto has been a prevalent practice in service research involving justice perceptions, may conceal important aspects of the perceived justice–customer satisfaction association. More specifically, an analysis on the treatment group level in our case revealed that the perceived justice–customer satisfaction link was (a) linear in the under-reward condition (R²=.38, F=30.23, p<.01), (b) very weak in the equity-reward condition (R²=.07, F=4.40, p=.04), and (c) U-shaped in the over-reward condition (R²=.18, F=4.98, p<.01). This should be seen in the light of the output of an analysis of the perceived justice–customer satisfaction association at the aggregated sample level (N=145); in this analysis, R²=.21 (F=39.60, p<.01). Our disaggregated analysis shows, as suggested by Clayton (1992), that perceived justice may be a relatively more potent antecedent of customer satisfaction when injustice is at hand. At the same time, given that two distinct forms of injustice exist, one should not automatically assume that they would have identical effects on customer satisfaction: in our case, under-rewards produced a more causally potent context than over-rewards for the perceived justice–customer satisfaction association (cf., Sprecher 1986 for similar results).

### DISCUSSION

When the special treatment for a specific customer is conceptualized as an over-reward to one customer in relation to another customer (who is present in the same service encounter), our results...
show that the special treatment is not producing more satisfaction (and it is not more repatronage intentions-enhancing) than an equity-reward. This, then, questions the practice of providing customers with special treatment as a means to boost customer satisfaction in a transparent service encounter. The results thus question the positive special treatment-satisfaction link in previous research, which has not been allowing for the explicit presence of other customers (e.g., Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998). At the same time, given that the over-reward did not significantly reduce customer satisfaction in relation to an equity-reward, our results may suggest that providing customers with special treatment is not a particularly harmful practice. Yet in a transparent service encounter—in which more than one customer is present and in which each customer can see both what s/he gives and receives and what other customers give and receive—one customer’s over-reward is another customer’s under-reward. And our results suggest that under-rewarding a customer results in a significantly lower level of customer satisfaction (the results also suggest that the under-reward condition is where the perceived justice–customer satisfaction association is particularly strong). This thus implies that providing special treatment may not be such a good idea if this “special” is not distributed equally to all customers. That is to say, not getting the special treatment, while others do get it, is likely to be perceived as an under-reward (and, again, our results suggest that under-rewarding a customer results in a lower level of customer satisfaction). Given that several customers are present, then, and given that the service firm wants to boost satisfaction for each of them, an equity-reward is therefore likely to produce the highest satisfaction level for each customer.

Moreover, perceived justice has become an increasingly popular variable in service research, particularly in studies of service failures. Yet the dominant practice in service research is to conceptualize (and operationalize) perceived justice as a bipolar construct—and as a construct in which injustice is typically equated with under-reward. Our results, however, indicate that the perceived justice–customer satisfaction association is different in terms of both strength and form (linear vs. nonlinear) between the two injustice conditions, thus stressing that under-reward and over-reward represent two distinct forms of injustice. Clearly, then, more precision in models of the impact of perceived justice on customer satisfaction would be obtained if also over-rewards are allowed in model-building efforts.

As for limitations and suggestions for further research, more research is needed to identify potential moderating variables. Such research should, for example, explore situations in which (a) customers have closer relations than in our case (in which they were strangers vis-à-vis each other); it is possible that a close relationship mirrors a higher degree of interpersonal similarity, which may increase the probability for social comparisons and make deviations from equity more causally potent with regard to satisfaction. Other possible moderating variables are (b) the extent to which the service firm is offering different functional rather than technical service quality to different customers, and (c) the price of an offer (i.e., the extent to which it represents a substantial sacrifice for the customer). Moreover, Cate et al (1982) have indicated that (d) the absolute level of outputs, not only the relative level, may have an impact on individuals’ evaluations. For example, in our setting, if the ice cream volume had been larger, maybe a 25 percent difference in ice cream volume between customers would have mattered less. Services other than our café setting should of course also be examined, and field experiments may be useful to assess if the results from our scenario-based method would be replicated. Researchers should also examine situations in which there are differences in inputs (a somewhat nebulous term in equity theory) between P and O. One specific example is loyalty differences between customers; it is possible that a long-term customer views him/herself as more “entitled” to over-rewards than a short-term customer (and is viewed along such lines also by the short-term customer). Other input differences calling for assessment are purchasing power (is a rich or a poor customer seen as more entitled to special treatment?) and expertise (is special treatment viewed as more appropriate for an expert customer or a novice customer?). Finally, the special treatment can be viewed as a specific expression of providing different levels of benefits to different customers. Further research should therefore be extended to take into account that contemporary marketing practices often emphasize differences between customers—which may, in the aggregate, affect notions of justice. That is to say, when markets comprise an increasing number of micro-segments, in which different customers receive different benefits, because marketers have decided that they are different (and have decided that some customers are more valuable than others), what would this mean for the individual’s view of market transactions? And what would it imply for the view of a just society?

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The “Give-the-Service-Customer-Special-Treatment-Approach:” What Happens when Other Customers are Present in the Service Encounter?


On the Borderline: Metaconsumption and the Liminal Tween
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ABSTRACT
The following paper details specific aspects of a research project which explores the consumer culture of a liminal group–tweens, using the anthropological theory of liminality as a lens of analysis. The lived experience of a tween is explored using personal diaries, in-depth interviews and accompanied shopping trips. Outcomes of one aspect of this longitudinal research project—the theory of metacommunication—are presented, suggesting a divergent theoretical path from the “effects” dominated consumer socialization approach to researching young people and their relationships with consumption. We conclude that those in a shadowed reality, those social neophytes no longer children but not yet teens engage with consumption practices and spaces particular to those who must exist mid-way between two spheres of identity. Thus this shadowed reality, this socially indiscernible identity belies agentic consumption and active engagement with signifiers of a duality of meanings and selves.

“It is in this gap between ordered worlds that almost anything can happen” (Turner 1974, p.13)

INTRODUCTION
Marketing theory and research, in particular the vibrant tendril of consumer culture and consumer behavior research embodies a kaleidoscopic essence of cross-disciplinary infusion and hybridism. The origins of interpretive consumer research as outlined for example by Tadajewski, (2006), as well as contemporary theorizations (e.g., Arnold and Thompson 2005) and empirical advancements (e.g., Kozinets, 2001) have been shown to embrace ontologies far beyond the scope of marketing’s seminal mantras (e.g., Kotler et al. 2008). Rather than consequently exist as a diluted pseudo-discipline, conceptions of socio-cultural evolvement and disruption. Several bodies of literature forming a hybridism of theoretical perspectives with liminality represents an instance of incompleteness, when the liminars (the ritual subjects in this phase) “elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (Turner 1969, p.95). Understanding the attributes of liminal entities also serves to illustrate the core ideologies of the theory. One such attribute is structural and social invisibility, seclusion from the spheres of everyday life (Turner 1967). In addition, ideologies of liminal theory espouse characteristics such as tabula rasa, symbolization of concurrent degeneration and gestation or parturition (Turner 1967), heteronomy, silence, equality and obscurity.

Turner’s (1967, 110) ‘invitation to investigators of culture to focus their attention on the phenomena and processes of mid-transition’ has resulted in contrasting disciplines welcoming liminality and its constituent dimensions into their midst to enrich an understanding and analysis of many phases of cultural change. Several bodies of literature have proved sources of inspiration and powerful theory development in the fields of anthropology, sociology and psychology (e.g., Van Gennep 1961; Turner 1974; 1978; 1988; Freud 1950; Foucault 1977). Douglas (1966, p.137) writes that within society, ‘there is energy in its margins and unstructured areas’. Consumer culture research has hitherto acknowledged the fruitfulness of transitional phenomena, spaces and places, as well as the experiences of the individual or group in flux and evolution (e.g., Davies & Fitchett 2004; Maldonado & Tansuhaj 1999; Gentry 1997; Schouten 1991). But it is the heart of this transition that has evaded exploration, slipped beneath the radar of interest. The farthest realms of the threshold may inevitably beckon, but the interim must be experienced to enact the resolution so often the focus of researcher’s attentions. For many, the threshold is their current reality, their centre of nowhere.

This research focuses on the premise that for those whose sense of self is ambiguous, vague or blurred by the experience of standing mid-way between two symbolically-loaded social spheres of interaction, belonging to neither, but embedded in both, consumption practices and relationships with consumption take on a new meaning, a divergent core. Focusing specifically on the pre-adolescent or tween, who has come to represent the epitome of a categorical anomaly, a socio-cultural miasma (James, Jenks and Prout 1998; Cook 2004a), we set out to explore and theorize upon the dynamics of these liminars’ relationships with and through goods and their associations. This paper presents one of the theoretical conclusions of this longitudinal research project—the theory of metacommunication—which explores consumption within the tweens’ liminal shadow of activity and regeneration which prepares these social neophytes for entry into a teenage world.

EVERYTHING AND NOTHING—THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LIMINALITY
Defined by Turner & Turner (1978, p.249) as “the state and process of mid-transition in a rite of passage,” a “moment in and out of time” (Turner 1969, p.96), the liminal phase of a transition, represents an instance of incompleteness, when the liminars (the ritual subjects in this phase) “elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (Turner 1969, p.95). Understanding the attributes of liminal entities also serves to illustrate the core ideologies of the theory. One such attribute is structural and social invisibility, seclusion from the spheres of everyday life (Turner 1967). In addition, ideologies of liminal theory espouse characteristics such as tabula rasa, symbolization of concurrent degeneration and gestation or parturition (Turner 1967), heteronomy, silence, equality and obscurity.

Turner’s (1967, 110) ‘invitation to investigators of culture to focus their attention on the phenomena and processes of mid-transition’ has resulted in contrasting disciplines welcoming liminality and its constituent dimensions into their midst to enrich an understanding and analysis of many phases of cultural change. Several bodies of literature forming a hybridism of theoretical perspectives with liminality unite around a core trope of illness and loss (e.g., Little et al. 1998; Gough 2005, Jones et al. 2007). In the context of these studies, the theoretical framework of liminality has added credence to instances where alliance with social categories and social structures is suspended and irrelevant. Anderson (2003), Campbell et al. (2005), Landzelius (2001) and Waskul (2005) have engaged with contextual specificities such as symbolic boundaries as a theoretical framework of liminality.

Contexts as disparate as place and space (Pritchard & Morgan 2006; Matthews et al. 2000), performance (Dunne 2002; Rill 2006; Brown 2007; Hooker 2007), and Postmodernity (Bhabha 2004; Zukin 1991; Bettis 1996) also highlight the infusion and contribution of many areas of socio-cultural research with ideologies of the liminal, adding vividness and analytical depth to contemporary lived experiences of socio-cultural evolvement and disruption.

LIMINAL CONSUMPTION
But what of liminal consumption? Have the ideologies of interim states been used as a lens of analysis for consumption practices and behaviours? Within interpretive consumer research’s current brand of organization and theorization, CCT, liminal theory has been relatively
underutilized as a theoretical lens through which to understand the consumption practices of those betwixt and between social categories or states of being. Schouten (1991) represents the inaugural integration of this anthropological perspective on mid-transition with individual consumption practices. Despite introducing a link between liminality and consumption, the overall emphasis of Schouten’s (1991) research is divided between self-concept theories, role transitions, rites of passage and liminal ideologies. This multi-theoretical focus implies that less in-depth insights of specifically liminal consumption behaviours are garnished. Schouten (1991, p.422) himself concludes that “little is yet known about the consumption behaviours of liminal people.”

Despite focusing on a proposed relationship between liminal transitions, symbolic consumption and the extended self, the work of Noble & Walker (1997) gravitates around the notion of transitions as opposed to the state of liminality itself and additionally utilizes a positivist framework and quantitative methodology to align with its dissemination in predominantly psychologically oriented fields of inquiry.

Several other studies have approached the phenomenon of consumption in a liminal state (Hogg et al. 2004; Landzelius 2001; Pavia & Mason 2004). Although generating fascinating insights in their own right, these studies commonly relegate the liminal to a constituent dimension of a wider terrain of focus. It appeared that Schouten’s (1991) cry to rally the troops towards explorations of this potential reservoir of symbolic meaning and consumer experiences had been relegated to the margins of interpretive consumer research. Thus this research aimed to explore the interweaving of consumption and identity amongst those whose sense of self is as much about past as future; selves that are embedded in what was, but concurrently gravitating towards what is to come.

METHODS

In order to explore the interaction of liminal lived experiences and tween consumption practices, there were several methodological considerations and implications. Firstly, cognizant of the inherent ideologies of liminality, an instance of time deemed fundamentally disruptive or ambiguous in the life of a pre-adolescent was selected so as to capture lived experience of ‘betwixt and between’ at its most lucid. Therefore, a longitudinal study of a year was undertaken spanning the participants’ final months of primary school and early months of secondary education in two Irish cities. Three main sites of access were utilized; drama schools, personal contacts and primary schools. Second, in line with Richardson’s (1994) conceptualization of multiple methods within the interpretive domain as “crystallization,” this year-long exploratory research project was interjected at various points by a constellation of data collection techniques. A focal point of Richardson’s (1994) theorization is the premise that “what we see depends on the angle of our repose” (p.523). Five data collection methods were employed; namely in-depth interviews (which were conducted at two separate intervals), personal diaries, accomplished shopping trips, e-collages and researcher diaries. Each method was chosen so as to reflect a divergent angle of repose on the lived experience and consumption practices of a liminar. However, due to space constraints, only interview data will be integrated into this paper.

Analysis of such a myriad set of data collection techniques required a specific combination of rigor and creativity. In line with the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998), a grounded theory process of analysis was used which proved “mechanistic and indeterminate in roughly equal portions” (McCcracken 1988, p.41). Following this process of analysis which inherently involves stages of memo writing, axial coding and selective coding, core categories were developed around which the other categories and constructs revolved and offered explanatory power (Spiggle 1994). This process of data analysis culminated in a stage of data interpretation in the manner of “a hermeneutic circle” (Arnold and Fischer 1994, p.63).

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following section details one of the central findings of the first phase of data collection—during the last months of primary school—the theory of metaconsumption. Although the main focus of this paper is the metaconsumption theorized as reflective of the consumption practices engaged with by the liminar tweens, it is necessary to briefly ground this theory in the context in which it emerged. This contextual grounding lays the foundation for the emergence of the metaconsumption theory.

THE LIMINAL TWEEN

As discussed throughout the literature review, the theoretical framework of liminality (Turner 1967; 1969; 1974) was utilized as a prism for interpreting the cultural and social categorization of these ambiguously located beings. Due to space constraints there will be a brief delineation of one of the component concepts of the notion of the liminal tween; clashing age perceptions. This and many other instances of liminality that emerged throughout the data add empirical credence to the social invisibility experienced by these “betwixt and between” girls. This sense of being socially imperceptible would emerge as a focal point for the metaconsumption strategies engaged with by these interstitial consumers.

Clashing Age Perceptions

Established within the specific elements of Turner’s (1967) theorization of liminality is acknowledgement of the ambiguity and indeterminacy that embodies the experience of one who exists as a miasma of socio-cultural categorization and perceptions. One of the most overtly liminal components of the tween identity was the tension experienced between their own conceptualization of how others in society should react to them versus the reality of their social positioning. Testament to the theorization that these girls are no longer, but not yet, their social and personal categorizations were often at odds with one another resulting in an acute sense of social invisibility and often darkness for the girls. Their sense of impending immersion into a teen sphere of social interaction was not matched with others’ behaviors towards them.

In the following interview excerpt, Elaine informs me that although she is given the responsibility of caring for her own brother and sister, many people outside of her family would consider her age far too young to be held responsible for their children. However she is quick to point out that she herself does not hold the same view.

E: But I am far more mature than a lot of 13 year olds I know… I think it is more to do with the fact that people hear 12 years old and they think oh that’s too young to babysit children…

K: And when do you think they would be okay with it....

other people.

E: I think at about 14 or 15 it is more acceptable, by other people, to be babysitting for children.

Here Elaine finds herself grappling with her own sense of personal development and the views of those who ascribe to the wider social implications of age-aligned development, socialization and consequent competencies. She exists awkwardly at the threshold of

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1These stages of education correspond to junior and senior high school in the United States.
what is deemed acceptable socially and how she considers herself personally; blurring boundaries, confusing classification.

In this marketplace example, Rachel highlights the tension she experiences between her own sense of distance from a child-like persona but concurrently other peoples’ conceptualization of her as far removed from the realms of teen consumer autonomy.

K: And how do you decide what to buy….when you’re shopping.

R: Well probably like…..when my mother’s coming down town with me…and it’s like oh this is lovely and she calls over the shop assistant…then I feel like such a child and I’m like oh no I hate that and she’s like oh yea this is lovely, try this on….and I’m like oh no…I hate this outfit…like I hate the pants or something… and then you know the way you wouldn’t want to say it in front of the shop assistant and then you’re just like…oh okay I’ll try it on.

Rachel’s experience with the sales assistant exemplifies her occupation of or location in a category lacking boundaries or clarification and as a result her developing sense of autonomy and independence resides uncomfortably beside society’s attempts to classify her as a child. Although understanding herself as a competent, self-knowing consumer, this is not how others behave towards her. Thus Rachel’s experience of shopping results in a clashing of subjectivities owing to her existence as a “betwixt and between” (Cook 2004), exemplifying an interim subjectivity, a liminal self.

THE EGOCENTRIC TWEEN

The incorporation of a theoretical perspective from the field of psychology was an emergent development following initial data analysis. Elkind’s (1967) notion of egocentrism is considered by those specializing in the field of adolescent psychology, to be an under-researched idea, with constructive potential for anyone attempting to theorize on the lived experiences of young adolescents (Elliot & Feldman 1990). In essence, Elkind’s theory centres on the advanced cognitive capabilities of those approaching adolescence status in particular their increased ability to incorporate the perspectives of others into their own way of thinking and understanding themselves and the world around them. What differentiates adolescents however, and perhaps most pertinent to this research, is the tendency of this group to over-generalize and believe themselves to be the focus of most other people’s attention all of the time akin to paradoxically evade definite categorization via consumption practices of these liminal tweens, the theory of meta-consumption was envisaged as involving a variety of second order consumption practices; or consumption about consumption. When re-appropriated to analyze the emergent consumption objects, is harnessed and utilized as a gauge for assessment owing to their egocentric tendencies and fear of social reprisal, prior to a more assured and competent entry into teenager-hood. But concurrently these strategies enable the tweens to tentatively participate in the consumer culture towards which they know their imperative abilities have allowed her to consider the perspective of those girls she has yet to meet, albeit to an exaggerated degree. Even something as seemingly unrelated to social judgments and ridicule as the theft of her MP3 player is reflective of the egocentric nature of Amanda’s developing self.

A: If you had a big girl sittin up on the table they might be like hmmm….baby….

Here Amanda is using the imagined reactions of her peers to alter her consumption repertoire and future buying habits. It is almost like how she envisages her class-mates reacting to her display of consumption objects, is harnessed and utilized as a gauge for what will be suitable to bring along to secondary school. At this point in time, Amanda has not yet experienced the social environs of secondary school at first hand. However her advancing cognitive abilities have allowed her to consider the perspective of those girls she has yet to meet, albeit to an exaggerated degree. Even something as seemingly unrelated to social judgments and ridicule as the theft of her MP3 player is reflective of the egocentric nature of Amanda’s developing self.

A: I nearly made myself sick thinking about it…..i dunno why I got so upset about it….

K: Was it to do with losing your zen…or that it was robbed by someone….

A: I dunno… I guess it was a bit of both….i just dunno….i just cracked….i imagined everyone will think I can’t look after stuff…

In this example it appears that what had unsettled Amanda so much following the theft of her MP3 player was less to do with the physical void of the item but more with what she imagined the incident conveyed to others about her ability to be responsible for her possessions. Egocentrically, she believes this mishap to be the sole focus of others’ attentions.

METACONSUMPTION

As outlined above, the liminaries’ lived experiences are characterized by social ambiguity, categorical invisibility and an overt preoccupation with how they appear in the eyes of those around them. It emerged throughout the data analysis that despite their conveyed annoyance at their status as social non-descripts, their shadowed realities were a vital resource. As evidenced in the data, various consumption strategies were being utilized by the tweens in order to paradoxically evade definite categorization via consumption owing to their egocentric tendencies and fear of social reprisal, prior to a more assured and competent entry into teenager-hood. But concurrently these strategies enable the tweens to tentatively participate in the consumer culture towards which they know their imperative abilities must be oriented if they are to be accepted by friends and envisaged onlookers.

Regardless of contextual application, the pre-fix “meta” denotes “something of a higher or second-order kind” (OED 2009). A relatively recent consideration within the domain of cognitive analysis is that of second order thinking; or “thinking about thinking” (Keating 1990). Metacognition is frequently studied within the realm of psychology as ‘the ability to monitor one’s own cognitive abilities and activity for consistency, for gaps in information that need to be filled’ (Keating 1990, p.75). This theory appeared to have potential for application within the domain of this instance of consumer research. When re-appropriated to analyze the emergent consumption practices of these liminal tweens, the theory of meta-consumption emerged as a viable theoretical process. Fundamentally metaconsumption was envisaged as involving a variety of second order consumption practices; or consumption about consumption. Specifically these metaconsumptive practices focused on consump-

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3Parer is an Irish slang word referring to pencil sharpener.
tion mastery, regulation & monitoring of consumption experiences & knowledge for gaps that need to be filled, as opposed to tangible marketplace experiences.

During this liminal existence, these metaconsumption strategies, as will be outlined, served to realize the main preoccupation of a tween; remaining covertly active. It appears to be one of the primary preoccupations of the liminal experience, the main product of this ambiguous, obscure interval. Eluding definite categorization as either child or teen, the tweens channel this cultural anonymity into preparing for one of the most socially pertinent roles of their lives thus far; becoming a teenager. These metaconsumption strategies, as will be delineated, allow the girls to paradoxically both evade definite categorization via consumption prior to a more assured and competent entry into teenager-hood but also enables them to tentatively participate in the consumer culture towards which their imperatives must be oriented.

Prior to outlining a selection of metaconsumption strategies, it is necessary to theoretically position metaconsumption in relation to consumer behavior research extant in the area of young consumers and consumption practices.

**CONSUMER SOCIALIZATION–A DIVERGENT PATH?**

Despite the fact that “a consumer culture of childhood stands as a ubiquitous fixture in public life” (Cook 2004b, p.1), there are few theoretical accounts of young people’s specific negotiations and “styles of agency” (James and Prout 1996, p.47) as they mediate the intricacies of their lived experiences and social contexts within contemporary consumer culture. Within the realm of children’s consumer culture theorists, Martens et al. (2004, p.161) contend that “relatively little is known about how children engage in practices of consumption or what the significance of this is to their everyday lives and broader issues of social organization.”

The most widely accepted view amongst contemporary sociologists is that this subordinate theoretical positioning has its origins in the paradigm which has dominated the sociology of children and consequently consumer behavior studies with children, for decades; Developmentalism. Disseminated widely by the work of Piaget (e.g., 1955), the child is envisaged as an incomplete work in progress, evolving along a trajectory of cognitive capacity to a point of adult competence. Fundamentally this paradigm relegates the child’s social world to inconsequentiality.

Within the sociology of childhood, these paradigmatic specificities became manifest in the form of socialization theory (e.g., Coley 1998; Harris 1995; Maccoby 1992). In part due to its suggestion of the potential to influence or intervene at various stages of development (Gunter & Furnham 1998; Mills 2000) the theory of socialization has been applied to consumer research of children via a myriad of studies and theoretical advancements (John 1999). The term consumer socialization was first introduced to the field of consumer behaviour by Ward (1974) and defined as: “the processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace” (p.2). John (1999) presents the most comprehensive and thorough delineation of literature and theoretical developments in the consumer socialization of children, providing structure and summary to an increasingly expansive area of research. The recognition of brand names and advertising (e.g., Hogg et al. 1998; Achenreiner & John 2003; Chaplin & John 2005), and the influence of particular “socialization agents” on children’s growth as consumers (e.g., Dotson & Hyatt 2005; Grant & Stephen 2005; Ekstrom 2007) represent the core focus of research in this area.

In other words, as represented in Figure 1, children’s evolving relationships with consumption have been predominantly conceptu-
alized under the mantle of “effects research.” However burgeoning research within children’s consumer culture studies have begun an attempt to embrace an alternative perspective on young peoples’ interactions and relationships with consumption practices.

For example Cook’s (2008) concept of “commercial enculturation” attempts to capture the “variety of ways children come to know and participate in commercial life” (Cook 2008, p.9) by shifting the focus to “how consumption and meaning, and thus culture, cannot be separated from each other but arise together through social contexts and processes of parenting and socializing with others.” (Cook 2008, p.9). Thus commercial enculturation espouses the notion that a more insightful perspective can be gained by viewing children as not so much socialized into becoming one kind of specific consumer as they are seen entering into social relationships with and through goods and their associations. There have been several key studies, as listed in Figure 1, which align with such a perspective on children’s interactions with consumption orienting from the premise that traditional theorizations via consumer socialization theory obscure fruitful ways of seeing consumer behaviour “in expansive & nuanced ways” (Cook 2008, p.11). Thus from “the effects” perspective consumption practices and the role of the consumer engage with fairly limited spheres of interaction, and are “tied to market transactions, brand & products” (Cook 2008, p.11).

The metaconsumption practices outlined below highlight not a concrete socialization process of liminal tween to secure teenager, but rather an intricate interweaving of relationships between consumption and identities-past, present and future- as these social neophytes mediate the intricacies of their interstitial positioning.

**Brand Apathy**

The nexus of the metaconsumption strategy is thus the maintenance of an unobtrusive, yet concurrently burgeoning site of consumption, which the liminal period appears to represent for these girls. Several strategies had at their core the notion that any activity, which wrenched the girls from the comfort of their categorical ambiguity and assign them to either a child or teen status before they feel prepared, is detrimental. One concept reflective of the tweens’ striving towards consumption practices that facilitate preservation of their social anonymity, for fear of premature emergence before their imagined audience, is brand apathy. Pervasive throughout the first interview data is a definite reluctance by the girls to express an alignment with or affinity to branded products for fear of making an error conducive to social exclusion and ridicule. Contrary to the abundant secondary research in this area (e.g., Siegal et al. 2004; Lindstrom 2003b; McNeal 1992), the girls displayed a noticeable reticence when a discussion of brands and their importance to them arose.

In this example Nicola dismisses the notion that brands are important to her, but acknowledges that “some people” like to revolve their consumption patterns around them.

K: Do you think brands matter to people your age?

N: Well some people do….like they have to get all the brand…. it doesn’t matter to me

K: Does it not…so what’s important to you.

N: Just kind of if I like the top or not.

At this stage, she is still a novice when it comes to buying her way into the teen/consumption dialectic. By refusing to commit to an engagement with brand labels, she is not expected to know anything about them and thus cannot err in her discourse around brands and consumption. Her social status cannot be allocated and she can remain in the interstices of categorisation until such a time when she is equipped with enough social-kudos oriented information to emerge.

Another metaconsumption strategy seemingly utilized in order to convey a purposeful apathy about branded items is price preoccupation. There are numerous examples throughout the first interview data, which suggest that reverting to the reliable utilitarian justification of “because non-branded things are cheaper,” allays the possibility that their incompetence with consumer culture will be brought to notice.

Two excerpts from Rachel’s interview add credence to the notion that apathy or resistance toward acknowledging the centrality of brands to their lived experiences is a strategic defense mechanism often couched in a fixation on value for money, designed to protect the shadow side of their being, their liminal regeneration.

K: And do you think brands matter to people in your class….well not just your class…but your friends…..do ye talk about brands at all?

R: Amm….not really….the main place that we go is penneys,… coz it’s so cheap and it actually does have some nice clothes and stuff….and they just have everything at a really cheap price….and say if you went into somewhere else….like where would you go….am…..really expensive like Pauls or somewhere….and you’d see the same string top or the same jumper for like fifty euro and like the one you could get in penneys would be like fifteen or twenty…

In this first passage, Rachel’s attitude is analogous to the other tweens, in that she justifies her supposed detachment from branded goods by referral to the value for money at non-branded stores. However just minutes later, Rachel recalls the experience of buying a new outfit for her confirmation a couple of months previously.

K: And what other shops would you go to…..say if you went in with your mum?

R: Well radical4 I bought my confirmation outfit in.  

K: What kind of outfit did you get?

R: Well I got these grey bench combats….they’re really nice and I got this tee-shirt and I love it I wear it all the time….and I got a bench hoody….and am its really cool you can put on the sleeve you can put your thumb through a little hole in it….its really cool….and I got my runners.5 there as well….they’re van.

It appears therefore that Rachel’s earlier expressed indifference to brands is not consistent with her behaviour. In this instance, when her mother’s financial agency enters the equation, and Rachel has had a tangible experience with a brand, Rachel’s priorities change and the non-branded shop doesn’t get a mention. Rather she manages to list two big brands in her purchases. Surely if the non-branded store is such good value, her mother’s financial resources would

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4Radical is a store in Ireland which stocks branded clothing and footwear.

5Runners is Irish slang for trainers/sneakers.
have gone a long way further? Clearly Rachel’s interview, visible in part through this inconsistency, suggests that indifference is a defense mechanism. Expressing a detachment from the world of labels, logos and symbolism is less important a goal when resources not available to the neophyte materialize.

**PARODY**

Cognizant of the fact that the core of the metaconsumption strategy is its focus on existing without exhibiting, I was made aware of yet another component of this strategy during the accompanied shopping trips. This strategy centred on the agentive dimension of this liminal shadow in which the tweens exist; consumption strategies that evinced monitoring and acquiring of information and competencies needed when the time came to lead their liminal cocoon and embrace young teen identity.

During these shopping trips, the ambiguity and ensuing tension that the girls experienced in many of the shops seemed to stem from their recurring misallocation as a group or social category. At times the shops we visited were so beyond the realm of possibility for these girls on every level, while concurrently other stores evinced notions of a former childhood self that they were eager to forsake. In other words, it was palpable throughout these trips, that expressing interest in particular items was a risky, value-laden endeavor. Signaling interest in an item deemed “inappropriate” in any dimension appeared to represent social suicide. I soon realized that these weren’t just shopping trips, but opportunities to manage, protect and accumulate the knowledge that was expected of them as young, female consumers.

The concept of parody emerged as a means through which the girls could openly experiment with possible signifiers and configurations of consumption, but maintain a distance from any personal reflections ensuing because of these experiments at the same time. It allowed them to exist without exhibiting. During the shopping trip with three tweens for example, I witnessed firsthand the use of this strategy. On entering one particular store, the girls picked up random tops and skirts claiming “this is so you” or “this is my dream outfit.” I only realized after chatting to the girls later on, that this was a statement of sarcasm meant to denote that something was not to their taste and they weren’t at all genuine in their sentiments. However although it was not genuine admiration they espoused, expressing opinions or preferences couched in parody or mockery, protects the girls’ vulnerability at a time when their level of consumer experience is limited.

**THE FAKE FACILITATORS**

This concept refers to the conclusion that many of the girls chose to forsake a preoccupation with having the genuine brand and instead focused on manipulating and utilizing the sign value even associated with counterfeit versions to assert a provisional foot into the world of teen consumption. Therefore although many of the “brands” they possess are in fact fakes, these products nonetheless facilitate a participation in a version of consumer culture, however diluted. This strategy allows for an engagement with the imperatives that dominate teen consumption but concurrently does not demand the resources only attributed to those of a more defined societal categorization such as finances, life experience or definite market place allocation. In this example, Katie is taking me through some of the possession in her room, including a fake Von-Dutch cap. Interestingly she herself points out that it is a fake.

K: What other brands do you use?

KL: Von dutch…I got those in Majorca…they have lasted me two years now.

K: Wow…and do you have any other von dutch stuff….do you know much about the brand?

Katie roots underneath her bed:

K: Ooh a cap…do you wear that much.

KL: Yeah…its fake von dutch…but it’s still von dutch.

What Katie seems to mean here is that to others, it still appears to be Von Dutch, or at the very least she is appearing to others to be engaging with the brands that form the appropriate staple diet of any normative teen. The important thing for Katie then is appearances rather than authenticity. Appearances maintains the shadow side of their being so that they can incur as little anticipated social ridicule as possible while they experiment with the intricacies of the teen persona/consumption dialectic.

Rachel also displayed an affinity for the non-authentic version of some well-known brands.

K: (reading diary)…Louis Vuitton is one of my favourite designers. I love his bags….so which one is yours?

R: Well I got the both of them off my next door neighbour (laughs), she got them…

K: What do you like about those bags?

R: I think they look really cool…and I don’t mind of they’re fake…because no-one really knows.

Rachel here articulates the key element of the fake facilitator concept, as a metaconsumption strategy. Counterfeit products allow the liminal tweens, despite their lack of agency as a socially ambiguous category, to engage with a desirable facet of consumer culture; the repository of symbolic meaning and social implications behind the Louis Vuitton logo. Although the use of fake brands is not a consumption practice limited to this age group, the role that these brands play in the lived experience of a liminal tween is significant towards understanding how consumption is enacted during a time of social invisibility.

**DISCUSSION**

This paper has described some of the constituent elements of metaconsumption; the proposed theorization of the liminars’ consumption practices and a suggested diversion from “the effects” perspective on young consumers’ socialization. Being neither a child consumer nor a teen purchaser implies that there exists a gap between the self they were and the self they long to be and the liminal status that ensues. In addition, advancing cognitive capacities instill the tweens with a flagrant sense of trepidation regarding their neophyte-like social standing and potential public transgressions. Consequently they long to reside in the shadowed side of being, attempting to learn, monitor and accumulate socially oriented consumer knowledge, but all the while protect and maintain the anonymity that shields them from social scrutiny and insinuations. This intense period of second order consumption practices, or “consumption focused on consumption” aligning oneself with the nuances and mores of the social sphere which will help sculpt their entry into teenager-hood, provides examples of a myriad
consumption strategies and practices which further a theorization of liminal beings and their consumption practices. In addition, metaconsumption advances the burgeoning area of children’s consumer culture research which attempts to explore the mediation of socio-cultural hierarchies and boundaries by young people via their relationships with consumption.

Thus this desire to exist without exhibiting is the core characteristic of the liminal existence and subsequently the theory of metaconsumption has an integral role in its manifestation. For example, the visible propensity of the tweens to convey decided apathy and even resistance towards branded consumption with the variant but related strategy of price preoccupation, was reflective of an effort to preserve the unspoken nature of their social categorization. Not committing to a brand meant not committing to an (unfinished) teen identity. This theoretical conclusion stands in stark contrast to the prevalent literature on branded consumption, whether conceptually, theoretically or managerially oriented (Lindstrom 2003; McDougall & Chantrey 2004; Elliot & Leonard 2004) that convey brand-oriented consumption as a transparently positive and desired facet of tween consumer culture.

However it is equally as intrinsic to the liminal existence that this period of time is not entirely static. As theorized by Douglas (1966, p.137) in relation to interstitial existences “there is energy in the margins and unstructured areas.” A degree of agency must become the metaconsumptive practices of the tween if they are to progress towards the essence of their teen identity (Jenks 2003). Thus the concepts of the fake facilitators and parody encapsulate the covert but fervent accumulation of consumer-oriented knowledge and experience that concurrently embodies the liminar’s “betwixt and between” existence. For example, parody, akin to the foundational premise of the other metaconsumption strategies is both an enabling and a protective mechanism in that it facilitates the tweens’ engagement with the appearance of consumerism but yet safeguards the anonymity necessary to prevent premature alignment with a teen identity that they are ill prepared for.

Cognizant of the tweens’ concurrent engagement with and detachment from consumption practices, the liminal period is proposed to represent a fruitful darkness (Turner 1967, p.110). Akin to understudies waiting in the wings anxiously ingesting as much information as possible in order to better prepare themselves for the biggest performative role of their lives to date—which as of yet is just out of sight—the fructile chaos of the fruitful darkness facilitates a private rehearsal for what will eventually be a very public performance. The metaphor of the fruitful darkness embodies the concurrent darkness and energy, the restorative obscurity that epitomizes the liminars’ experiences with consumer culture within the interstices of socio-cultural categorization. Although at times the tweens appear passive or nonchalant about many of the signifiers of teen culture, this passivity appears to belie a fervent task. Turner (1967, p.102) similarly theorized when he claimed that during the liminal period “his apparent passivity is revealed as an absorption of powers which will become active after his social status has been redefined…”

**CONCLUSION**

Schouten’s (1991, p.422) assertion that “little is yet known about the consumption behaviours of liminal people” was one which had been tentatively approached amongst those exploring the intricate and fascinating interweaving of self and consumption. Research had been instigated and conclusions drawn in relation to consumers and transitions without in-depth focus of that interim period when transition is midway and individuals exist on a threshold blurring past, present and future. As articulated by Turner (1974, p.13) it is “in this gap between ordered worlds that almost anything may happen.” In addition, studies of young consumers and their interactions with consumption have been stifled by a fixation on “effects” approaches to the detriment of interpretive explorations of the social relationships which emerge between young people and various realms of consumer culture and practices, cognizant of the boundaries and hierarchies which constitute their social world. There are many other areas within consumer culture theory which would reap the rewards of considering the liminal; that threshold existence which embodies both light and dark, stillness and energy, ambiguity and focus. Those experiencing the mid-state of transition have received sparse attention in the field of consumer research. This paper has begun addressing this dearth and by doing so has attested to the potential of the liminality theory itself.

The Liminal status is a fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibilities, not a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process (Turner & Bruner 1986, p.42).

**REFERENCES**


Identifying Adolescent Peer Group Structure in the Search of Social Network Methods
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Marie-Hélène Fosse-Gomez, Univ Lille Nord de France, France

ABSTRACT
The peer group has appeared to be a relevant and useful notion in consumer analysis. However, most empirical studies dealing with this subject have been criticized because of difficulties in identifying peer groups. To overcome these shortcomings, we conducted a first exploratory study using two methods (social network analysis and participant observation) to measure French teenage girls’ integration level within their peer group. We devoted a second quantitative study (n=327) to the development of a measurement model based on social network method and applied to make-up consumption. Results showed that the link between teenage girls’ social integration level and the frequency of purchasing/using make-up products is largely mediated by the susceptibility to peer influence. Limits and potential future fields of research are put forward.

INTRODUCTION
Research in marketing provides evidence that peer groups play a crucial role in consumption at adolescence. According to Roedder-John (1999, p.103), “peers are affecting consumer beliefs starting early in life, and continuing intensely through adolescence.” At the age of adolescence, school is the obvious primary location where adolescents interact everyday with their peers and it constitutes an interesting field of research for consumption (Valente, Unger, and Johnson 2005). Consumption is part of the everyday life of adolescents and is mostly influenced by peer groups. Research dealing with adolescents’ consumption has focused mostly on the increasing influence of peer groups on adolescents’ product preference (e.g., Bachmann, Roedder-John, and Rao 1993); on preferences of peers over parents and mass media for specific information sources (e.g., Tootelian and Gaedeke 1992) and on purchase requests to peers (e.g., Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol 2004).

Although several studies on peer influence at adolescence have emerged in consumer research, the field of peer group structure has remained relatively unexplored in marketing and would deserve more attention in adolescent consumer studies (Roedder-John 1999). In accordance with Hartup (1983), we believe that we cannot really understand adolescent consumption without studying adolescents’ integration level within their peer groups. Becoming a member of a peer group and defending one’s social position within the group are two of the primary developmental steps sought at adolescence (Steinberg and Morris 2001). Nevertheless, no relevant measure of adolescents’ integration level within their peer groups has emerged in marketing so far. According to Gould and Hogg (2008), the search for the development of new methods to identify effective peer groups should be an ongoing process in marketing. Our first objective is therefore a methodological one. The purpose is to introduce, develop and compare two methods to measure adolescent social integration level within the peer group. Susceptibility to peer influence appears to be an important variable in teen consumption behaviors (e.g., Roedder-John 1999). Nevertheless, no prior marketing study has examined mechanisms which link adolescent social integration and consumer behaviors with peers (Valente et al. 2005). The second objective of the article is therefore to develop a model to test the impact of teenage girls’ social integration and peer influence on the frequency of purchasing/using a product. We have limited our investigation to one product category (make-up products) and one category of teenagers (teenage girls).

To cover these two main objectives, we will first review the literature related to peer group composition, social influence and position our research in relation to the different interdisciplinary approaches. Secondly, we will present two studies conducted. The first one develops and compares two methods: participant observation and social network methods. The second study tests a full measurement model of adolescents’ social integration and peer influence applied to make-up consumption (n=327). We will end this article with a discussion, including the limits of this research and the avenues for future study.

1. LITERATURE

1.1. Interdisciplinary Approaches
Social sciences have questioned the existence of human groups in general and of peer groups in particular. Several disciplines in social sciences have provided explanations and theory to justify such a group emergence. The functional perspective has produced the largest number of studies to date in the history of group analysis. This normative approach considers a group to be goal-oriented and focuses on studying the functions and results of a group, as well as the decision-making process (Decrop, Pecheux, and Bauvin 2007). The psychodynamic approach focuses on interpersonal relations within groups. Leadership plays a particularly important role in this approach. In every peer group, there is a hierarchy, a leader incarnates the values and the beliefs of the group and maintains its cohesion (Mucchielli 1989). The social identity theory considers the need to be associated with others, as a means to create a social identity. This theory relies on three essential theoretical notions: social identity, social categorization and social comparison (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Similarly in the identity theory, the social network theory also considers groups as structures that are both linked together and embedded in larger social networks (Wasserman and Faust 1994). Group structure refers to the regularized patterns of interactions among individuals in a social system. While the notion of conflict is present in several approaches, it is the central point of the conflict theory which defines groups in terms of power and status (Sherif and Sherif 1969). Based on the assumption that social groups have incompatible shared interests (competition), this approach studies how these rivalries between groups create conflict and how conflict is resolved thanks to a real situation of cooperation between different group members.

These different theories are not mutually exclusive and when combined, they can provide a complete and complex theoretical framework to understand groups. However, we have decided to focus especially on the social network theory provided by social psychology. This theory is the one most often used to study teenagers’ peer groups (Valente et al. 2005). Hence, the social network theory has proved to be suitable and relevant to identify friendship ties between members during adolescence (Ennett and Bauman 1993).

1.2. Peer Group Composition and Evolution
According to social psychology (Ennett and Bauman 1993; Steinberg and Morris 2001), two commonly observed peer group categories can be observed during adolescence: “cliques” and “crowds.” Crowds are large groups of teenagers, not based on durable friendship, whereas cliques are much smaller groups of peers based on friendship and shared activities. Another basis of clique composition is similarity, as people do not choose their friends randomly. A large body of empirical evidence suggests that homophily is a pervasive organizing principle of many kinds.
of social networks (e.g., McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Homophily involves a variety of characteristics, which are presumed to be important, but these characteristics change throughout the individual life cycle. For example, when children move into mid adolescence, they subsequently choose friends based on characteristics such as activity preference, personality or values (Lubbers 2003). Consequently, the importance of being part of a popular crowd declines in mid adolescence, as teens search for closer and more stable friendships. Research also showed gender effects. Boys generally gather in crowds, whereas girls more often gather in cliques, where they find more emotional closeness with their friends (Steinberg and Morris 2001). Thus, it is important to investigate what effects this closeness has on adolescent consumption behaviors (Yalkin and Elliott 2009).

1.3. Social Influence

In studying the effects of adolescents’ social positions on attitudes and behaviors, network research overwhelmingly relies on general social influence theories, such as the social comparison theory and social information processing theory (Festinger 1954). According to these theories, individuals tend to compare their own attributes with those of others. In this comparison, individuals could change their individual attributes to become similar to those of others. Therefore, influence processes are set to work.

Research in marketing has shown that peers constitute an important socializing influential factor, increasing with age as parental influence fades away (Bachmann et al. 1993). Thus, teens are subject to peer influence (Mangleburg et al. 2004). Following conceptual work by Bearden et al. (1989), researchers have investigated two forms of social influence: informational and normative influence. Informational influences help to guide consumers in search of a product, whereas normative influences direct and control evaluations, choices, and loyalties. The two-dimensional model (informational/normative) proposed by Bearden et al. (1989) will be used to measure teenage girls’ interpersonal influence. Nevertheless, before measuring social influence, we have to find an integration level measurement. It will be the main goal of the first study.

2. STUDY 1: A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO MEASURE TEENAGE GIRLS’ INTEGRATION LEVEL WITHIN THEIR PEER GROUPS

2.1. Different Methods to Study Peer Groups

In view of the lack of a universally accepted method to measure adolescent integration level within a peer group, we conducted an exploratory study. According to Sanders (1987), studying a peer group requires it to be observed in its natural settings. In order to be immersed within a natural adolescent context, we chose the context of school to conduct our study. Schools are the primary location where adolescent friendships develop most (Valente et al. 2005). Thus, one of the two researchers took part in two different and unrelated one-week school trips by two different schools. According to prominent authors in the study of group processes, such as Forsyth (1998), studying groups requires multiple and varied methods. During our participation in two different school trips, we developed and compared two methods. First, we tested the social network method, based on the social network theory, to identify each adolescent social position. We compared it with the results of participant observation. As we mentioned earlier, since there are many differences between female and male peer groups in terms of structure, activities and characteristics, we decided to focus our analysis on one gender group only and chose the teenage girls group.

The Social Network Method. A primary task of the social network method is to use the interactional patterns among individuals (i.e., friendship ties) to identify the different adolescent social positions within one’s peer group (Wasserman and Faust 1994). Since schools are the primary location of adolescent friendships (Valente et al. 2005), our social network study is conducted on school-based relationships. Teenage girls answered a self-administered questionnaire the first day of the school trips. The social network method relies on sociometric data (i.e., friendship choice information elicited by questions such as “Name your three closest friends who took part in the school trip”) to identify peer group structure. Subjects named their three closest friends, in order of priority. We limited ourselves to just three choices, since, with more choices, subjects tend to name less close friends, leading to overestimation rather than underestimation of affiliations (Ennett and Bauman 1993; Rogers and Kincaid 1981).

Two social network indicators of popularity and subgroups’ categories were created. Popularity is the number of times a person is named as a friend. Subgroup categories refer to the size of the subgroups adolescents belong to. In network analysis too, we wished to study subgroups within the network, in order to better understand the network as a whole entity. When all actors are interconnected, they form a “clique.” Cliques are defined as a group within which each member is connected to each of the others (Hanneman and Riddle 2005). Some network researchers recommend using reciprocity measurement to identify cliques, because interconnectedness implies reciprocity links (Iacobucci and Hopkins 1992). The identified ties within a group characterize three other major peer-defined social positions available to adolescents: bridges, dyads and isolates. Bridges have at least two links with either clique members or other bridges, but are not themselves members of a clique. Dyads are a pair of actors both linked to each other. Isolates have few or no links to other adolescents within the social network. To determine adolescent subgroups, we used the graph-theoretical method (Reingen et al. 1984). A graph is a set of points (individuals), some or all of which are joined by lines (a relationship between a pair of individuals). These graphs feature social structures and validate outcome variables defined previously (including clique members, bridges, dyads and isolates). For this purpose, we used the UCINET 6 network analysis software to help us to construct graphs and to visualize friendship links.

The Participant Observation Method. Participant observation is particularly suited for the investigation of issues such as studying personal networks or shopping behaviors (Sanders 1987). Participant observation allows direct experience of the meaning system by social actors in a natural setting (Belk 2006). In order to identify peer groups and social positions, one of the two researchers was immersed in teenage girls’ lives and activities over one week: the researcher shared their dormitory and meals; accompanied them on their activities (shopping, sport, visits), or was seated closed to them in the bus. The observation phase involves making a role decision when studying the social world of children (Mandell 1988). The “involvement participant role” was adopted. This involved blending in “with those being studied,” allowing for the adult to be accepted by the children to a certain extent as part of their ongoing activities. The opportunity of taking part in two one-week school trips helped us to reduce the gap between the researcher from the informants and to develop an equalitarian friendship role with the teens we observed. We considered ethical issues of participant observation research such as the responsibility of the adult researcher in dealing with teens (Mandell 1988). Participant observation therefore enabled us to observe peer groups in different situations and at different moments. We tried to get all this information by taking...
field notes, time diaries (60 handwritten pages), photographs of teenage girls, peer groups (54 photographs1 were taken) and video on-site observation (a 2-hour film).

Moreover, through participant observation, we determined both the size of the group the teenage girl belongs to and the identity of members of the group. We then compared the data obtained from our observation sessions with the results of the social network method.

2.2. RESULTS

Firstly, we conducted an exploratory study during our participation in the school trips. The first one-week school trip took place in March 2007 with three 11th grade classes from a private college (St Adrien, Lille). We set up a convenience sample of 45 French teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 18. The second took place in May 2007 with adolescents from several classes (equivalent to 10th, 11th and 12th grade) from a state college (Fenelon, Lille). We set up another convenience sample of 41 French teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 18. As for the preliminary results, the class is the most relevant analysis unit within the school to identify effective peer groups. Eighty-six percent of clique groups (38/44) in the first study were formed within the class. Moreover, even though teenage girls were not restricted to naming friends of the same sex, the three best friends they named were girls for 80 out of 86 participants. Gender identity remains important in building close social networks at adolescence (Steinberg and Morris 2001).

Participant Observation Provides Robust Results. Whatever the moments we observed teenage girls’ peer groups, we noted that these groups remained robust and stable in different situations (travelling by bus, shopping, sport, visits) and at different moments of observation (breakfast, lunch and dinner). Nevertheless, when material conditions (number of beds in the dormitory, the number of seats around the table) did not fit in with the size of the group, we observed that peer group finally split up but always without leaving someone alone. As soon as possible, the peer group “unit” was built up again. No group identified at the beginning of the trips imploded. Moreover, we did not observe teenage girls moving from one peer group (clique) to another during the two school trips. It does not mean that no teenage girl moved from one group to another, but all these moving girls were identified at the beginning as “independent” girls who did not belong to an identified group.

The Social Network Method Identifies Different Social Positions. The social network enables us to identify the four subgroup categories defined previously: cliques, dyads, bridges and isolates (Table 2).

Clique members represent the most common position in the two school trips, followed by dyads, bridges and isolates. These numerous cliques underline the strong need for integration by teenage girls. Concerning popularity score, numbers of nominations

### TABLE 1
Different Moments and Situations to Observe Peer Group Robustness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First observations: peer groups in the bus.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher observed seating arrangements and friendship ties in the bus (8 photographs).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer group observation at meal times (breakfast, lunch and dinner).</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher observed seating arrangements around the table (13 photographs).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer group observation during free activities: sport, shopping, visits (15 photographs).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher observed three peer groups during two shopping afternoons and focused attention on obvious peer group influence on adolescents’ product preference and purchase and on the exchange of clothes in the fitting room.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer group observation in dormitories (18 photographs).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher observed teenage girls when they chose their beds in the dormitory. She observed the traditional collective preparation in the evening: exchanges of make-up products and clothes between teenage girls belonging to the same groups, peer groups as initiators in using make-up, peer groups as a proactive influence in using make-up…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Photographs and videos have not been referenced in order to preserve the teenage girls’ confidentiality.
TABLE 2
Teenage Girls’ Social Position During the Two School Trips (N=86)

| Clique members (44) | 24 | 20 |
| Dyads (20)           | 10 | 10 |
| Bridges (13)         | 7  | 6  |
| Isolates (9)         | 4  | 5  |
| N=86                 | N=45| N=41 |

ranged from 0 (for isolates) to 7 nominations (for teens in the larger cliques) within the class.

Triangulation of the Two Methods. Triangulation principles (Denzin 1978) were applied in the study conducted during the two school trips. We triangulated the methods by combining participant observation and the social network method. In that way, peer groups identified as cliques were composed of close teenage girls which did not break up when material circumstances forced it. Dyads were pairs of teenage girls both linked to each other. We observed that dyads never joined isolates and bridges. Nevertheless, they sometimes became closer to cliques for special events, such as shopping trips. Isolates had no contact with other teenage girls, they often tried to move closer to a clique but the latter rejected them. Bridges were the most difficult members to identify with participant observation. Contrary to isolates, when bridges joined a clique, they were accepted and integrated, but they never stayed very long and then moved on to another clique. Social network and participant observation converged to give the same results. Nevertheless, the participant observation research process was rich but also tedious, time-consuming and occasionally dangerous (e.g., the risk of being involved, the emotion and empathy syndrome…) (Sanders 1987). The social network method is the most suitable and relevant one to identity peer groups. But has the adolescent social position within his/her peer group anything to do with consumption behaviors? We decided to develop a social network measurement model applied to the purchase of a product category in order to study this question (see Figure 2).

3. STUDY 2: A SOCIAL NETWORK MODEL OF TEENAGE GIRLS’ MAKE-UP CONSUMPTION

3.1. Model Development

The first step was to choose a product category because influence measures must be related to a consumption situation. Research in marketing pointed out that make-up consumption contributed to teenage girls shaping their identity, enhancing their self-image and making integration into a new group of peers easier (Fabricant and Gould 1993). Make-up is a relevant product for teenage girls, even if they do not always use it on an everyday basis. Therefore, we decided to choose make-up as the field of application of our social network model (Study 2). The logic underlying our theoretical model is developed below.

Teenage Girls’ Social Integration: An Antecedent to Peer Influence. In consumer behavior, not much is known about the processes through which the peer group exerts influence, except for the fact that frequency of adolescent communication with peer groups leads to greater susceptibility to peer influence (Moschis and Moore 1979). Additionally, socio-demographic variables (e.g., age-Mangleburg et al. 2004) and personality variables (e.g., self-esteem-Bearden et al. 1989) are antecedents, which impacted adolescent consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Research in social psychology (Latané 1981) and in sociology (Katz and Lazarsfeld 2008), has shown that peer group structure impacted susceptibility to social influence. Nevertheless, the relationship between adolescents’ social integration level within their peer group and peer influence has yet to be examined in teenage girls. This led us to formulate hypothesis H1.

H1: The more teenage girls are socially integrated within their peer group, the more susceptible they are to friends’ influence.

The Impact of Peer Influence on Teenage Girls’ Make-up Consumption. According to Bachman et al. (1993), peer influence affected some types of products (public luxury) but not others (private necessities). As shown in a qualitative study (Gentina 2007), make-up products are often consumed out of public during adolescence (with the presence of other girlfriends) and are not commonly used everyday. Therefore, we expect that:

H2: The more susceptible teenage girls are to friends’ influence, the more frequently they purchase and use make-up products.

The Impact of Teenage Girls’ Social Position on Make-up Consumption. While there has been overwhelming support in increasing peer influence during adolescence and its impacts on teen consumption, some psychologists (Kirke 2004; Valente et al. 2005) have expressed caution about the possibility that peer influence may be exaggerated if researchers do not control the effect of adolescent social integration within the group. Kirke (2004) concluded that only half of adolescent cigarette smoking behaviors are explained by the influence of their peers; the other half is due to peer group structure. In this regard, Valente et al. (2005) have shown that popular teens are more likely to become smokers, nevertheless they do not measure the four peer-defined social positions of adolescence (clique members, bridges, dyads or isolates. Therefore, we formulate hypothesis H3, which has yet to be validated.

H3: The more socially integrated teenage girls are within their peer group, the more frequently they purchase and use make-up products.

3.2. Data Collection

Three survey questionnaires were distributed to a convenience sample of 684 teenage girls who attended eight different types of schools in an urban region in northern France. Surveys were administered to students in class, in the presence of the main researcher who instructed them not to discuss their responses with classmates. The first two samples (N1=162; N2=195) were dedicated to the construction of peer influence scale. The third sample (N3=327) was restricted to test the proposed model. The respondents’ ages ranged from 12 to 20 years, with an average of 16 years.
Measurements. Teenage girls responded to a self-administered questionnaire whose first question was “Who are your three closest friends in your class?” We used the two social network measurements defined in Study 1: popularity and subgroup (i.e. clique member, bridge, dyad and isolate). Since the 23 school classes were nearly the same size (in each class, there were between 15 and 17 teenage girls), we determined a global popularity score as a count of friendship received (and not a score divided by class size).

Then, teenage girls’ susceptibility to interpersonal influence was measured by the 12 items developed by Bearden et al. (1989). This scale was developed for adults (and not specifically for teenagers) in an American context and for any kind of interpersonal influence (not only for close friends’ influence). This restriction to close friends is acceptable for teenagers because peer groups play a major role in consumption decisions at that age. Items were therefore modified slightly to focus on influence from friends. Before testing the proposed model, adolescent susceptibility to the peer influence scale was developed using EFA and CFA analyses on samples 1 and 2. Exploratory factor analysis on 158 teenage girls reduced the scale to 7 items and yielded a two-factor scale comprised of four normative items and three informational items. The coefficient alpha was .84 for the normative dimension and .782 for the informational dimension. Then, we proceeded to phase 2 and collected subsequent data on a new sample (N = 319) to confirm factor structures and assess scales’ reliabilities, convergent and discriminant validities. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses replicated the two-dimensional structure found in the first sample: normative and informational dimensions. Acceptable fit measures, as indicated by low chi-square statistics, and significant loadings (> .67; p<.001), were obtained for the peer influence scale (RMSEA = .037; χ²/df = 1.257; CFI = .994; TLI = .991 and RMR = .043). Additionally, the composite reliability coefficients were adequate (>.83). The correlation among informational and normative influence was relatively high (r=.64; p<.001). A second-order factor is conceptually justified because consumer interpersonal influence developed by Bearden et al. (1989) is defined as a construct through both normative and informational influence and is measured as a stable two-factor correlated structure.

Frequency of purchasing and using make-up products was measured using a five-item frequency scale with five points (“never”/“sometimes”/“often”/“very often”/“always”). Then, we determined a global frequency score related to seven make-up products: mascara, eye pencil, eye shadow, blush, foundation, powder and lipstick.

3.3. Results

Hypothesis Testing. The peer influence scale being validated on the second sample, we proceeded to phase 3 to evaluate the structural relationships for sample N3 (319). The conceptual model depicted in Figure 2 was tested using AMOS 6. The full model evaluated is shown in Figure 2, with its standardized parameter estimates and corresponding t-values. For the measurement part, all factor loadings were statistically significant (t-value>7.0 and p<.001) and strong (exceeding .61). The full model fit was reasonably good (RMSEA=.056; χ²/df=1.615; CFI=.971; TLI=.961 and RMR=.048).

As expected from H1, teenage girls’ social integration level within their peer group has a statistically positive effect on susceptibility to peer influence (β1=.22; p<.001). Popularity (β2=.98; p<.001) and peer group structure (β3=.70; p<.001) are two significant indicators to measure adolescent social integration. Popular teenage girls and clique members are more susceptible to peer influence compared to bridges, dyads and isolated. This may be explained by the fact that popular and clique member teens embrace norms of their group to remain popular and feel more pressure than others. Additionally, as expected (H2), we found that teenage girls’ susceptibility to peer influence was positively associated with the frequency of purchasing/using make-up products (β1=.22; p<.004). However, contrary to expectations, teenage girls’ social integration had no significant direct influence on the frequency of make-up consumption. H3 was not supported (γ2<.001).
CONCLUSION

Like Bagozzi (2000), we consider the peer group itself as a fundamental element of study for the analysis of consumer behavior. The main theoretical contribution of this research is to bring sociology and social psychology—in particular the social network theory—into the consumer behavior literature.

Responding to Consumer Culture Theory’s call for increased research into consumption dynamics (Arnould and Thompson 2005), this research contributes to enrich the methodological approaches to the study of peer groups in marketing. Indeed, thanks to our participation in two school trips, two methods developed (mostly) by researchers were combined to study peer groups and consumption within these groups at adolescence: the social network method and participant observation. The development of social network measures (cliques, bridges, dyads, isolates and popularity) enabled us to understand adolescent peer groups better, which is at the heart of much consumer research. Moreover, the structural model has shown that the relationship between teenage girls’ social integration level and their frequency of make-up consumption is largely mediated by teenage girls’ susceptibility to peer influence. The consistency of our findings—from the central role of adolescent social integration level within the peer group to the consideration of peer influence—throughout the 23 classes strengthens our results.

Our research provided the opportunity a richer perspective on social influence processes and particularly its antecedents in marketing (such as peer group structure and popularity). Our results imply that retailers should encourage teenage girls to buy makeup products with peers. Perhaps “bring a friend with you” promotions, special events, and other techniques could be used to encourage more teen group shopping.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary limitation of our study is that our study focused only on teenage girls, therefore one avenue of research would be to examine the teenage boys’ social network and its impact on consumer behavior. Moreover, our research focused only on make-up products. As future research, we suggest the use of other product categories, to examine whether the relationship between teenage girls’ social position within their peer group and their consumer behaviors depends on product category choices, or not. Moreover, the fact of limiting ourselves to just three choices in friends’ name-selection may not give the actual social network because some ties might not be measured.

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Communitas Interruptus: The Limits of Loyalty
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ABSTRACT
This paper presents the result of a qualitative study of consumers who have defected from a brand community. The Brand Community literature has largely focused on questions that relate to motivations of its members and sponsors, the processes that lead to integration within the community, and some of the challenges Brand Community can create for marketers. We know much less about the experiences of individual members and how those experiences impact their participation in the community and loyalty to the brand. We find defection among highly integrated member informants is typically associated with a significant life event or trauma. Less integrated members fail to connect on the elemental relationships of brand community and these misconnections can motivate departure.

INTRODUCTION
The brand community literature has emerged from the significant work that has explored the powerful social connections that can exist among those who own and/or appreciate a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity (Arnould and Price 1993; Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Kozinets 2001). This early work has now evolved into a broader theoretic construct that has important practical implications (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002). Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) work is particularly important as it established important markers of brand community: consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility. Noteworthy, too, are the contributions of McAlexander and his colleagues (2002) as they develop a customer-centric model that reveals that the relevant relationships of brand community are diverse, as consumers experience complex connections with the product, brand, company, and other customers.

Research interest in issues related to brand community has remained strong. Scholars, for example, have begun to investigate brand community in diverse industry contexts. Researchers have explored and described vital brand communities associated with the consumption of automobiles, consumer electronics, virtual worlds, B2B products, recreational activities, education, entertainment, and even packaged goods (cf., Andersen 2005; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Cova and Pace 2006; Leigh et al. 2006; McAlexander et al. 2006; McAlexander et al. 2000; Muniz and Schau 2005; Kozinets 2001; Quinn and Devasagayam 2005). This research continues to extend our understanding of the concept and its broader relevance across product categories.

Although researchers have observed that brand communities can exist with little or no formal encouragement by the institutions that own the brands (Muniz and Schau 2005), these consumer collectives are often co-created through the active involvement of marketing institutions and interested consumers. Presumably, these groups thrive when all participants engage in an exchange that provides reciprocity to all parties. To the firm, interest in brand community is largely motivated by the expectation that brand communities can contribute to loyalty, profitability and favorable word of mouth (Algesheimer et al. 2005; McAlexander et al. 2003). To the consumer, value is found in the social, utilitarian, symbolic, and experiential benefits that come with participation. The community provides consumer members with information helpful to the use and maintenance of focal products, expressive benefits of brand associations, and pleasure in sharing consumption experiences with others (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

While the academic literature has largely provided an encouraging portrayal of the benefits derived through the creation and maintenance of brand community, it is important to recognize that community is not equally or unanimously appreciated by consumers or marketers. Some marketers have found, for example, that consumers who maintain close contact with peers can share damaging stories, impede or redefine branding efforts, or foster undesirable social entry barriers that constrain the purchases of new customers (cf., Algesheimer et al. 2005; Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006). As one might find in any social situation, some consumers find dissatisfaction in the interactions of brand community as they encounter other people who behave in ways that make them uncomfortable or have beliefs or attitudes that they find offensive (Fournier, Sele, and Schogel 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1993; Martin et al. 2006).

We are just beginning to understand the potential value and risks associated with these consumer collectives. There is still much to be learned about the experiences of consumers involved with brand communities, the influence of marketing actions upon the community and its members, and the ways in which brand communities may evolve over time. Our interest in the current research is to examine issues that influence the longevity and nature of a consumer’s participation in a brand community. The literature has largely focused on how brand communities can be built and members recruited, there is very little attention paid to the long-term experiences of the community or its members.

BRAND COMMUNITY: A DYNAMIC SOCIAL ENTITY
Research with these consumer collectives indicates that brand communities are dynamic social entities. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) describe processes of community entry and the development of status within a hierarchical social structure driven by experience and commitment. In a similar vein, other work reveals that experiential aspects of consumption and participation influence community integration and identification (Leigh et al. 2006; Schouten et al. 2007). Such research typically points to how the qualities of the social environment can provide value to participants, as they gain status and influence. We have also learned that consumer engagement in brand community can even survive the demise of the marketer’s support of the brand (Leigh et al. 2006; Muniz and Schau 2005).

While the earliest work tended to emphasize processes of building community and the potential benefits to marketers and consumers (McAlexander and Schouten 1998; Schouten and McAlexander 1995), research has begun to examine some of the challenging aspects of brand community to both consumers and marketers. Sometimes brand community members can experience social tension as consumers struggle to maintain legitimacy or status (Hickman and Ward 2007). Research has indicated that as the community grows and integrates new members, the community ethos may evolve in ways unanticipated by marketers or core members (Martin et al. 2006). Importantly, this evolution may be undesirable to some members and the marketer and lead to tension within the community itself (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Fournier et al. 2005; Leigh et al. 2006; Muniz and Schau 2005).

This recent research has begun to examine issues related to the dynamic character of the brand community, but there is still much to learn. While we have a fair understanding of some of the issues that lead people into brand community and build loyalty, we know little about those that leave. We suspect that brand community defection can be something more than merely brand switching (cf., Irwin 1973), as the points of connection and depths of relationship can be much stronger than for many other products. With respect to brand community defection, we are exploring a departure that can entail the untangling of diverse and potentially complex relationships of which feelings about the brand and product are imbedded.
RESEARCH METHODS

This study focuses upon the experiences of brand community members that have chosen to leave. Through depth interviews we explore those things that influence community longevity, that motivate disaffection, and the experiences of departure. At a micro-level, we seek insights into consumer experiences within the community. At a more macro-level, we gain evidence that may provide a better understanding of the forces that can impact the life-cycle of a brand community.

This paper presents the results of a multi-method qualitative study of brand community as it exists among motorcycle enthusiasts of several prominent brands. Initial insights into community defection are grounded in participant-observation research that has spanned more than a decade. The researcher team has logged many miles and had hours of encounters with riders in brand communities associated with motorcycles bearing brands that include Harley-Davidson, Honda, Yamaha, BMW, Buell, and Triumph. The researchers have participated in brandfests and activities sponsored by Honda, Yamaha, and Harley-Davidson as well as unbranded motorcycle festivals including rallies at Sturgis, Daytona, and Laughlin. During these experiences the researchers have encountered informants who have migrated between brands and also those that have left the sport of motorcycling entirely.

Our ethnographic encounters led to a desire to engage in a more focused approach to better explore the motivations and experiences of those who exit brand communities. So motivated, we identified and recruited brand community defectors for participation in depth interviews. These informants were identified through commercial sources from a list of consumers who had not renewed membership in a Harley-Davidson sponsored brand affinity group. From this list, prospective informants were screened in order to recruit those that left the brand (and not those who had just not renewed membership in the corporate sponsored affinity group). Among those that left the brand, we identified some individuals that left the motorcycling sport entirely and others that switched to another brand of motorcycle. We recruited a mix of brand and activity defectors for a total sample of fourteen informants. Informants were recruited from urban settings in Detroit, Atlanta, and Los Angeles. We felt that representation from diverse geographic regions would be valuable as essential elements of the sport (e.g., routes, riding style, length of riding season) vary by region.

The depth interviews averaged sixty minutes in length and, though focused on experiences in the community and community defection, were largely unstructured. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. These notes and field notes from the depth interviews serve as the bulk of the data that were analyzed for this paper, but are grounded in and reflected against the prior and continuing ethnographic experiences within the community. Data analysis was emergent and continued through the process of data collection. As we identified themes or analytic categories we further explored and challenged them throughout the research process. The researchers also engaged in deliberate discussions employing “devil’s advocacy” to provide increased scrutiny with respect to research conclusions (cf., Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

FINDINGS

In comparing the experiences of the Harley-Davidson brand defectors with those bikers that remain within the community we find many similarities. The brand defectors follow the same pathways into the community as those who remain loyal. Many defector informants have been raised in families with a motorcycling tradition. These individuals are often introduced to motorcycling by parents who facilitate youthful experiences with mini-bikes, dirt bikes, and small street bikes. For some the family tradition was within the Harley brand and for others the Harley brand affinity developed later as they gained more experience with motorcycles and exposure to Harley-Davidson. Other riders come to the motorcycling community later in adult life. Sometimes the motivation to ride is driven by an interest in engaging with the Harley brand and/or community. For others, a desire to ride a motorcycle provides an entry point to the sport and an interest in Harley comes after gaining riding experience and interacting with other riders and motorcycles.

Like their still brand-committed counterparts, defectors experience and interact with the community in diverse ways. We observe in both groups overlapping and complementary community affiliations as riders have social experiences in diverse settings that include family, work, professional organizations, and philanthropic clubs. Like the many committed owners these defectors have been engaged in the Harley Owners Group, a formal organization that is sponsored by the Motor Company. We find some that have been involved with and became committed members of private clubs which range from those that maintain “outlaw” affiliations to those that are aligned with evangelical Christianity. We have encountered both committed owners and defectors that articulate that their most relevant social and identity focus is participation in the sport of motorcycling, and others that claim a more brand-centric affiliation. The compelling point of distinction between the defectors and those that remain in the community seems to lie in the very fact that they chose to leave the brand.

THE DEFECTORS

As we focus attention to the Harley brand defectors we find diverse experiences, even with respect to what defection means. Some defectors leave the Harley brand, but remain within the motorcycle community. Other defectors choose to leave motorcycling entirely. Importantly, we find that the motorcycle owner’s relative integration within the community (McAlexander et al. 2003) and the development of status (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) have powerful impacts upon the experiences and motivations of defection. As modeled by McAlexander and his colleagues (2002), we observe that some owners do not develop the strong relational bonds associated with brand community integration. We refer to these weaker ties as “misconnections” and find them in relation to the motorcycle itself, the Harley brand, Harley-owning peers, and the Harley-Davidson corporate organization. Sometimes these misconnections reveal themselves early in the ownership experience. Other times, these disconnects develop as the owner gains broader experiences that uncover unanticipated issues or problems. We see that these misconnections can lead to weak and sometimes broken bonds with the brand community.

Given the importance of community integration to the defection experience, our discussion explores the impact of brand community integration upon defection. Our discussion first presents insights into the defection of highly integrated members (those who feel strongly positive about the diverse bonds of brand community) and then addresses those that have experienced misconnections with respect to two of the component relationships of brand community: owner/product and owner/peer.

HIGHLY INTEGRATED DEFECTORS: TRAUMAS AND TRANSITIONS

For those that are highly integrated in the community, brand defection does not come easily. In our early ethnographic work, we sometimes engaged with Harley owners that wore the Harley emblem upside-down on their vests or jackets to convey their unhappiness with the manufacturer. Most often that unhappiness had to do with Harley’s efforts to broaden the appeal of the brand and to bring "yup-
pies” into the Harley community. These self-professed “authentic working-class bikers” found these marketing efforts as potentially corrupting to the biker brotherhood. They felt that the “new bikers” lacked legitimacy and that the Harley-Davidson Motor Company was “selling out” and acting as immoral profiteers. This observation was, in part, the product of increased demand for the bikes and the escalation of motorcycle prices that they perceived to create unreasonable economic barriers to their own purchase of a bike. Of course, these riders were still riding Harley-Davidson motorcycles so, in a sense, they really were not defectors as much as unhappy loyalists.

While we actively sought to recruit previously integrated defectors, we discovered that they were difficult to find. Our interviews reveal that among the highly integrated members of the community it takes a significant life event to trigger departure. For some, this may be debilitating injury that makes it impossible for them to ride:

Larry: “I’d had a car accident, didn’t have insurance on the car. I had a lot of medical bills, I had a broken arm… I filed for bankruptcy. It was a little difficult riding around.”

Even still, we have met former owners who cannot ride as a result of injury who still identify themselves as loyal members of the Harley community.

For other integrated bikers a significant life transition, like a marriage, divorce, birth of child, or loss of job may lead them to leave the fold:

Todd: “I loved my Harley. I rode with the guys from work almost every week. It was great. When the baby came we really wanted to get into a house of our own. I sold the Harley for the down payment. I figure in a couple of years, when my wife is working again, I’ll get another bike, definitely another Harley-Davidson…”

Jeff: “When I remarried, my wife and I took up sailing. She had always wanted to. It became this all-consuming passion. We made friends in the yacht club and began racing. Eventually we needed another boat and since the Harley was just basically gathering dust in the garage…”

As indicated in Todd’s remarks, some of these defectors voice a desire to return to Harley ownership, indicating that their defection is strictly situational in nature. Our longitudinal ethnographic research reveals that these intentions do not always translate into action.

LESS INTEGRATED DEFECTORS: MISSED CONNECTIONS

For those riders who do not feel as deeply integrated within the community, defection can be triggered by a less momentous event. That is not to say that these riders manage to avoid the major life transitions and challenges lead them away from Harley ownership. As with the more integrated owners, the brand community experience of these owners overlaps with other important social groups and obligations in ways that impact participation and may motivate defection. As Dennis who is married and now has young children described his motivation to sell his bike, “the bike is a lot me, a lot nobody else and I got a family. And I just felt a little bit like I was taking things away from the family. Too much me, not enough family.”

Product Misconnections. Harley owners are not immune from product dissatisfaction. The following quotes convey the product related complaints of some Harley brand defectors:

Brandon: “When I got off the Harley I could hardly walk, but

Frank: “I had hoped to use the bike to commute to work. It’s not very far. But on cool mornings the bike never even had time to get warmed up. It seemed to always be misfiring and sputtering…”

John: “I’d ride it for an hour or two and then have to spend a half day cleaning it. It got to be a pain…”

Duncan: “For what I paid I shouldn’t have to be replacing stators [a component of the electrical system] every time I turn around…”

What makes these complaints noteworthy is that we have encountered similar complaints among committed Harley owners about their bikes, but they speak with adoration in their voices. With respect to Brandon’s comment, some Harley owners were unhappy when the Motor Company made changes to the Softail motorcycle line’s power plant that eliminated obtrusive vibrations. To them, the vibration of the older motor was an essential and valuable element of the character of that bike. The highly integrated riders would argue that Frank shouldn’t complain about his bike failing to “warm up” during the work commute, but he should take a longer and more enjoyable route to work. With regard to John’s lament, the integrated owners often describe in great detail the ritualistic cleaning of the bike and the resultant bond that is formed between owner and machine.

Among defector informants, we find that some leave as a result of changes in their riding motivations/preferences. This evolution of motives can lead to a realization that their Harley is not ideally suited for their new riding preferences. Especially for those Harley owners that are new to riding, experience on the road reveals riding styles, experiences, and opportunities that were largely unimagined by them prior to the Harley purchase. The sport of motorcycling is quite fragmented as riders can enjoy diverse activities that include racing and sport riding, long distance touring, off-road riding, and boulevard cruising. The motorcycle industry responds to this diversity by creating specialized bikes. Harley-Davidson’s brand cache is most strongly situated in the touring and cruising segments and is generally perceived to have less competence in sport and off-road riding segments.

For some Harley owners, alternative ride-styles become an avid interest. As a result of acquiring a new riding preference, they experience the limitations of their own motorcycle. Justin explains his reason for leaving Harley:

“I really wanted to build my skills, but on the Harley I was dragging metal [a product of the bike’s lean angle when taking turns at fast speeds] all the time. So I sold it and bought the Ducati…”

Affluent owners may choose to own several bikes, an approach adopted by Kyle:

“If I had to have one bike it wouldn’t be a Harley. It just doesn’t serve the common ground for everything I need to do. It just doesn’t.”

Many riders cannot afford or justify this indulgence and have to choose a single ride. For some defectors this realization leads to the sale of the Harley. As one such informant lamented, “You cannot find one motorcycle for everything.”

Among the defector informants we also found serial migrations. That is, we interviewed riders from other brands of motorcycles that acquired a Harley, then opted out of the Harley ownership experience and purchased a different brand of motorcycle. For some, the
experience with the Harley might be described as a fling (Fournier 1998), owners seek variety. Others anticipated that the Harley would be the ideal bike, but they discovered that it was not well-suited for their preferred riding style. Mike and Scott’s experiences are typical, as these defectors express that sometimes when riding the Harley they long to return to the experience and familiarity of riding their former bikes:

Mike: “on the sport bike the riding position feels like low level flying. Just like Superman my head is forward, legs behind, ground is below me and going fast. It’s almost a form of meditation at times, when I have a real stressful day I go up a favorite canyon and the riding lets the stress of the day, week, month go by…”

Scott: “First time on the Fat Boy did scare me. I pulled up to a light and used the front brake and was not slowing like I was used to. I was putting the back brake on and the front brake, sliding toward the car…”

**Peer Misconnections.** Relationships among brand owning peers are fundamental to brand community (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). The peer-to-peer relationships within the Harley-Davidson brand community have been characterized using the terms like brotherhood, tribe, and subculture (cf., Schouten and McAlexander 1995), indicating an especially cohesive bond among the owners. For some Harley owners, the existence of these strong bonds is a primary appeal that draws them into brand ownership. For others, the bonds grow over a period of time through engagement and participation in informal and formal groups (e.g., Harley Owners Group; Christian Motorcyclists Association). Among defectors, however, we find some Harley owners that do not integrate into these social groups. The connections either never form or, if they do, the relationships do not prove to be sufficiently rewarding so they do not become especially strong.

A reoccurring theme among defectors that fail to integrate deeply among their riding peers is the challenge associated with other significant groups and people that overlap in their lives that need/request time. Initiating and building engagement in the brand community impacts existing social ecologies. The most powerful conflict that often appears to derail the building of these interpersonal community bonds is the opposition of spouses and families. As one brand defector observed ruefully, “It was either keep the bike or keep the marriage…” Through our years of ethnographic work and with the current interviews we have heard repeatedly of spouses approving the purchase of a motorcycle contingent upon a doubling of the prospective rider’s life insurance. Motorcycling is perceived to be an activity that is too risky for a responsible husband or father. One informant confided that he hid from his wife, for several months, the fact that he had purchased a motorcycle.

Beyond just issues of fear of injury or fatality, spouses and partners complain that riding is a mostly solitary activity that takes away time spent with them or with the family or friends. We heard of spousal complaints that time on a motorcycle is time that is unavailable for other important activities like family vacations, water skiing trips, or even family dinners. It is apparent that, for some families, the disruption on the time budget is perceived to be a significant problem.

Social obstacles that exist among the bikers themselves also impede integration with peers. As Schouten and McAlexander (1993) report in their work with the Harley-Davidson subculture of consumption there are entry barriers and status hierarchies within the community. Those who feel derided or disadvantaged by the community may have a hard time building affinity with biker peers. Our current interviews provide triangulation that essential elements of the social environment (e.g., entry barriers, status hierarchies) can serve to deter the development of strong interpersonal bonds.

Defectors also report that they did not feel like they fit well within a local club or group. Our interviews reveal a perception that these formal groups tend towards relative homogeneity. This tendency toward group homogeneity can exist in many ways that include riding preferences (touring, or day rides) and demographics (social class, age). Admittedly, even within these relatively homogeneous groups, there are people who participate faithfully who are “not like the others.” Either through a strong personality or commitment to remain engaged, these “outliers” can find a space for themselves. For those potential members with less commitment or interest, these membership hurdles are insurmountable and the potential member fails to connect.

**DISCUSSION**

This research begins to reveal some of the challenges that consumers experience as they interact with brand communities. Extant literature has largely glossed over the tensions and social dynamics of the individual consumers that, either by choice or circumstance, come into contact with brand community. Our data identify some of the issues and experiences in brand community that influence defection from the brand community and impede integration within it.

As indicated by prior work, we find that consumers that are highly integrated into the brand community are reluctant to leave it. Departure of these engaged community members is largely a product of compelling circumstances. This finding affirms the disruptive impact upon even the most compelling loyalties that can be associated with situational influences and significant life changes described in the consumer behavior literature (Andreason 1984, Belk 1975; McAlexander et al. 1993; Young 1991).

Defection of the less-integrated members, as explored here with respect to ties to the product and peers, is not dependent upon a significant event; misconnections associated with brand community relationships may lead to brand abandonment. These misconnections may occur as one begins to affiliate with the community as expectations are not met. Misconnections can also unfold with ownership experiences as unanticipated issues emerge that erode relevant relationships and motivate departure (especially among those that enter the community with limited knowledge or experience).

We also see that it often takes multiple misconnections to motivate defection. We have found, for example, that strong social and brand ties can overcome product performance shortcomings for some owners. We also find instances where the ownership experience becomes progressively more dissatisfying as a disappointment in one aspect of the experience is followed by a problem in another facet of ownership. For example, one informant complained that the dealer took months to obtain a rear seat for his bike, a delay that made it impossible for his wife to ride with him. He attributed this delay to her inability to meet other riders and spouses. He claimed that failure to build social bonds made her progressively unhappier, ultimately leading him to sell the motorcycle.

This research indicates that some defections from community are inevitable. Clearly a marketer would have tremendous difficulty overcoming the significant life traumas that motivate departure. It is also not likely that one can anticipate long-term loyalty from variety seekers. We also find that a brand community tied to a fashionably popular and specialized product attracts consumers that may lack essential information and experience, which may lead to misconnections that can motivate defection.

The current research provides some initial evidence of the potential value of looking closely at the various ways that consumers
engage in brand community. Its contribution is limited in that we are grounded in a single community with a sample purposively chosen rather than selected for any degree of representativeness. Additionally, this paper examines only the brand community relationships consumers maintain with the product and the brand. There is a need for exploration of the impact of brand and company relationships upon defection. Clearly, there is an important place for additional research in brand community that further illuminates such important issues as: the diverse encounters that occur in the community and their impacts upon relevant relationships; the long-term experiences of its members and how those experiences influence participation; and, more broadly, issues of the lifespan of brand community and actions of the marketing institution that may sustain or damage the community itself.

REFERENCES
Consumption as a Tool of Cultural Resistance Against Patriarchy: the Case of First Generation Nigerian Women Living in Britain

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ABSTRACT
Applying Consumer Culture Theory to acculturation and consumption, we argue that first generation Nigerian women, living in Britain, actively use consumption, as a form of cultural resistance, to reassert their power in patriarchal households. By interviewing British white and first generation Nigerian husbands and wives, we show how the latter negotiate cultural differences through consumption. In particular, the Nigerian husband’s needs to replicate a position of power and dominance in the home produces various acts of cultural resistance using consumption by their wives—sometimes explicit and other times implicit.

INTRODUCTION
Studies focusing on decision-making and consumption are often lacking in their focus on ethnic minorities; specifically in the case of immigrants (Greave et al. 1995). By applying Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) to acculturation and consumption, we argue that first generation Nigerian women, living in Britain, actively use daily acts of consumption, as a form of cultural resistance, to reassert their gender and personal power in patriarchal households where they are expected to be culturally subservient. Previous research into immigrant consumption has tended to be American-centric with theories and methods favouring comparative studies of assimilation amongst different ethnic groups (Waters and Jiménez 2005). Whilst this approach is helpful it also fails to understand the micro inter-relationships and complexities of integration that the family unit faces. This problem is compounded by previous studies typically focusing on the experiences of the male immigrant, resulting in female immigrants becoming either invisible or stereotyped (Dona and Ferguson 2004; Reid and Diaz 1990); ignoring the differing opinions and needs of the wife (Dion and Dion 2001) or solely focusing on the way immigrants resemble consumption practices of host nation through assimilation (Cleveland and Laroche 2007). By focusing on the relationship between husband and wife, this paper makes an important contribution to existing research into immigrants. In particular, this paper addresses the lack of research into issues of gender and power in relation to husband and wife dynamics in immigrant families (Dion and Dion 2001; Kallivayalil 2004) and changing power dynamics in immigrant families in relation to acculturation, cultural identity and ethnicity (Gentry, Communi, and Jun 2003; Lindridge and Hogg 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW
Immigrant consumption, we believe, must be understood by investigating the comprehensive mechanisms through which culture influences individual consumption patterns. We will address this by reviewing what culture is, how acculturation affects it, its relationship to the family unit, and its links to cultural resistance and consumption.

Recent definitions of culture have focused on categorizations of culture with the individual seen as a product of that culture (De Mooij 2003). Cultural categorizations of individualism and collectivism can be used to categorise a societal culture by its level of inter-dependence. Individualistic societies, such as Britain (Lindridge and Hogg 2006) are socialised into cultural values of independence and achievement, with individuals wanting to be perceived as unique persons whose needs and rights take precedence over that of their society. In contrast, Asian/African countries are termed collectivist, placing emphasis on the group’s rather than the individual’s needs, such as the family. De Mooij (2004) adds that individual’s within a culture are conditioned by their social cultural environment to demonstrate conformity.

Identifying the individual as product of their culture assumes a sense of cultural homogeneity that is not available to immigrants, themselves a product of two cultures (country of origin and country of residence). Particularly those immigrants who leave behind a collectivist culture for an individualistic one may present a number of difficulties arising from cultural adaption, i.e. acculturation. Acculturation refers to a process of culture change between two differing cultural groups who interact with each other leading to psychological and socio-cultural outcomes (Ward and Kennedy 2001). The former refers to a collection of internalized outcomes including psychological well being and good mental health, manifesting with a satisfaction with their new culture. Socio-cultural outcomes refer to how individuals relate to their new cultural environment, in this paper existing as a Black person in a White society. Although a variety of acculturation models have been proposed, such as Berry’s (1997) four acculturation outcomes, these models have been criticized for their tendency to categorise immigrants and ethnic minorities into fixed acculturation outcomes. Instead, it would appear that immigrants are continuously reconstituting and negotiating their identity often with mixed cultural values existing within the same individual depending on the context encountered (Rohner 1984). Such criticisms are reflective of the assumption that immigrant women are not passive receptors within acculturation but are able and do make decisions that protect and promote their own needs and interests. Bhatia’s (2002) dialogical model of acculturation addresses this criticism by proposing that an immigrant individual continuously moves between opposing cultural positions, allowing them to demonstrate various positions of being assimilated, acculturated, separated and marginalized. Acculturation then involves multiple negotiations and renegotiations of identity, such mediation involving political and historical practices that are linked to and shaped by the specific culture of the immigrants’ homeland and host society (Bhatia 2002). By adapting to the context they encounter, Bhatia’s theory builds upon Oswald’s (1999) discussion on code-switching amongst ethnic minorities’ sense of behavior and identity. Most importantly Bhatia’s theory provides a means of understanding an individual’s behavior from both inter-and intra-cultural perspectives, unlike previous research that has tended solely to focus on inter-cultural contact (Cleveland and Laroche 2007; Lindridge and Dhillon 2005).

Acculturation theories have not explicitly identified the role of gender as an influencing variable on acculturation outcomes, even though previous research notes its relevance. An assumption in acculturation literature is that men may acculturate more quickly than women; however this opinion has been challenged partially as immigrant women do not always experience the same or comparable benefits as men (Costigan and Dokis 2006). As a consequence, female immigrants may experience greater acculturation conflict arising from cultural conflicts in everyday situations (Morris and Shin 2004). Sources of conflict arise from female immigrants being more: patriotic, conservative, conformist, and concerned about preserving social harmony and promoting positive feelings among
group members than their male counter-parts (Entzinger and Cross 1988). However, the process of immigration may provide an opportunity for culturally determined gender roles to be reconstructed in the new host society (Dona and Ferguson 2004). For example, female support networks, that were embedded in extended family and friends are reduced upon migration, leaving women struggling alone with their multiple roles as mother, car, employee and so on (Erhenreich and Hochschild 2002).

Immigration, however, does not necessarily mean continued sub-ordination for the woman. Immigration from non-Western cultures to the Western cultures usually entails drastic change in gender environment with increased exposure to feminist ideas and sexual liberty, as well increased prejudice from their own community, and conflicting moral values of the old and new cultures in the realm of femininity, sexuality, and fertility (Pessar and Mahler 2003). In understanding gender and immigration the question arises to what extent does immigration improve or undermine a woman’s ability to renegotiate hierarchical gender relations (Moon 2003)? As the needs and resources of the immigrant family changes after immigration, the duties assigned to each gender changes as well, often leading to traditional gender roles being questioned and consequently renegotiation of power arrangements (Kibria 1990). Employment opportunities for immigrant women are deemed necessary to sustain the family, with increased financial contribution enabling women to renegotiate their roles, providing them with the ability to share decisions within the family (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kibria 1993). For example, Ganesh (1997) found that amongst Indian immigrants to America, women had more power in dual-career marriages than in single-career marriages, suggesting greater egalitarian sex roles similar to western households. This renegotiation of roles can then be identified with Bhatia’s (2002) previous Dialogical Model of Acculturation. Immigrant women then will be able to create a self-identity that allows them to exist in the workplace, draw upon appropriate cultural norms and demonstrate appropriate levels of acculturation to succeed in this environment. In contrast, the same women will also be able to construct a self-identity in the home environment that is reflective of their original cultural values, even if this means they have to be subservient to their husband. It is within this context that we argue that immigrant women will actively use consumption acts and opportunities to carry out acts of cultural resistance.

The joint family system can be seen as a structural arrangement that ensures male domination within the household through the traditional gender roles. However, immigrant women’s increased financial status allows for the renegotiation of gender roles within the family. Feminist theories of households highlight the possible effect of migration for disrupting and changing gender relations, power, and status within trans-national households and the conflict and tensions that such changes engender (Mahler and Pessar 2001). Joy and Dholakia (1991) noted how women who take on independent or co-equal financial responsibilities make augmented consumption decisions—acquire goods and make purchases for their homes and may resist imposed patriarchal cultural values through various acts of resistance (Kandiyoti 1988). The role of the women, as a wife, reasserting her power through consumption acts, differs from the traditional perception of the women, where consumption is perceived as a feminine activity reflecting self-indulgence and a concern with style, aesthetics and fashion, in contrast to men who are linked to production (Kacen 2000).

Viewing immigrant women then as existing in various dualities (home-work, wife-wealth provider, assimilated-traditional cultural values) therefore presents women not as a passive acceptor but actively resisting through various consumption acts. As Reynolds (2006) notes marital conflicts may be resolved through the woman taking charge of purchases in order to resist power from her husband. Existing research does not appear to have investigated how and to what extent immigrant women use consumption as a means of resistance, not only to re-assert their identity but also to manage acculturation conflicts within the family household. By considering Bhatia’s (2002) earlier Dialogical Model of Acculturation we argue that immigrant women, who are employed and be expected to demonstrate assimilation into society, will struggle from a cultural perspective in demonstrating cultural conformity in their domestic situation, i.e., subervience to their husband leading to acts of resistance through consumption. Furthermore, we posit that research has not studied how this resistance through consumption is culturally embedded in the use of specific culturally laden products.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Aims.** The aim of this research paper is to explore the power dynamics between a husband and wife in immigrant families, with particular attention on how immigrant women assert their power in the household through consumption. The research principles of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) were applied to the research because this would allow the researchers to explore the tension between individual consumer and the wider social, cultural, and ideological structures that they exist within.

**Sampling.** The sampling procedure employed was theoretical, relational and discriminative. An approach that allowed for theoretical concepts to be inter-linked providing a means to test and assess any emergent theory. The emergent theory could then be assessed and inform the next interview. A process which was continued until theoretical saturation was reached and no further emergent theory was evident. This approach removed the need for random sampling, with participants chosen solely for theoretical reasons. This rationale supported the theory that immigrant women, empowered from acculturation, and subservient in their domestic, ethnic cultural lives, resolved this incongruence using consumption to create acts of resistance. A total of 40 participants were selected, consisting of the wife and their husband (20 married couples), with 10 white married couples, and 10 first generation Nigerian couples living in Britain achieving theoretical saturation. To ensure the behaviors noted were identifiable to cultural and societal differences, as prescribed by CCT, all participants were matched in terms of socio-economic status, religion (self-identified as Christian and attending church), education and living in the cities of London or Manchester.

**Research Interviews.** Participant interviews were conducted on a sequential basis. Each female participant was interviewed twice; first the wife and husband were interviewed to hear their shared story about life in Britain, their decision-making process and how they consume. The interview was then transcribed, notes written up and then analyzed. Following this process the wife was then interviewed separately, at a later date, with similar topics asked and clarification sought on points raised from the first interview. The purpose of this second interview was to partially note how female participant narratives changed (if at all) and explore the reasons why. This approach would allow for the identification of any perceived cultural subservience in their relationship and household. Subsequent interviews with other participants then allowed previous interview topics to be replicated and extensions of the previous participant’s interview findings to be explored. This allowed for emergent and environmental themes to be explored allowing for greater in-depth analysis and continued testing of the emergent theory.

The interviews were conducted by one of the researchers who identified herself as a second generation female, Black, Nigerian.

**Transcription and Analysis.** Interviews were taped and tran-
scribed producing preliminary codes, which were then transcribed onto data sheets. These sheets were annotated to allow for identification of comparisons, metaphors and tropes in the data.

FINDINGS

To understand the comprehensive mechanisms through which culture influences individual consumption patterns (Morris and Shin, 2004), the data was analysed using Venkatesh’s (1995) ethno-consumerist framework; a method of data analysis consisting of four categories, which have been reversed from the original order proposed by and justified in great depth by Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004). This approach allows for the identification of the antecedents and origins of resistance through consumption by our female participants. However, it is also important to assess whether our female Nigerian participants demonstrated issues of cultural subservience to their husbands that was in contrast to their British white equivalents. Although page limitations restrict a full exploration of the evidence, all the one-to-one interviews the Nigerian female participants produced different narratives, regarding the same topics, compared to what had been discussed in the presence of their husbands. Sometimes these differences were subtle nuances or clear contradictions of what had been said previously. Where the wife would not publicly criticize or undermine her husband in his presence, critiquing of the husband became part of these female only interview narratives. An example of this is provided in conceptual schemes and structures aspect of the data analysis. In contrast, female British white participants’ narratives did not differ noticeably from when they were with their husbands or by themselves. Instead these narratives reflected a greater sense of equality and ‘in-jokes’ between the couple, each knowing their partners supposedly secret behaviours, such as the wife going shopping for clothes every time the husband wanted to play golf. It is this recognition that allows us to focus our analysis on our Nigerian participants.

Social Histories and Memories. Explores how memories are used to establish the family context within which multiple role obligations can be seen. This is achieved by focusing on stories of immigration. All our Nigerian participants had immigration stories they wanted to share, ranging from economic hardships, struggles finding a home and simply surviving in a new culture. Most of these participants noted how the decision to migrate was undertaken by the male participant, with their partners joining them later. For male participants, immigration stories focused on their need to maintain marital cultural beliefs:

A woman’s role is to look after her husband and her children, whilst a man’s role is to provide for his family, he should have the resources to support his family. Bob

The home for our Nigerian male participants represented a symbolism and embodiment of their economic and social prowess; not only providing for their family but also demonstrating their success in a new country. This finding reflects traditional African cultural values that men are the providers and women are the carers (Daley 2007). Ishii-Kuntz and Maryanski (2003) also support this observation noting how male African immigrants assume responsibility for providing financial resources for their families, whilst women are expected to maintain domestic chores in the role as housewife, even if the wife is employed. The home then became a place where the male could recreate a Nigerian cultural world, one where they were respected as head of the household. However, a cultural world of male dominance in the home was often contentious for our female Nigerian participants. When interviewed with their partners, they wanted to reassert the cultural perspective of the authoritative husband:

…..culture demands a wife should be a wife, their main priority should be focused on the home. It is not only about cooking and cleaning it’s more than that. Women must be a beacon to their family, giving their husband due respect. Jane

Yet cultural respect for their husband and their role as a wife also produced narratives that reflected their own sense of empowerment. Devoid of the cultural resources that their native society would have provided for them to maintain these cultural roles, our female participants instead had to improvise and adapt to meet the cultural demands of family life. These stories typically involved the difficulties of caring for a young family with the economic hardships of migration; resulting in our female participants transgressing from a cultural supportive role to the husband, to one financially supporting the family, as well as maintaining a home. Financial support arose from paid employment, offering an outlet to demonstrate their skills and abilities bringing with it new responsibilities. These narratives reflected a sense of independence outside of the home, only to return to the cultural dependence on the husband on their return to their home. This dependence manifested in maintaining the cultural roles expected of a wife, regardless of employment status or earning capacity etc:

You know before I came to this country I really wasn’t responsible … but this society makes one to work, when I first came I had to do everything, he only had to go to work then come back and eat [laughs]. Till this day it is the same I have so many responsibilities….it’s not easy. Jane

Our female Nigerian participant had used employment as a means of internally renegotiating their own roles, supporting Erhenreich and Hochschild’s (2002) earlier observations. Whilst our Nigerian narratives illustrated a power imbalance between husband and wife, in terms of culturally defined roles, this was not evident amongst our white participants. Instead for our white participants household roles were either shared (for example, the male–garden, wife–cleaning) or blurred (for example, taking turns cooking).

Conceptual Schemes and Structures. Having identified how memories of immigration were used to establish the family context, we now need to assess how the participants’ sense of culture was used to construct their multiple identities and I positions (Bhatia 2002). This will then provide an understanding of how our Nigerian participants differed and how this will lead into consumer resistance.

Our white participants struggle to identify what constituted British culture, and ultimately made them British, was in stark contrast to our Nigerian participants. Where Entzinger and Cross (1988) noted how female immigrants tend to be more patriotic, conservative, conformist, and concerned about preserving social harmony this was not evident amongst our Nigerian participants. Instead, these roles were fulfilled by the husbands.

Their narratives regarding culture predominately reflected distrust or diminishing values within British white culture, typically about the lack of respect for hierarchies based upon status attributable to age. (In Nigerian culture, the older you are the more status your community attributes to you). Narratives that reflected the loss of culturally attributed power that would have been bestowed upon them in Nigerian society were instead recreated and acted out inside their homes, supporting Costigan and Dokis’s (2006) observations. Nigerian culture for our male participants became the embodiment of self-respect. For example:

…..culture is who we are as people. You only have to look at us as people, compare ourselves to English people and say ‘yes we are blessed.’ You see sometimes we as people get caught
up in this society. We start forgetting where we come from and who we are, and then what do, we teach our children, that our culture is something meaningless … Peter

All our Nigerian female participants' narratives, in the presence of their husband, demonstrated similar narratives regarding culture. These narratives served to support and reinforce the husband’s perception on the supremacy of Nigerian culture. For example, immediately following Peter’s narrative, his wife added: “This is right, we have to ensure that we practice our culture.” However, when interviewed alone her narrative changed, in contrast to her husband’s, becoming more dismissive of the importance of Nigerian culture:

…but this culture thing is sometimes too much…as for me I know my culture but it is not the be all and end all. There are more important things. Some people focus on it too much, as for me I know my language, I know how to cook so it’s fine [laughs] Mary

These narrative differences were common amongst our female Nigerian participants, when interviewed alone, often reflecting an awareness of the limitations Nigerian culture placed on women. These limitations were not applicable in a British world where they were employed and contributed financial resources to the home. Living in Britain allowed perspectives of the role of women in Nigerian culture to be challenged and re-interpreted allowing them a sense of freedom. As one participant noted:

…English culture for me is about freedom, being liberal… but for women, well comparing this culture to others, I would say it’s got something to do with freedom, equality… Margaret

Migration offered then these women a means to reinterpret their cultural roles and identities, and begin to renegotiate their roles as women, wives, mothers and workers, as suggested by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) and Kibria (1993). Whereas the male participants saw their role in maintaining Nigerian culture in their daily lives, family and home, our female participants had become selective regarding Nigerian culture, choosing values that suited their needs as women who worked but also maintained a family. However, their husbands roles linked to production appeared to be endorsed by our female Nigerian participants, even though the reality contradicted this; a finding that partially supports Kacen’s (2000) observations of gender roles amongst immigrants, and Moon’s (2003) renegotiation of gender relations.

Practices and Experiences. Whilst we have already shown how Nigerian women conform to cultural expectations and roles in the home, this section explores how our Nigerian female participants multiple identities emerged in response to their community and wider British society. Interviews with female British whites did not reveal a need to construct multiple identities, arising from a greater transparency in their lives, i.e., as they represented the majority population their need to adapt to various situations was not an issue. Our female Nigerian participants’ identities did appear to respond to differing situations, reflecting at times a sense of empowerment but also demonstrating Bhatia’s (2002) multiple I positions. For example, our female Nigerian participants discussed how they attended certain social events, often to the objection of their husbands. For example, Nigerian community meetings were often viewed as a means of reinforcing cultural norms and behaviours, but also reinforcing Nigerian cultural values that ultimately aimed to perpetuate through expectations the gender hierarchy the women were against. For example:

Well I do sometimes [attend community meetings] but it is usually with my husband. Just once in a while when they have special occasions but to be honest I don’t waste time on all those things [laughs]. What would one gain from them? …I ask my husband why he likes going to these meetings, he just says he just wants to keep in touch with home, but to me it is just a place where people go and gossip… Shirley

Our female Nigerian participants’ selectiveness in attending community gatherings were reversed when it came to socializing with British whites, often with the husband staying at home. A behaviour reflecting their wider level of acculturation noted previously:

…but he does not like the environment. I always think it is important to socialise with people you work with. You never know when you will meet them again. He does not like gathering like that, he always complains about Oyibo people and how they can drink. It’s true but that’s their culture… but my husband does not go, in fact he always complains that he does not like me going to these things, he becomes funny, Jane

Our female Nigerian participants’ engagement with white social events, unlike their husbands, reflected not only their sense of multiple I positions (Bhatia 2002) but also a renegotiation of power within their marriage, supporting Kibria’s (1990) observations.

Cultural Objects and Consumption. Having identified important between our Nigerian participants on the basis of their gender, the final stage of the analysis is to examine how these divergences manifested in their consumption behaviours, providing a tangible affirmation of resistance. Trying to prove that our female participants dealt with their culturally oppressed need for autonomy through acts of resistance was difficult. For our white participants the wife’s resistance to enforced male behaviours, with the husband present during interviews, was openly communicated and joked about. For example, one white female participant joked that every time her husband left her to go and play golf, her response was to going shopping for clothes. An intervention they both commented was a valid response to his perceived selfish behaviour. In contrast, our female Nigerian participants never publicly undermined their husband’s status and position when interviewed together. Instead Nigerian cultural values of respecting the husband, noted earlier, were prevalent. Narratives surrounding acts of resistance manifesting through consumption acts where only openly discussed and acknowledged when these women were interviewed alone. Acts of resistance took two approaches: open acts of resistance justified by necessity and acts of conscious, premeditated resistance.

Open acts of resistance justified by necessity often arose from the pressures of migration and the husband working long hours. Our female Nigerian participants described after numerous requests for house repairs etc to be done, simply resolved the problem themselves. Typically these situations arose because the husband was out working and unavailable to undertake household chores associated with their role, for example making repairs, putting up curtain rails. For example:

…there was a time that I had to replace one of the curtains in our room. Well I couldn’t wait for him, so I had to replace it myself. I just went to Homebase and got a new rail, I then called one friend I have that knows a builder, and that is how he came to fix the curtain rails. They are still there today!

Researcher: So what did your husband think?

'Oyibo means ‘white’ person/people.
Well what could he say? I couldn’t wait, something that he should have done…he hadn’t done. So I had to do it myself, it did not matter what he thought [laughs]. Jane

Increased socio-economic wealth arising from employment also empowered our female participants to make direct cultural challenges to the husband’s right to make family decisions. In these instances resistance manifested in the over-riding of the husband’s wishes, indicating a higher level of autonomy then was evident amongst our white participants; consider this narrative about a female participant building a second home in Nigeria:

Well he wasn’t too happy as he felt that we should have had the main family house in the village. But we discussed it and I reminded him of the house we already had, although it is in need of decoration it is still there [in the ancestral village]…I can’t imagine the children wanting to stay there when they visit. So I just took it upon myself to start to develop my land, and to be honest it was the best decision that I have ever made. The house is wonderful…Margaret

The participant then discussed how her cultural resistance was being extended further by planning to purchase more properties in Nigeria, against her husband’s wishes, using her sister for moral and financial support:

Yes, actually I have been discussing with my sister and we want to invest in a few properties in Nigeria, the market it so good. But I have to keep that hush, hush for now [laughs].

Researcher: Why

Well you see my husband is really not into property investment. But I feel it would be an ideal way for use to have another external income when we go back to Nigeria. Margaret

Margaret’s ownership of her own financial wealth and how she wanted to assert it, against her husband’s wishes was a familiar story amongst our Nigerian female participants, supporting Kandyoti’s (1988) comments on resistance of patriarchal cultural values. Money had been earned from these women working and these participants felt empowered to spend it as they wished; a renegotiation of power that contradicted traditional gender roles (Kacen 2000). Issues surrounding ownership of wealth was not evident amongst our white participants reflecting a greater sense of cultural equality. Whilst purchasing land perhaps represents an extreme example of cultural resistance through consumption, our female Nigerian participants noted how more mundane acts of consumption became forms of resistance to their husband’s assertions. Clothing, including designs, textures, and cultural outfits—Western or Nigerian—clothing all became areas of dispute and assertion, with clothes chosen with the explicit knowledge that the husband would not like it.

Other examples involved consumption used as a means of reasserting female power within the family unit; often involving the female participant intervening and contradicting their husband’s wishes. Although similar behaviours may exist within white families, the level of concealment occurring purchases with the intention of undermining the husband was not evident. Consider the following narrative, from a female Nigerian participant, where perceived favoritism in the family provides the impetus for the wife to use consumption not only as an act of resistance against the husband’s wishes but also to reinforce her position and power within the family:

...there was a time when he [their youngest son] got so vexed with my husband, as he gave my eldest son his laptop for university. My son was not happy...[and the act of going against her husband’s wishes provoked marital tensions so] it nearly became something serious...well [laughs] don’t mention this to my husband but later I bought him one of those computer games. They call it [pauses] a Ninten, Nintendo, he deserved it anyway, he did well in his exams! Jane

Jane’s use of consumption to contradict her husband’s wishes, assert her power and position in the family with regards to her children was a common occurrence. These acts are indicative of Reynold’s (2006) observations of marital conflict and Moon’s (2003) renegotiation of hierarchical gender relations.

CONCLUSION

Our paper has illustrated how acculturation leads to female Nigerian women, through acts of consumption, to reassert a sense of individuality, experienced from engaging in an individualistic society, in culturally, collectivist, traditional homes. The need of the husband to assert his sense of cultural power in the home ultimately led to their wives seeking ways to reassert their own sense of power. Yet, the question arises why did their husbands want to reassert Nigerian cultural roles, of male supremacy, in their households? The answer lies in acculturation stress and the need to be accepted and valued. All our Nigerian participants discussed, at length, their experiences of racism and their effect on self-esteem. For the men, brought up to be respected by their wives and wider community, it was particularly difficult:

Well [sighs]. You see I can understand when people are not used to change...I remember there was a time that, actually my first day of university in this country. I was waiting on the bus and some of the local children out of nowhere were making monkey sounds [laughs]. At first I was wondering what was happening, then it finally dawned to me that they were making the noise at me! George

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

In this conceptual paper we scrutinize the recent marketing technique of co-creation within marketing and consumer research. The aim of the paper is to discuss the premises and possible consequences of co-creation by framing it as an emerging branding paradigm. In doing so we seek to problematise the idea of the consumers as productive agents in the process of brand value creation. We argue that co-creation, despite its promising aspects, constitutes a modern form of governmentality that seeks to control and govern the consumers in the name of freedom. We trace this form of governmentality historically and conclude with some implications for brand authenticity.

At threadless.com consumers are urged to vote for clothing designs that they want to see produced, and to submit their own clothing design. At Lego’s website consumers can form networks, trade Lego models and discuss model design with fellow enthusiast. They may also design their own Lego models and submit them to Lego. If Lego finds the models interesting they may be included in the assortment. Nearly half of the research undertaken by the software corporation National Instrument is performed by an online community of customers who analyse how the firm’s products can meet the needs of the members in a better way (Humphreys and Grayson 2008). In a similar vein, Proctor & Gamble recently introduced the community program Vocal Point, which encourages product enthusiasts to talk about the corporations’ products against discounts and product samples.

These examples, we argue, point towards the emergence of a novel branding paradigm that marketing scholars in various ways have termed co-creation (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2006; Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004a; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004b; Zwick et al. 2008). The concept of co-creation originates in the service dominant logic (S-D logic) introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004). The service dominant logic challenges the conventional assumptions within marketing of how value is created through transgressing the boundary between the roles of producers and consumers in the value creation process. A central premise is the contention that value is created in consumers’ use of goods and services, rather than at the point where the good is exchanged for money (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2006). Consumers are seen as resources with intangible specialised skills, competences and knowledge that firms may benefit from in the value creation process (Lusch et al. 2007). Value is regarded as jointly co-created between the firm and its consumers, instead of encapsulated in the physical goods that firms offer consumers.

From the perspective of co-creation then consumers are regarded as collaborative partners who generate value together with the firm and not as passive targets of marketing offerings (Vargo and Lush 2004). The marketing management literature increasingly argues that it is inevitable for corporations to acknowledge consumers as innovators and creators of brand value for the firm (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000).

In this paper we are interested in examining co-creation as an emerging branding paradigm. The aim is to explore what the co-creation branding paradigm involves through the proposition of Zwick et al. (2008) that co-creation constitutes a form of governmentality working through the freedom and autonomy of consumers. In particular we are interested in discussing the historical development of this form of governmentality and its contemporary consequences for consumer subjectivities. Within consumer research the view of the consumer as autonomous has been acknowledged for decades. We argue that the co-creation brand paradigm translates this strand of thought into a new form of control system that aims to manage consumer agency. Presumably, this is done in order to make the newly won agency of consumers in the marketing literature manageable and therefore less threatening to brand management.

THE CO-CREATION BRANDING PARADIGM

A branding paradigm consists of a shared set of principles among firms that structure the way that brands are built from a managerial point of view. The paradigm is formed when some branding principles are used as the taken for granted guiding principles for how to build brands successfully. Here we use Holt’s (2002) dialectical model of branding as a starting point for a contextualized understanding of the development of the co-creation branding paradigm. The model explains how different branding paradigms attain their shape in relation to an evolving consumer culture. As the branding paradigm works within the confines of the prevailing consumer culture, however, the success of its principles in generating brand value hinges upon how well it captures what consumers value in a particular culture. Holt argues that as firms start to press these branding principles to their logical extreme, consumers tend to become more reflexive and able to scrutinize these principles. This leads to a tension between the prevailing branding paradigm and the consumer culture propelling an institutional shift in both. Eventually the paradigmatic principles lose their ability to capture what consumers find relevant. In order to maintain the value of the brand, a new branding paradigm consisting of new branding principles needs to be developed. Here we understand co-creation as a marketing management induced re-conception of how brand value ought to be created in a market characterized by consumer agency (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Holt 2003; Borgerson 2005) and various dimensions of consumer resistance (Peñaloza and Scott 1993). Within the co-creation branding paradigm, consumer agency does not, as was thought before, constitute a dangerous threat to the brand. Rather consumer activities are regarded to produce symbolic and cultural content, which—when appropriated and included in the firm’s offering—strengthen the value of the brand.

Distinguishing Co-creation from Co-production

The marketing literature commonly distinguishes between co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000) and co-production (Arvidsson 2008). Before proceeding further in the paper, we would like to briefly consider this distinction in order to define our use of co-creation. The main difference between the concept of co-production and co-creation is that while co-production represents the cultural, symbolic, and immaterial or material content produced in social relations that allow the producers with a use-value, co-creation refers to the process where exchange value is co-created between firm and consumers. In the latter the firm appropriates what has been produced by the consumers and sells the produced content to the general market.

Drawing upon Lazzarato’s (1997) notion of immaterial labour, Arvidsson (2005) demonstrates how in co-production social rela-
Co-creation, as a set of organizational strategies and discursive procedures aimed at reconfiguring social relations of production, works through the freedom of the consumer subject with the objective of encouraging and capturing the know-how of this creative common. (2008, p.23)

The goal of the mechanisms of governmentality is to control and make realms and objects calculable. Co-creation as a managerial device enables predicting and controlling consumer actions. In order to be able to do so, however, Zwick et al. argue, the compliance of the consumers must first be mobilized through the notion of freedom. In the next section we discuss what governing consumers through freedom entail and what possible consequences this form of governmentality have for the co-creation branding paradigm.

GOVERNING CONSUMERS THROUGH FREEDOM

The relationship between government and freedom has recently experienced a renewed importance within the social sciences. The idea of government seeks to answer the complex question of how government is possible in liberal democracies. How can political authority be integrated in all domains of life? With the spread of capitalism under advanced neoliberal society the boundary between economics and politics has somewhat become blurred, that is to say that to govern politically is also to govern economically. To this end indirect mechanisms of governing were established that seek to govern at a distance. Before one can seek to manage a domain like for instance the activities of the consumers on newly established platforms that the web 2.0 has made possible relations and process of how to manage the actions that take place here has been developed. In the book Powers of Freedom, the sociologist Nicholas Rose (1999) sees governmentality as attempts to shape, guide and direct the conduct of others. In contrast to prior understanding of governmentality as operating through a defined sovereign such as the state, from his perspective governmentality refers to the conduct of conduct. According to Rose there is no longer a conflict between the self-interest of the economic subject and the patriotic duty of the citizen. Instead the fulfillment of one’s obligations to one’s nation is most effectively pursued through the enhancement of economic well-being of oneself, one’s family, business and organization. Self-realization hence coincides with individual activity. The self-regulating capacities of subjects are shaped in large part through the powers of expertise that constitute key resources for modern forms of government, which enables governing in a democratic way (Miller and Rose 2008). Involved in this governing is that the regulating techniques of the self, to a larger extent than before, works through notions of autonomy and self-fulfillment. In a neoliberal economy conduct is governed via the notion of the free subject. Rose (1999) writes:

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1Foucault briefly mentioned the notion of government in his later writings. For him governmentality refers to a certain mentality, which undergirds all modern forms of political thought and action (Miller and Rose, 2008).
To govern is to act upon acting. This entails trying to understand what mobilizes the domains or entities to be governed; to govern one must act upon these forces, instrumentalise them in order to shape actions, processes and outcomes in desired directions. To govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed (Rose 1999, p.4).

All forms of government depend on a particular mode of representation. Government rests on the use of a language that presents the nature of reality, while representing it in line with political calculation and argument (Miller and Rose 2008). The notion of co-creation in this sense, we argue, is then not only a management tool, but needs to be seen in a wider context as a response to the neoliberal ideal of free market subjects and the attention to the consumer as agentic. Individuals are shaped as free through a range of different discursive mechanisms there among branding techniques. Miller and Rose (2008) argue that contemporary governmentality accords a crucial role to action at a distance, to mechanisms that promise to shape the conduct of diverse actors without shattering their formally autonomous character. The citizen in the neoliberal model is addressed as a consumer. Consumers are considered as entrepreneurs seeking to maximize their quality of life through the artful assembly of a lifestyle put together through the world of goods. In this vocabulary of the enterprise, the worker is translated into the consumer who seeks to maximize its success in terms of returns and achievements. The analogy between consumers and the worker is naturally not clear-cut and difficult to make a case for. Ritzer (1999) argues for example that since fewer workers are involved in production nowadays consumers are doing more and more of the kind of labour that formerly was carried out in the factories. The twentieth century capitalism has therefore experienced a shift from production to consumption. While Marx argued that the capitalist ownership of the means of production enabled the exploitation and control of the workers, consumers are not forced to consume and can choose what to consume. Nevertheless, Ritzer observes that the new means of consumption intends to lead people into consuming more that they can afford or intend to.

Forging a New Type of Consumer Subjectivity

The close relation between the subjectivities of consumers and marketing is documented by amongst other Miller and Rose (2008). They show how marketing historically forged a consumer subjectivity centred on choice and identity. Organisations were to manage group relations to maximise contentment not by rationalising management to ensure efficiency but by releasing the psychological strivings of individuals for autonomy and creativity and channelling them into the search of the firm for excellence and success. Psychological consultants to the organisation chartered the cultural world of the enterprise in terms of its success in capitalising upon the motivations and aspirations of its inhabitants and invented a whole range of new technologies in order to give effect to these programmes by reducing dependency, encouraging internal competitiveness and stimulating individual entrepreneurship. The autonomous subjectivity of the productive individual was a central economic resource in such programmes: autonomy was to be an ally of economic success and not an obstacle to be controlled and discipline.

During the period 1950-1970 a new form of consumer subjectivity was forged, which connected consumption to the individual through psychology expertise in advertising research, most notably carried out by the Tavistock Institute of human relations. This made possible different kinds of relationship between human through the mediation of material goods. Inspired by psychoanalysis these psychology or psy techniques was targeted to consumers’ sub-conscious and placed beneath consumers’ level of awareness. It was assumed that people did not really know what they wanted and that desire could not be properly expressed in interviews. Therefore, the task of marketers was to identify hidden motives and needs which resided in the consumer’s sub-consciousness (Arvidsson 2006; Miller and Rose 2008). Miller and Rose describe how the early marketing of ice cream was carried out according to the psychoanalytic notion of pleasure. The intention of serving ice cream as round little balls was to appeal to an oral stage and give connotations to breasts and milk, which would encourage licking and sucking the ice-cream.

As marketing evolved it moved away from disciplining consumers through appealing to their hidden desires to controlling them in a more direct sense (Zwick and Knott 2009). The new subjectivity that the new branding principles of co-creation forge, we argue, link to the sense or obligation of enacted oneself as free and innovative and creatively working with brands. Note that this is different from the so-called bricolueur and the postmodern version of consumer subjectivity as a poacher of texts and unruly force within the market place (Gabriel and Lang 1995). The new consumer subjectivity works not through the opposition to the market, but with the market actively engaged. Even tough this consumer subjectivity may not be new per se; the advent of user-based platforms enabled by Web 2.0 has visualised the organisation of large numbers of consumers in communities in the name of their own innovativeness. Apparatuses such as psy do not crush subjectivity, but rather consumers are obliged to be free, to construe their existence as the outcome of choices that they make among a plurality of alternatives.

Nowadays, apparatuses such as psychology co-exist with other forms of governing there among a focus on the entrepreneurial consumer, which endows the subject even greater degrees of autonomy. The actively choosing subject is based on an active and choosing self, but also on a self that plans for and hence controls the future. To conduct oneself as an entrepreneur and creator of things seem to be closely related to the degree to which one can overcome risks through controlling the future. The new type of consumer brought about by the co-creation paradigm resembles the rational consumer of the Tavistock institute albeit the consumer instigated by the co-creation paradigm is less defined by rationality than by creative and innovative features. It is actually the ability and the insight that the consumer is not rational that makes it possible for the co-creation paradigm to work. The acknowledgement that the consumer can create another form of value for the firm is possible precisely because her or she is not considered rational, but culturally defined, a member of a tribe and even irrational (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000; Cova and Cova 1997). As consumers are increasingly conceptualized as innovative, the relation between subjectivity and freedom must be forged. Zwick et al points out that the governmentality of co-production risk trapping the consumer in a game of innovation and entrepreneurship by controlling and creating subjective processes wherein the consumer’s subjectivity and ultimately life itself becomes involved in the production of value. In turn this may lead to feelings of not being good enough as oneself and the surrounding world becomes a project that constantly needs to be worked on. In what follows we move on to discuss two consequences of the co-creation branding paradigm. The first concerns a new way of creating brand authenticity, whereas the second has to do with how authenticity give raise to feelings of exploitation.

Brand Authenticity and Control

The consequences of co-creation are not only visible in the domain of consumer culture, but the notion of co-creation is translated into the very essence of everyday life from where the value of the brand is now extracted. In enabling consumers to symbolically and materially create brand value, the co-creation
branding paradigm seems to take brand authenticity to its extreme. In marketing management the individual is re RESPONSIBILISsed for the management of one's own risk (Miller and Rose 2008). Affiliations to communities of lifestyles through regulated consumption practices displace older forms of habit formations that enjoined obligations upon citizens as part of their social responsibility. It is often presumed that the value of brands is connected to the authentic place it occupies in consumer culture. As consumers are argued to be overly cynical towards branding techniques and are now argued to be able to ‘see through’ the logics of marketing, authenticity is threatened by extinction (Holt 2002). With the co-creation branding paradigm follows a different way of producing authenticity. By way of setting up brands as platforms that enable consumers to do things, as highlighted in the introduction, rather than building the brands through conventional marketing channels, consumers are partly made responsible for shaping the brand and the branded products. This responsibility involves a new form of authenticity. For what can be more authentic than what one creates for oneself? The authenticity produced in co-creation might perhaps explain why so many consumers are willing to engage in co-production despite the awareness that one’s own creativity becomes owned by the firm and generates profit for the firm. At the same time the debate around the role of the social medias also points towards that users are becoming increasingly frustrated over the management of co-created contents on these sites as corporate assets. For example many high profile users have recently deactivated their accounts in protest against Facebook’s changed privacy policy. The changed privacy policy enables Facebook to share and store user information, which has upset users who feel that they loose control over what they share with others on the Facebook site. One of the users who have deactivated his Facebook account is Steven Mansour. On his blog he writes:

…you can’t really close your Facebook account once you open it; you can only deactivate it, which I somehow miss when reading their 913 page privacy policy…It’s one thing when I choose to leave a web service (Flickr, Youtube) because I don’t want them profiting from my content. It’s another when they prevent me from leaving. Is this really the only choice we have left? Shitty web companies vs. shitty web companies that keep and distribute your personal data ad infinitum even when you request your account to be closed? As it turns out, I had to ‘contact’ Facebook and ask them how to delete my account, only to find out that I have to manually delete every single minifeed item, friend, post, wall writing, etc by hand, one-by-one, or else they will refuse to close your account. When you’re a member of the Internet High Society as I am, you find that you have thousands of these items to delete (Steven.Mansour.com/blog).

Mansour illuminates experiences related to a loss of control over what one share with others on Facebook and how these experiences could result in feelings of exploitation of one’s own personal integrity and creativity. While Facebook thrives on being about the freedom and creativity of users, their privacy policy prohibits that same freedom by imposing a rigorous set of rules on users. At Facebook anyone is free to be whomever he or she wants, but must be ready to accept being targeted by adverts based on previous clicks and status updates. At the same time it is difficult to avoid using Facebook as social activities are organized via the forum. In this sense Facebook resembles the unavoidability of the means of consumption needed to cope with everyday life.

CONCLUSION

Our aim in this paper was to discuss the emerging branding paradigm of co-creation. We began by distinguishing co-creation from co-production arguing that co-creation refers to the creation of exchange value through valorising consumers’ social relations. We then moved on to discuss the recent observation within marketing and consumer research that co-creation as a marketing technique works as a mode of governing through conceptions of freedom and autonomy central to the neoliberal economy. The co-creation branding paradigm seems to construct a novel form of entrepreneurial consumer subjectivity. Consumers nowadays actively engage in value generating labour for firms in exchange for reputation and the establishment of social networks and relations. Paradoxically, however, consumers seem to have received more agency and freedom, while at the same time being controlled by these concepts. The emerging branding paradigm of co-creation therefore needs to be approached as a branding principle, which seeks to control consumers in the same way as the psy apparatus in marketing’s early years. The difference is that co-creation builds on a different logic of control with different consequences for branding, like, for instance, brand authenticity. What is more authentic than that which one has produced by and for oneself? Thus, our contention is that co-creation needs to be studied from the perspective of control, rather than as a value generating mechanism for the firm. The valorisation of social relations within contemporary branding practices opens a space where consumers’ identities become forms of conduct, which may result in feelings that one is obliged to create and innovate. Such feelings may ultimately culminate in experiences of exploitation as consumers realise that they are constant labourers.

REFERENCES


The Paralyzed Customer: An Empirical Investigation of Antecedents and Consequences of Decision Paralysis

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ABSTRACT

This article makes a further contribution to the identification of effects on consumer choice behavior under high product variety. Based on previous research a structural equation model is developed that involves both quantitative and qualitative characteristics of variety. Therefore a novel construct is introduced that refers to the tendency to disengage and evade the choice process by choosing an avoidant option. In order to evaluate consequences of these tendencies toward paralysis, their impact on customer satisfaction is assessed. The model is empirically tested with regard to the German cellular phone market. Implications for business practice and future research are deduced.

INTRODUCTION

Today, life requires consumers to make an immense number of decisions. For example, ordering a coffee at Starbucks is not as simple as one might think. Customers have to deal with almost uncountable combinations to finally enjoy a half decaf, vanilla, low fat, extra foamy, cafe latte. In a similar way, companies in various areas try to attract consumers with an overwhelming abundance of different products. Previous research supports the positive impact of product variety on attractiveness of assortments (Iyengar and Lepper 2000) and store choice (Hoch, Bradlow, and Wansink 1999). In addition, a common finding is that a high variety of an assortment increases the probability to meet heterogeneous preferences (Lancaster 1990; Kahn 1998; Bayus and Putts 1999; Hoch et al. 1999). However, consequences of increasing variety are not exclusively beneficial. Literature suggests a negative link between assortment size and decision satisfaction (Heitmann, Lehmann, and Herrmann 2007). Furthermore, different determinants for distinct forms of decision avoidance are proven to result from choice set size (Anderson 2003). In this context, experiments of Tversky and Shafir (1992) reveal that adding only one alternative to a small choice set enhances the tendency to defer or even omit choice. Iyengar and Lepper (2000) also observe a significant decline in purchase probability when the number of choices grows. Redelmeier and Shafir (1995) evidence similar effects on the decision to maintain the status quo. In addition to the quantitative trait of assortment size, further qualitative choice set factors such as similarity and alignability of alternatives can be held responsible for inducing consumers’ indecision (Dhar 1996; 1997; Gourville and Soman 2005). Appropriately, Schwartz (2000, p. 87) summarizes that “freedom of choice is a two-edged sword, for just on the other side of liberation sits chaos and paralysis.”

According to Anderson (2003) we differentiate between three distinct extreme peculiarities that represent decision paralysis: status quo bias, omission bias, and choice deferral. While status quo bias reflects the decision makers’ inflated preference not to change the current situation (Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988), omission bias is observable when individuals fail to choose (Ritov and Baron 1995). By contrast, choice deferral constitutes a situation in which decision makers decide not to choose for the present and adjourn their decision indefinitely (Dhar 1996). Literature suggests common origins for these different aspects: rising decisional conflict and corresponding preference uncertainty can be held responsible (Tversky and Shafir 1992; Redelmeier and Shafir 1995; Dhar 1997). In addition, negative emotions such as anticipated regret are able to rush decision makers into choosing an avoidant option (Luce 1998; Schwartz 2004; Keys and Schwartz 2007). Furthermore, evaluation costs in the form of cognitive effort is expected to contribute to an explanation of decision paralysis (Iyengar and Lepper 2000; Gourville and Soman 2005). This foundation of recent findings allows the introduction of a new construct that in contrast to previous approaches not only detects actual avoidant behavior in terms of choice deferral, status quo, and omission bias, but also the tendency to evade the choice-making process. Thus, tendencies toward paralysis are defined as the extent of decision makers’ preference to (1) maintain the status quo, to (2) omit and/or to (3) delay choice resulting from decisional conflicts, negative emotions, and evaluation efforts.

In spite of the wide range of findings regarding reasons for different forms of decision paralysis, conclusions about its consequences are rare. Thus, the purpose of this paper is threefold: First, in order to generate a better understanding of the determinants and—for the first time—consequences of decision paralysis, a framework is developed that is able to identify negative effects on the choice-making process resulting from diverse characteristics of variety. Secondly, we conceptualize and operationalize, the newly-introduced construct, namely tendencies toward paralysis. Thirdly, the proposed structural equation model as well as the conceptualization and operationalization of the novel construct are verified by means of partial least squares (PLS) using data from the German cellular phone market. Finally, implications and directions for further research and business practice are discussed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Consequences of Tendencies toward Paralysis

The formation of tendencies toward paralysis can lead to the application of simplifying heuristics, such that only little relevant information is involved, with the result of a less than optimal choice (Payne, Bettman, and Johnson 1993; Schwartz 2007). Thus, a greater tendency to disengage from the choice-making process constitutes a source of dissatisfaction (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). Vice versa, Ritov and Baron (1995) suggest an increasing satisfaction in consequence of low tendencies toward paralysis. They evidence that decision makers feel more satisfied with the positive outcome of an active decision than if the result of omission turns out to be positive. Moreover, social psychological findings reveal that achieved objects are not evaluated independently of previous decision-making processes. In this context, the fit between intended and actual procedure is proved to influence object evaluation positively (Higgins et al. 2003). Assuming that formation of decision paralysis produces a discrepancy between actual and intended behavior, this should be further evidence of the negative impact on satisfaction. In sum, we expect the following consequences of tendencies toward paralysis:

- H1: The higher the tendencies toward paralysis, the lower the customer satisfaction.
Direct Influences on Tendencies toward Paralysis

The state in which decision makers are not in a position to assess with reasonable certainty which of several alternatives best meets their goals is defined as preference uncertainty (Anderson 2003). Consumers have the intention to justify their decisions to both themselves and others. The appearance of uncertainty concerning the optimal solution makes justification harder, whereupon decision makers seek options that decrease personal responsibility (Redelmeier and Shafir 1995). This need can be fulfilled with omission, maintaining the status quo, and delay (Anderson 2003). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

\[ H_1: \text{The higher the preference uncertainty, the higher the evaluation costs.} \]

Regret theory (Bell 1982; Loomes and Sugden 1982) provides a further approach to explain tendencies toward paralysis. According to Zeelenberg (1999, p.93) regret is defined as “a negative, cognitively based emotion that we experience when realizing or imagining that our present situation would have been better, had we decided differently.” This approach assumes not only that decision makers regret a bad choice in hindsight, but also that the possibility of such a feeling can be anticipated and involved even before making a decision (Loomes and Sugden 1982; Sugden 1985; Zeelenberg 1999). Following Kahneman and Tversky (1982), decision makers are likely to expect an intensive experience of regret if a negative outcome is a result of personal action than of inaction. Analogically, consumers should undertake as little action as possible or even eliminate choice to avoid future regret (Thaler 1980; Heitmann, Herrmann, and Kaiser 2007). Thus, the following hypothesis should hold:

\[ H_2: \text{The higher the anticipated regret, the higher the tendencies toward paralysis.} \]

Another important source of decision paralysis is evaluation costs resulting from the investment of time and cognitive effort into decision making that is required for information search and analysis (Shugan 1980; Anderson 2003). These expenses can be considered as opportunity costs as they could be spent on other activities. As decisions become too costly in this regard, individuals tend to simplify their choice by selecting an avoidant option (Loewenstein 1999). Therefore, the following hypothesis applies:

\[ H_3: \text{The higher the evaluation costs, the higher the tendencies toward paralysis.} \]

Previous research emphasizes that choice behavior of uncertain individuals can be explained via the anticipation of regret (Crawford et al. 2002). If individuals are uncertain about which of the offered alternatives best meets their goals, they have to suspect that rejected options turn out to be superior in hindsight (Schwartz et al. 2002). Consequently, we suggest the following relationship between these direct determinants of tendencies toward paralysis:

\[ H_4: \text{The higher the preference uncertainty, the higher the anticipated regret.} \]

Moreover, the state of preference uncertainty encourages extensive information search and processing to provide an improved basis for decision making (Urbany, Dickson, and Wilkie 1989). In this context, Jacoby, Speller, and Kohnt (1974) show that consumers feel more confident if they expand their search for further information. Similarly, decision makers who anticipate regret are motivated to extend the information search in order to avoid possible negative consequences of a wrong decision and associated experienced regret (Janis and Mann 1977). The notion that spending more time and cognitive effort would more likely lead to a desirable outcome makes enhanced evaluation costs follow the anticipation of regret (van Dijk, van der Pligt, and Zeelenberg 1999). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

\[ H_5: \text{The higher the preference uncertainty, the higher the evaluation costs.} \]
\[ H_6: \text{The higher the anticipated regret, the higher the evaluation costs.} \]

Indirect Influences on Tendencies toward Paralysis

Three quantitative and qualitative key choice-set factors are used to describe variety adequately: the number of alternatives, their alignability, and complexity. Regret theory suggests that the utility of one alternative cannot be considered as independent of the utility of the other selectable options. Thus, the choice from more than one attractive alternative is conducive to the development of anticipated regret (Brownstein 2003). Moreover, increasing quantitative variety produces both higher expectations about the outcome (Desmeules 2002) and decreasing probability to come to the optimal decision (Iyengar and Lepper 2000; Schwartz 2000; Schwartz et al. 2002). Hence, we assume the following hypothesis:

\[ H_7: \text{The higher the number of choices, the higher the anticipated regret.} \]

A second effect that is associated with an increasing number of choices concerns the rising amount of available information (Schwartz et al. 2002). Individuals typically feel that they are in a better position to evaluate a choice set when they have processed as much available information as possible (Zhang and Fitzsimons 1999). Furthermore, Shugan (1980) suggests a positive relationship between the number of alternative products and the thinking costs as the difficulty of the decision task increases proportionally to the number of selectable options:

\[ H_8: \text{The higher the number of choices, the higher the evaluation costs.} \]

In accordance with Malhorta (1982) a consumer who is confronted with a choice set of five alternatives has to evaluate 10 paired comparisons to completely rank these options corresponding to preference. Increasing the number of alternatives to 10 inflates the number of required paired comparisons to 45. Hence, it is assumed that consumers do not perform all needed comparisons under the condition of a continually increasing number of choices, with the result that certainty about which option best matches their preferences decreases:

\[ H_9: \text{The higher the number of choices, the higher the preference uncertainty.} \]

Alignability, the second trait of variety under consideration, refers to the system according to which the offered alternatives differ. Gourville and Soman (2005, p.383) define an alignable assortment “to be one in which the alternatives vary along a single, compensatory product dimension.” By contrast, a nonalignable assortment requires trade-offs between dimensions, such that attainment of one desirable feature involves abandoning another.
desirable feature. The fact that decision makers are forced to give up needs that are fulfilled by rejected alternatives produces regret by definition. Conversely, differences between alternatives of an alignable choice set are small, such that both perceived losses and resulting regret are diminished. We conclude this discussion with the following hypothesis:

- **H13:** The higher the alignability, the lower the anticipated regret.

Moreover, it is obvious that a set of options that have alignable aspects of information is relatively easy to evaluate, whereas multiple differences between nonalignable alternatives in noncompensatory dimensions make an immediate comparison difficult and demand more cognitive effort (Zhang and Fitzsimons 1999; Gourville and Soman 2005):

- **H14:** The higher the complexity, the lower the evaluation costs.

Alignable differences reflect both commonalities and differences in such a way that there is a corresponding attribute in each of the alternatives that continuously varies along the level. Due to this characteristic decision makers focus on alignable differences, whereas nonalignable differences are often ignored (Zhang and Markman 1998). Hence, processing of nonalignable alternatives is less complete. Individuals obtain a lower amount of relevant information and may feel less capable of identifying the option that best meets their needs. As a result of this discussion, we add the following hypothesis to our model:

- **H15:** The higher the alignability, the lower the preference uncertainty.

Finally, complexity of the alternatives, that is, the extent to which a product or service is perceived to be relatively difficult to understand and to use (Holak and Lehmann 1990), is expected to influence decision making. Aside from the price structure, the number of attributes per alternative can be considered an important complexity driver (Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan 2003). If relevant information of a product is difficult to understand, individuals are likely to perceive higher risk of making a wrong decision (Holak and Lehmann 1990); as a result, the anticipation of regret should be effected positively as well (Josephs et al. 1992). Thus, we conclude the following hypothesis:

- **H16:** The higher the complexity, the higher the anticipated regret.

Moreover, a product that is perceived to be difficult to understand makes evaluation of the offered alternatives more costly. The large number of attributes associated with complex products complicates the search for relevant information, the processing of the information, and the comparison of alternatives (Shugan 1980; Burnham et al. 2003). Hence, we predict the following relation:

- **H17:** The higher the complexity, the higher the evaluation costs.

Finally, the fact that relative advantages of complex products are not discernible (Holak and Lehmann 1990) should affect decision makers’ certainty in identifying the alternative that best meets their preferences. This leads to the following hypothesis:

- **H18:** The higher the complexity, the higher the preference uncertainty.
### Table 1: Operationalization of Latent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Variables and Items</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Choices</strong> (Iyengar and Lepper 2000): A VE=.92, CR=.96, α=.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I had to select a cell phone tariff,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOC1 I felt that I had too many options to choose from. (R)</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>47.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOC2 I felt that I had too few options to choose from.</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>169.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alignability</strong> (Zhang and Fitzsimons 1999): A VE=1.00, CR=1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALG1 Comparing the different cell phone tariffs and their attributes was very easy</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complexity</strong> (Cannon and Perreault 1999): A VE=.78, CR=.91, α=.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLX1 complex.</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>21.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLX2 complicated.</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>140.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLX3 difficult to understand.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>61.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation Costs</strong> (Heitmann et al. 2007): A VE=.86, CR=.97, α=.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO1 How much time/effort did it take to evaluate the alternatives in order to feel comfortable making a choice? (“very little/a lot”)</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>107.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO2 It was tough to choose from the different tariffs being offered.</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>90.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO3 I could not afford the time to fully evaluate relevant purchase options.</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>76.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO4 I concentrated a lot while making this choice.</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>114.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO5 It was difficult for me to make this choice.</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>67.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anticipated Regret</strong> (Heitmann et al. 2007): A VE=.74, CR=.92, α=.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARE1 When I selected a cell phone tariff, I was worried to get information after the purchase on superior competing products.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>56.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARE2 When I chose a tariff, I was curious about what would have happened had I chosen differently.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>62.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARE3 When I selected a cell phone tariff, I was curious how much I would appreciate competing offers.</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>27.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARE4 Even after finding a good option, I feared that I am overlooking better tariffs.</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>74.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preference Uncertainty</strong> (Urbany et al. 1997): A VE=.88, CR=.96, α=.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE1 certain (R)</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>166.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE2 sure (R)</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>167.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE3 confident (R)</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>49.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Satisfaction</strong> (Fitzsimons et al. 1997): A VE=.79, CR=.94, α=.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT1 My choice turned out better than I had expected.</td>
<td>eliminated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT2 Given the identical set of cell phone tariffs to choose from, I would make the same choice again.</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>45.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT3 How satisfied were you with the tariff you chose? (“extremely dissatisfied/extremely satisfied”)</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>176.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT4 I am very happy with the cell phone tariff I selected.</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>123.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT5 Thinking of an ideal example of a cell phone tariff, my choice was very close to the ideal example.</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>35.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All measures not indicated otherwise were assessed on seven-point Likert scales, anchored by “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (7). (R)=reverse scored, AVE=Average Variance Extracted, CR=Construct Reliability.
Inaction (Mann et al. 1997): AVE=.71, CR=.88, α=.80
INA1 I wanted to avoid making the decision. .83  46  4.56
INA2 I preferred to leave the decision to others. .87  44  53
INA3 I did not like to take responsibility for making this decision. .83  30  4.11

Delay (Mann et al. 1997): AVE=.69, CR=.87, α=.76
DEL1 I waited a long time before starting to think about the decision. .82  45  93
DEL2 I delayed making the decision until it was too late. .80  24  39
DEL3 I put off making this decision. .87  49  65

Status Quo (Bansal and Taylor 1999): AVE=.88, CR=.96, α=.93
When I made my decision I thought switching my cell phone tariff would be …
STQ1 a good idea. (R) .94  81  14
STQ2 wise. (R) .96  73  03
STQ3 desirable. (R) .91  39  21

Notes: All measures were assessed on seven-point Likert scales, anchored by “strongly disagree” (1) “strongly agree” (7). (R)=reverse scored, AVE=Average Variance Extracted, CR=Construct Reliability.

Dimensions of Tendencies toward Paralysis and Items                      Loading Weight t-value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Tendencies toward Paralysis and Items</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inaction (Mann et al. 1997): AVE=.71, CR=.88, α=.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA1 I wanted to avoid making the decision.</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA2 I preferred to leave the decision to others.</td>
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<td>.44</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA3 I did not like to take responsibility for making this decision.</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay (Mann et al. 1997): AVE=.69, CR=.87, α=.76</td>
<td></td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEL1 I waited a long time before starting to think about the decision.</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEL2 I delayed making the decision until it was too late.</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEL3 I put off making this decision.</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Quo (Bansal and Taylor 1999): AVE=.88, CR=.96, α=.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I made my decision I thought switching my cell phone tariff would be …</td>
<td></td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STQ1 a good idea. (R)</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STQ2 wise. (R)</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STQ3 desirable. (R)</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All measures were assessed on seven-point Likert scales, anchored by “strongly disagree” (1) “strongly agree” (7). (R)=reverse scored, AVE=Average Variance Extracted, CR=Construct Reliability.

paralysis (.406) exceeds the influence of anticipated regret on this construct (.324).

**IMPLICATIONS**

**Implications for Business Practice**

In particular, the intensity and significance of the investigated negative relationship between tendencies toward paralysis and subsequent customer satisfaction point out the importance of our findings for business practices, especially for cell phone service providers. In this context, the identified quantitative and qualitative characteristics of variety turn out to be appropriate parameters to manipulate decision paralysis. Results suggest that a well-directed assortment configuration and communication with regard to number, alignmentability, and complexity of offered alternatives should be central considerations. Due to the comparatively high total effect of alignmentability, cell phone service providers should pay most attention to this choice set factor. Furthermore, the relatively high calculated construct averages of the perceived number of choices (5.09) and subsequent increase of anticipated regret and evaluation costs suggest that it would be desirable to reduce assortment size. Also, because of the investigated impact of complexity, companies should simplify their tariffs in both pricing schedules and number of attributes (Burnham et al. 2003) to avoid customers regretting their decision before they even make it. As a result of the high negative relationship between tendencies toward paralysis and customer satisfaction, high switching barriers in terms of long contract durations and periods of notice should be considered more critically.

**Implications for Future Research**

Conceptualization and operationalization of the introduced construct tendencies toward paralysis provides a new holistic approach to assess avoidant choice behavior. The basically satisfactory assessment of quality criteria of this construct demonstrates that the combination of the three dimensions, namely inaction, delay, and status quo, that previously have been analyzed only separately, can be considered as effectual. However, examination of predictive validity and explained variance of endogenous model constructs suggest that further research should focus on both identifying further determinants that produce decision paralysis and identifying more meaningful antecedents of these determinants. Moreover, although the predicted effects on the construct evaluation costs were predominantly significant, the positive relation between this variable and tendencies toward paralysis cannot be supported. Thus, a replacement of this construct eventually by expected evaluation costs might lead to better results. Against the background of a continually increasing product variety in diverse areas of today’s life, the discovered significant negative consequences should not be disregarded by companies and researchers in the future.

**REFERENCES**


422 / The Paralyzed Customer: An Empirical Investigation of Antecedents and Consequences of Decision Paralysis

FIGURE 1
Structural Model with Path Coefficient Estimates

TABLE 3
Total Effects of Indirect and Direct Determinants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Tendencies toward Paralysis</th>
<th>Customer Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Determinants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Choices</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>-.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignability</td>
<td>-.120</td>
<td>.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>-.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Determinants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated Regret</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>-.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference Uncertainty</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>-.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Costs</td>
<td>Not significant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

European Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 9) / 423


Luce, Mary F. (1998), “Choosing to Avoid: Coping with Nega-


yrschwartz.pdf.


Segmenting Internet Users Using Emotions
George Christodoulides, University of Birmingham, UK
Nina Michaelidou, University of Birmingham, UK
Nikoletta-Theofania Siamagka, University of London, UK

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
Marketers have for several years dealt with consumer heterogeneity by segmenting the market to identify and address different consumer clusters. Yet, albeit the global nature of the internet, it is surprising that only a small number of studies (e.g., Barnes et al. 2007; Brengman et al. 2005; Shiu and Dawson 2002) identified their segmentation typologies using data from more than one country. In addition, whilst the role of emotions in consumer decision making is well-documented in the marketing literature (e.g., Han, Lerner and Keltner 2007; Kwontnik and Ross 2007), there is no consumer typology based on online users’ feelings. This study comes to address these gaps by collecting data from online users within four countries, namely the UK, USA, Australia and Canada to construct typologies based on consumer emotions.

Literature Review
Segmentation strategies and bases were investigated within international contexts in an effort to form cross-national consumer segments (e.g., Barnes et al. 2007; Boote 1983; Lesser and Hughes 1986; Steenkamp and Ter Hofstede 2002). The generalizability of consumer segments has been attested in numerous other studies developing typologies or segments of consumers based on cross-national data (Barnes et al. 2007; Boote 1983; Brengman et al. 2005; Lesser and Hughes 1986; Moskowitz and Rabino 1994; Hofstede, Steenkamp and Wedel 1999), illustrating that consumer clusters could surpass national borders. More recently, an increasing volume of marketing research has developed segmentation strategies for online consumers (Barnes et al. 2007; Brengman et al. 2005; Gonzalez and Paliwoda 2006; Shiu and Dawson 2002; Swinyard and Smith 2003). Additionally, relatively new research area focuses on the role of emotions within the internet retail channel (Jones, Spence and Vallaster 2008; Menon and Kahn 2002). Menon and Kahn (2002) shows that the sequence or order by which consumers visit websites has a significant impact on their purchase behavior. Marketing research on emotions has been in its embryonic stage, with very few studies using emotions as a segmentation base (e.g., Bigné and Andreu 2004). Taking into account the evidence indicating a significant impact of emotions on consumer behavior, this study comes to propose a new online segmentation base.

Methodology
Four focus groups with internet users were initially conducted in the UK to further enhance the Consumption Emotions Set (CES) by Richins (1997) and address emotions that internet users experience when they are online. The transcripts of the focus groups were analysed separately by each of the researchers. Our participants kept referring to their feelings online versus offline (i.e., in relative terms). A resultant list of 19 adjectives, both positive (e.g. happy) and negative (e.g., stressed) was produced to form the initial pool of items for the online emotions scale. An internet questionnaire was developed including the 19 items measured on a five point comparative scale as emerged from the focus groups (1= much more online than offline, 2=slightly more online than offline, 3=about the same both online and offline, 4=slightly more offline than online, 5=much more offline than online). The main data collection was conducted in four countries (UK, US, Australia and Canada) using quota sampling to control for respondent selection bias. All respondents were internet users. We used demographic (country, gender, age, working status) and attitudinal variables (online brand perceptions) to discriminate online emotions clusters.

Findings
The sample consisted of 786 consumers from 4 countries, UK, US, Australia and Canada. Exploratory factor analysis was first conducted on the UK sample followed by confirmatory factor analysis (Churchill 1979; Gerbing and Anderson 1988). A 3-component solution (with factors labeled “Assured,” “Worried,” and “Unseen”) was supported by various validity and reliability tests (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Netemeyer, Bearden and Sharma 2003). A multigroup confirmatory factor analysis was then performed indicating a satisfactory fit (GFI=.923, AGFI=.879, TLI=.891, CFI=.918, RMSEA=.036), which suggests that the same factors underlie online emotions in UK, US, Australia and Canada.

Following well established clustering procedures, the following four-factor solution was considered the most appropriate (Brengman et al. 2005; Steenkamp and Ter Hofstede 2002):

Cluster 1: These respondents feel more “assured” and “unseen” offline than online. They are more confident, adventurous and imaginative offline than online and feel more worried in terms of being stressed and anxious online than offline. They seem to feel less anonymous and invisible online than offline. This cluster is labelled “Nervous” online users.

Cluster 2: Respondents in this cluster are more confident, adventurous and imaginative offline than online. However these respondents are less worried online than cluster 1 and feel more anonymous online than offline. This cluster represents “Invisible” online users.

Cluster 3: Respondents in cluster 3 feel they can express themselves more online than offline. Compared to the other clusters, these respondents feel more confident and adventurous online than offline. Further, respondents in this cluster are more worried and feel more unseen online than offline. This cluster is labeled “Confident but reserved” online users.

Cluster 4: Compared to the other clusters, respondents are less stressed or anxious online than offline. In addition, they feel less unseen online than offline. This cluster has been labelled “Carefree and confident” online users.

Chi-square tests and ANOVAs were subsequently used to establish the external validity of the cluster solution. Findings of $\chi^2$ tests for demographic variables show significant differences.
across clusters, specifically working status ($\chi^2 = 33.819, \text{df}=18, p<.05$), and age ($\chi^2 = 15.651, \text{df}=9, p<.10$). Country and gender do not discriminate the clusters. Further, ANOVA indicates significant differences in online brand perceptions ($F= 14.907, \text{df}=3, p<.05$).

Providing support to findings regarding the context-specificity of emotions (Richins 1997), clusters are found to differ in terms of the emotions experienced online versus offline. Additionally, findings show that working status and age discriminate clusters, while country and gender do not. This contradicts Barnes et al. (2007) who report variations in terms of behaviour based on cultural background. Nationality (country) does not discriminate clusters. This finding provides support to the notion of the internet as a global consumer context and can be effectively used by marketers to target consumers from different nationalities.

**REFERENCES**


An Experimental Investigation of the Influence of Virtual Community Characteristics on Consumers’ Evaluations of an Online Store
Peter Domma, Saarland University, Germany
Hanna Schramm-Klein, University of Siegen, Germany
Joachim Zentes, Saarland University, Germany

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction and Background
Forrester Research estimates 74% of Europe’s population to be online in 2011 with more than 176 million people shopping online (Dellner 2007). Simultaneously the use of the web is changing dramatically: Applications which are summarized under the umbrella term “Web 2.0” referring to key concepts such as user empowerment and participation are changing the way consumers use the web (O’Reily 2005). Implementing new strategies with regard to Web 2.0 will allow retailers to create competitive advantages. For example, a study by Brown, Tilton, and Woodside (2002) showed that customers who participated in a virtual community (VC) provided by a website only accounted for about one-third of the visitors but generated two-thirds of sales.

While research on the concept of VCs in general is well documented (Farquhar and Rowley 2006), there is still a lack of studies investigating its influence on consumers’ perception of the transactional and relational qualities of a shopping website. Furthermore the effects of different VC characteristics are widely unknown. We therefore identified three factors of VC characteristics as influencing factors of consumers’ evaluations from prior literature and practical evidence: The exertion of influence by the operator (i.e., the retailer), the VC quality and the degree of sociability. We investigate the effects of these determinants on consumers’ perception of the transactional and relational qualities of a shopping website by means of an online experiment.

Effects of Virtual Communities: Conceptual Foundation and Hypotheses
We conceptualize consumers’ evaluations using six constructs. The transactional perspective in our study comprises Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness (Davis 1989). We also added Perceived Risk (Mitchell 1999) as comprising the probability of a loss and the subjective feeling of unfavorable consequences. To capture the relational perspective of consumers’ evaluations, we regarded three dimensions: Perceived Social Presence is defined as how a medium is perceived to be warm if it conveys a feeling of human contact and sensitivity to the user (Hassanein and Head 2004). Perceived Enjoyment refers to the extent to which the activity of using an information technology is perceived to be enjoyable (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw 1992). Following McMillan and Hwang (2002) we conceptualize Perceived Interactivity as the extent to which users perceive the online store to enable (many-to-many) communication, to provide control (speed, navigation, content), and to respond to user requests.

The investigated determinants of consumers’ evaluations (i.e., the VC characteristics) are the exertion of influence by the operator, the VC quality and the degree of sociability. We propose the effect of the exertion of influence to be nonlinear, which means concerning the comparison between a moderate exertion of influence and a high or low exertion we expect a more positive evaluation in the moderate group (H1).

As mentioned by Preece (2001) the volume, the quality and the timeliness of the information provided in a VC are factors that affect members’ engagement in the community, implying that those factors will have a huge impact on consumers’ evaluations of the VC. Referring to VC quality we therefore hypothesize that consumers evaluate the online store more positively if an integrated VC is of high quality (H2).

The coldness and impersonality of online retailing is still one of the major problems of this distribution channel, which may be solved by the usage of Web 2.0 instruments. We focus on the term sociability which is concerned with developing software, policies and practices to support social interaction online (Preece 2001) to investigate the effect of adding social cues to the VC. We assume that increasing sociability of the VC will lead to a more positive evaluation by the visitors (H3).

Experimental Design
To test our hypotheses a laboratory 3x2x2 (exertion of influence: low/moderate/high; VC quality: low/high; sociability: low/high) between-subjects experiment with 477 participants was conducted. The VC contained an area with a discussion forum and a user profiles section. Manipulation of the exertion of influence was achieved by varying the occurrence an contributions of an administrator. To manipulate VC quality the number of contributions to the discussion forum, comprehensiveness of content and timeliness of contributions varied between groups. To manipulate the sociability of the VC the user profiles section was either present or absent within the VC. To avoid participant awareness bias we chose a non-forced exposure design and developed a cover story.

Major Results
The results of the 3x2x2 MANCOVA (with product involvement and internet experience as covariates) showed that the exertion of influence is mainly affecting transactional factors, especially the risk perceived by the respondents. We could show that consumers tend to react positively to an increased exertion of influence by the retailer only to a certain point beyond which an increasing influence leads to a negative effect. Moreover we found a significant interaction of the factors exertion of influence and sociability. Apparently the presence of the user profiles section has some alleviative effect on the negative impact of the high exertion of influence by the retailer.

The effect of VC quality is highly significant for the transactional contracts of perceived ease-of-use and perceived usefulness, indicating that comprehensiveness and timeliness of content are effective components of consumers’ transactional evaluations. With regard to relational components the results show that the use of a comprehensive and lively VC makes the shopping task a more enjoyable experience. Further analysis confirmed our hypotheses of the effects of high vs. low sociability of the VC on perceived risk, perceived social presence, perceived enjoyment and perceived interactivity. We found no support for the effect of sociability on perceived usefulness of the online store. Apparently consumers in an online environment tend to disregard the importance of tie strength (similarity, expertise, accessibility) as posited by traditional WOM theory. With regard to relational factors increasing the sociability of an integrated VC seem to be adequate to convey a feeling of human contact and warmth, thus increasing perceived social presence.
Moreover changing the nature of the online store by adding the user profiles section and increasing sociability is demonstrated to have a positive effect on perceived enjoyment and perceived interactivity.

REFERENCES


Conflicting Imperatives of Modesty and Vanity Among Young Women in the Arabian Gulf
Rana Sobh, Qatar University, Qatar
Russell Belk, York University, Canada
Justin Gressel, University of Texas, Pan American, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Muslim women’s clothing is a visible form of public consumption, and has been the subject of much debate within social science literatures. Modesty in clothing for women is central to Islam. A large body of work has looked at the diverse meanings and connotations of the Muslim veil and the practice of hijab (observing Muslim women’s dress code) in many Muslim countries including Egypt (e.g., El-Guindi 1999), Turkey (Sandikci and Ger 2007, forthcoming; Secor 2002; Gole 2002), Mali (Shultz 2007), Cote D’Ivoire (leBlanc 2000), Indonesia (Jones 2003), South India (Oseall and Osealla 2007), and London (Tarlo 2007b). However, the black abaya within oil-rich Gulf countries is embedded in a different contemporary local context and is increasingly associated with status and wealth (Abaza 2007). Young Muslim women’s dress in the Gulf States of Qatar and UAE (United Arab Emirates) is both emotionally and politically charged.

The Gulf States are unique for several reasons: 1) There is a distinct and strong ethos of traditional dress for both men and women, 2) There is an omnipresent awareness of Islam and religious values in shaping identities and informing behavior, 3) There has been a rapid increase in wealth due to petrodollars, and 4) There is a dramatic presence of foreigners from both Western and Non-Western cultures, such that only 1 in 4 Qatar residents is Qatari and only 1 in 10 Emirates residents is Emirati. The latter conditions create a situation unique in the immigration literature in which there is pressure for the locals to acculturate to the immigrant rather than the more normal reverse situation. Locals increasingly fear the dissolution of their ethnic identity and therefore strive to emphasize their authenticity and ethnic affiliation distinction through wearing ethnic dress but also through other consumption styles such as extravagant conspicuous and luxurious consumption that foreigners in general cannot afford. Furthermore, the main acculturative agent in our context is not the dominant host culture as opposed to the minority or immigrant culture, but rather the forces of globalization and more specifically transnational Western consumer culture and its underpinning ideology that fundamentally conflicts with the local religious and patriarchal principles. Hence, new clothing styles and adornment practices are increasingly adopted by young women in the region and reflect the conflicting forces of individualistic Western values that emphasize display of women’s beauty and sexuality in the public sphere and traditional values requiring modesty and promoting a virtuous public domain. The abaya itself has been gradually reinvented and has evolved from being a concealing garment that hides women’s sexuality and beauty in public to an embellished fashionable, trendy haute couture garment that enhances beauty and reveals sexuality, all supposedly without undermining the local look. We propose to understand the dynamics underlying conflicting imperatives of modesty and vanity and to probe the ambivalence inherent in such performatives constructions of identity and conceptions of the self as well as explore how young women negotiate and reconcile resulting tensions.

In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty three middle class university students in business from Qatar University (12) and American University of Sharjah (11). The informants ranged in age from 17 to 22. In addition to interviews, all researchers used observations of clothing and adornment practices in public places by young women (e.g., university, malls, restaurants) and the female researcher observed clothing and adornment practices in private spaces as well (homes, social gatherings, fashion shows, weddings and other women’s parties). Projective techniques were used and consisted of showing participants a set of stimulus pictures of girls wearing different types of abayas and using adornment practices across the spectrum from what might be perceived as vain to modest.

Our findings reveal that young women resolve conflicting tensions between the conflicting imperatives of the transnational consumer ideology and traditional local values through a number of appropriation and adaptation processes. Informants construct idiosyncratic meanings of prevalent religious, cultural and fashion discourses informed by the two conflicting ideologies and shaped by changing cultural intermediaries and other social, political and economic structures. They negotiate dominant values in the Western ideology, adopt and adapt some but resist and reject others. They appropriate global fashion trends to create a local glamorous fashion trends and symbolically charged clothing practices that give them a sense of uniqueness and superiority over expatriates and foreigners. In effect they out-global the global consumer culture representatives, at least in some respects. Young women also enact Western style identities in uncontrolled spaces and settings such as in women-only gatherings and gender segregated spaces where tensions between traditional and modern, modesty and vanity are alleviated.

While accepting and acknowledging the local value systems, they manipulate and reinterpret some of the meanings to justify their clothing practices and condemn those of others. Regardless of their degree of religiosity, Islam was used by all informants to justify their clothing practices whether vain, modest or somewhere between the two extremes. Informants negotiate their need for beauty display in public within the Islamic discourses of beauty and the legitimacy of nice self-presentation and enjoyment of life.

Besides, young women seem to reconcile opposing pressures by injecting western symbols such as designer names and fashion trends and patterns into traditional garments in order to rejuvenate and bestow modernity on them. This reinvention of tradition gives them a feeling of connection with the youth consumer culture and engagement in the world of fashion while still retaining connections to local traditions that they are proud of. The purpose of wearing the abaya is also manipulated to be more aligned with Western ideologies and beauty discourses. Ironically, the abaya is interpreted as a camouflage garment that makes them look taller and thinner hence enhances their beauty and hides their body imperfections, tendencies which are in accordance with Western fashion discourses. Playing with meanings and altering the original uses and meanings of the abaya can be interpreted as unintentional resistance (Ger and Belk 1996) of the local hegemony emphasizing social conformity and as an affirmation of young women’s power in managing their appearances and enacting their identities in public. Following Blumer (1969), the abaya fashion seems to help young women mediate cultural contradictions they are subject to in some Arab Gulf countries and to adjust in a disciplined and orderly way to their fast moving society to help cope with the major social changes their countries have been undergoing as a result of globalization.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, consumer researchers have taken more interest in the study of symbolic brand meaning (Belk 1988; Chon and Olsen 1991; Cushman 1990; Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Levy 1959; Mick et al. 2004; Mittal 2006). Much of this research however, has been conducted in western consumer cultures, which leaves a gap in understanding of symbolic meanings, consumption practices and applications of (western) theory in non-western contexts. Therefore, attempting to address the gap, this research focuses on an emerging paradoxical subculture of consumption in Kuwait; young modest Muslim female consumers of western luxury fashion brands. To our knowledge, no research has addressed this group, and our preliminary study shows promising findings.

Research on the symbolic meanings of western luxury fashion brands of clothing and accessories e.g. Gucci, Prada, LV, confirm that in addition to communicating class distinctions, such brands are perceived to carry symbolic meanings of (female) sexuality often termed “porno-chic” (Maneau and Tissier-Desbordes 2006). Research also confirms that expressions of female sexuality e.g. revealing clothing etc in socio-Islamic cultures (such as Kuwait) are regarded as taboo while customs of female modesty are preferred and practiced especially among young Muslim females (Antoun 1968; Rashid and Michaud 2000). Hence it is paradoxical that young modest Muslim women in Kuwait are engaging in consumption of western luxury fashion brands symbolically associated with female sexuality.

A preliminary research compromised of semi-structured depth interviews and participant observations with four participants took place in Kuwait over a period of two months to address the two main research questions: 1) To what extent do Muslim women recognize symbolic meanings of luxury fashion brands to be related to taboo? And 2) how is taboo involved in their consumption practices? The participants selected through convenience sampling were single, ages 13-19, from the upper/middle-upper classes in Kuwait. The women of higher classes of society not only afford and consume luxury fashion brands but they are also motivated to protect and maintain the family honour of their already esteemed families through practices of modesty (Mina 1981). Thematic analysis was employed (Braun and Clarke 2006) and the major findings show that although Muslim women recognize symbolic meanings of western luxury fashion brands to be related to taboo, they still consume those brands. Two major themes emerge:

First, in a similar fashion to compensatory consumption (Woodruffe-Burton and Elliott 2005) the desires of young Muslim women to express their sexuality are communicated through the use of the luxury fashion brand as a “symbolic-substitute” to direct expressions of sexuality. This “symbolic-substitution” follows the idea that if a ritual is suppressed in one form, it manifests itself in another (Douglas 2002; Freud 1960; Jung 1990). Further, it was observed that young women may be utilizing the sexual appeal of the luxury fashion brand to attract others in a manner more favourable and acceptable than engaging in direct expressions of sexuality through appearance or behaviour. The findings show that young Muslim women seem to enjoy being “attractive” to the opposite sex which they communicate through their symbolic consumption, while still maintaining modest clothing.

Second, the luxury fashion brand (compared to other fashion brands) is intriguing because it brings “luxury” and “sexuality” symbolically together, offering consumers a “symbolic space” of negotiation which potentially conjoins cultural understandings of luxury and sexuality. In the context of this study, young Muslim women seem to adjourn “luxury” as a form of sexuality attractive to the opposite gender and “sexuality” as a form of luxury thereby concealing female sexuality through modest clothing and behaviour. This contradictory interplay between modesty, luxury and sexuality through the use of symbolic brands, as far as we know, has not been previously addressed within the context of an Islamic consumer culture.

To conclude, the context of this study is expected to broaden marketing knowledge (Tsui 2004) by being the first to address how taboo “desires” may be fulfilled through symbolic consumption, ironically within an Islamic consumer culture. As this study has shown, symbolic brands can be important sites of investigation to reveal certain oppressive structures in society and their subsequent negotiation by consumers. The luxury fashion brand in this context becomes an “implicit resistance strategy” (Cudd 2006) and a manner to reassert free choice (Burger 1992) against the taboos of female sexuality imposed on young Muslim women.

Nonetheless, this study has limitations as findings are based on four participants and focused on a particular product category (luxury fashion brands) and particular consumer (young Kuwaiti Muslim female). This is not imperative however in that this preliminary study merely aims to encourage further research away from the Islamic idealist bias, as the context seems worthy of considerable investigation.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

“Age” is one of the most widely used categories in consumer research and at the same time one of the most undertheorized variables. We argue that consumer research on age-related behaviour is flawed. The variable age has been too often naively conceptualized in consumer research. First, age requires a more thorough cultural and sociological theoretical framing. Here, the sociology of life course frame is utilized. Second, integrating age in a life course perspective enables consumer researcher to realize a reversed structure of influence. Rather than seeing age as a cause for a certain consumer response, consumption can become a medium to negotiate the personal age in a life course pattern.

In segmentations studies age is often understood as chronological age, defined in terms of the numbers of years lived. Embedded in a life cycle frame, the assumption is that going through different stages in life from birth to death, a consumer acquires certain skills, abilities, and needs that will change his or her consumption patterns (Wilkes 1995). However, empirical research has found that the variable “age” is seriously flawed in its predicative quality (Barak and Schiffman 1981). A step further in conceptualizing age is the focus on the subjective perception of one’s chronological age. The concept of self-perceived age was introduced as cognitive age by Barak and his colleagues (e.g., Barak and Gould 1985; Barak and Schiffman 1981).

Refinements in age-related variables tend to neglect the inherent fallacies of background assumptions that underpin psychological models of age-related research. This refers to a still overly biomechanical assumption of life going through the ordered sequence of growth, maturation, and decline in life cycle approaches (Powell and Longino 2001). Neglected is furthermore the complex social and cultural embedding of age-related behaviour that is reduced to simple variables (Kohl and Meyer 1986). As a result it is ignored that chronological age is an “empty” variable (Settersten and Mayer 1997, p.239). It does not “cause” any change in and of itself. We need a social context, a historical frame based on the social biography of individuals to understand age-related processes and we have to consider age as it becomes meaningful for the individual to connect it with related behavioural patterns. Already the basic connection between age (chronological or cognitive) and subsequent stages is a historical and social institution (Featherstone and Hepworth 1991). The assumption of a structured sequence of growth and development through life stages is a product of a normalisation and institutionalisation process due to the process of western modernisation (Foucault 1979).

A requirement for understanding life through and in time is the conceptualisation of dynamic social changes and their link with individual, subjective processes. On the one hand, ageing is mediated by macro-level changes. On the other hand, the members of one cohort change in their ageing behaviour and consequently shape age-appropriate norms and rules in society. These changes are manifested in political, economic, kinship and other social institutions. These requirements are integrated in the conceptual stream of sociology of life course.

Sociology of life course can be understood as a multidisciplinary approach, united by a set of themes (Bengtsson and Allen 1993, p.470) or principles (George 1993, p.358). A key aspect of the life course is the shared conviction of studying age-related patterns embedded in social institutions and history. The life course focus is on transitions, which are short life changes (with possible long-term consequences), and trajectories, which are understood as more long-term patterns that link several life stages (Elder 1991). These key concepts are interrelated, as transitions are usually shaped in their form and meaning by trajectories.

Our study is based on qualitative in-depth interviews with 23 women, all of them Danes, living in Denmark with an age variation from 22 to 56 years. A female research assistant, age 28, conducted the depth interviews, using an interview guide. The data was analyzed in two stages. First from a phenomenological approach to find themes in the material, the themes were then later analyzed from a theoretical approach. The content focus is on the consumption of underwear. Among the products most of us consume everyday, underwear definitely belongs to the one with the broadest and deepest cultural meaning. Underwear is distinguished from most of the other everyday products, since the consumption of this kind of garment is mainly kept in private and the influence from status seeking behavior can be downgraded. In this way, the focus is mainly on the single consumer’s perception of herself.

In our findings we see in the female underwear consumption a dynamically intertwined link between individual agency and sociocultural environments. Underwear consumption can be interpreted as a process of negotiation. This process is dynamic, changing and reaches back and forth on the life trajectory. In the interviews the current underwear consumption is usually confronted with the own individual consumption history, like the quintessential cotton underwear for young girls. It is the movement on the trajectory that is relevant to understand a behavioural pattern which is not just a consequence of an however defined age-variable. There is an amount of variability and heterogeneity in the individual negotiation of life transitions and trajectories, but there is also a structural pattern of constraints. Here we can see different forms of rigidity and ambiguity especially in negotiating the social expectations for wearing certain kind of underwear. This ambiguity is a symptom of what has been phrased as asynchrony in the micro-macro relationships in life course research. It means that human life is changing in a rhythm often different from social structures (McMullin 2000, p.518). Finally, our data supports the notion that cohorts are socially embedded and interacting with other cohorts in the life course negotiation.

The article concludes with a conceptual model for framing age-related identity negotiations through consumption. It reflects the individual negotiations in regard to transitions, trajectories and cohorts.

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432 European Advances in Consumer Research Volume 9, © 2011


It’s the Mindset that Matters: The Role of Construal Level and Message Framing in Influencing Consumer Conservation Behaviors

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Given that past research regarding the effects of message framing on conservation behaviors has produced mixed results, this research elucidates when loss versus gain framed messages are most effective in influencing consumer recycling by examining the moderating role of whether a more concrete or abstract mindset is activated. Actions can be construed at varying levels of abstraction, from low levels, specifying how it is performed; to high levels, specifying why it is performed (e.g., Freitas, Gollwitzer, and Trope 2004). In the case of recycling, one could think about the behavior in terms of lower level processes and actions (e.g., “I will recycle by saving paper and aluminum cans”) or think about the behavior in terms of higher level purposes (e.g., “I will recycle to help the environment”). It was predicted that (1) consumers would exhibit positive recycling behaviors when presented with a concrete “how” construal in combination with a loss framed message, and (2) consumers would exhibit positive recycling behaviors when presented with an abstract “why” construal in combination with a gain framed message.

In study 1 we examine in a lab context the notion that loss (gain) frames are more effective when paired with lower-level, concrete (higher-level, abstract) thinking rather than higher-level, abstract (lower-level, concrete) thinking by directly manipulating the consumer’s mindset. As anticipated, when a concrete mindset was activated, participants reported more positive recycling intentions in response to the loss frame as opposed to the gain frame. When an abstract mindset was activated, participants reported more positive recycling intentions in response to the gain frame rather than the loss frame. Study 1 highlights that when the individual focuses on the behavior of recycling in more concrete terms, loss frames are more successful in generating positive recycling intentions than are gain frames. Conversely, when the individual focuses on the behavior at a higher level of abstraction, gain frames are more effective in generating positive recycling intentions than are loss frames. Thus, both types of frames can be efficacious in influencing consumer recycling intentions, and it is the consumer’s mindset (i.e., concrete versus abstract) that is instrumental in determining which message frame will be most effective.

Study 2 included 390 households in a North American metropolitan neighborhood which were assigned to one of 5 conditions (4 experimental conditions and 1 control group). Marketing materials were prepared in partnership with the City to ensure that branding elements were consistent with other communications about the recycling program. A two-sided door hanger, printed on recyclable paper, was generated. On one side of the hanger was the frame manipulation, and on the other side of the frame the construal manipulation was presented. Ratings of recycling behaviors were taken at two time points; the initial measurement provided a baseline of behavior prior to distribution our experimental manipulation. The following week, the door hangers were delivered to each of randomly assigned subsections of the neighborhood (e.g., loss/how, gain/how, loss/why, gain/why) and the control condition received no message. During the third week, the post-test measurements of recycling behavior were taken. Trained raters evaluated whether or not the household participated, the volume and the variety of materials in the bin. As hypothesized, loss frames were more efficacious when paired with lower-level, concrete mindsets, whereas gain frames were more effective when paired with higher-level, abstract mindsets. Pairing messages about losses with how messages yielded significant improvements in participation, volume and variety of recycling material contributed. Similarly, pairing messages about gains with why messages significant improvements in participation, volume and variety of recycling material contributed.

The goal of study 3 was to further highlight the mechanism driving these effects within a lab context. It was proposed that a pairing of a loss (gain) frame with a more concrete (abstract) mindset will lead to a match to processing styles, thus enhancing processing fluency or ease of understanding and processing meanings (e.g., Lee and Aaker 2004). We explicitly test this processing account in Study 3 and propose that a match between message frame and mindset leads to enhanced processing fluency. One potential outcome of enhanced processing fluency is perhaps a feeling of ease, which may in turn influence perceived self-efficacy (Bandura 1977). Such feelings of efficacy may then lead to greater recycling intentions and behaviors. As anticipated, when a “how” appeal was presented, participants reported more positive recycling intentions in response to the loss frame (as opposed to the gain frame). When presented with a “why” appeal, participants reported more positive recycling intentions in response to the gain frame rather than the loss frame. We proposed that the interaction between frame and appeal type will be mediated by fluency to predict efficacy, and that, in turn, efficacy would mediate the effect of fluency on recycling intentions. As predicted, the indirect effect of the interaction (between message frame and advertising appeal) on recycling intentions was mediated by a processing fluency → perceived efficacy pathway.

The results of study 3 shed light on the process underlying the effects. The findings suggest that the mechanism underlying our matching effect (whereby a match of loss/concrete and gain/abstract lead to favorable intentions) relates to both processing fluency and perceived efficacy. That is, a match in terms of message frame and appeal type will lead to enhanced subjective ease of processing, which in turn predicts enhanced perceptions of efficacy and subsequent increases in positive recycling intentions. This is a novel finding, showing that ease of processing can lead to enhanced perceptions of ease of doing. Finally, other potential mediators such as involvement, positive mood, and negative mood did not readily account for the results.

Taken together, the findings of our three studies are consistent with our matching hypothesis. In particular, pairing messages that activate more concrete (abstract) mindsets leads to enhanced subjective ease of processing, which in turn predicts enhanced perceptions of efficacy and subsequent increases in positive recycling outcomes.
Product Information Presented as Ratios and the Role of Consumer Processing Mode: Can Analytical Processing Lead to More Biased Judgments for Certain Ratio Formats?

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers often encounter information presented in the form of ratios (Peters et al. 2007; Silverblatt 2009), and they are sometimes required to compute the averages of multiple pieces of data in ratio formats. Commonly encountered ratios in daily activities include laundry detergent information given as loads per container (LPC), fitness equipment information regarding calories burned per minute (CPM) of exercise, and vehicle speed information in miles per hour (MPH). In this research, we examine how computing averages for multiple pieces of data in such ratio formats might bias consumer judgments. Equally importantly, we also examine how processing mode might moderate the effects of ratio formats on consumer averaging judgments.

There has been limited research on how consumers process ratio information (with Denes-Raj and Epstein 1994; Hsee et al. 2003; Larrick and Soll 2008; and Raghuvir and Greenleaf 2006; being notable exceptions), and no study has examined how consumer judgments might be biased when they are computing averages of multiple pieces of data in different ratio formats. Further, no study has examined the moderating effects of consumer processing modes in this context. Thus, the present research examines the potential for bias when computing averages, and examines the moderating effects of consumer processing mode (Studies 1 and 3) and cognitive capacity (Study 2). We find an interesting paradoxical result – analytical (vs. heuristic) processing accentuates the bias when processing certain ratio data, and likewise higher cognitive capacity reduces the judgment accuracy for certain ratio data. Finally, we identify alternative data formats that can potentially reduce consumer judgment biases.

People tend to process numerical information in a linear fashion (Brousseau, Brousseau, and Warfield 2002). Such linear arithmetic processing is likely to lead to erroneous judgments when evaluating inverse ratio data (i.e., where the focal variable is in the denominator). Specifically, for inverse ratios (like LPC, CPM, or MPH), the appropriate mathematical computation to use would be a harmonic mean. However, consumers are instead likely to employ the linear arithmetic mean, leading to biased judgments.

Study 1 examined how consumers compute the average rate of calories burned across multiple exercise routines (or fitness machines) with information given in a commonly used format of calories burned per minute, or CPM (see Zeni, Hoffman, and Clifford 1996); versus an alternative format of minutes taken per calorie (MPC). Study 1 also examined the moderating effects of consumer processing mode (analytical vs. heuristic) (e.g., Alter et al. 2007; Kahneman and Frederick 2002). Under analytical processing, a consumer is more likely to rely on mathematical calculations, and therefore more likely to compute the linear arithmetic mean across the multiple pieces of ratio data. In contrast, under heuristic processing, an equivalent of a random choice between the options would be more likely. Hence, analytical (versus heuristic) processing of the data would magnify the proportion of erroneous judgments.

Therefore, we posit that when consumers are computing averages across multiple pieces of data in CPM format, analytical (vs. heuristic) processing will paradoxically increase judgment inaccuracy. However, when consumers are computing averages across multiple pieces of data in MPC format, analytical (vs. heuristic) processing will increase judgment accuracy.

Study 1 was a 2 (type of data format for calorie burning rate: calories per minute vs. minute per calorie) X 2 (processing mode: analytical vs. heuristic) between-subjects experiment (N = 114). The results of study 1 supported our hypothesis that when computing averages across multiple pieces of data in inverse ratio formats (such as CPM), consumers are prone to make erroneous judgments. Study 1 also showed that such erroneous judgments for ratio data are likely to get enhanced when consumers are making judgments under analytical (than heuristic) processing mode.

Study 2 extended the findings of study 1 by examining a different context using the scenario of a decision-maker choosing between two route options with speed data in miles per hour (MPH), and the moderating effects of cognitive capacity. Study 2 showed that different levels of cognitive capacity lead to a similar pattern of results as processing mode. That is, paradoxically, when consumers exert greater effort in analyzing the given options and employ mathematical computations to a greater extent under high (vs. low) cognitive capacity, their judgments become more inaccurate/biased.

Study 3 had three objectives. First, it replicated the potential bias in computing of averages of ratios in the context of laundry detergent usage. Second, it examined how presenting ratio information through a medium (e.g., Hsee et al. 2003) such as price per load might reduce consumer judgment bias. Third, while in Study 1 processing mode was manipulated, Study 3 measured processing mode as an inherent personality trait (Pacini and Epstein 1999). Study 3 was a 2 (type of data format for laundry detergent: loads per container vs. Dollar per load) X 2 (processing mode: analytical vs. heuristic) between-subjects experiment (N = 144). The results of Study 3 again highlighted how an inverse ratio format like LPC, which is commonly used, can bias consumer judgments when computing averages of multiple pieces of data; the judgment bias can be reduced by presenting the data with the help of a medium, such as price per load. Study 3 also demonstrated that analytical (vs. heuristic) processing tendency increases consumer judgment biases with the LPC format, but lead to more accurate judgments with DPL format.

In sum, the results of three experiments highlight how some commonly used ratio formats might bias consumer judgments when they are computing averages. Equally interestingly, analytical processing or higher cognitive capacity can reduce judgment accuracy when consumers attempt to compute the mean of multiple data pieces in certain ratio formats such as CPM, MPH, or LPC. The bias can be corrected if the data are presented in alternative formats of MPC or DPL, which are conducive to linear mathematical processing.
The Influence of Brand Concept and Styles of Thinking on Brand Extension Evaluation
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Many of the successful new product introductions each year are brand extensions, such as Godiva coffee and Jeep strollers. Consumers tend to respond more favorably to extensions that fit with their perceptions of the parent brand, including extensions that are launched in nearby product categories (Aaker and Keller 1990; Volckner and Sattler 2006). However, it is also true that many brands are more “elastic” and are able to launch brand extensions into distant product categories, which share few attributes with existing products. For example, Ralph Lauren markets a diverse set of offerings under its brand, including sunglasses, paint, and dog leashes.

Why are some brands more elastic? Prior research suggests that characteristics of the parent brand dictate brand elasticity. Of particular importance is the nature of the brand concept associated with the parent brand—prestige versus functional (Park, Milberg, and Lawson 1991; Volckner and Sattler 2006). Prestige brands, such as Rolex, have abstract brand concepts that are more elastic and can successfully expand into many product categories. Functional brands positioned on functional attributes, such as Timex, are less elastic and are more successful if they extend to offerings that conform to the functional nature of the brand.

However, recent research finds that consumers can also influence brand elasticity by the style of thinking they use when evaluating brand extensions (Ahluwalia 2008; Monga and John 2007). Consumers might use analytic thinking, where they focus on specific attributes or products usually associated with the parent brand and try to match these features with those of the extension. Or, consumers might use a more holistic approach, where they seek out alternate ways to relate the extension to the parent brand, such as overall brand reputation, regardless of whether the extension conforms to the same attribute or product category profile as the parent brand. When consumers use a holistic style of thinking, they perceive higher brand extension fit and are more accepting of brand extensions, especially when they are distant from the parent brand.

Which of these explanations for brand elasticity is correct? We propose that both factors are important for understanding how far firms can stretch their brands. We examine distant extensions of brand extensions for prestige and functional brands. For distant extensions of prestige brands, we predict that analytic and holistic thinkers will respond in a similar way. Prestige brands have abstract concepts that can be stretched to distant product categories; thus, even analytic thinkers have an accessible way of relating the parent brand and extension. However, for functional brands, we predict that analytic thinkers will respond less favorably than holistic thinkers. Functional brands are anchored on functional attributes not readily transferable to distant extensions; thus, analytic thinkers will be unable to use attributes or product category profile to connect the parent brand and extension. Holistic thinkers, on the other hand, have an advantage in being able to generate alternate ways to relate the parent brand and extension, thereby perceiving better extension fit that forms the basis for more favorable extension evaluations.

We tested our predictions in three studies. In study 1, we used a 2 (style of thinking: analytic, holistic) x 2 (parent brand concept: prestige, functional) between subjects design. In study 1, analytic and holistic thinkers were identified using the analytic-holistic thinking scale (Choi, Koo, and Choi 2007). Consistent with our predictions, consumers who engaged in holistic thinking evaluated far extensions of functional brands more favorably than did analytic thinkers. For prestige brands, analytic and holistic thinkers evaluated far extensions equally.

In study 2, we examined whether analytic thinkers could be encouraged to respond more favorably to far extensions of functional brands. In study 1, analytic thinkers responded poorly because their perceptions of the parent brand (attributes, product categories) were at odds with the extension category. In study 2, we reasoned that creating distance between the parent brand and extension through different brand architecture could suppress these types of objections and enhance extension evaluations. Results from a 2 (style of thinking: analytic, holistic) x 2 (brand architecture: direct, sub-brand) supported our predictions. For the direct brand, Toyota wallets, analytic thinkers responded less favorably than did holistic thinkers, consistent with our prior studies. For the sub-brand, Excera wallets by Toyota, analytic thinkers responded as favorably as did holistic thinkers. Subsequent analyses confirmed that the sub-brand architecture suppressed analytic thoughts, as expected.

In study 3, we reasoned that providing information about a far brand extension would need to be provided in a linguistic frame that matched the natural inclinations of analytic thinkers. Based on research in linguistic categories (Stapel and Semin 2007), we designed one message compatible with analytic thinking (e.g., using verbs) and a second message compatible with holistic thinking (e.g., using adjectives). Results from a 2 (styles of thinking: analytic, holistic) x 2 (linguistic frame: analytic, holistic) supported our predictions. For analytic thinkers, the message with an analytic frame resulted in more positive extension evaluations. For holistic thinkers, the message with a holistic frame resulted in more positive extension evaluations. Thus, providing more information about a far extension was successful, but only if the message matched the style of thinking of consumers.

Taken together, our findings qualify past brand research in important ways. First, we find that prestige brands are not always more elastic than functional brands. This difference emerges only for analytic thinkers, not holistic thinkers. Second, we find that brand extension evaluations are not always more favorable for holistic than analytic thinkers. Style of thinking matters for functional, but not prestige, brands. Third, sub-brand architecture and persuasive messages can increase evaluations for distant brand extensions, but much of the benefit resides in increasing acceptance among analytic rather than holistic thinkers.
Self-Concept and Brand Relationship Dimensions on Teenage Consumption Representations
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ABSTRACT
This study addresses the relationship between self-concept and brand perceptions on teenager consumers market. Semi-structured interviews and projective techniques were conducted with 13 teenagers about 12 to 17 years old. The analysis revealed a set of 10 core dimensions for which the individual establishes relations between self-concept and brands. These dimensions are based in Interpersonal Influences, Personal Identifications and Moment of Transition of adolescence. There were found evidences that illustrate that what is perceived by consumers as brand personality approaches their self representations. This finding may help the development of positioning.
Sociocultural Branding Research (SBR): An Evolutionary Paradigm for Brand Management Theory
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Branding has been a focal topic of groundbreaking studies within the consumer research discipline (Fournier 1998; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001) however interpretive consumer research occupies a marginalised position within mainstream brand management theory (Kapferer 2001; Keller et al. 2008). New developments in brand consumer research have explored the sociological and cultural aspects of branding practices and processes which emphasise the co-creative role of the consumer in the social construction of brand meaning (Kates 2004), yet these studies are often ignored or given scant treatment in branding texts which conceptualise meaning as primarily marketer-generated (Keller et al. 2008). Interpretive consumer research has an important contribution to make to the mainstream brand management conversation, and this paper argues for a more central role to be given to these studies. The paper defines and develops the concept of Sociocultural Branding Research (SBR) (Diamond et al. 2009), and identifies four distinct patterns of academic work within this evolutionary paradigm. It represents the first attempt to provide a working definition of SBR, and map its emerging approaches within consumer research.

SBR is defined here as an array of empirical studies which investigate the co-created, cultural and critical social relationships which are mediated through brands in the context of market systems. Scholars in the SBR paradigm explore how individuals engage in brand relationships and consume symbolic meaning, the active engagement of consumer communities around brands, the reciprocity between brands and the culturally constituted world and the critical discourses which both circulate and permeate brand culture. SBR is characterised by four distinct patterns of academic inquiry that embrace interdisciplinary theories and pluralistic methodologies, examining the interface between brands, consumers, and culture within the marketplace, ranging from micro to macro analytical perspectives.

The Micro/Historical “Individuated Brand Consumption and Symbolism” explores individual micro practices of consumption in relation to brands, based upon a stream of consumer research which has an established historical grounding examining the everyday meaning of consumer objects and artefacts (Appadurai 1986; Douglas and Isherwood 1979). In this context, brands are seen as co-created entities which consumers have active relationships with and provide symbolism that is integrated into consumer identity projects (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Fournier 1998). Brands offer consumers socially resonant signifiers for both group affiliation and class distinction (Holt 1998; Thompson and Haytko 1997), with SBR researchers examining how consumers draw upon these symbolic resources for individualised meaning making processes.

The Macro/Historical “Cultural Brand Meanings and Aesthetic Marketing” refers to research approaches that examine the sociological and cultural nature of branding together into a paradigmatic framework that has theoretical, methodological and pragmatic utility for consumer researchers and brand theorists alike. It also represents a potentially strong “academic brand” (Cova et al. 2009) of theory that could provide this research paradigm with a distinctive identity in the landscape of brand management literature. This paper concludes that mainstream branding theory would benefit from deeper engagement with the philosophy and concepts of the SBR paradigm, and that a co-created, cultural and critical understanding of brands is increasingly essential in our technologically mediated and socially networked contemporary marketing age.

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Brand Meaning in the Age of the Critical Reflexive Consumer: A Greimasian Semiotic Square Analysis
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In this paper we address the consumer resistance phenomenon, and describe how it has been dealt with by researchers like e.g. Ozanne and Murray (1995). By reviewing the consumer resistance literature it becomes clear that the conceptual foundation for this type of consumer is mainly based on critical theory with a point of origin in the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). For Holt’s (2002) is such theoretical foundation not sufficient for a profound analysis of the anti consumption phenomenon. Instead we perceive this consumer as a critical reflexive consumer who is conscious about consumer resistance and at same time caught in a dilemma, since this consumer is living in consumer culture and commodities are an essential tool in the identity construction. Holt (2002) is also addressing this, although using other concepts, and he shows how current consumer resistance literature is old fashion, when it comes to an understanding of how brands are used in identity construction. Holt (2002) characterizes the consumer resistance literature as either modern or postmodern, and both are outdated. From our point of view is there a profound need for a method by which we can analyze and try to understand the dilemma of critical reflexive consumer, who is at the same time against consumption, but also allured to consume to get tools for the identity construction. The second part of this paper will analyze this dilemma by using a Greimasian semiotic square (e.g., Greimas 1987) to reveal the underlying logical structure of this consumer identity. The critical reflexive consumer is caught in a logical tension between branding and anti-branding. In our semiotic analysis we are using two brands available at the market: The Blackspot sneakers from Adbusters and a cigarette brand with no name from the company Mac Baren. The Blackspot solution to the dilemma is a movement from the anti-branding position to a logical negation of this position in the non anti-branding position, where Blackspot can be an ordinary brand trying to simulate anti-branding. Mac Baren is instead moving from the branding position to the non branding position, where they are pretending not to be a mainstream brand and by doing that it can simulate being an anti-branding commodity. It is shown in the analysis how Adbusters are using mainstream old fashion branding techniques in their market communication and Mac Baren are much more sophisticated in their branding strategy. Thereby is it possible for Mac Baren to create a brand image that fits the critical reflexive consumer better that Adbusters’ Blackspot brand. We are concluding that Adbusters are dealing with a branding strategy that is not adjusted to the reflexive consumer and Mac Baren is instead much more reflexive in their branding strategy. The way Mac Baren is dealing with branding leads to a comparison, where there are many similarities between branding and art. This is an issue which is also addressed by Holt (2002). The consequences of this perspective on branding are troublesome when it come brand management. An important outcome is a discussion regarding the resemblance of art and branding. We going into a discussion of this issue and can clarify some aspects, but it is obvious that we need to go much deeper into this kind of research if we want a profound understanding of how brands are consumed today and how it possible to work with brand management both as a firm and as an nonprofit organization who want to inform consumer about resistance toward consumption. Future research in this area can give us a deeper understanding of how branding is art and the complex aesthetic dimensions of brand consumption today.
Purchasing Motivations of Regular and Occasional Organic Food Consumers: The Incidence of Food Safety and Ethical Concerns
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Conceptualization. The progressive diffusion of organic farming in a growing number of Countries and the continuing expansion of the market for organic food have favoured, in the past few decades, the development of a large body of literature interested in assessing the psychological factors that determine a favourable disposition towards organic food and, in particular, the cognitive determinants that are more likely to affect consumers’ buying intentions. Anthropological and psychological research (see Magnusson et al. 2003, for example) has established the existence of a multiplicity of factors, some of which relate to qualities like the perceived healthiness and naturalness of organic food (and have been, therefore, classified as “private” motivations), while others (so-called “public” motivations) concern the property of environmental soundness of organic farming and its respect for the biological lifecycles of plants and farm animals.

As in the most recent years the food industry is periodically experiencing the outbreak of contagious diseases and other negative events (e.g., adulteration, accidental contaminations, etc.), the drop of public confidence in the safety standards guaranteed by producers and regulatory authorities is determining continuous changes in consumer habits and boosting the sale of products that, as in the case of organic food, are perceived as a safe alternative to conventionally produced food. Indeed, even though the superior nutritional properties of these products have not been scientifically proved yet (Magkos, Arvanit and Zampelas 2006), a large number of consumers consider organic foods harmless to human health and, generally, safer than the industrial ones. While, as far as the environmental friendliness of organic farming is concerned, it could be argued that this production system allows ethically concerned individuals to express an important facet of their personality and behave in a self-congruent manner. Organic food buyers, in fact, are generally sensitive to environmental preservation and broader ethical issues like the use of renewable sources of energy or the care for animal rights (Makatouni 2002). Existing literature (e.g., Zanoli and Naspetti 2002) has documented that, depending on the frequency with which consumers tend to buy organic food, food safety and environmental concerns may affect to a greater or lesser extent their intention to consume the product in question. The purpose of the present study was, therefore, to ascertain the existence of differences between regular and occasional buyers’ behavior and to understand how food safety concerns, individuals’ health consciousness, and ethical self-identity—i.e., the propensity to perceive oneself as a consumer committed to ethical issues—shape the attitude that the two groups hold towards organic food.

Method. Our willingness to investigate the presence of different patterns of consumption among individuals that, in broad terms, can be referred to as “organic food buyers,” justified the adoption of a comparative approach. A total of 303 subjects were, in fact, surveyed and, following the criteria adopted in existing studies (e.g., Cunningham 2001), those who declared to consume organic food only in few occasions in one year were classified as occasional buyers, whereas, those who reported to be used to purchase the same products at least five or six times per year were considered as regular buyers. Grounding on the information that respondents provided by filling in a closed-ended questionnaire, a structural equation model was built and tested for both groups. Intention was considered as the outcome of the model, food safety concerns, health consciousness, and ethical self-identity were considered as independent variables, and, finally, attitude towards organic food was supposed to act as a “bridge” (i.e., a “mediator”) between the predictors and the dependent variable.

Major Findings. The results of the model implemented in this study reveal that for both groups of respondents, the intention to consume organic food stems from a favorable disposition towards the same products and from the subjects’ inclination to consider themselves as ethical consumers. This finding is in line with previous research (e.g., Arvola et al. 2008) and provides evidence to the social meaning rooted in the act of supporting organic farming. The ethical dimension resulted, in fact, able to not only determine a favorable disposition towards organic foods, but also to shape the decision-making process that drives consumers’ purchase intentions. It should be added that for occasional buyers—rather than for the regular ones—the preference for organic food also proved to be motivated by concerns relating to the level of safety of the food we eat. Specifically, food safety concerns were found to impact on occasional consumers’ attitude towards organic products, and, together with health consciousness, on the subsequent purchase intention; which suggests that, for such buyers, worries related to food crises and pandemics may act as an incentive to consume organic food. Moreover, such concerns, were found to also affect the ethical side of their personality, thus suggesting that ethical awareness, for them, seems to be connected with health related issues, like the care for their own health and the sense of responsibility for their household’s wellbeing.

Taken together, the results of the present study indicate that, while regular buyers consider organic food consumption essentially as a way to express their sensitivity for issues that entail an ethical dimension (like environmental defense, or preservation of biodiversity), less frequent purchasers tend to prize the care for their own health and that of their families as a leading motivation for buying organic food. As a result, to increase the receptiveness of their messages, producers, institutions, or consumer associations interested in promoting the growth of the organic food sector should take into account that organic buyers pursue different values and it is worth, therefore, to set more tailored marketing programs and communication campaigns. Firms aspiring to boost sales, for example, should target consumers’ awareness of ethical issues, since this psychological dimension proved to directly influence the purchasing intention of regular and less frequent consumers. Whereas, to facilitate the development of favorable judgments among occasional buyers (or people who do not buy organic food at all), consortia or regulatory bodies should emphasize the high levels of safety guaranteed by organic farming through its international standards.
REFERENCES
Antecedents and Outcomes of Consumer Uncertainty in Ethical Buying Decisions: A Conceptual Model
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Ethical markets have experienced significant growth rates over recent years (e.g., Doane 2001; Taylor and Howard 2005). This research is concerned with ethical consumption in the context of purchasing clothing, an area where concerns may include the human welfare aspects of clothing production, use of animals and negative environmental impacts from production and the promotion of throw away trends. This context has been hindered by a lack of availability and information, particularly in the form of labeling, which has inhibited purchasing behaviour (e.g., Dickson 1999 2001; Shaw and Duff 2002; Shaw et al. 2006a; 2006b; Tomolillo and Shaw 2004). Shaw et al. (2006a) outline, for example, that in seeking to avoid a sweatshop produced garment the consumer may consider country of origin and working conditions important factors in choice and wish to purchase a garment produced in their home country to alleviate these concerns. Conflict can arise, for example, between a concern to trade fairly with poorer countries, to promote their economies and a desire to support home-country production and minimize moral tensions. In such a situation ethically concerned consumers find themselves confronted by uncertainty in terms of both information available to aid decision-making and the consequences of their actions (Tomolillo and Shaw 2004).

While past research has highlighted problems of uncertainty in ethical consumer decision-making in terms of labeling, information and choice (e.g., Dickson 1999; 2001; 2005; Shaw and Duff 2002; Shaw et al. 2006a; 2006b), it has failed to fully examine consumer uncertainty as a theoretical concept, its drivers and their resultant impact on consumer decision-making and behavioural intention. Urbany et al. (1989) in exploring the purchase of appliances is one exception. This research aims to take this work forward by making several key contributions to the literature. First, we take up Urbany et al’s (1989, p.213) call to develop and conceptualize a new dimension of evaluation uncertainty to capture “uncertainty about how to integrate the information available to form judgments.” In the context of ethical clothing decision-making, in addition to experiencing knowledge and choice uncertainty, as explored by Urbany et al. (1989), consumers may also encounter uncertainty when making purchase judgments in terms of information evaluation and integration. Second, we consider Urbany et al’s (1989) recommendation that the antecedents underlying the uncertainty dimensions be explored. Third, Urbany et al. (1989) examined the effect of uncertainty on information search. We extend their work by exploring both the impact of uncertainty on intention to purchase (thereby, examining the impact of uncertainty through to the point of actual behavioural intention) and on information search. Fourth, ethical concerns in clothing have been experiencing increased levels of consumer concern and media attention (e.g., Taylor and Howard 2005), however, understanding of consumer decision-making in this area remains limited. Pertinent is an understanding of how consumers respond to and manage their ethical concerns under conditions of uncertainty. To extend the literature-based insights on consumer decision uncertainty, we draw on qualitative research. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using different samples of ethical consumers.

Findings from the qualitative analysis give rise to a theoretically grounded model. In proposing this model, the study sheds light on how consumer uncertainty affects information search and behavioural intention. This research identifies four antecedents of consumer uncertainty, namely, credibility, complexity, conflict and ambiguity. Consumer uncertainty dimensions consist of knowledge, choice and evaluation uncertainty. In addition to the hypothesized relationships between antecedents and the three uncertainty dimensions, two postulated consequences, intention to engage in external information search and behavioural intention, are formulated. The conceptual nature of this study gives rise to the desirability of future work on this topic.

REFERENCES
Commercial Ethnography and the Production of Practice
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Ethnography is growing in popularity as a marketing research technique. Within the field of academic research in consumer culture, ethnography has become an institutionalized method in understanding the sociocultural dimensions to consumer behavior (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1988; Kozinets 2002). The popularity of ethnography has also gained ground in commercial settings where there are several books about ethnography as a research technique (Mariamposki 2006; Sunderland and Denny 2007) as well as many large organizations that incorporate ethnographic findings into day-to-day decision-making. However, there are few studies that look at how commercial ethnographers construct, represent, and deploy insights gained via ethnographic methods. What kind of consumer does commercial ethnography create? How is this construction utilized in the application of ethnographic knowledge? What are the implications of commercial ethnography for understanding consumer culture? This paper seeks to address some of these shortcomings through an ethnographic approach to understanding the commercial adaptation of ethnographic methods.

This paper seeks to shed light upon the practices commercial ethnographers incorporate in the production of consumer culture. In this context, we define commercial ethnography as a paid commercial engagement between a commissioning organization (i.e. client) and a market research organisation that positions itself as offering “ethnography,” which is considered to be extended commercial observations of consumers that go beyond in-home depth interviews. We argue that these studies are forums through which consumer knowledge is contested and produced. Through an understanding of the practices associated with the dissemination of consumer ethnography, we are able to understand how organizations derive consumer knowledge and construct a consumer.

Some of the research questions guiding this study were (1) how do market researchers’ produce commercial ethnographies, and (2) how do market researchers’ construct the “consumer?” Our story involves how consumer knowledge is generated through an understanding of the production of market research practices. We explore the social interplay that exists between the market research organization, the commissioning client and the consumer.

In order to understand the ways in which commercial ethnographers are able to produce cultural knowledge, we turn to theories of practice. More specifically, we argue commercial ethnographies represent ritualized activities where the potential outcomes of the study are constrained and produced through ritual agents that uniquely differentiate their practice from other forms of market research practice and other forms of sensemaking, a process that Catherine Bell has identified as “ritualization” (Bell 1992; 1997). Bell argues that ritualization is “a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane,” and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors” (Bell 1992, p.74).

We adapt this theoretical framework, which has largely been argued within the context of religious studies, into a secular context to highlight the socio-cultural strategies that ethnographers employ in the production of a consumer. It is our argument that commercial ethnographic practices represent ritualized social bodies (Bourdieu 1977) where domination and subjugation are played out between ethnographer and client in the creation of discourse as to what constitutes a consumer.

Furthermore, it is our position that ethnographers incorporate strategies by which they produce a ritualized body that serves to structure a space-time environment for the purposes of establishing practical mastery; enabling them to create an environment where new cultural meanings of consumer culture are constructed. Through empirical evidence, we discuss the ways in which ethnographers structure their environment through action, meaning, language, gesture, video, and belief in order to generate distinct consumer knowledge. We present findings that highlight the approaches commercial ethnographers take that privilege their ability to collect consumer data and then we highlight how ethnographers are able to produce new forms of consumer knowledge, which are distinct from that of clients and other market research professionals.

We chose an ethnographic approach to understanding our empirical phenomenon, which can be described as an academic ethnography of commercial ethnography. In this research, we employ ethnographic research methods of participant observation, ethnographic interviews, depth interviews, video recordings, and archival documents. Our approach gives us an intimate understanding of the commercial ethnographic experience and at the same time allows us to understand the commercial ethnographic experience from a range of differing perspectives, which included consumer, client and market research industry perspectives.

The importance of this research to Consumer Culture Theory is to extend previous scholarship that has shed light on how social agents symbolically produce culture as opposed to expressing values (Bonzu and Belk 2003; Cayla and Eckhardt 2008; Hackley 2002; McCracken 1986; Peñaloza 2000; 2001). We argue that ethnographers produce practice in culturally relevant ways to generate the perception that these activities are: 1) intrinsically different from other acts; and 2) privileged in their significance. Through a focus on actions of the body, ethnographers are able to structure a social body, which acts as a mechanism to establish practical mastery and create a forum through which commercial ethnographers’ produce cultural meaning.

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The American Civil War has such a strong grip in American imagination that millions of consumers flock every year to more than 380 battlefields around the country to pay their respect to one of the foundational events of the nation. In reality, it was one of the most violent periods in American history, during which more than 620,000 people lost their lives. How is it that such a stupendous fratricide is celebrated as a defining moment of the nation, embodying patriotic values of unity and freedom?

While imagination has been evidenced in of mountain men reenactments (Belk and Costa 1998), stock shows (Peñaloza 2001), utopian marketplaces (Maclaran and Brown 2005), and themed environments (Sherry et al. 2001; Kozinets et al. 2004), the way in which it interacts with and shapes collective narratives and its transformative potential in consumption contexts are in great demand for theoretical investigation. I provide a theoretical account of consumer imagination that is enacted via consumption narratives in the marketplace. I argue that the shift of narrative meaning in the Civil War narrative from a horrendous fratricide to a tale of unity is largely attributed to the transformative power of consumer imagination during market-mediated interactions with the malleable history of the Civil War.

A large number of mental imagery studies show its considerable explanatory potential, but they fall short in addressing hedonic aspects of consumption experiences like battlefield tourism. More recently, the passive and mechanistic basis of mental imagery has given way to agentic consumption that acknowledges the contribution of consumers in shaping their own imaginary experiences. Reader-response theory emphasizes the active role of readers in interacting with a text during which imagination plays a central role. Transportation theory highlights the absorption into the unfolding events. Reader-response and transportation theories assume an active consumer that uses his/her imagination. They are limited though in providing an integrated theoretical account of imagination at leisure spaces of collective significance.

I conducted ethnographic research (Arnould 1998) at Gettysburg, where the bloodiest battle of the American Civil war took place in July 1863. Collected data include participant and non-participant observation as well as depth interviews with more than a hundred tourists, guides, and business owners.

The findings shed light on the commercially staged space of Gettysburg. I define narrative staging as the reconstruction and commercial presentation of a story in both substantive and communicative ways. The most popular narrative presentation is a battlefield tour during which visitors listen to the stories told by the guides. During tour interactions, guides face continuous challenges by trying to adjust to multiple audiences in terms of age, level of knowledge, and specialized interests. They also act as “imagineers” since they continuously trigger visitors’ imagination by explicitly inviting them to visualize scenes of the past. Visitors describe their imagination as a multi-sensory experience, including visual, acoustic, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory senses.

Gettysburg stories are enmeshed in blood, death, and suffering. These are narrated by guides but they are also sedimented in the hundreds of monuments dedicated to the fallen combatants. These story protagonists are enmeshed in heroic deeds and sacrificial acts that transform them into memorable heroes. Stories of death and suffering do not leave consumers unmoved. One of the most evident rewards for visitors is the emotional connection with the fallen heroes. This is clearly an imaginative experience since they could actually “see” those soldiers in the scene of what happened. Emotional connection also transpires when visitors walk on various parts of the battlefield and the cemetery.

But Gettysburg is also highly contested. A number of visitors from the south find that it is biased in its representation and it does not provide a balanced interpretation. Some consumers are misinformed due to the background material they used to familiarize themselves with the events. Although licensed guides are extremely well-read on the relevant history, we noticed a lot of diverse and contradicting interpretations during battlefield tours. While tour guides argue that their tours are balanced, they will occasionally let their own biases come through. It is not uncommon that disputes and conflicts will arise during interactions. Thus, it is almost impossible to establish a historical account free from all biases, inaccuracies, and ambiguities.

This study provides insight on the character of narrative imagination, which is not restricted to the visual dimension. Rather, it is a multi-sensory experience. The imaginative presence of multiple senses connects consumers with the narrative world. Multi-sensory imagination is not a decontextualized reflection of external stimuli into the consumers’ mind. Rather, it is a holistic and dynamic experience that involves protagonists participating in dramatic acts in specific settings. This character of consumer imagination differentiates it from previous static conceptions of mental imagery and renders it as narrative imagination.

It is also shown that narrative imagination is central to transformative cultural processes. As a historical occurrence, the battle of Gettysburg does not exist in the past, but is built in our imagination via narrative articulations found in books, movies, oral traditions, and storyscapes. Narrative agents and consumers alike incorporate their own biases, bring together heterogeneous elements into an imagined whole, and they produce multiple interpretations of an imagined past. There are diverse sources, multiple agents, different constructive processes, frequent contestations, and disagreements. Collective imaginaries are, therefore, negotiated.

At the same time, storyscapes become performative stages for the enactment of the imagined narratives. The enacted character of narrative imagination helps to transform abstract historical occurrences into explicit and meaningful cultural narratives. What is being produced through such contested and enacted stories is a moral valuation of the past that provides an opportunity to bring moral closure to an open narrative of division and conflict. Thus, the product to be experienced at Gettysburg is not a day out or education. It is neither the tourist accommodations nor the gifts for the family back home. Rather, it is the moral closure to a contested story and a national ideology that is enacted and dramatized through imagination and is convincingly etched into consumers’ conscience through the storytelling process.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer culture theory and consumer research in general has historically found the philosophical rendering of concepts such as agency and structure, essence and anti-essentialism, social stratification and social reproduction an eternal concern when theorising consumer phenomena. These discussions, particularly in consumer culture theory, orient towards the study of “cultural complexity” with conceptualisations focusing on co-construction, iteration, fluidity and circularity, and more specifically to the dynamic relationships between consumer action, the marketplace and cultural meanings (Thompson and Arnould 2003). Within the disciplinary discussions of the researcher-respondent relationship however, this discussion has been scant with the relationship remaining configured as stubbornly dualistic. The dualistic, objectivist model of this relationship endures despite these ontological shifts in the paradigm towards a post-structuralist view of the world, performing a world “out there” that we, as “epistemic subjects” enter, study, leave and write about (XXXX). The questions raised in consumer culture theory, such as: what makes us who we are within a particular cultural milieu? How are we to understand ourselves, our politics, our passions, wants, needs and desires as produced in these contexts? are rarely posed at the primary research reality for most of us, our engagement with our research subject(s). The need to address these questions, we would argue, is never more pressing than in ethnographic and netnographic research. Ethnographic and netnographic research in the consumer discipline has evidenced a recent growth in popularity as a way to theorise and describe consumption practices where other more formal methods might prove inadequate to the task (e.g., XXXX; Celsi et al. 1993; Peñaloza 1994; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Belk and Costa 1998; Kates 2002; Kozinets 2002). Recently, writers have raised the issue of doing field work in online and distributed cultures, where the notion of site is less than clear cut (Kozinets 2002; Canniford 2005). Following developments in understanding culture not as blocks of unifying meaning, but as heterogeneous and multiple partial connections of meaning, often overlapping and ambivalent (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Clifford and Marcus 1986), especially those bound by an avocational interest (Thompson and Troester 2002) traditional ethnographies seem less convincing and multi-site (Marcus 1995;1998) and virtual site approaches have emerged that are analysed in terms of the circulation, flow and process of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time-space (Hannerz 2003; Hage 2005). However, how to ethnographically “enter” cultures defined through this new concept of site is clearly problematic (Gille 2001) and the presentation of dualistic, objectivist models of the researcher/respondent relationship seem particularly inadequate to deal with the complexity of the research vista presented to the ethnographer. This paper seeks to address some of these crucial questions within the context of our own work as ethnographers in virtual worlds. To do this we present auto-ethnographic vignettes of our arrival narratives within these virtual worlds, discussing our first engagements with our research fields, Second Life and an enthusiasts’ internet forum, as consumer ethnographers. We draw on the concepts of performativity and belonging (Butler 1990; Bell 1999) as an alternative to traditional notions of “access” and “entrée” which, we suggest, reinforce the dualistic models of research engagement we seek to challenge. Using these concepts of performativity and belonging we analyse the different online contexts within which we engage, conceptualising them on a continuum between the perceived constraints of the performance of a hyper-real-self and the perceived freedom of the escape-from-self. We then use this conceptualisation to structure a discussion of the specific issues that we encountered when performing our own belonging as researchers within those fields, offering suggestions and insights to guide ethno/netnographers in their endeavours. We conclude that the multiple co-constructions of reality and virtuality we creatively and actively co-perform with our research subjects have many insights to offer consumer research in general, and to progress our understanding of our own real world research practice.
Are Guilt Appeals Good in Green Marketing? The Moderating Roles of Issue Proximity and Environmental Involvement

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

With increasing public concern about the environment and corporate social responsibility on environmental sustainable development, the 1990s was declared the decade of environmentalism (Drumwright 1994; Kangun, Carlson, and Grove 1991). Consequently, recent studies have begun to examine potential factors that might affect the effectiveness of green marketing campaigns and how consumers respond to green marketing initiatives (e.g., Chan 2000; Obermiller 1995; Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius 1995). One influential variable that has been identified to determine the success of green marketing is its advertising (e.g., Karna et al. 2001). Emotional appeals are widely used to “cut through the clutter” and arouse persuasive communication. Among them, guilt appeals are identified as popular, especially in the contexts related to public service announcement.

This article contributes to this evolving stream of research by applying guilt appeals in green marketing campaigns to demonstrate that guilt appeals are not equally persuasive in all conditions, and can be influenced by the impacts of issue proximity and environmental involvement. Reusable chopsticks were chosen as the test product. An experiment with 2 (advertising appeal: guilt appeal vs. positive appeal) × 2 (issue proximity: low vs. high) × 2 (environmental involvement: low vs. high) factorial design was conducted. The first two factors were manipulated and the final one was measured. Therefore, four experimental versions were produced. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions above. After successful manipulation checks, a series of analysis of variance were conducted to examine proposed hypotheses.

The results indicate that focusing on the comparison between guilt and positive appeals may be overly simplistic. Indeed, the findings presented here establish that the influence of guilt appeals on consumer response is relatively complex and contingent on issue proximity and environmental involvement. Three observations are noteworthy.

First, in terms of the relative effects of issue proximity, this study shows systematic effects on consumer responses by comparing low and high issue proximity. High proximity made a difference in advertising effectiveness; a local issue, as opposed to a foreign issue in a less familiar region, yielded more favorable evaluation and higher behavioral intention. This perspective is conceptually consistent with social impact theory and signaling theory. The reason could lie in the notion that the local community is more salient to consumers—regardless of the advertising appeal. No differences are found between a guilt and positive appeal in advertising effectiveness of high-proximity issue. This idea does not suggest, however, firms only add local issues and neglect global or foreign issues because advertising appeal may not be a concern in their advertising campaign when presenting a local issue. When an issue is perceived as less proximal, the tactic of guilt appeal allows a firm to enhance consumers’ attitudes toward the product and purchase intention.

Second, that effects of advertising appeal are contingent on environmental involvement is noteworthy. This construct delineates the boundary conditions for the guilt appeals on persuasion. A guilt appeal works for those with low environmental involvement.

Third, the effectiveness of guilt and positive appeals depends on issue proximity and environmental involvement simultaneously. Instead of blindly applying any type of advertising appeal, advertisers should pay particular attention to perceived proximity of the environmental issue and consumers’ individual differences in environmental involvement. When facing individuals with low environmental involvement, the guilt appeal performed better than the positive appeal in promoting an issue with high proximity. Thus, when dealing with a problem people regard as relatively important or about which they are self-relevant, the impact of guilt appeal may offer advantages. As Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius (1995) note that consumers pay attention to external cues such as how an ad is framed when they do not possess strong beliefs about the environment. Alternatively, when concern for the issue is low (low issue proximity), no differences of advertising effectiveness between a guilt and positive appeal can be found. Because of weak impetus to process the message and less well-developed green product schema, the less involved consumers may not be able to identify the differences between the two appeals. When facing highly involved consumers, the guilt appeal was more persuasive than the positive appeal in promoting a less proximal issue. However, this observation appears to be reversed when the ad was presented to less involved consumers. The guilt appeal may offer a redundant warning, or worse, cause a boomerang effect. Consistent with prior work on involvement and skepticism about advertisers’ environmental claims, environmentally involved individuals may engage in more effortful and elaborative processing and discount the received information.

In such cases, the positive appeal is preferable. The implication is that advertisers must be careful not to arouse guilt feelings through the ads. If such care is not taken, a backlash may occur whereby the consumers develop negative attitudes toward the promoted product. In any event, advertisers are advised to adopt a situational perspective by taking the possible interaction effect among advertising appeal, issue proximity, and environmental involvement.

Findings from this investigation are informative both theoretically and pragmatically. This study contributes to the academic literature and industry by increasing our understanding of guilt appeals in a green marketing context by proposing issue proximity and environmental involvement as factors that moderate the relationships between guilt appeal and consumer responses toward the promoted product. The findings underscore the importance for green marketers to learn more about whether guilt appeals work, and in turn describe how practitioners can avoid negatively toward guilt appeals. The present research should serve a starting point for entry into this under-researched area.
REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT
This research examines the psychological avenues in processing extrinsic numerical cues and its verbal counterpart in the context of product series evaluation, which is affected by the mere choice of product labels on a newer generation with the membership being indexed either numerically (e.g., [Brand Name] Plus) or verbally (e.g., [Brand Name] Plus). Specifically, it is predicted that numerical labels are being judged more favorably when the innovations involve objective improvement over the older generation, such as in physical attributes. In contrast, equivalent descriptive (verbal) labels are being judged more favorably when the innovations require subjective interpretations through (anticipated) experiences, such as in cosmetic facelifts. Also, it is predicted that consumers are unaware of using label information for judgment. A theoretical model is proposed to account for this “label effect” which posits that numerical labels activate an expectancy mode to unconsciously search outward for information compatible with the expected product specification, while equivalent descriptive labels activate a self-fit mode to unconsciously search inward for incidental goals congruent with the anticipated product experience. The present research extends previous research on nonconscious conceptual consumption and number processing, and also offers insights on comparative judgment.

The number processing, conceptual consumption, and nonconscious goal literatures provide the following insights for this present research. First, numerical labels are easier to compare against each other due to the fact that numbers are inherently ordinal. In the product series paradigm, numerical labels facilitate direct specification comparison across product generations, where the gains in utility (or, innovations) are distributed along declarative (utilitarian) dimensions. However, descriptive/verbal labels are easier to trigger subjective interpretation of an anticipated product experience due to the fact that adjective quantifiers are inherently descriptive. In the product series paradigm, descriptive labels help appreciate the gains in utility (or, innovations) that are distributed along experiential (hedonic) dimensions. This distinction in innovation judgment due to labels shall become blurred when the numerical or descriptive information in the labels becomes less diagnostic. (H1a: Consumers judge a product belonging to a product series with numerical labels more favorably when the judgment is on the utilitarian dimensions. They judge descriptive labels more favorably when the judgment is on the hedonic dimensions; H1b: The judgment shall converge once the numerical or descriptive information in the labels becomes less diagnostic.)

Second, a natural conjecture from the above hypotheses is that the label effect shall be moderated by the type of product messages available to consumers. To be specific, declarative product messages that meet expectations of certain product specification improvement shall be more appreciated when paired with numerical labels. On the flip side, experiential product messages that meet an incidental goal orientation shall be more appreciated when paired with descriptive labels. (H2: Consumers prefer a product belonging to a product series with numerical labels when they observe declarative product information. They prefer descriptive labels when observing experiential product information.)

Third, since labels are basically extrinsic cues, consumers may be unaware of this information in forming judgment. They can be clueless if they ever use this information or how to use such information. In the product series paradigm, they can be unaware of the changes in expectancy (in the case of numerical labels) or feeling right (in the case of descriptive labels) that is attributable to labels. (H3: Consumers engage in a nonconscious processing of certain extrinsic cues, particularly product series labels.)

And forth, this present research aims to pin down the psychological factors that are likely to influence this label effect. Based on previous findings on expectancy and regulatory fit (e.g., Shiv et al. 2005; Asvem and Higgins 2006), expectancy strength and incidental goal priming are two promising candidates for this purpose and I will further elaborate on these in the respective experiments. (H4: Consumers prefer a product belonging to a product series with numerical labels when they are in a high expectancy strength condition; Expectancy strength has no effect on descriptive labels; H5: Consumers prefer a product belonging to a product series with descriptive labels when they are primed with a prestige orientation. They prefer numerical labels when primed with a thrift orientation.)

Four studies with stimuli from both physical and information goods tested and confirmed the above hypotheses, concluding that consumers employ distinct psychological avenues to process numerical and verbal/descriptive extrinsic cues in comparative judgment tasks. And such processes are out of consumer conscience. In particular, the judgment on the product series is gated by product labels—they generate more favorable utilitarian judgment with numerical labels and more favorable hedonic judgment with descriptive labels (Study 1). The label-induced product series preference is moderated by the information that highlights inter-product relations—numerical labels lead to higher preference when paired with declarative messages that specify the expected product specification; descriptive labels lead to higher preference when paired with experiential messages that portray the anticipated product experience (Study 2). Numerical extrinsic cues activate a distinct psychological avenue of expectancy. The resultant effect excels when the specification-induced expectation is stronger (Study 3). In contrast, descriptive extrinsic cues activate a distinct psychological avenue of regulatory fit. The resultant effect excels when consumers have an incidental goal to interpret a subjective experience (Study 4).

Consumers are oblivious of the activation of the nonconscious process—they cannot identify the label as a source of the process (Study 2). Subsequently, consumers are oblivious of the process itself—they cannot tell that either the expectation on the specification-induced outcome when they are in the expectancy mode (Study 3) or the incidental goal when they are in the fit mode (Study 4) is the actual force behind this nonconscious process.
Contrast and Assimilation in Response to Associative Priming: 
The Case of Cross-Category Brand Alliances
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Recent years have witnessed a significant increase in various forms of inter-firm cooperation (e.g., joint ventures, R&D agreements, advertising brand alliances), through which firms pool resources to pursue specific market opportunities. Advertising brand alliances are appealing to firms because they lead to competitive advantages that otherwise would be beyond a company’s reach, such as access to new markets and increased demand through leveraging the strengths of two brands (Cooke and Ryan 2000; Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven 1996; Hagedoorn 1993). Little is known about the effect of these alliances on perceptions of brand attributes, or about the inferences made by individuals when primed with these associations. This work focuses on the inference processes used by individuals when they are primed with associations of brands with different memory schemas, belonging to different product categories. Examples of such alliances are between Hewlett Packard and Starbucks, Tide and Oshkosh, Whirlpool and Day Runner, Nike, and iPod.

Although research in the area of brand extensions and comparative advertising has previously investigated different situations for consumer inference, the present work focuses on the inferences that take place when individuals are exposed to an associative prime featuring different brands, with different memory associations (unlike brand extension research), belonging to different product categories (unlike comparative advertising). Also, the present research focuses on the attribute inferences that occur when individuals are primed with an association of brands in the absence of an explicit comparative claim.

Context plays an important role in a variety of consumer judgments. Context effects have been examined in the areas of consumer choice (Huber, Payne, and Puto 1982; Huber and Puto 1983; Simonson and Tversky 1992), comparative advertising (Manning et al. 2001; Rose et al. 1993), product judgment (Janiszewski, Silk, and Cooke 2003), and product assortment (Chernev 2003).

Two types of context effects on people’s judgment of a stimulus have been reliably demonstrated in the marketing and social sciences literature: assimilation and contrast. Assimilation is known to occur when judgments of a stimulus are displaced toward a contextual stimulus and refers to a positive relation between the value assigned to the contextual stimulus and the value attributed to the target. On the other hand, contrast occurs when judgments of a stimulus are displaced away from the contextual stimulus, and refers to a negative relation between the values assigned to the contextual stimulus and the target.

Our research shows that each brand partner in a cross-category brand alliance creates a context that is used as an anchor for judgments of the other brand attributes, and we provide evidence that the inference processes that occur are moderated by individual differences in information processing strategy, associated with differences in need for cognition (NFC). As such, allied brand attributes may produce assimilative anchor effects that move perceptions toward the ally’s attribute value, or the anchors may serve as standards of comparison that produce contrast and move perceptions away from the ally’s attribute value (Wedell, Hicklin, and Smarandescu 2007).

Study 1 was a 2 (alliance present/absent) x 2 (high/low NFC, based on a median split) between-subjects design, and examined how priming a brand association influences judgments of non-alignable brand attributes. We found that low and high NFC individuals adopt different inference making strategies when they are primed with a brand alliance. The effects are driven by the more extreme, and thus salient, user ratings provided for the contextual brand. Data indicate that low NFC individuals used the non-alignable information provided about the contextual brand as an anchor for their judgments of the target brand attributes. On the other hand, high NFC individuals partialed out the non-alignable information given about the contextual brand from their judgment of the target brand on a salient attribute and adjusted their evaluations of this target attribute in a direction opposite to the contextual brand. This finding is consistent with the direction of the effects predicted by Martin’s (1986) set/ reset model.

Study 2 was a 3 (no alliance control/low load alliance/high load alliance) x 2 (high/low NFC, based on a median split) between-subjects experimental design, and investigated whether the effects of a brand alliance prime on perceptions of a target non-alignable attribute are moderated by individuals’ ability (manipulated by cognitive load) and processing motivation (measured by NFC) to process the alliance information. We found that individuals’ responses to cross-category brand alliances are sensitive to situational and individual difference factors. Low NFC individuals assimilated their judgments in the direction of the contextual brand irrespective of cognitive load. This result is in line with Martin, Seta, and Crelia (1990) and provides support that assimilation is the default judgment for low NFC. Responses of high NFC individuals were influenced by the amount of cognitive resources they had available at brand alliance encoding. In conditions of limited cognitive ability, high NFC individuals formed unbiased judgments that were not affected by the contextual partner; however when they had the ability to correct their initial judgment for the perceived bias introduced by presence of the alliance partner they over-adjusted their judgment of the target attribute in a direction opposite to the context of the brand ally, as proposed by the flexible correction model (Wegener and Petty 1993). One key aspect of the flexible correction model is that it assumes that corrections are aimed at removing perceived rather than actual bias. Hence, high NFC individuals made unbiased judgments under high load, but corrected their judgments for the perceived bias introduced by the contextual brand when they had extra cognitive resources.

Finally, results of study 2 suggest that given enough cognitive resources, high NFC individuals engage in correction at the stage of brand alliance encoding, through a memory updating mechanism and not at the judgment stage. This provides evidence that context effects observed in brand alliances are due to background context and not to the effect of the recent context as observed in classic priming studies.

REFERENCES


One Without the Other: The Effects of Priming Individual and Collective Mindsets on Consumer Choice and Valuation

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

What is peanut butter without jelly or bacon and lettuce without tomato? What would Ken be without Barbie? What is a belt without its buckle or a shirt without pants? In most consumer settings, products and services can exist not only as independent items but also as items sharing some relationship with other items whether that relationship is obvious or non-obvious. Thus, while a shirt may simply be just a shirt, most clothing retailers take great care in presenting that shirt in the context of an outfit, complete with a matching tie and pants, to emphasize the relationships among these items with the expectation that consumers will purchase more than just the shirt. It may even be possible that consumers feel a sense of incompleteness if they only purchase one item from a perceived set of related products, perhaps accounting for the phenomenon in which consumers often go into a store with the intent to purchase only one item and yet emerge from the store with many more products than they had planned to purchase, unable to bear the thought of consuming one item without the others.

From a managerial perspective, examples of marketing and selling tactics that rely on perceptions of relationships among products are abundant. Take, for example, the practices of up-selling and cross-selling. Up-selling refers to instances in which consumers purchase an item and salespeople then attempt to sell additional features or add-ons for that same product, such as warranties, to increase the value of that purchase. Cross-selling refers to situations in which consumers purchase a product and salespeople try to sell complementary or related goods. Other common practices relying on understanding of relationships among products include product bundling and related product recommendations, such as Amazon.com’s “As someone who recently purchased Product X, you might also be interested in Product Y” feature.

Certainly, marketing tactics such as these will not sway every consumer. In our previous shirt example, some consumers intent on purchasing a shirt and only a shirt may likely buy just the shirt, regardless of how well the accompanying tie accents the color of the shirt or the matching pants. Salespeople should take great care in presenting their products as standalone items with the expectation that consumers will purchase more than just the items. What could explain the differences in consumer susceptibility to the influence of relationships among products and its effect on purchase behavior?

One potential explanation worth exploring involves differences among consumers with respect to viewing the world discretely and isolated from relationships or viewing the world contextually and via associations or relationships. To explore this idea, we integrated related research in the domains of self-construal and analytic and holistic processing via a situated cognition framework specifically with respect to self-construal and processing style without exploring the notion of how priming activates separating and contrasting procedures and connecting and integrating procedures on a broader level. In considering these broader implications of priming, we provide insights into the underlying cognitive processes producing the results beyond interpersonal influence, as in self-construal, and focal or contextual emphasis, as in analytic versus holistic processing. Furthermore, given that the previous research has primarily focused on the influence of interpersonal relationships instead of inter-product relationships, the shifting of attention to both the relationships among products and the use of priming that does not involve the notion of the personal self so directly moves theory in this area into a domain of products and services and away from the notion of self and other.

From a practical perspective, this article suggests several managerial implications. First, the finding that subtle priming of individual- and collective-mindsets can influence consumer decision-making, in general, suggests that marketing managers should be mindful of the content of advertisements and in-store, point-of-purchase displays. Although consumers may not actively attend to in-store displays, one can easily imagine a situation in which the wording or content of an in-store display can influence consumer decision-making as shown in this article. Second, the finding that the presentation of products either in explicit, related groupings or in random, less-obvious groupings can yield different results with respect to initial selection has interesting implications for product presentation. Whether in a retail setting or online, marketing managers should take great care in presenting their products as standalone products or as products that fit within a context of other products. Third, common marketing tactics that rely on relationships among products and services, like product bundling, cross-selling, and up-selling, could be made more efficient as a result of this study’s findings. In fact, salespeople may need only to remind consumers about a relationship among products to elicit results comparable to those found in this paper.

Thus, whether it be the marriage of peanut butter and jelly, the combined goodness of marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers, or the inseparability of shampoo and conditioner, some product relationships are long-standing and easy for consumers to bring to mind. In addition, new associations like those presented in outfits on mannequins at a clothing store, strategic in-store place-
ment of products, point-of-purchase displays, and the infamous, “You know what would go well with that...,” salesperson pitch suggest that relationship perceptions can be influenced in the moment and yet could be just as influential on consumer choice. The idea that consumer preferences regarding relationships can influence consumers in such a subtle manner is fascinating as is the discovery that this influence has downstream effects on consumers’ purchasing behaviors.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Gift exchanges are complex transactions with relational and psychological implications for both giver and recipient. Givers strive to meet the needs and desires of the recipient with a gift that is both appealing and meaningful. When choosing a gift, the giver has three distinct goals: the item must 1) satisfy the recipient, 2) reflect the giver’s preferences and identity and 3) reflect the relational intimacy between giver and recipient. The giver’s task is complicated by the asymmetry of preference information between giver and recipient. Retailers have partnered to resolve this asymmetry in the form of gift registries, which provide perfect information about a recipient’s preferences and preferred gifts. However, while a registry reconciles the information asymmetry, it also constrains the giver from freely choosing.

We look at the circumstances in which givers are willing (vs. resistant) to choose from a registry. Our main hypothesis is that when choosing for a close (vs. distant) friend, the giver will discount the recipient’s explicit preferences in favor of a gift that signals the giver’s identity or the relationship between them. Further, we suggest that givers are more likely to make a free choice (vs. registry choice) for a close (vs. distant) friend, resulting in an increased likelihood of choosing a less desirable gift. Three studies support this perspective.

In Study 1, staff university members chose a gift for someone they knew in a professional setting and had rated on social closeness. Participants were presented with three lamps which had been pre-tested by a group similar to themselves. Two were equally liked and the third was significantly less liked than the others. Participants were told that the recipient had rated each of the three lamps either “good” or “excellent.” The lamp liked the least by the givers was rated “excellent” by the recipient and the other two lamps (pre-tested as ‘more liked’) were rated “good” by the recipient. Thus, the recipient preferred one lamp and the givers preferred the other two. Givers selected a lamp to give as a gift to the recipient.

As predicted, givers indicating a closer relationship with the recipient were more likely to opt for one of their own preferred lamps (rated “less preferred” by the recipient). Thus, we see evidence that givers are more likely to select a freely chosen gift and risk choosing something less liked when buying for a close friend.

In Study 2, we examine givers’ specific strategies when choosing a gift for a close (vs. distant) friend. We primed givers with altruism (vs. no prime) as our presumption is that givers choosing for a close friend are motivated to choose something that will maximize the recipient’s happiness. In order to manipulate social closeness between giver and recipient, close givers were told personal information (e.g., the recipient has “classic tastes”) and distant givers were given no taste information about the recipient.

The giver was then faced with three choices of lamps representing different aesthetic styles: classic, modern and plain. Pretests confirm that the modern lamp is the most preferred by givers, however, the plain lamp is designated by the recipient to be on the registry.

Thus, in this study setup, participants’ preferences and recipients’ expressed desires conflict, as givers know the recipient’s registry choice but personally prefer the modern lamp. An added layer of complexity exists in close-friend conditions: the recipient has indicated the control lamp on the registry but the giver is aware that the recipient’s tastes match the classic lamp. Thus, close givers perceive the wish list to be misaligned with the recipient’s tastes. Conversely, distant friend are not aware of the recipient’s tastes.

The data reveal that distant givers display no effect of the altruistic prime. In both prime and no-prime conditions these givers’ dominant strategy is to choose the registry lamp and secondarily, the modern lamp, which matches their own preferences. In close-friend conditions, the results are strikingly different. Givers in the no-prime condition again dominantly choose the registry gift. However, in the altruistic-prime condition, givers are equally likely to choose the registry lamp as the classic lamp.

It appears that when givers are focused on the goal of meeting recipients’ needs (in altruistic conditions), they are more likely to achieve it when choosing for distant (vs. close) friends. Further, when choosing altruistically for close friends, givers appear to use their knowledge of the recipient to guide the choice rather than the recipient’s explicit preferences.

In Study 3, we use a procedure similar to Study 2, to investigate givers’ objectives in making a free-choice gift. In a 2 (Relationship Signaling: Signaling vs. Non-Signaling) x 3 (Motivation Embodied by Gift: Explicit Recipient Preferences, Giver’s Preferences, Relationship Intimacy) design, participants are told to imagine that they were exchanging gifts with friends who live far away using a “Secret Santa” paradigm. Importantly, participants are informed that after the gifts are given, their identity will be revealed (vs. not revealed) to the recipient, to remind the giver that s/he will (vs. not) receive attribution from the recipient for having chosen a well-liked gift. All participants are also told that the recipient has “classic tastes” (see Study 2) and are faced with the same gift choices of lamps as described in Study 2.

The data reveal that givers make different choices when they receive (vs. do not receive) attribution from the recipient for the gift chosen: in the Relationship Signaling condition, givers were equally likely to choose from the registry as to choose the classic lamp, while in the Non-Relationship-Signaling condition, the registry choice was dominant. These results confirm that givers diverge from the registry to signal relational closeness rather than to match the recipient’s inferred preferences to the gift.

These studies provide some insight into the paradox of gift-giving that well-intentioned givers are more likely to choose inappropriately for the people who matter to them most (i.e., close friends), as their own needs to express themselves and the relationship supersede their goals of pleasing the recipient.
Unwrapping the Contribution of Gift Wrapping to the Overall Value of a Gift

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the relationship between gift wrapping and the overall value of a gift. There are four dimensions to gift value: economic, functional, social and expressive values. It was found that gift wrapping can contribute to all dimensions. However, gift wrapping contributes more to the social and expressive values than the economic or functional values. The ability of gift wrapping to create messages and symbolic meaning strengthens the social and expressive value associated with a gift. Gift wrapping’s contribution to gift value illustrates its importance to the creation and exchange of a gift.
Grief Goods: Material Possessions and Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The death of a significant other can be one of the most traumatic and cataclysmic events for a consumer, shattering all sense of a meaningful order to life and the world. His or her world is literally torn asunder. Faced with the prospect of such “anomic implosion” (Berger 1967), the terror of life without order, bereaved people are compelled to make sense of a situation that threatens loss of control, meaningfulness, and loss of personal identity (Neimeyer 2001).

A growing number of consumer researchers have begun to study the impact of both dying and its aftermath on consumer behaviour. Their interests have ranged from the effects of impending death on consumers to the daunting and harrowing task for the survivors as they begin life anew without those who were dear to them. Death of a loved one inaugurates a surreal, emotionally draining microclimate. In the immediate and medium-term phases of bereavement both decision-making and psychological resources are severely impaired or depleted (Gentry et al. 1995a). Hand in hand with this functional impairment comes a powerful urge to restore meaning and sense in the face of what is perceived to be a meaningless and senseless loss (Neimeyer 2001). The emergence of interest among consumer researchers in death and dying comes at a time when a major debate is taking place among thanatologists regarding the purpose and process of grieving. The traditional Freudian model of grief that advocates withdrawal and detachment from the deceased is being increasingly problematised in favour of an approach that advocates continuing bonds with them.

In recent years the publishing industry has witnessed a burgeoning in “pathographies” or personal accounts of dying or bereavement. Their popularity suggests that contemporary consumers may not be as averse to confronting their impending mortality as is sometimes claimed. The value of popular literature as a source of insight into consumption is being recognised increasingly (Belk 1986; 1987; Holbrook 1991; Brown 2005). Such works “provide new paths to thick description. They refresh the parts that other research procedures cannot reach” (Brown 2005, p.232) however their potential to shed light on the behaviour of bereaved consumers remains untapped.

The focus of this paper is Joan Didion’s best-selling book The Year of Magical Thinking (2006), a particularly powerful account of the death of her husband John and her life without him over the following twelve months. It provides a forensic introspection of her emotional and cognitive journey through this first year of widowhood. The title’s reference to “magical thinking” captures how bereaved people attempt to function in a distressing, disorienting microclimate and struggle to create a meaningful narrative of both death itself and the loss that follows. Indeed, a critical part of meaning-making after bereavement is the construction of a ‘durable biography’ of the departed. The fact that Didion was already an established popular author and that this book was a best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic lends support to the choice of The Year of Magical Thinking for such an undertaking.

Through a close reading of Didion’s story we explore the array of roles and functions possessions can play as consumers negotiate the process of grieving for a loved one as well as their ongoing attempts at meaning reconstruction (Neimeyer 2001). Our analysis is grounded in a strand of consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005) that focuses on how consumers use goods and services as symbolic resources to negotiate and give meaning to their identities and relationships. We aim to use this lens to further understanding of the relationship between material culture and bereavement (Hallam and Hockey 2001) and, in so doing, to explore the nexus between consumer behaviour and the emerging continuing bonds approach to grieving (Klass et al. 1996; Walter 1999; Mitchell 2007)

Themes emerging from our analysis include retrospective perceptions of purchases by the deceased as portents, the role of products as facilitators/prohibitors of return, the power of possessions and places to serve as talismans of time-reversal, the relationship between goods and continuing bonds, the role of marketing stimuli as pitfalls during the grieving process, and the privileging of certain possessions in the post-mortem period.
Exploring the Emotive Nature of Self-Fashioning Practice within Competitive Female Relations
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ABSTRACT
For many women, fashioning their bodies in specific ways can be a source of considerable gratification, but can also cultivate great angst and self-deprecation. Competitive psycho-social dynamics within female relations influence each woman’s development of emotional tendencies and conceptions of moral and social (self) worth. In turn, this shapes their fashion consumption practices. Applying greater emotional depth to the theories of Bourdieu, significant connections are established between the overtly emotive nature of self-fashioning and the context of competitive relations. Within the psycho-affective landscape of fashion consumption class-based emotions are seen to hinder, fuel, compromise, or enhance experiences of female consumer subjectivity.
The Ironic Effects of Credit Card Balances and Credit Limits on Consumer Spending
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Much of the previous research on credit card usage has focused on the difference between credit cards and other forms of payments on consumer spending. A common finding from this research is that the use of credit cards leads to more spending compared to paying in cash or by check (Hirschman 1979; Prelec and Loewenstein 1998; Raghubir and Srivastava 2008; Soman 2001). Building off of these findings, this research demonstrates that simply carrying a balance on a credit card can increase spending by reducing consumers’ focus on avoiding credit card debt.

Several studies have documented a tendency by individuals to abandon a behavioral goal after an initial failure (Polivy and Herman 1985; Cochran and Tesser 1996). The basic idea is that the violation of a goal is often accompanied by a sense that the goal is lost, which lowers subsequent commitment to the goal. This “what the hell” effect is most likely to occur for behaviors that a person is trying to decrease or eliminate entirely (Cochran and Tesser 1996). Since incurring credit card debt is an undesirable activity that consumers would like to avoid (Prelec and Loewenstein 1998), carrying a credit card balance should lead them to abandon the goal and increase spending. However, because those with high self-control are the ones most likely to avoid behaviors that will increase spending (Raghubir and Srivastava 2009), carrying a balance should have the strongest effect on spending for people who are high in self-control.

Recent research suggests that the proportional impact of consumption, past or present, depends on one’s overall resources (Ando and Modigliani 1962; Morewedge et al. 2007). In the context of credit card balances, this suggests that the perceived failure from incurring a credit card balance may depend less on the actual value of the balance than on the proportional impact of the balance to the resources that are available on the credit card (i.e., the available credit limit). This also suggests that the subjective pain of an outstanding balance can be lowered by increasing the credit limit on the credit card, while holding the value of the balance constant. Doing this should have two effects on consumer behavior. First, by reducing the sense of failure from incurring the balance, it should increase consumers’ commitment to avoiding future credit card debt and reduce spending. Second, by reducing the subjective pain of the balance, it should reduce consumers’ desire to eliminate the balance from their credit card.

Thus, we propose that credit card balances can increase spending for people who are high in self-control and that this effect should be mitigated by increasing the credit card limit while holding the balance constant. However, doing so should also reduce consumers’ desire to pay off the balance at the end of the month.

These predictions were tested in five studies. Studies 1a and 1b used a similar design. First, participants were asked to complete a measure of self-control. In a separate session, conducted weeks later, they choose between two products to purchase in the same category (two versions of iPhones in study 1a and two brands of eBooks in study 1b) that differed on price. Participants were instructed that they had or did not have a $500 balance on their credit card. As expected, participants that were high in self-control were more likely to select the higher priced product when they had a balance compared to when they did not have a balance. The balance did not lead to any difference in preference for people who were low in self-control.

Study 2 tested our prediction that the effect of credit card balances on spending can be mitigated by increasing the credit limit using sunglasses as the product category. All respondents were instructed that they carried a $500 balance. Approximately half were instructed that the credit card had a $1,500 credit limit. The remaining subjects were instructed that their limit was $10,500. As expected, spending was lower for participants with high self-control when they carried the balance on a high credit limit card; they were also less likely to pay off the balance at the end of the month. No differences were observed for those with low self-control.

Study 3 was conducted to demonstrate that debt avoidance underlies the findings in the previous study. The design was similar to study 2, except instead of making a choice, respondents were asked to indicate how focused they would be on incurring additional credit card debt. As expected, when participants carried a balance on a high limit card, those with high self-control were more focused on avoiding debt compared to when it was on a low limit card. Moreover, a mediation analysis demonstrated that debt avoidance mediates the effect of increasing the credit limit on the likelihood of making an unnecessary purchase.

Study 4 was conducted to rule out different inferences, from having different credit limits, as an alternative explanation (Soman and Cheema 2002). We provided respondents with two credit cards (a high limit card and a low limit card), but kept the total available credit and the outstanding balance between the two cards the same; we only manipulated which card carried the balance. The results replicated the findings of the second study.

This work contributes to our understanding of the psychology behind credit card spending. Particularly in this era of economic crisis and pending credit card regulation changes, it is important to better understand the factors that influence unnecessary credit spending. Findings from the body of literature in this domain are often integrated into policy guidelines to aid and educate consumers to help them spend wisely and avoid debt. Future research that informs industry or regulatory guidance is encouraged.
The Cost of Convenience: How Credit Cards Weaken Impulse Control and Increase Unhealthy Food Purchases
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The current research investigates the influence of mode of payment on the healthiness of food purchased and explores the underlying mechanism. Specifically, it asks whether deciding to pay by credit card (cash) prompts a consumer to buy less (more) healthy but more (less) impulsive items? Given the convenience and ubiquity of paying by credit cards, this research question has clear implications for consumer welfare, store managers, and public policy administrators.

With obesity reaching epidemic proportions (e.g., Ogden et al., 2006), an increasing number of consumer behavior researchers have started investigating this topic from several perspectives (e.g., influence of internal factors such as lay beliefs, affective states, depletion of cognitive resources; impact of situational factors such as label information, assortment variety). The present research contributes to the self-regulation literature (e.g., Raghunathan, Walker-Naylor, and Hoyer 2009; Ramanathan and Menon 2006; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999; Vohs and Heatherton 2000; Wansink and Chandon 2007) by showing through two lab experiments and analyses of actual choice behavior of 1000 households in a field study that credit cards increase choice of unhealthy food items.

Prior research has extensively documented the spending facilitation effect of credit cards by which consumers (Feinberg 1986; McCall and Belmont 1996) spend more money when paying by credit cards versus cash and other modes of payment. Our second contribution is to this literature by showing that credit cards do not indiscriminately increase spending; instead, they selectively increase spending on less expensive unhealthy products but not on healthy and more expensive products.

Our proposition that mode of payments can influence impulse control is based on two key tenets. First, we assume that impulsive responses evoked by unhealthy (vs. healthy) products are characterized by a response conflict between a spontaneously elicited affective response and the responses based on more deliberative appraisals of utilitarian product features and the pain of payment (Baumeister 2002; Lowenstein 1996; Ramanathan and Menon 2006; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). Regulating the spontaneously activated affective response requires cognitive control. Second, we assume that the mode of payment can influence this cognitive control process. Specifically, we posit that paying by cash increases the preparedness of the control processes and thus is able to better resist the tremendous urge to rapidly respond to the BUY decision evoked by unhealthy, impulsive (vs. healthy, utilitarian) food products. In contrast, credit cards reduce the preparedness of the control processes and thus impede impulse control. The above postulations are based on the theoretical underpinnings of the cognitive orientations in self-regulation (Gollwitzer and Sheeran 2009) and cognitive control theory (e.g., Dewitt, Bruyneel and Geyskens 2009) which suggest that cognitive control is influenced by the degree of preparedness to control the impulse evoked by unhealthy products.

We report three studies, two lab experiments and a field study, to test the hypothesis about the influence of payment mode on purchase of unhealthy food products and the underlying mechanisms. Study 1 (n=120) examined whether participants assigned to the credit card vs. cash payment condition were more likely to buy unhealthy, impulsive food items. More importantly, to test the proposed account we examined whether using credit cards strengthened the effect of self-reported chronic impulsivity and weakened the effect of diet control intentions on purchase decisions. We also analyzed response times for purchase decisions to investigate whether chronic impulsivity elicited faster responses from participants, and whether paying by cash helped them to slow down their impulsive responses. Findings revealed that chronically impulsive participants were more likely to buy (β=.04, p=.05) and spend more on unhealthy, impulsive products when paying by credit cards (vs. cash) (please refer to Figure 1). Moreover, the diet control exercised by impulsive consumers was stronger when paying by cash (vs. credit cards) (β=.16, p=.01). In addition, when the mode of payment was cash, diet control intention was a significant predictor of unhealthy purchases (β=-.13, p<.01) but chronic impulsivity was not (β=.02; ns) and the opposite was true under the credit card mode of payment (β=.05; p<.01 for chronic impulsivity; and β=.05; ns for diet control intentions). Finally, as expected, impulsive (vs. prudent) consumers took less time to make buying decisions (M_high-impulsive=777 milliseconds vs. M_low-impulsive=822 milliseconds; F(1, 118)=4.35, p=.042).

We ran study 2 to address an important limitation of study 1–impulsivity was measured as an individual difference variable. It is likely that this scale might have captured factors other than impulsivity (e.g., involvement) which might have influenced our result. To rule out the role of such confounding factors, in study 2 we manipulated impulsivity. We specifically tested the hypotheses that the shopping basket will have a larger proportion of unhealthy food items when participants pay by credit card vs. cash and that mode of payment will have a larger influence on purchases of unhealthy, impulsive food but not on purchases of healthy, utilitarian food items.

To test these hypotheses, we presented participants with 10 utilitarian and 10 impulsive products and manipulated the mode of payment.

Findings from study 2 supported both our hypotheses. There were more unhealthy items in the cart when the mode of payment was credit card (MCreditCard=$13.93) than when the mode of payment was cash (MCash=$9.54; F(1, 147)=6.62, p=.01). However, the mode of payment did not affect the number of utilitarian items in the cart, MCreditCard=3.94 vs. MCash=3.85, F<1. Similarly, subjects spent more on unhealthy items when the mode of payment was credit card vs. cash, MCreditCard=$13.93 vs. MCash=$9.54; F(1, 147)=7.08, p<.01. In contrast, the mode of payment did not affect the amount spent on number of utilitarian products in the cart, MCreditCard=17.55 vs. MCash=17.24; F<1. Finally, consistent with our conceptualization, participants took less time to respond to unhealthy, impulsive (vs. healthy, utilitarian) food products (Minulsive=605 milliseconds vs. Mutilitarian=642 milliseconds; F(1, 148)=7.017, p<.01). These results suggest that the results observed in the previous study using measures of individual differences in impulsivity are reliable.

Although the two experiments demonstrate the internal validity of the impulse facilitation effect of credit cards, the external validity of this effect remains an unaddressed question. The previous two studies used students and the purchases were hypothetical. Study 3 examines whether mode of payment influences purchase of unhealthy food in real shopping situations. In this study we analyze scanner panel data from a large retailer that operates 120 stores.
and serves more than two million customers in the Northeastern region of USA. The data has information about every transaction involving every single item that the chain sells including data about price, promotion, margin and mode of payment for each transaction. We used a random sample of 1000 highly loyal single member households who primarily purchase from the chain’s stores for our analysis and examined the purchases in 100 major food categories which account for 73% of the total basket size of consumers in our sample. The time period of our analysis was six months (Jan to June) in 2003 (latest period for which mode of payment information is available). Results of regression analyses, after controlling for several shopping and demographic variables, again confirmed our basic effect that consumers using credit cards are more likely to purchase impulsive and unhealthy products.
Affective Misforecasting and Consumption Behavior: The Influence of Restrained Eating and Emotional Intelligence
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Decisions in which emotions are central to outcomes can be found in abundance around us. Importantly, a number of consumption situations involve affective forecasting, that is, consumers’ predictions of how they are likely to feel after consumption. However, consumers do not always accurately forecast their future affective states. Consequently, an affective misforecasting (AMF) gap arises between forecasted and experienced feelings.

Importantly, anticipated consumer emotions and AMF has been gaining increased attention in marketing. Previous research (Patrick, MacInnis, and Park 2007) has shown that AMF is a significant predictor of customer satisfaction even when product attributes, expectancy-disconfirmation, and experienced affect are accounted for. However, little is known regarding how AMF influences actual consumption behavior.

This paper examines behavioral consequences of AMF in a food-related situation. Because AMF can be conceptualized as a meta-emotion, positive if the AMF gap is positive (better-than-forecasted affect is experienced) and negative if the AMF gap is negative (worse-than-forecasted affect is experienced), we expected that in general, food which creates better-than-forecasted feelings will be more appealing and thus consumed more, while food which creates worse-than-forecasted feelings will be less appealing and consumed less.

We also examined the negative consequences of AMF. Marketers often influence consumers to forecast future feelings, often suggesting unreasonable expectations, and thus contribute to the AMF experienced by consumers when their expectations are not realized. One group of potentially vulnerable consumers is restrained eaters (dieters). Dietary restraint is an individual characteristic that describes a level of a person’s attempt to control food intake (high attempts to control = restrained eaters). When such self-control fails, people who try to avoid overeating (restrained eaters), ironically, resort to exactly the action which was being avoided. The pattern of self-restraint and disinhibition of overeating repeats and often puts restrained eaters in danger of obesity. As such, studying consumers with different levels of dietary restraint is warranted and needed to improve our understanding of what triggers disinhibition and increased (but unwelcome) consumption.

Restrained eaters were expected to react differently to AMF in a food-related situation since they have an emotional relationship with food and they are more sensitive about emotion-producing situations (like AMF) than unrestrained eaters. Restrained eaters also tend to “fix” negative emotions by consuming food, and thus it was expected that worse-than-forecasted (but not better-than-forecasted) emotions will lead to higher food intake in restrained eaters.

In two experimental studies AMF magnitude and direction were manipulated and consumption of a food item (popcorn) was measured. Consistently with our predictions, in the first study (n=282) it was found that in general consumers ate more when their emotions were better-than-forecasted and less when their emotions were worse-than-forecasted. But restrained eaters (contrary to the pattern exhibited by unrestrained eaters) ate more when experiencing worse-than-forecasted emotions compared with situations when experiencing better-than-forecasted emotions. This finding is consistent with our disinhibition explanation, and thus this research introduces AMF as a new trigger of disinhibition in restrained eaters. It also suggests that creating unreasonable expectations (and thus AMF with worse-than-forecasted affect) can hurt some consumers.

Because AMF carries with it emotional information that consumers might use in their decisions and in controlling their behavior, it was proposed that emotional intelligence (a skill helping consumers process and use emotional information) will moderate the relationship between AMF and consumption. In addition, because restrained eaters were found to be vulnerable to the emotional effects of AMF, it was proposed that having high emotional intelligence could reverse such negative effects, and lead to more positive consumer outcomes.

Indeed, in the second study (n=220) in general consumers with high levels of emotional intelligence were able to bring their consumption more in line with their emotional experiences. Moreover, restrained eaters with high consumer emotional intelligence were less vulnerable to AMF and did not increase consumption in worse-than-forecasted situations, thus reversing the pattern of behavior of less emotionally intelligent restrained eaters.

This research has theoretical implications for affective forecasting and misforecasting research as well as substantive implications for transformative consumer research and public policy.
**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Since ancient Greek and Latin, the etymology of "voluptuary" has to do with pleasure and desire. From the term voluptas we can derive the term “voluptuary" (like volupetueux in French and voluttuario in Italian) and introduce the concept of voluptuary consumption in consumer research. Voluptuary has been associated to luxury in English, whereas in Italian and French it presents facets of enjoyment and delightfulness, sexual pleasure, sensual and lascivious practices, and unnecessary goods and services.

The reason why we are interested in voluptuary consumption is that it lies at the borderline of consumption: it stays close to both the good and the evil, gratification and sin. Most voluptuary goods and practices imply negative side effects from social, physical, and psychological perspectives. Still, starting from the characteristics of goods and services that are usually employed in voluptuary consumption, it seems that there is a “need for voluptuousness:” food, drink, and many forms of self indulgence can be seen from this perspective.

From a theoretical point of view, we propose that voluptuary consumption is not inherent to goods characteristics, but it arises from the interactions between the goods, the consumer and the context (Askegaard and Trolle Linnet 2009). To represent such a complex construct, we may refrain from a linear and analytical definition and try to depict voluptuary consumption originating from a sort of psychological profile (i.e., a personality profile). The overall profile is composed and influenced by five main traits, some of which counteract each other: luxury (Kapferer 1998; Vigneron and Johnson 2004), superfluity (Baudrillard 1974), hedonism (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2002); self-indulgence (Kivetz and Simonson 2002; DeMoss and Mick 1990; Mick 1996), conspicuousness (O’Cass and McEwen 2004; Vigneron and Johnson 2004), superfluity (Baudrillard 1974), hedonism (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2002); self-indulgence (Kivetz and Simonson 2002; DeMoss and Mick 1990; Mick 1996), conspicuousness (O’Cass and McEwen 2004; Vigneron and Johnson 2004). These traits can be classified in two broad categories, one of positive/constructive motivational elements (i.e., luxury, hedonism) and another one made of critical/negative elements (i.e., superfluity, self-indulgence, conspicuousness). On one side consumers seek material confirmation of the wealth they got, they like exclusive and expensive goods, and they indulge in hedonistic practices. On the other side, consumers can be (or feel) criticized for their ostentation of superfluous goods and even for manipulating their consumption patterns in order to get secondary objectives. These elements combine with each other according to the characteristics of the context, the decisions by the consumers and even the historical and cultural conditions. As in the metaphor of personality, some of its traits can be more intense than others, some traits can be antagonist and even dysfunctional towards others but, nevertheless, they have a role in the definition of the full profile.

We also propose that voluptuary consumption is characterized by three main paradoxes, which result from the previously defined traits: 1) Voluptuary consumption “must” be done without being necessary; 2) Voluptuary consumption taps into physiological needs, yet it is more sophisticated than basic body necessities; 3) Voluptuary consumption appears as an escape from marketing and, more interestingly, from the consumer’s self-theorizations: to escape the cage of one’s own self, it is necessary to get back to the body for a true and involving consumption pleasure.

What proposed above leads us to the following preliminary working definition of voluptuary consumption that is conceding oneself, despite its ambivalence due to a slight sense of guilt or uneasiness, and showing to others, a superfluous bodily pleasure provided by a good, or service, or activity.

We conducted an empirical research, exploring the consumption of chocolate. As to the methodology, we applied the personal diary technique (Alaszewski 2006) and the projective technique (Boddy 2005). We collected 23 diaries written by individuals regarding their consumption of chocolate. The length of the collected diaries ranges from 5 to 25 single-spaced pages. The researchers delved into the diaries, coding both the theoretically expected and emerging themes, then repeatedly met to compare and discuss the growing frame of the findings. The iterative process between theory and data allowed a comprehensive understanding of the chocolate consumption as emerging from the consumers’ texts (Thompson 1997). We also conducted in-depth interviews with 25 additional individuals, using projective techniques. During the interview, respondents were shown a projective pictorial card in which consumers were represented while consuming chocolate in four distinct consumption settings: home alone, home with friends, restaurant alone, restaurant with friends.

Results show that voluptuary consumption moves as a pendulum between rational self-restrain and indulged sensorial consumption. Consumers engage in practices that restrain the voluptuary consumption and, at the same time, allow it. Consumers adopt self-tricks to both avoid and indulge in voluptuary consumption. Gift giving of chocolate desserts is common, above all in some holidays. Gift giving is used by the consumer to both avoid and allow consumption: those who receive chocolate as a gift feel obliged to share the same chocolate with the donor, to reciprocate the gift and enjoy it together. By this way, the donor embeds her/his voluptuary consumption in a social ritual that makes voluptuary consumption more legitimate. The inescapable bodily pulses are enmeshed in a social discourse of consumption that, at the same time, legitimate and control voluptuary consumption. Another typical activity for chocolate consumers is to store chocolate in their domestic “hiding place,” for instance corners in cupboards. In this manner the temptation is out of sight and the chocolate consumption should be more unlikely. However, the hidden place is easily “discovered” by the same consumer and chocolate is finally eaten.

What emerges is a loosely tied Ulysses. Ulysses (Odysseus) asked his companions to tie him to the mast of the ship to avoid the temptations of the Sirens. The chocolate consumer ties him/herself, but not so tight to really avoid consumption. His/her control is not meant to prevent, but to prepare to unleash the voluptas of eating chocolate.

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The Faces of the New Consumer (1990-2010)—A Governmental Process?
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ABSTRACT
A genealogic approach reveals the three major faces of the new consumer that have emerged during the last twenty years throughout marketing discourses. The paper then shows how these faces interact to present a picture of the structure of consumers’ competencies: individualistic competencies of dialogue are combined with hedonistic competencies of play and with creative competencies of resources integration. It concludes on the existence inside these marketing discourses of a governmental process that puts pressure on today’s citizens of our world to see and think of themselves in the first place as consumers.
Consumer Response to Anthropomorphic Animal Images Based on Their Similarity to Humans
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Throughout civilization, people have imbued creatures from the natural world with human traits and motivations. Marketers have capitalized on this tendency by creating a plenitude of anthropomorphic animal mascots for a variety of products and services. Yet, research examining anthropomorphism on consumer behavior is sparse. The purpose of this research is to understand which types of animals are portrayed anthropomorphically most often in marketing communications (based upon their perceived similarity to humans) and how consumers’ attitudes are affected by such anthropomorphism.

Anthropomorphism is the process of assigning real or imagined human characteristics, intentions, motivations, or emotions to nonhuman objects, often motivated by explaining and understanding the behavior of those nonhuman agents (Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo 2008). People do this with a seemingly unending array of things, including brands and television characters, to the extent that they sometimes form parasocial relationships with them (Fournier 1998; Russell, Norman, and Heckler 2004). Instead of leaving it up to individuals to anthropomorphize objects of consumption, marketers often create advertising mascots with the express intent of imbuing them with personality characteristics, in a sense anthropomorphizing the brand for the consumer (Aaker 1997).

Individuals help to make sense out of their world by organizing things in categories. Each category and subcategory has mental prototypes. Objects are stored in memory around these prototypes by both their similarity to the prototype and their similarity to other items in the category (Tversky 1977). People seem to be particularly adept at categorizing animals. Henley (1969; see also Tversky 1977) devised a study asking participants to rate the similarity of 30 familiar animals to each other. The results were plotted on a cognitive map where the animals that were perceived to be most similar to each other were closer to one another (i.e., closer in psychological distance) on the cognitive map. While Henley (1969) interpreted this cognitive map as having two axes of size and ferocity, one could also interpret this cognitive map as indicating each animal’s similarity to human beings. I characterize these animals as highly similar to humans (e.g., non-human primates such as monkeys and gorillas), moderately similar to humans (e.g., carnivorous animals such as lions and wolves as well as rodents and rodent-like animals such as rabbits), and relatively dissimilar to humans (e.g., hoofed mammals such as horses, goats, and deer). Results from a pilot study support this categorization.

A large body of research has converged on the finding that people like similar others, possibly due to an increased motivation to process information about close others (Aron, Aron, Tudor, and Nelson 1991). The foundational work in this literature stream was built on attitude similarity (Byrne 1971; Byrne, Clore, and Smeaton 1986; Heider 1958). This research has been subsequently extended to domains such as similarity in personality traits (Tesser and Campbell 1980; Tesser and Paulhus 1983) and biological characteristics (Chen and Kenrick 2002). Miller and colleagues (1998) found that even trivial similarities, such as a shared birthday, cause people to view others more favorably. In extending this similarity-attraction principle to animal images, the most obvious prediction would be that high-similarity animals would be viewed more positively than moderate-similarity animals, which would in turn be viewed more positively than low-similarity animals. Furthermore, all types of animals should be viewed more positively when presented in anthropomorphic form due to heightened levels of similarity to humans.

However, researchers have found that construal level can moderate the relationship between similarity and attraction. Less similar objects, because they are psychologically more distant, are construed at higher, more abstract levels (Liviatan, Trope, and Liberman 2008). Likewise, higher similarity leads to lower-level, more concrete construals. Thus, it is possible that nonanthropomorphic images of all animals would be assigned more abstract representations, such as “animal.” Therefore, due to lower similarity to humans among all animal types in anthropomorphpic portrayals, there may be little or no preference for highly similar animals over less similar animals. However, because greater similarity leads to more concrete construals with more focus on secondary features, it is possible that anthropomorphizing animal images increases salience to the differences between the high, moderate, and low similarity animals, thus leading to differences in preference for anthropomorphic images but no preference among nonanthropomorphic images.

Additionally, Chen and Kenrick (2002) found that increasing similarity for outgroup members can have a more powerful effect on liking than increasing similarity for ingroup members. The authors argue that these effects are driven by lower levels of baseline similarity, and thus liking, in outgroups. Thus, enhancing similarity leads to a positive violation of expectations and increased attraction that does not occur for ingroups, whose baseline similarity is already high. In the context of this research, relatively dissimilar animals would have lower baseline similarity to humans, whereas moderately similar animals would have higher baseline similarity to humans, and highly similar animals would have the highest baseline similarity to humans. Therefore, it is possible that relatively dissimilar animals would benefit more from anthropomorphism than moderately similar animals, which would in turn benefit more from anthropomorphism than highly similar animals.

The purpose of this research is to explore how anthropomorphized animal images are used in marketing communications and how consumers respond to them based on their similarity to humans. Findings of content analyses indicate that animals that are perceived to be moderately similar to humans are more frequently used as anthropomorphic mascots than animals that are either highly similar or relatively dissimilar to humans. However, results from an experimental study indicate that, while participants are indifferent between animal types when they are presented nonanthropomorphically, relatively dissimilar animals gain the most in terms of attitude favorability when presented anthropomorphically. I argue that these results are driven by a lower level of baseline similarity to humans in the nonanthropomorphically presented images. Thus, enhancing similarity to humans via anthropomorphism leads to positive violation of expectations and enhanced attraction toward relatively dissimilar animal images. Consequently, animals that are relatively dissimilar to humans might be underutilized as anthropomorphic spokescharacters.
An Exploratory Analysis of the Links between Human-Pet Relationship and Consumer Behaviour

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Pets have long been part of human history, and have played a variety of roles (James, McMellon and Torres-Baumgarten 2004), such as companions, equipment and extended self. With the changes in modern society and family structure (Davids 1997), pets have also become used as ornaments, status symbol and toys, as well as psychological and social mediators, and all of these have attracted attention from both academics and practitioners.

However, it is only recently that the discussion of the benefits of pet ownership extended beyond the disciplines of veterinary and medical science (Friedmann and Thomas 1995; Friedmann, Thomas and Eddy 2000; Staats et al. 1996) and has been investigated more in terms of its psychological and social aspects (Holbrook et al. 2001; Straede and Gates 1993).

Based on the review of relevant literature, this research found that business and management scholars did not seem to have paid adequate attention to the pet market, which has seen impressive growth since the early 1990s (Davids 1997; Holak 2008; Megheee 2008; Ridgway et al. 2008). One significant investigation into this topic was conducted in a special issue of the Journal of Business Research, in 2008. Nevertheless, the focus of many of the papers it contained was still on the nature of the human-pet relationship, with less examination of the implications for consumer behaviour and consumption culture (Beverland, Farrelly and Lim 2008; Brockman, Taylor and Brockman 2008; Dotson and Hyatt 2008; Downey and Ellis 2008).

This research starts with an introduction to the British pet market, with a focus on cat and dog ownership, including the amount of time and effort expended. (easier.com 2008; Pet Food Manufacturers’ Association 2009a; 2009b; Petextrodinarium.com 2008; UKPets.co.uk 2005).

With the significance of this market thus introduced, the literature review examines the different types of human-pet relationship that have been documented. In the view of this and the some of other related studies, this relationship is an important factor when examining the associated consumption behaviour (Holbrook and Woodside 2008). According to previous research, human-pet relationships can be categorised into six forms: family members/friends, extended self, equipment, psychological mediator, social mediator and ornament/status symbol and toy. During interview, a distinct, but yet documented typology was added to capture pet owners who are overly protective of their pets. To have more practical and research value for marketing, this study adopted the 4Ps as a flexible guidance to classify and segment pet owner’s consumption behaviour.

This research interviewed 18 owners regarding their relationship with their pets and their consumption on pet-related products and services. The transcript discourse was analysed through an interpretive approach based on categories of relationship and emerging themes (Hackley 2003; 2009).

The results show that it is easy for owners to identify their pets as family members or friends, and this confirms previous research (Hirschman 1994). Nevertheless, the specific relationships and consumption behaviours can take different forms, just as with human family members and friends. This finding allows future research to further divide this category into sub-categories.

Despite the number of studies that focus on pets as extended self (Ridgway et al. 2008), it was difficult to recruit participants who characterised their relationship in this way. However, those who did focused their consumption on significant events they shared with their pets, such as weddings and visits to the vet.

This research suggests that the distinction of the dark-side of pet ownership is not always as clear as previous research has implied (Beverland et al. 2008; Darden and Worden 1996). First, the two pets that were categorised as equipment did not have an obvious financial value. Second, although these two dogs performed some household duties, they were not ill-treated and shared some of the same benefits as pets seen as family members or friends or as psychological mediators.

Previous research also found that pets often function as social lubricants (Gillespie, Leffler and Lerner. 1996; Serpell 1991). One feature of these pet owners is the amount of outdoor activities they perform with their pets, and often with other individuals. These pet owners favour purchasing accessories with utility and social functions. Furthermore, they are particularly conscious regarding the health of their pets.

Many medical journals have outlined the psychological benefits of pet ownership for the elderly, children, patients and the general public (Beck and Meyers 1996; Siegel 1990). This is reconfirmed during this research. For pets that are seen as psychological mediators, the nature of participants’ daily schedules allows them to spend more time with their pets. However, in comparison with owners who see their pets as social mediators, the three participants in this category prefer indoor rather than outdoor activities.

Two out of three pets in the pet as ornaments, status symbols and toys group were purebred. In addition, the owners interviewed were not the prime caretaker of the pet, although they identified themselves as the ones who paid for the related expenses. The goods these pets used were often more expensive and high quality, which supports the findings of Dotson and Hyatt (2008).

During fieldwork, it was realised that previous classifications did not cover the type of owners who see their pets as a ‘vulnerable companion’. These owners have the attitude that the external environment can be hazardous for their pets, and thus the animals should be kept indoors. This attitude influences their consumption behaviour in terms of the number of pets they own and the choice of pet-related product and services, and these findings have not been documented before.

With the identification of these seven pet owner types and their consumption behaviour investigated, this research then proposes some potential managerial implications. This contributes to further research on consumer behaviour and identity-possession relationship, and also aids practitioners in their desire to serve this market more effectively.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Self-control failures among the U.S. population are at epidemic levels. One of the most popular explanations of self-control failures is the depletion hypothesis (Muraven and Baumeister 2000). This hypothesis invokes the muscle metaphor to explain behavioral control. It is posited that people control their behavior by drawing on a limited supply of regulatory resources. As a person engages in more frequent or more difficult acts of self-control, the resource becomes depleted (i.e., the muscle becomes tired) and the person becomes more likely to exhibit regulatory failure. We will propose a different approach to understanding regulatory behavior. We will argue that effortful behaviors can be construed as “work” or as “fun.” When regulatory behaviors are construed as an obligation to work, the person engages in the behavior in anticipation of a subsequent reward (e.g., personal gratification, social approval). In effect, work is a means to an end. Interruptions to the effortful behavior encourage a person to continue to work (so as to deserve the reward), whereas completing the behavior encourages the person to seek the reward—often in future behavior. When regulatory behaviors are construed as an opportunity to have fun, completing the behavior is the reward in itself. In effect, the work is fun (work is the reward). Interruptions to the behavior encourage a person to find alternative means of being rewarded (i.e., self-regulation declines), whereas completing the behavior provides an experience of gratification. Our main hypothesis is that low (high) self-control people are more likely to interpret behaviors as obligations to work (opportunities to have fun). Therefore, completion (vs. interruption) of a self-regulatory task should encourage less (more) subsequent regulatory behavior for low (high) self-control people. All of the studies featured a task that required self-control at time 1, a manipulation of the time 1 task as interrupted or completed, and a task in which participants could exert as much self-control as they wanted at time 2. We also measured participants' self-control as an individual trait.

In study 1, participants were given M&M’s and Skittles and asked to put one piece of each in their mouth and take it out, answered questions about the candies, were asked to hold one piece of each in their finger, and answered additional questions about the candies. Participants were either told that they were done with the first study (completed task condition) or to advance in order to answer additional questions about their behavior as consumers (incomplete task condition). Time 2 involved a 20-minute filler task, which was done while the rest of the candies were in participants' work stations. We weighed how much candy participants ate and used this as a measure of regulatory behavior. Low self-control participants ate more candy in the completed task condition (M=34 grams) than in the incomplete task condition (M=22 grams). High self-control participants ate more candy in the incomplete task condition (M=29 grams), all p’s < .05. A pretest indicated that low self-control participants saw the time 1 task as more of an obligation to work than high self-control participants. Because low vs. high self-control participants saw the task as an obligation to work, completion led them to seek more rewarding behaviors.

In study 2, we showed that if a task is framed as “work,” this will lead everyone to perform less self-regulation. In one condition, we replicated the results of study 1 using the same task as that of study 1. In a second condition, we asked participants to choose the minimum amount of M&M’s and Skittles they needed in order to perform the initial candy task. Making participants select a minimum would lead them to see the task as obligation to work. In this condition, all participants ate more candy in the completed (M=35 grams) than in the incomplete task condition (M=24 grams), all p’s < .05.

In study 3, we showed that a task can be framed as being “fun”, which will lead everyone to perform more self-regulation. At time 1, participants made four choices that involved difficult trade-offs. After participants made four choices, the task was manipulated to be incomplete or completed as it was in study 1. At time 2, participants were asked to look at a series of product ads (i.e., product descriptions presented in a tedious way) and were told that they could quit the task whenever they wanted to. The amount of ads participants were willing to see was our dependent measure. When the time 1 task was framed, low self-control participants saw fewer ads in the completed (M=54) than in the incomplete task condition (M=80), while high self-control participants saw more ads in the completed (M=80) than in the incomplete task condition (M=51). When the time 1 task was said to be a fun task (the sentence “this is a fun task involving choices in four product categories” was added to the instructions), all participants were willing to see more ads in the completed (M=75) than in the incomplete task condition (M=60), all p’s < .05.

In summary, low self-control and high self-control people construe their worlds differently. Low self-control people perceive many behaviors, especially regulatory behaviors, as taxing and difficult (depleting). Upon completion of a taxing behavior, a low self-control person is more likely to exhibit regulatory failure. Regulatory failure is consistent with seeking a reward. High self-control people perceive many behaviors as challenging and rewarding. Upon completion of a challenging behavior, the high self-control person is likely to sustain regulatory control. Completing the challenging behavior is the reward. Yet, when a high self-control person lacks an opportunity to complete the behavior, the person finds other ways to experience a reward. Most importantly, our manipulations show conditions under which people in general are more prone to self-regulatory failure, and conditions under which we can encourage increased regulatory behavior despite of people’s natural self-control tendencies.

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From Washington to New York to London: The Effect of Subgoal Accomplishment on Satisfaction
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Creating and retaining satisfied customers is the endeavor of most marketers and customer satisfaction continues to be a primary concern for all. One of the important determinants of customer satisfaction is how much progress consumers think they are making during a consumption experience (Koo and Fishbach 2010). The general belief is that perceptions of progress can favorably impact how consumers evaluate their consumption experiences (Nunes and Dreze 2006). In this research, we use literature related to breaking a goal into subgoals to examine the impact of perceptions of progress on customer satisfaction. We identify an important individual level difference variable, consumers’ implicit theory orientation, which can differentially impact perceptions of progress for the same naturally occurring end-goals.

Achieving an end-goal often involves breaking the ongoing goal (e.g., obtaining a good grade in school) into many individual subgoals (e.g., submitting assignments on time). If subgoals are set as mental links between situational cues and goal-related actions, these actions are more likely to be successfully pursued when confronted with situational obstacles (Gollwitzer and Brandstatter 1997). However, although extant research extols the breaking down of end-goals into smaller subgoals, recent research suggests that the pursuit of overarching goals may in fact be hindered by subgoal achievement. Amir and Ariely (2008) have shown that information about subgoal achievement and goal-progress could hinder goal-pursuit, task performance, and even preference for the task. In this research, this seeming contradiction in the impact of subgoals on goal-progress is addressed, given the several naturally occurring goals and subgoals people face in their lives. We resolve these conflicting findings by suggesting that the impact of subgoal achievement on an individual’s overall goal pursuit is affected by the person’s implicit theory orientation.

Research has identified two specific types of implicit theories that individuals endorse. These theories can manifest as both chronic personality traits or as temporary orientations (Poon and Koehler 2006). Incremental theorists have been shown to focus on learning goals, thereby focusing on process. In contrast, entity theorists have been shown to focus on performance goals and related outcomes (Molden, Plaks, and Dweck 2006). These differences in goal focus have important implications for the two theorists’ goal pursuit strategies. Incremental theorists focus on building mastery skills in order to achieve end goals. When pursuing an end-goal, incremental theorists are likely to treat intervening tasks and subgoals as a part of the goal-pursuit process that must be completed in order to achieve the end-goal. Therefore, they are less likely to spontaneously generate subgoals when pursuing an end-goal. In contrast, entity theorists, who focus on demonstrating performance and achievement, are likely to generate subgoals when pursuing an end-goal, since accomplishing subgoals can give them a sense of achievement and positive outcomes. Therefore, any task that provides an opportunity for demonstrating frequent subgoal accomplishment regardless of end-goal achievement is likely to be preferred more by entity theorists than incremental theorists. Finally, in accord with the entity theorist focus on outcome, we should see greater outcome-focus for entity theorists, as evidenced by their focus on achieving the subgoals and the end-goal, while incremental theorists should show greater process-focus, as evidenced by their focus on the pursuit of only the end-goal.

In study 1, using a retail queue setting, we examined whether implicit theory orientation impacts perceptions of progress through a spontaneous self-generated breakdown of tasks into subgoals. In retail settings, being served at the cash register is a naturally occurring end-goal. We anticipated that entity (versus incremental) theorists would spontaneously generate subgoals and derive a sense of achievement through achieving those internally generated subgoals, which in turn may impact their perceptions of waiting time, their evaluations of the queuing system, and their evaluations of the retail store. After completing the implicit theory scale adapted from Levy, Stroessner, and Dweck (1998), respondents were asked to imagine that they were standing in line after finishing their grocery shopping. They were then presented with a description of a queue process modeled after the Whole Foods supermarkets. Respondents viewed three visuals of the line system, each visual representing the line after every five minutes, and their own position in the line as it moved towards the cash register. After each visual, they provided responses to relevant measures. Results of study 1 show that entity (versus incremental) theorists are more likely to generate spontaneous subgoals in a natural end-goal setting (reaching and being served at a cash register) and prefer tasks with greater subgoal accomplishment. Entity theorists preferred this line system to the standard line system, and this preference remained as they moved up the line. Interestingly, the line length perceptions also differed for the two theorists. While entity theorists in general thought that the line was shorter (fewer people were waiting in front of them), incremental theorists thought that the lines were longer, thereby indicating that entity theorists generated spontaneous subgoals as compared to incremental theorists.

In Study 1, subgoal accomplishment was spontaneously generated. In Study 2, we sought to replicate the findings with a specified end-goal and explicitly provided subgoals. Using a classroom assignment setting, we used actual behavioral information to assess whether task enjoyment and evaluation is impacted when participants’ end-goal is broken down into subgoals. Students were asked to read four different marketing-related chapters as a part of an extra credit assignment, following which, they completed a brief quiz about the chapter, indicated their recall of chapter material, their overall evaluation of the chapter, their evaluation of their progress on the task, and their perception of the extent of completion of the extra credit assignment, and their adherence to a recommended weekly submission schedule. We observed that students with an entity (versus incremental) theory evaluated the task more favorably, but that the locus of their foci was different. While entity theorists focused on outcome, incremental theorists focused on process and they submitted more assignments as per the recommended schedule.

The two studies together supported our hypotheses and contributed novel and important insights to the areas of goal progress, customer satisfaction, and implicit theories.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In an increasingly complex world where people find it more and more difficult to generate feelings of security and contentment, brands can help to reduce uncertainty, provide orientation, and establish a sense of reliability as well as stability (Erdem et al. 2006). Against this background, the relatively new phenomenon of brand rituals can be observed in consumer research. In brand rituals, brands are consciously and deliberately associated with actions or activities that create an emotionally pleasant atmosphere. Though the concept of brand ritual is quite new, such associations have clear relevance as a newly developing type of consumer behavior, and of significant concern in brand management as well (Arnould 2001; Rook 1985).

Primarily because brand rituals are a relatively recent development, the concept has not yet been fully explored in marketing research, or in consumer research. Extensive examination of related literature has revealed no studies investigating the phenomenon of brand rituals, but the potential that brand ritual holds as a marketing technique underscores the importance of pursuing significant consumer research. This study moves the research into an exciting new area, and explores antecedents and consequences of consumer brand rituals. As a foundation for analyzing the application of ritual behavior to consumer behavior, the paper begins with a review of the literature (particularly the social sciences literature) that addresses the general concept of ritual, and that offers suggestions for defining aspects of the term ‘rituals’. Social science literature presents several definitions and types of rituals, including everyday rituals (e.g., bedtime rituals), individual rituals (e.g., Arnould 2001; Holak 2008; Ustunero 2000), and rituals marking specific occasions during the year, such as Christmas (McKechnie and Tyan 2006; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). These occasions are often pervasive and significant ritual experiences, which can and do leave a highly emotional imprint on human lives and, consequently, on consumer behavior as well (Ustunero 2000).

Therefore, for the purpose of this research on brand rituals, the concept of rituals can be characterized as regularly occurring acts, proceeding in a largely identical and therefore standardized fashion. As well, rituals use symbolically charged means of expression that are accentuated within the context of the ritual, and that are intended to impart meaning. Rituals are stylized, repetitive, and stereotypical; they occur at specific times at specific locations, and present themselves as an element of a kind of “liturgical order.” According to Snoek (2008, p. 13), most ritual behavior is “more formally stylized, structured, and standardized than most common behavior.”

In brand rituals, brands and/or branded products become the centerpiece of rituals. This may give deeper meaning to the brands or branded products, and could have the potential to fill an emotional niche for consumers (McCracken 1986; Muñiz and Schau 2005). Thereby, a functional definition for the term ‘brand rituals’ asserts that brand rituals are rituals in which brands are consciously and deliberately associated with actions or activities that create an emotionally pleasant atmosphere. Brand rituals may be personal, but are also often rooted in a group or a society (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001), providing the individual with a feeling of security and orientation, a sense of being part of a greater whole.

Based on this definition, and on the need for specifically directed research, we have introduced research on brand ritual targeted specifically toward brand ritual strength. For this study of what we hope will be a continued area of research, we developed a conceptual framework to identify antecedents and outcomes of brand ritual strength (i.e., the extent to which consumers ritualize a certain brand). Based on analysis of consumer research, we derive the following hypotheses from several theoretical approaches, with respect to the antecedents of brand ritual strength:

H1: The more the consumer is involved with a brand, the higher the brand ritual strength.
H2: Consumers’ novelty-seeking has a negative impact on brand ritual strength.
H3: Brand trust positively affects brand ritual strength.
H4: The greater the intrinsic reward of the brand ritual for a consumer, the higher the brand ritual strength.
H5: The greater the consumer’s extrinsic reward derived from brand rituals, the higher the brand ritual strength.

From this, we are able to state the hypothesis that brand ritual strength may be assumed to affect consumer loyalty toward the ritualized brand:

H6: Brand ritual strength positively affects consumers’ loyalty toward the brand.

In order to identify a brand which has a relatively high ritual tendency, we ran several focus groups. As a result, we were able to identify the German television media brand Tatort as a brand with relatively high ritual proneness suitable for our study purposes. In Germany, Tatort is a very popular crime scene show that has been airing since 1970. In an exploratory pre-study, we found that some consumers perform very specific rituals around Tatort. We therefore chose the media brand Tatort as our research object. From an online panel and from a web page for people interested in Tatort, we used an online survey that allowed us to query the level of experience with this media brand, in order to identify and eliminate responses from persons with no real knowledge of the series. Of the remaining group, we then randomly selected 602 participants for the questionnaire. The demographic data indicate that of the participants who completed the online questionnaire for the survey, 51.3% were female and 48.7% were male, with ages ranging from 18 to 68 years (M=42, SD=13).

Parameters for the factors affecting brand ritual strength and the influences on consumer behavior were developed and adapted from prior research (e.g., Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Fagan, Neill, and Wooldridge 2009; Fournier 1998; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Mehrabian and Russell 1974; Oliver 1997, 1999; Zaichkowsky 1985). However, all items needed to be slightly modified to address the specific nature of brand ritual research, and items for measuring brand ritual strength were created in accordance with the established definition of brand rituals.

The data of the main study were examined and controlled with the help of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Cronbach’s alpha and average variance extracted. Principal axis-factoring was used to analyze the formative factors which are hypothesized to be present in the conceptualized model. Sampling adequacy was acceptable based on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criterion. It can be noted that the alpha values of all scales were above the threshold generally suggested (Nunnally 1978). To control for a potential common method bias, we used an exploratory factor analysis approach to Harman’s
one-factor test (Korsgaard and Roberson, 1995). As expected, we found ten factors explaining 69.95% of overall variance, which suggests that one general factor did not account for the majority of the covariance among the measures in this study (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Combining these approaches, we conclude that reliability and validity of the constructs in our study are acceptable.

In order to test the hypotheses, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to analyze the impact of the factors (involvement, novelty-seeking, brand trust, intrinsic and extrinsic reward) on brand ritual strength as the dependent variable. In the next step, we tested the impact of brand ritual strength as the independent variable on the dependent variable loyalty.

Overall, we conclude that involvement (H1), brand trust (H3), intrinsic reward (H4), and extrinsic reward (H5) have a significant positive influence on brand ritual strength ($R^2 = .860$). Data analysis shows the following significant, positive influence: involvement ($\beta = .252, p < .001$), brand trust ($\beta = .131, p < .001$), intrinsic reward ($\beta = .402, p < .001$), and extrinsic reward ($\beta = .268, p < .001$). In contrast, novelty-seeking (H2) has no significant negative influence on brand ritual strength ($\beta = .005, p < .772$). Moreover, we find that brand ritual strength has a significant, positive influence on the four stages of Oliver’s (1997, 1999) conception of loyalty (H6): (a) cognitive loyalty ($R^2 = .355, \beta = .596, p < .001$), (b) affective loyalty ($R^2 = .460, \beta = .678, p < .001$), (c) conative loyalty ($R^2 = .612, \beta = .783, p < .001$), and (d) action loyalty ($R^2 = .585, \beta = .765, p < .001$).

The powerful findings of the brand ritual strength model establish the relevancy of the notion of brand rituals in the theoretical as well as in the managerial field. We can conclude that brand rituals have a strong influence on consumer behavior (in fact, they qualify as a new type of behavior in this context) and seem to be an important source of brand equity, particularly consumer brand equity, in today’s marketplace (Aaker 1991). Therefore, the phenomenon deserves closer attention from both the marketing and the consumer research community. Moreover, brand managers should notice the possibility of strengthening consumer loyalty by initializing, maintaining, and enhancing consumers’ brand ritual strength. Employing brand rituals for the intensification of consumer loyalty could become an efficient means of marketing. For academicians, however, as our study on the potential antecedents of brand ritual strength shows, the construct itself is suitable for further studies in the field of consumer research, and may also highlight a very interesting issue in branding theory.

SELECTED REFERENCES

When Seeing Many Types of Wine Makes You More Sensitive to Technological Threats: Unrelated, Prior Categorizations and Reactions to Change

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Detecting change is a fundamental, all-pervasive cognitive activity. It forms the core of many cognitive activities, such as visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile discrimination, similarity judgments and categorization. Naturally then, the ability to detect a change, to accurately assess the magnitude of the change, and to react to that change in a commensurate fashion, is of critical importance in many substantive domains (Massey and Wu 2005; Rensink 2002), ranging from medical decisions, business investment decisions, face recognition, to air traffic control. Thus, it is important to understand factors that systematically affect people’s ability to detect change.

To that end, in this paper we document a simple and counterintuitive effect: decision makers’ reactions to a change (e.g., an emerging technology), are systematically affected by the categorizations they encounter in an unrelated, prior task (e.g., how a wine store categorizes and displays its wines). We find that unrelated, prior exposure to narrow (vs. broad) categorizations leads to stronger (vs. weaker) reactions to a given change. These differential reactions occur because the prior categorizations, albeit unrelated, alter the extent to which the presented change is perceived as either a relatively large change or a relatively small one.

Theoretically, though, there are two distinct possibilities, depending on whether the continued use of relatively many (vs. fewer) dimensions impacts the perceptual system or whether it impacts the evaluative system. If the perceptual system alone is affected, then people previously exposed to many, narrow (few, broad) categorizations should have a more (less) sensitive perceptual encoding system, one that is attuned to processing incoming perceptual stimuli on relatively many (fewer) dimensions. Such people, therefore, should detect and perceive more (less) change, subjectively, when they encounter a subsequent change. In this case, then, prior exposure to unrelated, narrow (broad) categorizations will lead to stronger (weaker) reactions to a given change.

In contrast, if the evaluative system is affected, then prior exposure to many, narrow (few, broad) categorizations should encourage decision makers to evaluate the subsequent change more (less) carefully, using many (few) dimensions. The use of many (few) dimensions to evaluate the presented change should lead to perceptions of a relatively small (large) change, since the presented change would have to satisfy multiple (fewer) criterion in order to be deemed a significant enough change. Thus, in this case, prior exposure to narrow (broad) categorizations will lead to weaker (stronger) reactions to a given change. The question of which of these two conjectures is likely to prevail, is an empirical one, one which we leave our studies to answer.

Each experiment comprised two, ostensibly unrelated studies. The first task was used to administer the unrelated, prior categorization manipulation (explained in detail in the next section). The second task was used to record reactions to a presented change. Specifically, we asked participants to assume a managerial role in a firm manufacturing a particular product, and assessed their reactions to an innovative new technology that loomed in the horizon. A pretest was used to verify that the new technology was perceived to be relatively innovative.

Across three studies, we find consistent evidence that unrelated, prior exposure to narrow (broad) categorizations leads to stronger (weaker) reactions to a given change. As the mediation analysis shows, these differential reactions occur because the prior categorization manipulation, albeit unrelated, alters the extent to which the presented change is perceived as either a relatively large change or a relatively small one. Additionally, these effects are important since (a) they generalize across three, very different replicates, (b) they generalize across two different kinds of categorization manipulations (one more real-world and externally valid, and one more tightly controlled and internally valid), and (c) they are not attributable to differential involvement, confidence, familiarity, knowledge, mood, and task completion times. Our findings imply that real-world factors (e.g., the graininess of unrelated surveys, planning documents) that decision makers encounter, might systematically affect their reactions to change. We document the role of a new moderator of change detection–graininess of categories. Unlike Wu and Massey (2005) or Rapoport et al. (1979), however, our moderator arises from an unrelated prior decision. Given that category structure is a ubiquitous feature of many decision environments, our work is an important first step in documenting how it affects people’s reactions to change.
Incidence of Bottom-Up and Top-Down Cognitive Processes on Brand Confusion.

Approach from the Categorization Theory

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brand confusion consists of the rating or selection of one brand instead of another, provoked by their perceived physical similarity. Research has focused on consumer variables affecting confusion, such as previous experience, involvement, and processing style (Foxman, Muehling, & Berger 1990), developing procedures to measure it (Kaferer 1995; Simonson 1994), examining its consequences on consumer behavior (Loken, Ross, & Hinkle 1986), and elaborating conceptual frameworks (Foxman, Berger, & Cote 1992; Mitchell, Walsh, & Yamin 2005). In contrast, less attention has been paid to the bottom-up and top-down cognitive processes involved in the information processing that lead to brand confusion. We address this issue within the framework of the categorization theory, applying the assumptions of the exemplar model to object categorization (Smith & Medin 1981).

A key assumption of this model is that each member of a category has its specific mental representation, which serves as a standard of comparison when categorizing. Belonging to a category is a matter of degree, and some members are more prototypical than others (Roch & Mervis 1975). Prototypicality of an exemplar is determined by its family resemblance with the rest of the members of the category and/or by the number of times it appears as a member of that category, as well as by its similarity to an ideal member (Barsalou 1985). Therefore, similarity is decisive for object categorization (Smith & Medin 1981; Tversky 1977). The more similar an object is to the exemplar which is the standard of comparison, the more likely it will be assigned to the category of this exemplar. Accessibility of exemplars is also a determinant of categorization, and it can be chronic—related to the frequency of use and prototypicality—or critical—a transitory increase of its activation induced by a particular circumstance (Higgins, King, & Mervis 1982). In general, the more accessible exemplars are more likely to serve as a standard of comparison for categorization (Boush & Loken 1991; Meyvis & Janiszewski 2004; Morris 1999; Nedungadi & Hutchinson 1985).

According to these assumptions, categorization will occur as follows: a) perception of the target operates as a cue for retrieval of the exemplars of a category, b) this triggers the comparison with the mental representations of the exemplars, and c) the higher the perceived similarity, the greater the probability of including the target in the category of the exemplar (Cohen & Basu 1987). Depending on the resources assigned to categorization, these processes can develop analytically—comparing the similarities and differences of the representations of the target and the exemplar—or holistically—by means of a comparison based on the global similarity of both representations (Hutchinson & Alba 1991). As holistic processing is triggered in conditions that prevent the assignment of the cognitive resources needed to process the information in detail, as when there is a lack of time or of motivation, it provokes categorization errors, such as including the target in a category that does not correspond to it or attributing to the target the characteristics of an exemplar (Alba & Hutchinson 1987).

Knowledge of brands is also represented in categories (Loken 2006; Loken, Barsalou, & Joine 2008). Therefore, when conditions promote holistic comparison and the physical similarity of packages induces consumers to confuse them (Kaferer 1995), such confusion can be treated as a categorization error. Thus, we assume the hypothesis that the level of brand confusion depends on the perceived similarity of the mental representations of the target-package to the comparison exemplar and on the accessibility of the latter. We conducted two experiments to examine these issues.

The main goal of the first experiment was to examine the effect on brand confusion of the interaction between similarity and exposure time, manipulated to reduce the cognitive resources employed and so induce holistic processing of the physical characteristics of the packages. Starting with small values, we expected that increasing exposure times would lead to a greater decrease of confusion when the target-package is different than when it is similar to the comparison exemplar. The 218 participants, familiar with the brands of glue-sticks, took part in a mixed 3 x 3 (Similarity: 1 very similar package and 2 not very similar packages x Exposure time: 18, 30, and 50 ms) factorial design experiment. The effect of interaction was significant (F(2, 218)=20.13, p<.000, η²=.16), and consistent with the assumptions of the model.

The main goal of the second experiment was to verify the effect of the interaction between similarity and accessibility of the representation of the comparison exemplars. We expected that the impact of similarity on confusion would be different depending on the accessibility of the standard of comparison. The very similar package would cause more confusion with high accessibility than with low accessibility. The impact of these conditions on confusion would be less for not very similar packages. Accessibility was manipulated by means of instructions. Whereas in high accessibility, participants were informed about the category of the product to which the brands belonged before each trial, in low accessibility, they were only requested to identify the brands of a series of packages. The 72 participants took part in a 3 x 2 (Similarity: 1 very similar package and 2 not very similar packages; Accessibility: high vs. low) design experiment. The effect of the interaction was significant (F(1, 71)=26.87, p<.000, η²=.27), consistent with the assumptions of the model.

These results are consistent with those of previous studies (Foxman et al. 1990; Kaferer 1995; Simonson 1994) and they are a contribution to the literature, as they reveal that brand confusion is the result not only of the perceived similarity from bottom-up processing of the physical characteristics of the package, but also from the top-down impact of the comparison exemplars. Moreover, there are practical implications, as they can serve to increase the validity of confusion indexes (Kaferer 1995). To conclude, the results endorse the application of the exemplar model as a theoretical framework to investigate brand confusion.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite predictions to the contrary, family meals remain part of family life in 21st century Europe. While France appears to be a cultural exception in this domain (de Saint Pol 2006), the family meal remains the main activity in bringing families together, even in the United States (Gutierrez and Arnould 2007). Sociologists agree that even if family meals are less frequent at times, they nonetheless remain a strategic factor in building family ties (Kaufmann 2005; DeVault 1991). Consequently, our study explores one aspect of the consumer experience that has been relatively overlooked by marketing in the past, namely, the activity of feeding. Our study is firstly a response to the call by researchers to explore the meaning generated by the act of final consumption (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Arnould 2007), and secondly to study consumers as social actors who belong to a community and a family and who develop interpersonal relationships (Bagozzi 2000; Cova 1997; Epp and Price 2008; Penaloza and Venkatesh 2006). The research questions underpinning this study are the following:

1) What does meal production mean to parents today?

2) How do parents use market resources to produce this meaning?

Based on 4 focus groups and 21 in-depth interviews, together with the use of projective collages (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003), 43 informants from Latin cultural backgrounds (French, Italian and Romand) took part in the study (mothers or fathers with at least one child aged 3 to 11 in their care). Using a phenomenological approach, the participants were asked to describe their experiences when preparing and taking part in family meals on an everyday basis.

Our study indicates that the act of “feeding” can be considered through 4 metaphors: the “domestic chore,” the “child’s well-being,” “family ties” and “discovery.” With regard to the “domestic chore” metaphor, the informants allude to mechanics and chronometers. The parent acts as a robot, devoid of affection or emotion, and their resources enable the parents to distance themselves from the role of “carer/meal provider,” which they transfer onto the market.

Parents resist these “obstacles” to protect their children from the threat they represent. Surprisingly, resistance to a market threat is expressed through consumption: parents invest more in “symbolic resources” and in their domestic production. Finally, “escape” resources enable the parents to distance themselves from the role of “caretaker,” which they transfer onto the market.

This research suggests that mealtime consumption should be studied from the family perspective rather than that of individual consumption. Here, consumption is a resource (Arnould 2005) which informs the production of a domestic metaphor. This change in perspective (subject versus resource) opens up potential new research avenues for analysing food consumption. Moreover, identifying “obstacle” resources in the ‘metaphoric’ preparation of meals allows us to consider market resources not only as “value propositions” (Vargo and Lusch 2004) but also as sources of “value destruction.” This calls for new research to be developed on consumer resistance (Penaloza and Price 1993; Roux 2007) as a key driver behind symbolic consumption. Finally, the identification of “escape” resources contributes to Marcoux’s proposal concerning tensions in the “gift economy” (2009).

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477 European Advances in Consumer Research Volume 9, © 2011


Kauffmann, Jean-Claude (2005), Casseroles, Amour et Crises, Ce que Cuisiner Vaut Dire, Armand Colin.


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The notion “pester power” has appeared persistently the last decades, meaning that children nag parents to get their wishes fulfilled, but little evidence is found in the literature to support that pester power was ever important in family decision making. The notion draws with it simplistic perceptions of parents and children far from the reality of supermarkets.

This paper explores family decision making in a food context based on a literature study and observations from USA and Denmark in 2009 and 2010 examining the state of pester power in grocery shopping and is a qualitative study. The gap found between the lack of coercive child behaviour and the continuous use of the notion “pester power” even in recent publications, gave rise to this paper. It is obviously hard to prove that something does not exist, but through systematic observation in supermarkets of parent/child behaviour and by scrutinizing the literature in the field, the argument is made that “pester power” is not a particularly relevant notion in family decision-making. The approach chosen is to unobtrusively observe parents and children shopping together, because parents have been found not to report their children’s coercive behaviour correctly. The observational approach gives insight into processes that are not fully conscious and entangled with political correctness and ideals about being a good and responsible parent.

Findings show that parent and child interaction is far more about relationship-building, advanced negotiation and mutual consensus than pestering. Despite an often negative perception of children and consumption, not least embedded in the notion of “pester power,” the observations show that the supermarket trip is not necessarily an unpleasant experience for parents and children, and at least in middle and upper-middle-class environments “pester power” does not at all seem to be the order of the day. Family life in western affluent societies is a realm with few precious children, encouraged to participate in family purchase decisions, and with little time to do things together as a family. The supermarket visit is one time slot where the parent and child interact and most often seem to enjoy each other’s company. Grocery shopping with children is a part of family life, which is not just about functional shopping but also an ongoing work on social relations, moved onto the public scene of the supermarket, where both parents and children are manoeuvring between a variety of rules and roles, but the use of pester power does not seem to be a very present phenomenon.

In the “pester power” notion, which is still often brought up to describe the parent/child realm of interaction, the child is presented as on the one hand primitive: selfishly pursuing own cravings, controlled by advertising and marketing tricks and unable to take the parents’ perspective or postpone own desires, and on the other hand handicapped: overly empowered and able to control the parent. No doubt children influence grocery purchases, also very much the unhealthy part of these purchases, but “pester power” is not an apt description of what is happening, and the continuous use of the notion maintains an obsolete perception of the child which is out of tune with what is found in supermarket shopping. Furthermore, the continued use of the notion draws with it an underestimation of parents as too weak to resist children’s requests, which does not fit the clear image found of the parent as the absolute gatekeeper. Moreover, in much decision-making literature, it is implied that the parent, in opposition to the child, is rational, but the study shows that the parent is also from time to time irrational, controlled by habits and is not an information-processing agent, who acts upon rational knowledge, at all times.

The problem related to the notion of “pester power” when sketching the current parent/child climate when shopping is that it blurs the understanding of what is actually going on. To change behaviour towards healthier eating and shopping an adequate understanding of actual behaviour is necessary. While most parents would feel that they do not give in to a child’s pestering behaviour, they are probably less aware of their own, also at times irrational, behaviour and their child’s subtle influencing behaviour in the store. This calls for other types of action than healthy eating campaigns, which tend to rely mainly on appeals to rational behaviour, such as taxing or even removal of unhealthy food items from supermarkets.

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Effects of Product Unit Image on Consumption of Snack Foods
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumers everywhere are becoming more and more overweight, which is partially due to dramatically increased portion and package sizes over the last decades (Wansink 2004). Although accurate serving and package size information is indicated on nutrition labels, consumers very rarely read and adhere to that information (Cole and Balasubramanian 1993). Instead, they unknowingly use external and sometimes unrelated cues to estimate product quantity and to generate consumption norms, and that in turn leads to biased judgments that influence consumption volume (Raghubir and Krishna 1999; Wansink 2004).

The present research introduces the product unit image on the package as a new influential contextual cue that affects consumer perceptions and consumption volume. Across three studies we demonstrate that the number of product units displayed on the package influences consumer perceptions of product quantity and actual consumption. We show that subjects use an anchoring heuristic (Tversky and Kahneman 1974) to estimate product quantity where the more product units they see on the package (e.g., more cookies) the more they think are inside it. Importantly, subjects anchor their consumption on this arbitrary number.

In packaging, the product image performs an informational function that directly affects consumer beliefs about the intrinsic attributes of the product such as look and taste (Underwood and Klein 2002). Given its accessibility for judgment and choice (Kisielius and Sternthal 1986), the product image may serve as a very diagnostic piece of information that sets expectations for the contents of the package (Underwood and Klein 2002). We propose that consumers anchor their quantity judgments on the product image on the package and specifically on the number of product units. Anchoring is the psychological process by which a salient number is presented to subjects which subsequently influences their estimation judgments to be close to the anchor (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Thus, we hypothesize that packages displaying more product units will be perceived to contain more product quantity than packages displaying fewer product units (H1). In addition, we propose that actual consumption will follow this anchor judgment and that individuals will consume more from packages displaying more product units than from packages displaying fewer product units (H2). Next, because people differ in the extent to which they rely on visual information (Pavio 1971) we expect level of visual processing to moderate the effects of product unit image. Specifically, we hypothesize (H3) that high visual processors will consume more and estimate a larger product quantity for packages displaying a greater number of product units than for packages displaying fewer product units.

We confirm H1 and H2 in the first study (Studies 1a, 1b and 1c). The results show that the package is perceived as containing more cookies and a larger serving size when it displays seven as opposed to four cookies (Study 1a). We show the persistence of the anchoring effect by varying the size of the cookies and confirm that the number rather than the perceived weight of the cookies is driving our results (Study 1b). Importantly, the results also indicate that subjects consume more from packages displaying more crackers than from packages displaying fewer crackers (Study 1c). In this study, we increase external validity by showing the results with actual three-dimensional packages and objective measures of consumption (number of crackers consumed and ounces consumed).

In the second study we demonstrate that anchoring is the process underlying the product image effects by showing that subjects anchor their consumption on the product unit image only when they have cognitive resources available. Our results are consistent with the anchoring literature which suggests that the anchor needs to be salient in order to become accessible for judgment and that anchoring might be a less heuristic process than originally thought (Mussweiler and Strack 2001).

Research has shown that graphics affect beliefs even when accurate verbal information is provided (Bone and France 2001). Thus, we expect the anchoring effects to persist even in the presence of verbal label information on the package. The third study (Study 3) was run as a 2 (number of product units: 5 pretzels vs. 30 pretzels) between-subject design, with level of processing as a measured variable (Blazhenkova and Kozhevnikov 2008). We also included a nutrition facts panel invariant across conditions. Subjects anchor their consumption on the number of product units they see on the package and consume more pretzels from the 30 pretzel package. Importantly, confirming H3, high visual processors perceive the product quantity to be larger and consume more pretzels when there are 30 pretzels displayed than when there are 5.

The present findings contribute to perceptual research in the consumer domain and have important public policy implications. Understanding of how consumers use environmental cues to generate consumption norms has both theoretical and practical significance.

REFERENCES
The Influence of Subtle External Cues on Eating Behavior

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The main conclusion from the modeling literature is that a target person eats more when eating companions eat more and eats less when eating companions eat less (Conger, Conger, Costanzo, Wright, and Matter 1980; Nisbett and Storms 1974; Polivy, Herman, Younger, and Erskine 1979; Rosenthal and McSweeney 1979). In a standard modeling experiment, a naïve participant eats in the presence of an experimental confederate who has been instructed to eat a lot or only a little. This modeling effect of eating behavior has been shown to be highly powerful (Goldman, Herman, and Polivy 1991; Herman, Koenig-Nobert, Peterson, and Polivy 2005; Rosenthal and Marx 1979). Here, Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate that this effect is moderated when participants are exposed to external cues that relate to body weight.

In Study 1, a body scale was used as an external cue by putting it into the experimental room around four meters away from the participants, whereas in the control group no scale was present. Participants (54 female psychology students) were invited for a chocolate tasting study and were tested together with a confederate who ate only a little chocolate (two pieces) in half of the sessions and a lot of chocolate (six pieces) in the other half of the sessions. The results show that participants exposed to the scale eat little, even if a confederate eats a lot, whereas unexposed participants showed the well-known modeling effect. It is surprising that even a small change in the environment, such as putting a scale in the room, can have such an immense impact; particularly considering that the modeling of eating behavior is regarded as an extremely robust effect that can hardly be moderated (Herman and Polivy 2005).

Study 2 replicates and extends Study 1 by using a verbal cue—a short statement—instead of the visible scale. The verbal cue (“It makes people fat but also happy”) was given only at the beginning of the session in contrast to Study 1, where the scale was visible during the whole session. The experimenter uttered the statement in a rather funny and unobtrusive way so that none of the 47 female psychology students thought that the statement had anything to do with the experiment. The results show that, without the statement, we observe the well-established modeling effect of eating behavior. However, even a short non-salient statement at the beginning of the session was enough to inhibit this effect.

Study 3 was conducted in a setting without a confederate. Participants (51 women and 24 men randomly drawn from the local telephone book) again came for a chocolate tasting task. Half of them filled out a questionnaire about gender, age, size, and weight before the tasting (exposed group); the other half of the participants started directly with the tasting and filled out the questionnaire afterwards (control group). In addition, three questions about the monitoring of body weight were asked after the tasting session for both groups. The results support the reasoning that cues have to be accessible (filling in weight information before the tasting) and applicable (the motivation and possibility to reduce food intake) in order to affect behavior (see also Higgins 1996; Strahan, Spencer, and Zanna 2002). Our findings also show that the higher the tendency to monitor body weight the lower food intake but only when participants were made to fill in their weight information before the tasting. For the control group, the degree to which participants monitor their body weight does not affect food intake.

External cues can influence how much people eat. Past research has shown that factors such as portion size, package size, and ambient characteristics influence food intake (Wansink 2004). The present paper continues this line of research by demonstrating that weight-related cues in the environment can also have an influence on how much people eat and that such cues even work in a setting where another person provides the norm that eating a lot is appropriate.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

We develop a theoretical model explaining why people engage in Word-of-Mouth (WOM). The research question that we attempt to answer is not the typical: “What motivates people to share WOM?”, but a broader one: “What purpose does WOM serve?” The literature suggests that the intention of WOM depends primarily on satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the brand (Anderson 1998; Bowman and Narayandas 2001; Ladhari 2007; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996). However, WOM can be used to achieve goals unrelated to the brand, for example, to express achievement, or to seek confirmation, therapeutic feeling, or retaliation (Cheung, Anitsal, and Anitsal 2007; Sweeney, Soutar, and Mazza 2008). The perspective we take is that WOM is a socially embedded process instigated by explicit and implicit motives.

Several streams of research provide the theoretical foundations for this approach: 1) the social comparison theory: as an internal drive for a person to compare his abilities and opinions to others (Festinger 1954); 2) the social learning theory: as the ability to learn vicariously from others’ opinions and behaviors (Bandura 1969; Bandura 1971); 3) the social exchange theory: as the notion that people never do anything without expectations for personal gain (Blau 1986; Emerson 1976); 4) gossip: as a social phenomenon informing people about social norms (Baumeister, Zhang, and Vohs 2004; Dunbar 1998; Wert and Salovey 2004). We also focus on the theories for self-affirmation (Sherman and Cohen 2006) and the need for self-enhancement (Jones 1973) as motives for social interaction. The model is based on the fact that behavior can be motivated by implicit as well as explicit motives (McClelland, Koestner, and Weinberger 1989). Explicit motives result from planned intentions, and implicit motives result from the desire to satisfy self- and socially-related needs. The relationship between attitudes and needs goes like this: attitudes can lead to evaluation of alternative actions, and if an action is expected to satisfy a need, then it is preferred. Therefore, the presence of a high or low attitude is an opportunity to engage in an action that can satisfy a need, but it does not create the need. It is important to recognize that it is not the need that matters, but the expected satisfaction level of this need.

The particular theoretical model we advance includes WOM as the main outcome variable and satisfaction with the brand as the main independent variable. Several groups of variables affect this relationship: self-related needs (i.e., self-enhancement and self-affirmation), socially-related needs (i.e., need for social comparison and need for social bonding), and the intentions to share personal and social information. Self-related needs are related to individual well-being, and socially related needs refer to needs that can be satisfied only through social interaction. The specific propositions we develop can be summarized as follows. The socially-related needs are positively affected by the self-related needs. Both the self- and socially-related needs affect the intention to share information. Finally, WOM is affected by the self- and socially-related needs and the intention to share information.

We propose that the suggested model holds true for both positive and negative WOM. Based on social utility (Loewenstein et al. 1989; Messick and Sentsis 1985) as result of social comparison and the self-attribution bias (Bradley 1978) stating that people praise themselves for success and blame others for failures, we advance propositions about the difference in the magnitude and the signs of the relationships in the theoretical model. The need for self-enhancement will be pronounced more in positive than in negative WOM, and the need for self-affirmation will be pronounced more in negative than in positive WOM. The intention to share information will be pronounced more in negative than in positive WOM. Social needs will be pronounced more in positive than in negative WOM.

In conclusion, this study answers the call for more attention on the social aspects of consumer behavior (Bagozzi 2000; Wright 2002). The proposed theoretical model helps understand the purpose of WOM by recognizing that WOM serves socially and self-related needs. The ultimate gain which the transmitter of WOM gets through social interaction is self-affirmation and self-enhancement. The advanced propositions, related to the cognitive processes motivating WOM, are viable and testable and can serve as a sound framework for future research and marketing management. The managerial applications of this approach can be significant because it allows for contextual control of WOM through facilitated interaction. For example, when designing a promotional strategy with the goal of making customers talking positively, the focus should be not only on the performance of the brand, but also on the ability to make people maintain social relationships. Based on the intention to share information, a promotion can contain stories with social value that are worth sharing (e.g., recopies, jokes, facts, warnings, etc.). The social bond component suggests that the brand should instigate interactions among people that could be achieved, for example, by exchanging or complementing things (e.g., invitations, recommendations, games, group discounts, etc.). Based on the social comparison and the self-enhancement need, a promotional campaign may include competitions, public quizzes, awards, etc. Finally, the self-affirmation need can be addressed by emphasizing customer identity by helping customers connect with similar others or helping them communicate who they are.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Product appearance is an important factor for new product success, because it provides aesthetic value for consumers (Bloch 1995). Additionally, consumers can use the product appearance as a cue for evaluating functional attributes that are difficult to verify at purchase (Berkowitz 1987; Creusen and Schoormans 2005). For example, an attractive camera may be judged to have greater picture quality. Product appearance can thus prompt inferences about the product’s functional attributes. Despite this form-function interdependency, the value of product appearance for prompting inferences about functional attributes has received only limited research attention. Furthermore, past research on this topic has focused primarily on the ‘What-is-beautiful-is-good’-principle by investigating the positive effect of an attractive appearance on performance quality or ease of use (Page and Herr 2002; Tractinsky, Katz, and Ikar 2000; Véryzer and Hutchinson 1998). Nevertheless, research on person perception has demonstrated that while glasses decrease a person’s attractiveness, they also increase the perceived intelligence (Hellström and Tekle 1994). Correspondingly, it would be too simplistic to suggest that the ‘What-is-beautiful-is-good’-principle is the only process by which product appearance prompts inferences about the product’s functional attributes. However, research on other possible underlying processes that can explain the inferences that are prompted by product appearance is currently lacking. The central objective of this article is to demonstrate that besides the ‘What-is-beautiful-is-good’-principle, product personality serves as a process that can explain the inferences consumers draw from the appearance about the product’s performance quality.

Product personality is defined as the set of human personality traits that are used to describe a product variant. For example, a Volkswagen Beetle has a cheerful personality, whereas a Volkswagen Touareg is dominant and tough. Past research has demonstrated that product personality affects consumers’ preferences because people prefer products with a personality that is similar to their own (Govers and Schoormans 2005). Although empirical research is currently lacking, scholars have proposed that consumers may also use a product’s human-like traits as an analogy for their behavior and capabilities (Janert and Stolterman 1997; Mugge, Govers, and Schoormans 2009). Accordingly, it is anticipated that consumers may use the product’s personality traits in a purchase situation to draw inferences about the product’s functional attributes. Specifically, this article focuses on conveying a business-like personality through the product appearance because this personality trait is generally associated with competence, trustworthiness, and seriousness, and thus seems especially valuable for prompting positive inferences about a product’s performance quality.

Based on the literature and a review of consumer products in today’s market, curvature was recognized as an important design characteristic to encourage a business-like personality: angular product designs are expected to have more business-like personality than curved ones. Furthermore, past research has demonstrated that people are more attracted to curved objects than to angular ones (Bar and Neta 2006), suggesting that investigating the effect of a business-like personality through the design characteristic curvature will help to rule out a possible ‘What-is-beautiful-is-good’-effect.

Summarizing, it is hypothesized that consumers will infer from the appearance that a product with an angular design has a higher performance quality than one with a curved design (H1). Furthermore, the product’s business-like personality will mediate this effect (H2). To test these hypotheses, four different versions of a CD player were created following a 2 (curvature: angular vs. curved) x 2 (visual complexity: high vs. low) between-subjects design (n=95). Visual complexity was added as a second independent variable to provide insights in the relative importance of curvature and the conveyed business-like personality for prompting inferences about performance quality. CD players were chosen as the stimulus product category, because CD players are gender-neutral and have a high penetration degree. For the manipulation of curvature, the overall shape and the buttons of the CD player were digitally altered in either a completely angular or completely curved design. To manipulate visual complexity, the number of buttons on the CD player was varied (5 vs. 18 buttons). Subjects were instructed to take a look at the picture and to respond to several single and multi-item measures.

Two 2 x 2 ANOVA s supported the convergent and discriminant validity of the manipulations. Furthermore, the results showed that subjects who were presented with the angular design perceived this product to have higher performance quality than those presented with the curved design (Mcurved=4.78 vs. Mangular=5.50; F(1, 87)=10.22, p<.05). Mediation analyses supported the hypothesis that the product’s business-like personality serves as a mediator for this effect. Furthermore, no significant effect for curvature on the product’s attractiveness was found (p>.20), suggesting that the ‘What-is-beautiful-is-good’-principle cannot provide an alternative explanation for the effect of curvature on performance quality. No effects of visual complexity were found, which suggests that this design characteristic does not prompt inferences about the product’s performance quality.

This research contributes to the literature on self-congruity (e.g., Sirgy 1982) and brand/product personality (Aaker 1997; Govers and Schoormans 2005) by demonstrating that products conveying specific personality traits do not only provide symbolic meaning to consumers. Product personality can also serve as a cue for evaluating functional attributes that are difficult to verify because consumers use the conveyed personality traits as an analogy. The present research thus provides a first step to address the gap in our understanding of product perception by identifying product personality as another process that explains the form-function interdependency, in addition to the widely known ‘What-is-beautiful-is-good’-principle. Specifically, it is concluded that a product with a business-like personality prompts positive inferences about the product’s performance quality. Nevertheless, more research is needed to understand which other product personality traits and/or design characteristics can prompt such inferences. More knowledge on these issues will contribute to our theoretical understanding of product perception and can help companies to purposely encourage particular positive inferences about the product’s functional attributes through the product appearance.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Violent content is frequently used in social cause advertising campaigns as a means of discouraging anti-social behaviour. This practice stands in stark contrast to studies in media that suggest exposure to violent content strongly influences an individual’s disposition to engage in violent behaviour at a later date. The present research investigates the effect of violence in social cause advertisements on implicit attitudes toward violence. Participants were then shown a 30 minute segment of a television program. Depending on the condition, the program viewed contained either violent or non violent content. Furthermore, three 2-3 minute ad breaks were included in the program. During each of the breaks, two ads, approximately 1 minute in duration, were shown. Depending on the condition that participants were in, they were randomly shown a social cause ad containing violent imagery either zero, once or three times. Filler ads were used in the remainder of the ad breaks. Once the television programs (and ad breaks) were viewed, participants were asked to complete the IAT. Individual differences in response to the violent advertising stimulus were found. Social cause advertisements are effective in weakening implicit associations with violence for a non-aggressive individual. That is, the results reveal that, interestingly, violent content in a television program has the greatest effect on non-aggressive individuals. Furthermore, for non-aggressive individuals, the inclusion of violent imagery in social cause advertisements weakens their association with violence. On the other hand, these campaigns are ineffective for aggressive individuals. As for aggressive individuals, somewhat surprisingly, watching a violent television program does not influence their implicit attitudes towards violence. However, a social cause advertisement, which portrays violence in a negative light, strengthens the association with violence for these individuals.

REFERENCES


Methodological Nationalism: Pitfalls in Consumer Research and Their Remedies
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

An outcome of two hundred years of hegemony of the nation-states in the world is a certain type of blindness that affects social sciences, particularly consumer research, and leads to caveats in research designs, analysis, and interpretation. Modern nation-states combine the idea of a culturally unified nation and the idea of a sovereign state that governs it. The lack of problematization in the role of countries as containers of a national culture, often referred to as methodological nationalism, and the assumption that countries are the natural units of analysis when examining macro-cultural processes lead to a number of commonly repeated mistakes, such as naive generalizations and misinterpretation of research findings.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the potential implications of methodological nationalism in consumer culture and marketing research and also to identify strategies that allow researchers to avoid or minimize the problems that stem from it. Methodological nationalism is a term coined by Martins (1974), and later used by Smith (2004) and other social scientists. It refers to the “assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, p. 301). Critics of methodological nationalism argue that it makes certain historical trends and forms of identity completely invisible. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) extended the debate on methodological nationalism by explaining that it can occur in three different forms: silencing, naturalization and territorial limitation.

Essentially, methodological nationalism can manifest itself in three different types of underlying assumptions in articles on marketing and consumer research. These assumptions involve a) neglecting the role of nation-states, b) naturalizing the influence of nation-states, and c) limiting consumer phenomenon to nation-state borders.

First, methodological nationalism is expressed in the form of a certain disregard, in research articles, toward the historical context in which the nation-states have come into being. Such articles tend to talk about countries in a static way, as if they have always been the same. They refer to past studies for attributes of countries, or national cultures, without considering the respective cultural dynamics. If surveys and snapshots are to be taken, researchers should at least acknowledge in a footnote or in a paragraph that assumptions of immutability were made. Thus, when reading these articles, the reader will be able to interpret the findings, bearing in mind the history, moment, and dynamics of that nation-state.

Second, methodological nationalism can be witnessed in the lack of problematization in research findings. In such studies, each country corresponds to one national culture, which is usually seen as a uniform field that holds the nation together. The articles that embrace this assumption usually include cross-country comparisons and eventually attribute the data to cultural differences, collectivism versus individualism, or other features associated with national cultures. When writing or reading these articles, scholars should remember that countries are not the equivalents of cultures and that the tendency for most people in a nation to exhibit certain characteristics cannot be interpreted as a feature of the national culture.

Third, methodological nationalism can express itself in the form of territorial reduction. Phenomena that are not necessarily constricted by national boundaries, such as smoking, drinking, uncertainty avoidance, are assumed to share the same boundaries as the countries in which they are studied. Even a country full of smokers or risk-loving individuals cannot be assumed to be free from regional influences or other cultural issues that are not limited by the nation-state boundaries. Therefore, when planning such a study, or reading its findings, it is important to bear in mind that the phenomenon under discussion has its own boundaries and that a methodological choice of studying it as enclosed within the limits of a country may alter the findings.

The current article uses the criticism on methodological nationalism to discuss the negative implications of these three assumptions in consumer research. The three strategies, based on literature on cosmopolitanism and transnationalism, to overcome these problems and generate more convincing interpretations are historicization, de-naturalization and trans-nationalization. The three proposed remedies are far from being sufficient to overcome the problems of methodological nationalism in consumer research. Nevertheless, the careful researcher and the attentive reader can turn to them to strengthen their arguments and enrich their interpretation.
Tourism Promotion and Nation Branding: Insights from the Turkish Case
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Nation branding, the management of a country’s image, has recently emerged as a distinct research domain with important theoretical and practical implications (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2000; Kotler and Gertner 2002; Morgan et al., 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Anholt, 2007). Effective management of a nation’s brand plays an important role in attracting tourists, investors, companies, and talented people as well as promoting the country’s export products in foreign markets. Tourism promotion constitutes one of the most visible tools of nation branding (Anholt 2007; Morgan et al. 2004). The examples of Spain (Olins 1999; Gilmore 2002) and New Zealand (Morgan et al. 2002) provide evidence of the role tourism can play in developing a strong nation brand.

However, while the literature emphasizes the positive impact of tourism on nation brand, there are also cases for which a similar positive impact remains less apparent. Consider, for example, Turkey. Since 1989s, Turkey has emerged as a key travel destination in the eastern Mediterranean. Yet, despite its impressive performance in tourism, Turkey continues to suffer from what Kotler and Gertner (2002, p.254) have identified as a “troubled image.” Studies report that Turkey has not been favorably positioned in the minds of consumers (Baloglu and Brinberg 1997; Sönmez and Srurakaya 2002; Tasci et al. 2007). Similarly, public opinion surveys and nation brand indices reveal a bleak outlook for Turkey’s image.

Intrigued by this paradox, we examine the factors that might limit tourism’s positive impact on nation branding. We collected data through in-depth expert interviews. In total we interviewed thirty-eight informants. Nine of the informants were Turkish while the remaining represented six different EU countries. Given that a substantial portion of international tourists come from the EU, we have focused on the EU countries. Experts from different fields such as politics, marketing, media, as well as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism officials were interviewed.

Analysis of the interview data revealed that there are three key factors that appear to limit tourism’s contribution to Turkey’s nation branding efforts. These are strategic, experiential and organizational factors. A core issue for Turkey’s tourism strategy and promotion is the lack of differentiation from its competitors. A substantial portion of Turkey’s tourism advertising fall under the generic sun-sand-sea category and revolve around the images of sandy beaches, warm weather, and attractive resorts. While such imagery may persuade potential visitors to choose Turkey for their summer holiday, it fails to contribute to the development of a unique nation brand image. Yet in differentiating in the tourism domain, Turkey faces a further positioning dilemma. On the one hand, it competes on similar propositions with the Western rivals like Italy, Spain, Greece and France. On the other hand, Turkey can also promise an exotic, slightly Oriental note. The challenge seems to be effectively combining these two opposing themes.

Furthermore, the holiday experience itself seems rather exchangeable. Turkey’s massive investment into package tours and all-inclusive resorts does not help to brand a holiday experience specific to Turkey and create a lasting emotional bonding with the country. Paradoxically, rather than help familiarize people with a place, partaking in mass tourism may even distance and alienate the visitor from the country. The gap between the experience at the resort and the experience in the countryside creates a tension that can negatively influence visitors’ perceptions of Turkey. While holiday experience can be highly favorable, it can also be largely disconnected from country-specific evaluations and remain as inauthentic. Such disconnection may weaken the positive effect of direct experience on building or changing attitudes and perceptions.

Our analysis also reveals various organizational challenges that Turkey faces in effectively utilizing tourism promotion for nation branding goals. First, due to various legislative, structural, and political reasons, the organization of tourism promotion lacks a professional approach. Instead of a big global communications company, Turkish government works with several small- to mid-size local or at best regional agencies. The outcome is market-specific tourism campaigns that differ tremendously in terms of their styles, slogans, and visuals. Second, it appears that there is a lack of use of marketing research and intelligence techniques in either devising or assessing tourism promotion efforts. Neither the Ministry nor the agencies track effectiveness of advertising campaigns and measure pre- and post-visit perceptions of consumers. Third, tourism promotion and other nation branding efforts are not coordinated. Different government agencies engage in various nation branding efforts that promote different aspects of Turkey. However, due to lack of a coordination mechanism, the activities often result in disconnected and short-term focused communication.

The findings of our study offer new insights into the nation branding literature. Until recently, except a few studies, image and reputation were often regarded as almost synonymous in the context of nation branding theory (Passow 2005; Anholt 2007). The Turkish case serves as a convincing example for the relevancy of the distinction between image and reputation for nation brands and the need for further research on the implications of reputation for nation branding theory. As the increasing number of tourists visiting the country indicates, Turkey is able to attract customers to its resorts. However, while sea-sun-sand advertisements, all-inclusive resorts, and quality service are able to promote a favorable image of Turkey as a “good value for money” travel destination in the Mediterranean, these tourism images and experiences appear not to be able to penetrate deeper and contribute to the reputation of Turkey.

At a deeper level, tourism promotion strategy and execution reveals that the Ministry subscribes to a management-centered, product-focused branding paradigm which assumes that brand meanings can be controlled and managed by the organization (Aaker 1995). The Turkish case exemplifies the problem of controlling or managing nation brand meanings and the necessity of treating nation brands as complex entities that are formed by a network of multiple actors with different and often contradictory interests and goals. Such a recognition calls for a shift from management-centered to “cultural branding” (Holt 2004) approaches which place more emphasis on the relational and co-constructive nature of brand building process.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although research has examined how consumers negotiate identity via consumption (Arnould and Price 2000; Peñaloza 1994), the role of rituals and brands in reaffirming an individual’s national identity (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005), and the role of country-of-origin image to brand equity (Beverland and Lindgreen 2002), to date, little research has examined how national identity emerges and what role consumption plays within that process. For example, the term “Kiwi” is used globally to refer (positively) to New Zealanders. Although many may regard this identifier as deriving from New Zealand’s national flightless bird of the same name, the origin of this term and its role actually derive from the shoe polish brand of the same name. Created prior to World War One in Australia by a Scottish expatriate (who named the brand after the flightless bird endemic to his New Zealand wife’s homeland), the widespread use of the product by New Zealand soldiers in the First and Second World Wars earned the troops the nickname “Kiwi.” In fact, far from being a symbol selected by a government committee, prior to the First World War, many national symbols were used by New Zealanders and New Zealand brands (the extinct Moa, the Maori Tiki, silver fern, fern frond, and even sheep). Arguably without the high profile boot polish (and two global conflicts), it is possible that the national term for New Zealanders would be very different today. In this paper, we explore the role of consumption and consumption artefacts (called “Kiwiana”—which refers to those images which have been adopted as symbols of national identity; Bell 2004) as part of the recent emergence of a shared New Zealand national culture.

The rich tapestry of art, imagery and consumption objects which comprise Kiwiana serve as a shared identity and act as boundary markers to New Zealanders, providing unique rituals and rites of passage, knowledge and modes of symbolic expression that serve to delineate a culturally enacted boundary, acceptable modes of consumption, and which identify members as belonging to a particular subcultural group (Belk and Costa 1998; Kates 2002; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Like boundary markers in other subcultures, Kiwiana is seen as important for New Zealanders to understand and appreciate the history, language, symbols and traditions, for members to fully participate in the “New Zealand” subculture (Arnould and Price 2000; Belk and Costa 1998; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001) through authenticating acts and authoritative performances (Arnould and Price 2000). We propose that Kiwiana is central to the emergence of a shared New Zealand identity or culture. This shared culture operates in tandem with other values including those derived from subcultures such as ethnic background or other groups of which individual consumers draw identity from (i.e., we are not proposing that the shared “Kiwiana” culture studied here is the sole, or even most important source of identity for New Zealanders; rather it is a resource from which consumers may use to achieve their ends; Beverland and Farrelly 2010).

We explore how this shared culture is co-created, how consumers, brands, and culture creators all act together to (unconsciously) co-create an ecology of meaning, a shared identity that the group members draw on in shaping their consumption behaviour. Specifically, we investigate the cultural tradition and join the circle between the brands, which employ Kiwiana imagery and symbolism, the creators of the culture itself, and consumers (cf. Thompson 1997). Over a three-year period, we conducted a series of interviews with sixty-six informants (12 consumers, 54 people in the creative industries including brand managers, artists, designers, authors, celebrities, journalists, iconic individuals, academics and local body and national marketers). Consumer interviews consisted of ten in-home interviews with New Zealanders living outside of New Zealand, focusing on the historical context and usage of Kiwiana in consumption practices and daily life. In addition to the interview data and pictures, on the 12 occasions that the authors visited New Zealand between 2007 and 2009, they captured visual imagery ranging from graffiti art through to advertisements, consumers, and branded spaces. As well, both authors read (and even authored) articles published in local magazines, newspapers and on websites.

The findings identify that consumption images and objects (labelled as “Kiwiana”) play a central role in the formation and reinforcement of a shared national identity. Through the adoption and use of Kiwiana, New Zealanders connect to one another, and also connect to an imagined, shared past. We find five themes relating to national identity creation: deliberate storytelling, elevating the ubiquitous to the sacred, subcultural mash-ups, intergenerational transfer, and identity projection. The use of Kiwiana represents both an authenticating act (in that it allows for personal connections to time, place and culture) and an authoritative performance (in that Kiwiana is used to express one’s allegiance to a national identity) (Arnould and Price 2000). The findings identify that national identity, far from being a monolithic or irrelevant concept within post-modern markets, is in fact an emergent, evolving narrative shaped by (among others) consumers, artists, cultural institutions, marketers, designers, and other influencers. This suggests that the loss of traditional identity markers under post-modern conditions may have been overplayed. Although traditional markers of identity are no longer as dominant as they once were, our findings also suggest that shared rituals at a national level are created to ensure an ongoing connection between the past and present. Where some suggest that consumption rituals at the micro level allow for personal authentication (Arnould and Price 2000), we identify a richer picture in which personal consumption rituals such as identity displays and intergenerational transfers operate against a background of social changes, deliberate creative acts, and cultural wide reassessments of mundane items.

To our knowledge, this is the first paper to examine the role of consumption objects in the creation of national identity. Whereas previous research identifies how objects gain legitimacy and therefore status and longevity by locating themselves within a national narrative (see Beverland 2005 for review), these findings indicate that the meaning transfer is not one-way, rather national identity is also shaped by consumption and brands.
Branding of the Anti-Market Brands: ‘Imagine’ Lennon and ‘Pop’ Bono

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brands are cultural, ideological and political objects (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling 2006; Askegaard 2006; Lash and Lury 2007). Whilst the importance of branding has been developed, paradoxically, the consumer resistance and anti-branding movement has also become a central part of consumer culture (Klein 1999; Koizneta 2002; Holt 2002; Askegaard 2006) mainly towards global brands (Firat 2004; Yazıcıoğlu and Firat 2007; Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Varman and Belk 2009). Brand managers neither like consumer resistance nor any tensions, thinking that any one of these would destroy their brands. Ironically, there are anti-market brands that prefer to create tensions, but still become successful. The rock brands. The growing literature points to the centrality of the music in the historical process of cultural production and distribution (Attali 1985; Born 1993; Bradshaw, McDonagh, Sherifflock, and Bradshaw 2005; Giesler and Schroeder 2006; Bradshaw, McDonagh, and Marshall 2006; Hesmondhalgh 2008; Bradshaw and Shankar 2008; Yazıcıoğlu and Firat 2008) also supports the importance of this type of branding.

In the pursuit to answer such issues, this research initially focuses on the two anti-market rock brands that have both been regarded as symbols of political and musical prominence: Lennon and Bono. This paper reports the preliminary findings of this comprehensive research.

Brands represent capitalist institutions which generate their own series of productive practices (Arvidsson 2006). Lennon and Bono, as brand extensions of The Beatles and U2, are among those who illustrate the myth-embodied power and self-promoted mass-mediated and the anti-market brands of rock. Both brands are also recognized due to their musical prominence, anti-war and anti-market public personas, and provide us a rich texture. Lennon and Bono can also mediate iconographic modes of remembering and provoke controversies and tensions in the public. The richness of the literature applauding and despising Lennon and Bono has also supported the choice of these two rock brands.

The tension between art and commerce (e.g., Holbrook 2005; Venkatesh and Meamber 2006; Schroeder 2005) is inherent in many forms of art, but the music, the rock brands in particular represent a big industry. The traditional role of the artist in opposing bourgeois values as opposed to economic pragmatics is even required for survival and sustenance in the competitive music industry (Bradshaw, Sherifflock, and McDonagh 2003). Branding intersects with arts as Schroeder (2005) finds that in the visual arts. Musical brands can utilize branding and commerciality to reduce their reliance on the market (Bradshaw, McDonagh, and Marshall 2006; Kubacki and Croft 2004), despite the context highly differs from visual arts: A reproduction of a painting is almost worthless and despised, but the success of a rock musician is rated by the number of albums/CDs sold.

To best study the meanings and elements of the anti-market rock brands, the relevant aspects of the sociology of (rock) music and brand theory were abstracted and linked with the rich literature on Lennon and Bono. In the research, multiple methods that include content analysis (Kassarjian 1971) and in-depth interviews with media and empirical context were compared and contrasted to portray the two anti-market brands. Analysis began with the identification of dominant themes that are also suggested by the literature, e.g., the role of legitimization in branding (e.g., Fournier 1998). The emerging themes were then applied to the primary data. This iterative coding will be revisited after the completion of data collection. Despite the limited number of interviews and literature/media coverage regarding the narratives of the two brands, these all plot a promising course for future research.

The preliminary findings reveal that the anti-rock brands need to legitimize themselves through several processes that help them to resolve the tensions within the dramas they create. Meanwhile, resolving such tensions both empower themselves and their fans (Firat and Dholokia 2006; Thompson 2004; Holt 2002) and help them remain authentic. Importantly, anti-market rock brands seem to be authenticated by the tensions they create, but that has already been discovered by the managers and the music industry. Thus creating tensions and resolving them eventually help in the brand building—but only conditionally. Just for a start, these denote some implications for branding. It seems that the less the brand equity, the less it can benefit from the socially responsible and charitable work that can even work to destroy the brand.

The more the rock brands are empowered by the melodrama they create in the marketplace, that is the more they are able to set their own rules to fight against the market (Bradshaw, McDonagh, and Marshall 2006), the more convincing they become in their promises for freedom and hope. In other words, the more powerful they become, the more powerful their messages for the empowerment of people transmits thoroughly because being anti-market conveys the message of promising to defeat the market.

The anti-market rock brands successfully juxtapose the contrasting opinions of their activism and music and show us the postmodern marketplace of the future (Yazıcıoğlu and Firat 2008). Importantly, a brand has to be part of the culture of ordinary lives and even has to facilitate mutually constructed desires and the enrichment of meaning. The anti-market rock brands suggest that the marketing efforts are embedded in the brand itself in contexts where consumer participation is essential (Firat and Dholokia 2006). In the future of branding, the processes of this embeddedness seem to be put more in question as a fairly under-researched phenomenon.

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Product Placement in Song Lyrics: Impact of Cognitive Load, Disclosure, Valence and Strength
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In order to cut through the clutter, to circumvent technological innovations (e.g., ad-skipping digital video recorder) or to target consumers, advertisers use the whole available spectrum of communication means. One of these emerging tactics is product placement. Academics have studied a variety of different settings such as movies, sitcoms, game shows, video games or music videos (e.g., Avery and Ferraro 2000; Gupta and Gould 2007; Russell 2002; Russell and Stern 2006; Yang et al. 2006). However, research on placements in song lyrics is scant. This lack of research is even more surprising since practitioners are using product placement in songs and this phenomenon has been recognized as worthwhile by academics (e.g., Russell and Belch 2005). The purpose of this research is to fill this gap. Through three studies, we assess the impact of product placement in song lyrics on memory (recognition) and attitudes toward the artist and the brand. Our two first studies rely on Campbell and Kirmanni’s (2000) framework on the effects of accessibility and cognitive capacity. The two last studies are based on Russell and Stern’s (2006) balance model.

Studies 1 and 2
The two first studies assess the impact of disclosure and cognitive busyness on attitudes and memory toward the placement. Past research has shown that accessibility of ulterior motives impacts consumers’ perceptions of marketing tactics. The purpose of hybrid messages, such as product placement, is, precisely, to disguise the communicators’ ulterior motives. Two different theories may explain the path consumers will follow once they become aware of the true intent of the placement. On the one side, Friestad and Wright’s (1994) persuasion model posits that when consumers become aware of the persuasive intent of a message, they will activate their persuasion knowledge and “discount what the spokesperson says” (Friestad and Wright 1994, p. 13). On the other side, past research has shown that disclosure of persuasive intent might affect brand evaluations positively (Wei et al. 2008).

Moreover, when exposed to a song, two different mental processes might arise. On the one side, the song and its lyrics may be the primary focus of respondents. On the other side, people are often executing other activities while listening to music. As a consequence, the lyrics may not be consciously processed but only be part of a general “noise.”

The results of the two first studies provide two major findings. First, we show that memory for the placement is not only dependent on respondents’ cognitive load but also on the interaction between cognitive load and disclosure. Second, the impact of disclosure on attitudes toward the artist and the brand was assessed. Although there was no two way interaction between cognitive load and disclosure, we found a main effect for disclosure. This effect goes in opposite direction for the artist and the brand. Whereas the artist is perceived more negatively (study 1 and 2), the brand is perceived more positively (study 2) or equally (study 1) when the placement tactic is disclosed compared to when it is not disclosed.

Study 3
It may be argued that product placement depend not only on disclosure and consumers’ attention, but also on the actual implementation of these placements. In other words, the way artists choose to talk about a brand might impact attitudes toward the brand and the artist. Brands may be mentioned in a positive or negative manner (valence) and they may be mentioned once or several times (strength).

Concerning valence, we argue that if audiences perceive the mentioning of a brand in a song as negative, they will refute the hypothesis of a possible alliance between the company and the artist. Following the same rationale as in the two first studies, we expect commercial deals to be perceived negatively by respondents. Hence, we hypothesize that negative comments about brands in songs will elicit better attitudes, as opposed to less positive attitudes if audiences perceive that artists and brands are trying to influence them by making positive comments about products.

Grounding our explanation on Russell and Stern (2006), we suggest that the influence of valence is moderated by the strength of the relationship between artists and brands. We state that the placement’s strength will be a catalyst of the effect of valence on attitudes toward the brand and the artist. In other words, repetition of a positive brand mention will make the commercial deal between a brand and an artist particularly salient. We postulate that consumers will react negatively to such an ostensible persuasion attempt.

The results show that when brands are communicated negatively, individuals have more positive attitudes toward artists and brands compared to a situation in which brands are communicated positively. These result may, at first sight, seem counterintuitive and in contradiction with business practices. Nonetheless, recent research has started to uncover this interesting phenomenon. Results also demonstrate that repetition acts as a catalyst of valence. More precisely, when an artist mentions a brand on several occasions positively, attitudes toward the brand and the artist are at their lowest level. In other words, a positive mention triggers negative attitudes toward the artist and the brand, specifically when this mention is repeated several times.

Conclusion
This research is novel as it focuses on a specific domain barely attended to date, namely product placement in songs. It unveiled significant differences in attitudes over artists and brands according to public disclosure, cognitive busyness, valence and strength. Importantly, the current research provides implications for both brand and artist managers, and policy makers alike. In particular, results show that public disclosure might have a particularly negative impact on artists while brands might remain untouched (or even positively influenced) by this phenomenon. Moreover, the third study demonstrates that misused valence can discount individual attitudes over brands and artists. These results may be opposite to what is expected and fostered by marketers. Finally, the effect of valence was moderated by the strength between the artist and the brand. Repeated positive mentions of a brand name have the worst effect on attitudes toward the brand and artist.
In Defence of Authenticity. An Analysis of Consumers’ Responses to A Crisis of Authenticity
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Authenticity of objects and experiences is an important topic for psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists (Trilling 1972). Recently, consumer researches have also started to deal with this topic and, particularly, have noted that authenticity can refer to market offerings, such as products, services, and brands, which are perceived as true, genuine, or real (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Grayson and Shulman 2000; Rose and Wood 2005). In particular, an interesting contribution is that of Grayson and Martinec (2004), who distinguish between indexical and iconic authenticity. The first meaning of the term mirrors that of MacCannell (1973), viewing authenticity as objects’ intrinsic property. Conversely, iconic authenticity resembles the viewpoint of constructivist theorists (Bruner 1994; Cohen 1988; DeLyser 1999), who argue that authenticity is not intrinsic to an object, but the result of a social construction. That is, it would not be related (only) to objects’ intrinsic properties. Rather, it would be co-created through the interaction between several stakeholders, like producers or cultural intermediaries, who may influence individuals’ perceptions of the objects. In addition, especially in consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005), the role of individual consumers and consumption communities is also considered fundamental in this process of co-creation (Arnould and Price 2000; Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007; Kozinets 2002a; Rose and Wood 2005). Consequently, authenticity’s meanings could change dynamically in different contexts, for different people, and over time (Peterson 1997; Phillips 1997).

Nevertheless, the reaction of individuals to the processes through which authenticity can evolve or devolve over time is an under-researched topic. Therefore, this paper deals with the crisis of authenticity in an object, which is the process through which an object considered authentic—due to its involvement in a fact that might undermine its authenticity—can be unmasked as being inauthentic. In particular, the aim is to discuss how consumers respond to the crisis of authenticity in an object, which they believed to be authentic.

The study specifically focuses on the field of popular music, which is a context in which the authenticity of market offerings can be a very important value (Bradshaw and Holbrook 2007; Dyer 1991; Frith 1988; Kightley 2001; Moore 2004; Thornton 1996). Furthermore, this seems to be an appropriate context for this analysis because musicians’ authenticity is in constant evolution and they often face troubles in negotiating it (Barker and Taylor 2007). In particular, the band chosen for the analysis is called Afterhours and is an Italian independent band, probably Italy’s top alternative rock band. They have been selected because in 2009 they participated in the Italian Sanremo Music Festival, the majority of their followers used to deem them authentic because of identifying several indexical and iconic cues (Grayson and Martinec 2004) in them. Then, after their decision to attend a TV show, which is considered inauthentic by many fans of them, many supporters have accused them to have betrayed the community, to be inconsistent and sold out. However, after their performance in the Festival, the defence of authenticity also emerges as a potentially important individuals’ response, when authenticity is undermined. Particularly, individuals’ fantasy (Belk and Costa 1998; Daniel 1996; Rose and Wood 2005) and the negotiation between fans within the community (Cova et al. 2007; Kates 2002) seem to play important roles in the process of defence. First, fantasy would enable individuals to develop perspectives that are more acceptable in order to read the fact that occurred. It is in fact evident how, after Afterhours performed in Sanremo, their supporters have started to propose different explanations for their participation, in order to justify their unexpected behaviour. Second, the community is the contest in which these different motivations are suggested, evaluated, and negotiated. In fact, according to the discussion that follows from enthusiasts’ opinions about these explanations, those that seem to be more effective in defending the band’s authenticity, would be legitimated within the community. Put in other words, it seems that, due to the fans’ different interpretations of the band’s behaviour and to the community’s negotiation of them, new forms of authenticity may be created by the community itself.

Therefore, this research remarks how authenticity would not be static (MacCannell 1973) but would be dynamic (Holt 2002; Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006), subjective (Grayson and Martinec 2004), negotiated (Kates 2002), and co-produced (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Rose and Wood 2005). Moreover, the fact that Afterhours’ authenticity survives despite the existence of opposing views also suggests that consumers might maintain their sense of authenticity even when faced with events that seem to undermine it. Actually, if an object is becoming less authentic, developing a new construction for understanding it and defending its authenticity, could be easier than admitting that it is turning into something inauthentic. Consequently, even though many scholars support the idea that authenticity is a social construction, this research also calls for reflection upon the fact that this interpretation could be only the scholars’ viewpoint, while individuals might perceive authenticity as a fact and not accept that matters can change over time.

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Is Product-Cause Fit a Panacea in Cause-Related Marketing? Impacts of Type of Fit, Product Type, and Donation Magnitude
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Partnership between a product with a cause is referred to as strategically cause-related marketing (CRM) (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). It has become a major corporate philanthropic trend to donate money to a charity each time a consumer makes a purchase. Recent studies have begun to examine potential factors that might affect CRM effectiveness and to investigate when consumers would be more likely to buy a product associated with a cause. One influential variable that has been identified to determine the success of CRM is the fit between a product and a cause. While researchers agree that choosing the “right” cause is essential to a successful CRM strategy, there are two major gaps in the knowledge. First, we know little in terms of what constitutes a good fit and its role in determining the effects of CRM. The results of recent studies are inconsistent and even contradictory regarding the influences of product-cause association. Second, potential moderating variables in explaining the impacts of product-cause fit on the effectiveness of CRM remains unexplored. This article contributes to this evolving stream of research by examining the potential impacts of a consistent-fit (i.e., a cause and a product have consistent images or similar values), and a compensatory-fit (i.e., a selected cause is used to improve the harmful image through a compensation act) with two moderators: perceived product hedonism, and donation magnitude.

A computer-based survey involving choice-based conjoint interviews was carried out. Participants consisted of 512 undergraduate students because college students have been identified as a key market segment of CRM promotions (Chang 2008; Cui et al. 2003). Cellular phone was selected to be the test product of choice because it simultaneously provides two types of values: hedonic and utilitarian (Kim and Huang 2006) and college students are familiar with this product as well. To simulate realistic consumer decision making and test the potential moderators affecting CRM effectiveness of advertisement messages, the attributes in the current research incorporated the researched variables including product-cause fit (consistent-fit vs. compensatory-fit vs. low-fit), perceived product hedonism, and donation magnitude with various product attributes (i.e., price discount, style, camera function, battery and product price).

After successful manipulation checks, a conjoint analysis was conducted to examine proposed hypotheses. Four observations are noteworthy. First, contrary to our predictions and previous research (e.g., Pracejus and Olsen, 2004; Rifon et al., 2004), a low fit between a product and a cause is more effective than high fit between the two. The findings here actually are consistent with what Bloom et al. (2006) argue that promotion with a high-fit social cause may be viewed as opportunistic and the sponsored company is perceived as seeking commercial gain of itself. Second, with two types of high fit, the assessment of cause nature may be an important consumer heuristic. When promoting a utilitarian product, consistent-fit between a product and a cause is more effective than compensatory-fit. The results echo what previous research (e.g., Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Szykman 2004; Yoon et al. 2006) suggests that perceptions of a company’s profit opportunities as obvious can lead to positive attitudes to the product bundled with a cause. In contrast, compensatory-fit between a product and a cause can be an alternative to facilitate CRM effectiveness when consumers perceive the product as hedonic. A possible reason can be that a high-fit cause chosen to compensate for the product image may strengthen the impacts of affect-based complementarity in addition to guilt accompanied with the purchase. Third, the impacts of product-cause fit may be moderated by donation magnitude. The present findings highlight that consumers consider donation magnitude as a crucial piece of information in decision-making. Compared with product-cause consistent-fit, compensatory-fit is less effective when donation magnitude is lower (i.e., 1% and 5% in this study). However, the effect of compensatory-fit is similar to that of consistent-fit when the donation magnitude is high (i.e., 10%). A high donation magnitude may enable a company to overcome their selection of a compensatory-fit cause. Fourth, the cumulative effects of product type and donation magnitude cannot be ignored. The findings are useful for managers in marketing when selecting partners and determining the size of donation to the NPO. When promoting a compensatory-fit cause, perceived product hedonism is important, with strong perceptions of hedonism leading to consumer preferences toward the CRM. Donation magnitude is also important, with higher magnitude leading to the likelihood of choosing the product with CRM, suggesting that the ideal combination is high perceived product hedonism and high donation magnitude. If the brand cannot control the compensatory fit (e.g., a compensatory-fit cause has been chosen), it may be better to position the product as a highly hedonic product and allow more donation to dominate the communication.

Our discrete choice analysis turned out to be a powerful approach to investigating consumer preferences for different CRM campaigns. This conjoint research provides much richer results than simple willingness-to-pay studies or direct inquires into people’s attitudes, since we obtain less socially desired answers by taking an indirect approach to revealing consumer preferences. The current research provides potential guidance for practitioners in selecting appropriate NPO partners or social causes in CRM programs. Managers should consider that when the key target groups identify a product as utilitarian, then the compensatory fit between product and cause becomes less of a strategic issue. Instead, consumers should be more favorable to the consistent fit between the two. Conversely, when consumers classify the product as highly hedonic, a company should exercise caution in selecting partner causes by explicitly factoring in the type of fit it shares with candidate charities. In this case, compensatory fit between product and cause should elicit more favorable consumer responses. The study further suggests that consumers perceiving a product as hedonic are more sensitive to a cause that is compensatory to the product image, and are thus more likely to be influenced by this cue than their counterparts who view it as being of utilitarian value.

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Improving Attitude towards Compliance with Medication through a Public Health Campaign:  
A Field Study  
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In this research we investigate the effectiveness of a public health campaign on attitude towards compliance. Consumers’ willingness to comply with medical advice and prescriptions is highly relevant for their health and well-being. For instance, non-compliance from patients suffering from a common disease such as hypertension can lead to serious health problems. Equally, stopping therapy in the middle of a course of antibiotics could lead to resistance and thus cause severe health problems in the future. The high number of people affected by chronic diseases makes compliance a key factor—not only for consumers: costs attributed to non-compliance are estimated to be approximately 10 billion euros each year in Germany alone (Schmitt 2009). In the US, non-compliance has been estimated to cost the US health care system $100 billion each year (Horne 2006).

In our paper we ask whether public health campaigns can effectively improve general attitude towards compliance. However, to date, medical, pharmaceutical and consumer behavioural research has not analysed such campaigns: do they just go up in smoke, merely burning money from the health care budget, or can public health campaigns really change attitudes to compliance? We follow the call of Keller and Lehmann (2010) who encourage research on mass media public service health campaigns and their efficiency.

Compliance in a medical sense has been defined as the extent to which a patient’s behaviour matches the prescriber’s advice (Haynes, Taylor, and Sackett 1979). Non-compliance can be unintentional or intentional (Banning in press; Horne 2006). Both are relevant for public health. Forgetfulness, for example, has been reported to be one of the major factors of non-compliance (Jin et al. 2008; Reynolds et al. 2004). Thus, in our study we focused on both unintentional and intentional non-compliance. Scepticism towards therapy has been shown to contribute to intentional non-compliance (Jin et al. 2008) and was thus investigated as a particular aspect of compliance in our research.

Different strategies can be identified in order to influence compliance. One such strategy relies on mass media communication promoting compliance as a health issue; however, research about the effectiveness of such programmes is still scarce. A recently published analysis by Abrams and Maibach (2008) shows that public health campaigns could be an efficient way of improving health-related behaviours, as well as their attitudinal precursors. Rimal, Flora, and Schooler (1999) also demonstrated that exposure to a mass media health campaign leads to a significant improvement in consumers’ overall health orientation. One could argue, though, that such information campaigns could be inefficient since they are targeted at the general public and thus also reach consumers who do not need to take medication regularly. Such waste coverage is almost unavoidable and such inefficiencies are not trivial considering the exorbitant costs (Keller and Lehmann 2010). However, we believe that public campaigns should also have a preventive character and sensitize consumers to the topic. Thus, in our empirical study, we first concentrate on the effects of a mass media campaign on attitudes to compliance, since we are interested primarily in compliance in general terms and not in compliance with regard to specific medical conditions whereby success could be measured using direct measurement techniques. We argue that a public health campaign—by raising awareness of the importance of compliance and of the risks of non-compliance—can improve attitude towards compliance and can reduce scepticism about medication, given that

- the elements of the campaign are received favourably, and
- the campaign works on an advertising schedule that ensures consumers are exposed to the advertisements and media reports.

H1: When consumers are exposed to a favourably evaluated public health campaign promoting compliance, they will have a more positive and less sceptical attitude towards compliance.

The second strategy relies on improving personal communication between doctors and patients. In their literature review, Jin et al. (2008) point to the importance of a “healthy relationship” between patients and doctors. Trust in the prescriber is closely linked to trust in and a positive attitude towards the prescription itself (Jin et al. 2008). We hypothesise that mass media health campaigns can add to the positive effect of personal communication about compliance:

H2: The higher the trust in prescriptions issued by the doctor, the more positive the attitude towards compliance, but the proposed effect of the public health campaign is not suppressed by the effect of this personal communication.

Further, we incorporated into our study demographic and medication-related factors such as age, gender, and number of doses. Findings on the impact of these factors on therapeutic compliance are not unequivocal for them all (Jin et al. 2008). Furthermore, we investigated the influence of personality facets, experience orientation and conscientiousness, as well as consumers’ own health involvement, and the impact of these factors on attitude towards compliance. We consider that such individual predispositions are more important for compliance than demographic variables. Thus:

H3: The lower the experience orientation and the higher the conscientiousness and health involvement of a patient, the more positive her/his attitude towards compliance. The influence of age, gender, and amount of medication to be taken has to be controlled for.

We tested our hypotheses in a two-stage research design. In a pretest and a first survey period, we ensured that campaign advertisements and messages were evaluated positively. Since consumers might be inclined to report compliance as they deem socially desired, it was necessary to incorporate a design that ruled out such bias. Consequently, we chose a within-groups and a between-groups design:

- In the within-groups design, we tested whether consumers whom we interviewed during the first survey period had changed their attitude towards compliance after the campaign. We compared the effect for consumers with and without recall of the campaign and found that consumers exposed to the advertisement reported significantly more
positive attitudes towards compliance than those who did not remember any of the campaign messages.

- In the between-groups design, in the second survey period we only interviewed consumers who had not taken part in the first survey. With this design, possible testing effects can be ruled out. Results corroborate findings from the within-groups design; thus, H1 finds full support.

In a second step, we investigated the antecedents of compliance. Findings support H2 and show that, although trust in the prescriber is the strongest predictor of a positive attitude towards compliance, the public health campaign adds a positive effect. This further supports H1. Furthermore, high conscientiousness and health involvement increase attitude towards compliance, whereas experience orientation significantly decreases this attitude. Thus, H3 is also supported.

This research demonstrates the effectiveness of a public health campaign on positive attitude towards compliance. The effect of the mass media campaign is dominated neither by personal communication between patient and doctor nor by demographic or medication-related factors. This means that the money spent on this campaign adds to the efforts of doctors to improve attitude towards compliance in their patients.
INTRODUCTION

The new focus on consumption and environmental concerns, such as global warming and associated aspects like health concerns, has improved awareness of what is called environmental marketing (McDonald and Oates 2006) and it has taken many turns over the last thirty years (Kilbourne 2008). An extensive range of ethical concerns affects the consumers’ buying patterns, namely oppressive regimes, human rights, labor relations, land rights, the environment, irresponsible marketing, fair trade, nuclear power, armaments, animal testing, factory farming and political donations (Newholm and Shaw 2007). Goleman (2009) suggests that adverse consequences can be understood in three realms: geosphere (soil, air, water, and climate), biosphere (human bodies, those of other species and plants), and sociosphere (human concerns such as conditions for workers).

Some authors (Homer and Kahle 1988; Kilbourne et al. 2005) consider consumer values as central to consumer decision making. According to the Schwartz theory of values (Schwartz 1992), values can be organized into an order of importance, being classified by the needs and goals that they serve. Vitell et al. (2001) found that consumers are more guided by principles or values (deontology) than by consequences (teleology) when making ethical decisions. Numerous studies have linked ethical or sustainable behavior to personal values (Vermeir and Verbeke 2006). Sustainability is an attribute on prosocial concern, were considered most important in ethical consumer decision making. Also, the importance placed upon self-direction values, with an emphasis on independent thought and action, supports findings by Shaw et al. (2000), where it could be suggested that the acquisition of information is driven by needs for control and mastery inherent in self-direction values.

The more individuals are encouraged and enabled to act and to think for themselves, the more their capabilities increase and the more self-reliant they feel. Consumers become more aware of sustainability and in consequence their concerns over the several problems that are arising on the planet would rise. Although several other factors influence purchase in real life situations, we propose that promoting self-efficacy would consolidate the adoption of ethical consumption practices. This can be achieved by reducing ambivalent feelings towards ethical products: the lower the ambivalence, the higher self-efficacy is felt.

ETHICAL CONSUMPTION—FROM VALUES TO ACTIONS

The new focus on consumption and environmental concerns, has improved awareness of what is called environmental marketing (McDonald and Oates 2006) and it has taken many turns over the last thirty years (Kilbourne 2008). An extensive range of ethical concerns affects the consumers’ buying patterns, namely oppressive regimes, human rights, labor relations, land rights, the environment, irresponsible marketing, fair trade, nuclear power, armaments, animal testing, factory farming and political donations (Newholm and Shaw 2007). Goleman (2009) suggests that adverse consequences can be understood in three realms: geosphere (soil, air, water, and climate), biosphere (human bodies, those of other species and plants), and sociosphere (human concerns such as conditions for workers).

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DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though public interest in sustainability is increasing and consumer attitudes are mainly positive, behavioral patterns remain inconsistent with attitudes. Our main interest is dedicated to the decision-making process and we propose a conceptual model which aims to understand the adoption of ethical consumption practices. A lot can be done in this area and we thus suggest some avenues for future research. We propose the creation of a unified construct such as concern over sustainability, more broad than the concept of environmental concern, that integrates concerns over the biosphere, the geosphere, and the sociosphere. Concepts such as knowledge-based trust, ambivalence and self-efficacy and their influence on ethical consumption were never analyzed. It would be interesting to explore the effects on ambivalent feelings and perceived self-efficacy of an improvement of knowledge-based trust on large corporations.
(for instance, through the creation of reliable labeling by independent institutions). Behaviors will only take place if the individual is concerned and this concern is influenced by the core values proposed by Schwartz (1992) and the specific values suggested by Shaw (2005). This proposition itself needs to be empirically tested in different contexts. Also, it would be interesting to explore effective communication strategies focused in the proposed core-values would have impact on concern over sustainability. By explaining what the key-components are we intent not only to improve the concern over sustainability but most of all to understand and foster the adoption of ethical consumption practices.
Customer Value in Consumption-Systems: The Case of Mobile Telecommunication
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Since consumers attempt to maximize value in their market exchanges with product/service providers, 'customer value' is of fundamental interest for managers and scholars as well (Bharadwaj and Floh 2008). It has been called one of the most powerful forces in today's marketplace (Holbrook 1994; Patterson and Spreng 1997) and an underlying source of competitive advantage (Woodruff 1997). What remains disregarded are market offerings that comprise a combination of service and product subsystems. Yet, firms are increasingly involved in marketing of consumption-systems that contain both a significant product and service subsystem. They are realising the complementary role of product and service subsystems in structuring consumer experiences. Hence, the product subsystem influences the service subsystem and vice versa. These effects are called "crossover effects" (Johnson, Herrmann, and Huber 2006; Mittal, Kumar, and Tsitsos 1999). Mittal et al. (1999) argue that these effects occur when the product or service components are managed by different firms, as it is the case in the mobile telecommunication industry. The mobile phone and mobile service are the key subsystems of the mobile telecommunication consumption-system. To grasp the complex interactions embedded in the consumption-systems perspective, a multi-dimensional conceptualisation of the customer value construct seems required that comprises not only functional dimensions (e.g., utility) but also social or hedonic dimensions (e.g., enjoyment) (Petrick 2002; Sánchez-Fernández, Iniesta-Bonillo, and Holbrook 2009; Sheth, Newman, and Gross 1991; Sweeney and Soutar 2001).

The main purpose of this study is twofold. First, we analyse the roles of the different value dimensions in fostering overall customer value depending on the type of offering (product or service). Second, we empirically examine the interactions of overall customer value of the product and the service subsystems in forming loyalty intentions toward the different parties involved.

According to previous findings, customer value was operationalised as a second-order factor. The first-order constructs were measured with items used previously in literature (Cronin, Brady, Brand, Hightower, and Shemwell 1997; Johnson et al. 2006; Petrick 2002; Sweeney and Soutar 2001; Yang and Peterson 2004). The items were adapted to the context of the present study. Two focus groups were conducted in order to test the appropriate wording of the items. Additionally, a workshop with seven industry experts to check for clarity and applicability of the survey instrument was held. A seven-point rating scale, 1="strongly disagree," 7="strongly agree," was used throughout the survey. Data collection was administered with an online questionnaire. An electronic invitation to take part in the research project was emailed to 990 customers of one of the largest European mobile service providers. A mobile phone was promised to a randomly drawn respondent as incentive.

The results indicate satisfactory fit indices of the structural model: χ²=1146; df=582; CFI=.915; TLI=.908; RMSEA=.063; SRMR=.100. The reflective second-order factor overall value has large and highly significant paths to all first-order dimensions of customer value. The importance of functional value is highest, followed by emotional value, economical value and social value. This is true for both sides: mobile phones and mobile services. The relationship between overall value and customer loyalty is strong and highly significant. Additionally, overall value explains a large amount of variation of the outcome variable customer loyalty (R²: loyalty mobile phones: 54.3%, R² loyalty mobile services: 62.0%). These high numbers clearly indicate satisfactory nomological validity of our model and its hypotheses.

In order to identify the crossover effects, the authors calculated the correlation between the two overall value constructs (mobile phones and services) as well as the indirect effect of overall value mobile phones on customer loyalty mobile services and vice versa. The correlation between the overall value mobile phones and overall value mobile services is moderately high and significant. Additionally, the indirect effects of overall customer value on customer loyalty are significant and substantially high. These results suggest the existence of hypothesized cross-over effects in the mobile telecommunication industry.

The main findings of the present study can be summarised as follows: First, the conceptualisation of customer value as a multidimensional, higher order construct has been confirmed by the data. Second, analyses have shown that significant differences between mobile phones and services exist regarding the evaluation of perceived customer value. The functional value dimension is of comparable relevance for both mobile phones and mobile services. Surprisingly, the emotional value for mobile services is significantly above the emotional value for mobile devices. Emotional value relates to positive feelings and fun (Sweeney and Soutar 2001). However, in the mobile service context (positive) emotions may also be related to avoiding negative feelings and providing reliable services (Pura 2005), partly explaining this result. The impact of economical on overall value is strong for mobile services (.862), albeit significantly less strong for mobile devices (.485). In fact, this result may be explained by the large amount of free cell phones given as incentive for new contracts or renewals with the service provider. For mobile phones and mobile services the social value dimension is of medium relevance (.434,.537). Yet, the importance of the social value of mobile services is higher, albeit insignificantly. Third, the strong impact of overall value as well as the high portions of explained variance of customer loyalty underline the importance of customer value for outcome variables such as customer loyalty. This is true for both mobile phones and services. Fourth, the overall value evaluations are strongly interconnected. In other words, the assessment of the service provider is largely dependent on the value evaluations of the cell phone and vice versa. Based on these results, strong cooperations between service providers and cell phone manufacturers seem inevitable. Fifth, the calculated cross-over effects are substantial (.330; .309). On average, the cross-over effects account for one third of total effects. To put it in other words, 30% of the customer loyalty towards a service provider is based on the customer's value evaluation of his/her mobile phone.

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Masculine Experience of Happiness in New Zealand: How Young Men Consume Happiness
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Right or wrong, consumption has been associated with the human search for happiness. Research tells us that happiness does not come from consuming, yet people continue to behave as if money and things will make them happy (Csikszentmihalyi 1999). What do people really think makes them happy? Few studies have tried to understand how individuals link consumption with their happiness. Our work explores how individuals construct happiness for themselves. We advance cross-disciplinary understanding of sources of happiness and the role consumption plays in personal constructions of happiness.

This paper presents our hermeneutic analysis (Thompson 1997) of five New Zealand men’s construction of happiness. We asked them to take photos (Ziller 1990; Heisley and Levy 1991; Coulter 2006) of what represents happiness and unhappiness in their lives. Phenomenological interviews (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989; van Manen 1997) explored how the photos represent the essence of happiness for them.

Participants were aged between 20 and 25. John is a nature fanatic; he is trendy and loves competitive outdoor sports. James is competitive and smug; he brought the most photos. Rich is a nurturer who likes cooking and enjoys the adrenaline rush of the restaurant’s kitchen. Boris is carefree, works a fill-in job and is passionate about cars. Dave is a down-to-earth bloke and a dreamer; his photos resonated with national identity.

The photo essay (omitted here) contains a selection of photos and text to give a flavor for the young men’s happiness. We organized it around the main themes of home and winning.

Home is anywhere these men feel unthreatened, feel safe as themselves, where they can let their guards down, relax and have fun. The concept of home covers a broad range of social and spatial elements, including family, friends, fun, relaxation, flow, living space and the natural world. Home is a place in which these young men feel centered, relaxed, un-judged, protected and esteemed. The participants represented home by the house where they live (all of them), their family homes (Rich, Dave), locality/nationality (New Zealand for Dave, NZ, Arizona, and New York for James), the natural outdoor environment (the base camp (John), huts (Dave), under the boat (John), on the beach (Dave)), their cars (Boris and James), and the racetrack (Boris). The house as home holds memories of good times; recollection of the good times makes them happy. Furthermore, activities at home help them de-stress and un-mask. Disconnecting from stress makes them happy.

Home is not only a physical space, but also people. Family and friends make home for these young men when they do not judge and do not nag. Family protects them, especially their mothers. Friends esteem them, especially their girlfriends. Family and friends participate in fun play that is relaxing and de-stressing. When the young men talk about fun times making them happy, it is partly the companionship and partly the release from competing that makes them happy.

Finally, these young men find happiness in transcendent experiences in nature, leisure, and work. They are happy when they completely engage with an activity. They speak of “dream-like” “pure emotion” states that Csikszentmihalyi (1999) calls flow, Schouten, McAlexander, and Koenig (2007) call transcendent, and John (participant) calls “real.”

Winning involves conquering, creating, and achieving recognition for their superiority. They do things specifically to make themselves winners and they dream about winning. Many of their conquests were outdoor adventures such as kayaking dangerous rapids, skiing fast mountain slopes, and hunting wild pigs. Rich linked happiness to conquering challenges in work. Rich, Dave, and James dream that achieving career goals will make them happy. James has many dreams about conquering challenges Rocky style—“zero to hero.”

Creating something special—like food, photographs, or cars—makes these men happy. Rich is happy about pleasing customers with his good food and its presentation. Boris gets joy from restoring cars to their 1980’s glory. Both Dave and John create rather than produce beautiful photographs.

Achieving superior status boosts self-esteem and makes these young men happy. John is superior by kayaking “a world-renowned river.” Dave got runner up in a photography competition, which was “pretty cool,” especially with “the right people around.” Boris’s superiority occurs in his reputation as a car enthusiast, not a boy racer. Knowledge is James’s main source of superiority and happiness. His happiness comes from demonstrating how much more he knows and how much smarter he is than others about technological gadgets, sports, and anything that might convey status.

The things these men talk about dovetail with the literature on happiness. Previous research associates happiness with friendships, good social life, being loved by loved ones (Crossley & Langdridge 2005; Kesebir & Diener 2008), being free from stress, (Crossley & Langdridge 2005; Borooah 2006), self-confidence, (Crossley & Langdridge 2005; Reid 2004), physical activity (Crossley & Langdridge 2005), religion (Kesebir & Diener 2008), and experiences (Van Boven 2005).

Material things occurred frequently in these young men’s happiness stories. They used goods to make their home and support their social relationships. They consumed to win and they used goods as tangible trophies of their achievements. These young men used possessions extensively to show off their achievements. There is evidence in this study that having makes some young men happy.

Overall, we learned that consumption plays an important role in happiness. For the young men who participated in our study, consumption facilitates relationships and achievements. Our data indicate the importance of family and home to happiness for these men. Consumption plays a strong role in creating home, supporting family and connecting with friends.

We attempt to understand the positive side of consumption. Our data support the assertion that consumers, rather than marketers, are responsible for hedonistic consumption (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2002). These young men used the stuff of marketing to their own ends. However, the marketing system cannot yet deny responsibility for shaping attitudes and values and providing the means for achieving valued goals via brands. Nonetheless, this research can help consumers understand that possessions are not the sources of happiness, but facilitate happiness.

References

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And Now a Word from Our Sponsor: A Comparison of Online Streaming Video and Traditional Television in Terms of Advertising Perceptions and Attitudes
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

While it is readily apparent to advertisers that online access of episodic television is becoming increasingly popular, there is little information regarding how use of the new medium differs from traditional television viewership.

The theoretical support for the hypotheses is based on the concepts of Perceived Reciprocity and Advertising Receptivity. The concept of Perceived Reciprocity is based on the theory of exchange (Bagozzi 1975; Houston and Gassenheimer 1987). In the case of advertising, the exchange is between the advertiser who provides free (or subsidized) content in exchange for the opportunity to advertise products, and the consumer who provides an audience for an advertising message in exchange for free (or subsidized) content (Becker and Murphy 1993). Another element of advertising worth is the advertising content itself. Ducoffe (1995) proposed the Advertising Value Construct as a cognitive antecedent to attitude towards advertising in general. Advertising value is defined as “the relative worth or utility of advertising to consumers” (Ducoffe 1995, p.1) and is a composite of consumer perceptions regarding the informativeness, entertainment, and irritation of advertising. This suggests that advertising possesses inherent value above and beyond the provision of media content to consumers.

Advertising Receptivity—consumers’ openness to ideas and suggestions—is critical to the success of an advertising message. A consumer’s receptivity to advertising is determined by attitudinal and behavioral responses to advertising. Specifically, Advertising Receptivity is determined by the balance between the consumer’s overall attitude towards advertising and advertising avoidance behaviors. Greyser (1973) stated that public dislike of advertising leads to inattention. Mittal (1994) indicated that a significant relationship exists between negative attitudes towards advertising and advertising avoidance. And, because ad avoidance opposes attendance to the advertising, the behavior is related to reduced advertising effectiveness (Shavitt, Vargas, and Lowrey 2004).

The goal of the research is to determine if young adult consumers (aged 18-34) regard advertising viewed within online streaming television differently than they regard advertising viewed within traditional, non-recorded television programming. The research distinguishes between the viewership of real-time television programming and pre-recorded programming because recording technology provides viewer control of advertising content. Specifically, viewers can fast-forward (zip) or—in some cases—eliminate (zap) advertising messages during the viewing process.

The exchange theory suggests that consumers will be more tolerant of the presence of advertising if they perceive that they are provided with sufficient value. Online streaming television (OTV) provides a number of advantages versus the traditional television viewing experience.

H1: Viewers of OTV programming will have more positive attitudes toward advertising in the medium than viewers of traditional, non-recorded TV programming.

Ducoffe (1996) determined that the intrinsic value attributed to television advertising is significantly lower than advertising experienced in other media, such as the Internet. It is likely, therefore, that advertising viewed within online streaming television programming will be attributed greater intrinsic value than advertising viewed within traditional television programming.

H2: Viewers of OTV programming will attribute greater intrinsic value to advertising than viewers of traditional, non-recorded TV programming.

The research utilized a between-subjects design. A ninety-eight-item online questionnaire was developed and modified for viewers of traditional, non-recorded television programming (TV) and viewers of online streaming television programming (OTV). The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small sample of students to insure clarity. The questionnaire consisted of six major sections focusing on motives for media use, level of media use, media content, affinity for the medium, perceived advertising intrusiveness, and advertising avoidance.

Data were collected by a professional online research service from 19 June to 27 June, 2009. A national sample of approximately 380 participants was recruited for each media type (TV and OTV) between the ages of 18-34. Participants were screened to reflect the gender, race, ethnicity, education, and income of the U.S. adult internet users. Participants were also screened for media usage. Specifically, all participants viewed episodic television programs on television and online streaming television during the past three months. Care was taken to specify that television viewing did not include viewership of pre-recorded programming. The unusually specific requirements for participation resulted in a high rate of disqualification.

Established, five-point Likert-type scales were used to measure four variables: Advertising Information Value (Ducoffe 1995), Advertising Entertainment Value (Ducoffe 1995), Advertising Irritation (Ducoffe 1995), and Advertising Value (Ducoffe 1995). Attitude towards Advertising in General was measured by asking participants to indicate their attitudinal position on three established, five-point scales (Muehling 1987) for three very general semantic differential pairs.

Independent groups t-test findings showed that the TV group was more favorable in terms of their attitude towards advertising than the OTV group, disproving hypothesis 1.

Similarly, independent groups t-tests indicated a significant difference between TV and OTV viewers when assessing advertising value. Specifically, TV viewers were more positive than OTV regarding the informative and entertainment value of advertising, as well as the overall value of advertising. OTV viewers are significantly more likely to agree that advertising is irritating. This finding disproved hypothesis 2.

A structural model was developed using Amos 18 statistical software to investigate if the relationships between advertising value and attitudes towards television advertising remain consistent with the Ducoffe (1995; 1996) findings and if the same relationships exist in the new online streaming television medium. Results confirmed a strong relationship between the Entertainment Value antecedent to the Advertising Value construct and the Attitude towards Advertising construct. Importantly, however, the paths between the advertising value variables and the attitude towards advertising variable were not significant, indicating that entertainment value is the key predictor of attitudes towards advertising in both media.
Overall, the OTV group was less tolerant of advertising than the TV group. While advertising has long been accepted by American consumers as a necessary element of mass communication, the results suggest that viewers of online streaming television programming do not regard advertising as a means to subsidize the cost of online content. Rather, young adults appear to regard advertising as an intruder in the online streaming television environment. The findings also suggest that OTV advertising is held to a higher creative standard than traditional TV advertising.

REFERENCES
Data Doppelgänger: Addressing the Darker Side of Digital Identity
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In this paper we address the darker side of digital identity through a concept drawn from German folklore, the Doppelgänger. The paper illustrates how some of the complications of identity that have been explored in literature and psychoanalysis are played out in digital environments and in the complex dialectic between collectors of data and individuals’ priorities, histories and preferences as captured by something referred to as identity. We present the features of what we call the Data Doppelgänger (a person’s unwanted digital second self) through a discussion developed by Webber (1996) of what constitutes the Doppelgänger in literature.

We begin with a brief description of the nature of the Doppelgänger and its use in literature, such as Stevenson’s ‘The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde’ and Dostoevsky’s ‘The Double’ and the psychoanalytic writings of Freud and Jung. The Doppelgänger is described as a manifestation of a forbidden desire, of that which is lost and denied and has the power to create disorder and undermine the dominant value system.

We then consider some theories of identity and how they contribute and interplay with the idea of other selves whether positive or negative. Informed by the work of Hogg and Bannister (2001) and Stryker and Burke (2001), we map identity as being both multi-faceted, i.e. the many selves, as well as having a time dimension, with past, present and future selves. This conceptualization acts as a bridge between the concept of the Doppelgänger and our digital identities.

According to a definition proposed by Webber (1996, p. 1) on the basis of “a case-history of subjectivity in German writing in and around the nineteenth century”, the Doppelgänger is outlined in a series of premises. Against each of these premises we put forward thoughts on how they may cross from the literary to the digital in terms of their significance to the data Doppelgänger concept. These premises are described as, double vision, double talk, performance, double-bind, power-play, displacement, return and repetition, masculine, and the product of a broken home. We use these conceptual premises developed by Webber in his working definition of the Doppelgänger to build the conceptual underpinnings of the data Doppelgänger.

An important feature of the Doppelgänger is that it has a life of its own beyond control of the person from whom it derived or who initiated it. This raises questions of what consequences the Doppelgänger may have for that individual. We use the analogy of the metaphysical double or Doppelgänger, to visualize the potential that comprehensive data dossiers and extended data sharing practices unknown to an individual might have on his or her life. We assume that an online environment is not a simulation of reality, but a computer-mediated “alternative real” (Novak, Hoffman, and Yung 2000, p.39), where real consumers become intertwined (Robey, Schwaig, and Jin 2003) with their “digitally constructed consumer identities” (Zwick and Dholakia 2004, p.33). This means that consumer choices recorded by sellers provide the foundations of increasingly comprehensive profiles on individual consumers. The wide variety of personal data that might be consolidated into a consumer’s digital representation and the fact that this data links to a variety of the consumer’s roles in life, raises the question of how consumers can be protected from others accessing these potentially comprehensive profiles but also the question of what role such profiles might play in the real life of the person they are profiling. If they are a shadow of the real person, can this be an accurate shadow and can it be harmful?

To aid the further investigation of this phenomenon, we propose the concept of the Data Doppelgänger that builds on Webber’s nine premises of the Doppelgänger. It is visible to others representing the host, but also visible to the host as a distinct object (double vision). The Data Doppelgänger acts as the subject, therefore represents the performative character of the host (performance). By acting as the subject, the Doppelgänger mirrors and distorts its host’s messages (double talk). Combined with the tension between the cognitive and the inquisitive (double bind), this results in a constant struggle between host and double that leads to both sides influencing the other (power play). To the host, this struggle leads to the perception that the Data Doppelgänger appears to be out of place (displacement), which means that through the perception of others, it has the power to displace its host and to return compulsively without authorization by the host (return and repetition). The eighth premise (masculine) reminds us that the Doppelgänger may act as “a pantomime of the scenario of sexual dispossession” where “it is frustrated desire which is expropriated, past absence rendered present again” (Webber 1996, p.14). Transferred to the concept of the Data Doppelgänger, this reads as a reminder of the fact that, in online environments, actions are recorded which creates what Westin (1967) coined a ‘data shadow’. The Data Doppelgänger can be described as this shadow developing a life of its own, repelling the desire of the host to maintain control over it. While the eighth premise therefore reminds us of the ability of the Data Doppelgänger to limit the host’s free specification of identity, the ninth premise (product of a broken home) underlines the disconcerting conclusion that no ‘safe harbor’ exists for the host that provides ultimate protection from the possible dangers associated with the Data Doppelgänger.

At the beginning of the 21st century, with the rise of the network economy and emerging social networks, the Doppelgänger metaphor acts as a platform to initiate a debate on the dark side of digital identity.
Consumer Expectations Of Web Site Functionality According To Task Context
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
This paper develops insight into the differences in consumer expectations of web site functionality according to two online tasks: information search and transaction. The context of the study is online banking. Much of the research into online banking adoption has focused on transacting and few studies investigate the use of a web site for information search. This is surprising since statistics show that the Internet is used extensively by companies for information provision and in general by consumers for information acquisition. Furthermore, studies also show that online information search is an important first stage before full adoption, which emphasises the need for deeper understanding. Moreover, there is a lack of research that directly compares the differences in web site evaluation across task conditions. One of the few studies identified (Lassar and Dandapani 2003) finds that participants desired specific attributes for different task conditions. The study notes that current web site design is mostly “homogeneous” and that “practitioners as well as academics do not completely understand the Internet as a medium through which consumers gather information and execute transactions.” Thus this study investigates whether there are distinct evaluative criteria according to online task and the extent to which evaluations differ between tasks and draws upon the concept of Task Technology Fit.

In order to explore both user and non-user web site evaluations, the research followed a novel methodological approach. Recognising that the only type of evaluation a consumer may hold about an untried technology is expectation, the study explored the “fit” between normative (what should be present) and predictive (what will be present) expectations of bank web site features, to account for respondents with no online banking experience. Expectations of web site attributes were measured using a battery of 14 items, which was repeated for normative and predictive expectations and for each task scenario: information search and account transacting. Items were generated from a thorough literature search and focus groups. The survey was administered by email invitation to 10,000 individuals selected randomly from a permission-based list. 542 questionnaires were received yielding a response rate of 5.4%. Following deletion of incomplete surveys, a final sample size of 469 was achieved. The sample accounted for a range of ages and Internet experience.

The first stage of the analysis explored the expectation fit of bank web site attributes and sought to identify any differences between information search and account access tasks. In order to calculate expectation fit, the normative expectations score was subtracted from the predictive expectation score for each web site attribute. A positive score indicated that the predictive expectation (that an attribute will be present) exceeds the normative expectation (that an attribute should be present); an instance of anticipated over-provision. Conversely, a negative score indicates anticipated under-provision. For information search, consumers expected over-provision in relation to “Username,” “Moving graphics” and “Secure connection.” Two of these items: “Username” and “Secure connection” are features that enhance web site security. For all other items the fit scores were negative indicating that these were expected to be under provided. Six items revealed fit scores of less than −0.25 and thus are considered of interest: “Experimentation”, “Learn about financial services,” “Confirmation e-mail,” “Account instructions,” “Search engine” and “Competitors' rates.” These items are relevant to financial service information needs and the search task and learning about online banking.
Segmenting the Silver Market Using Cognitive Age and the List of Values: Empirical Evidence from Japan
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Conceptualization

Despite the increasing impact of demographic change around the globe, older consumers remain under-researched, especially in Japan, the most severely affected country by the demographic shift with a rapidly ageing as well as shrinking population. This paper aims to contribute to the state-of-the-field of research on older consumers in general and the Japanese older (“silver”) consumer in particular. Following the segmentation approach proposed by Sudbury and Simcock (2009), this paper applies their approach to the Japanese context by attempting to get a better understanding of the Japanese older consumer through the concepts of cognitive age (Barak and Schiffman 1981) and Kahle’s (1983) list of values (LOV). While cognitive age as a form of self-concept has proved important in gerontology and marketing, empirical studies outside the western world are scarce. In addition, personal values are a widely used concept in marketing and consumer behavior, but have received hardly any attention in research on older consumers. These two concepts thus form the theoretical background for our research. Moreover, Sudbury and Simcock (2009) have so far been the only ones to look into the relation between personal values and cognitive age for mature consumer behavior. Our empirical study is the first one to apply this segmentation approach to the Japanese context and thus aims to enhance understanding of the older consumer and—given the outstanding dearth of research on Japan’s older consumers—fill an important gap in the literature.

Method

Based on a review of the relevant literature, our research questions focus on: 1) Exploring cognitive age among Japanese older consumers. 2) Examining the magnitude of the difference between actual age and cognitive age in comparison with previous studies. 3) Finding a relationship between LOV rankings for different cognitive age groupings of Japanese older consumers and comparing with the previous study conducted in the UK by Sudbury and Simcock (2009). To ensure better comparison with the previous study in the UK, we kept the LOV scale measures separated without forming composite variables. We also used the same decade classification method, taking the mid-point of the cognitive age decade, for our respondents.

The data sample was collected in February 2009 face to face by a team of Japanese speaking trained research assistants in the main commercial street of the Sugamo district in northeastern Tokyo, an area well known in Tokyo as a place of social interaction and gathering of older Japanese. A total of 316 completed surveys were obtained for a response rate of 45.6%. As refusals in terms of gender and estimated age groups were not different from those retained in the final sample, there is no reason to believe that the final collected sample is not representative of the Japanese people aged 50 years and older frequenting the shopping area where the data were collected. As the objective of this research was to replicate a previous research with the use of a different sample in a different country and to test for relationships between theory-driven concepts, we deemed such a convenience sample appropriate, even though it neither enables us to make an estimate over the total Japanese population nor to generalize the findings to other populations.

We measured cognitive age with the 4-item scale used by Barak and Schiffman (1981) and personal values using the 9-item version of Kahle’s (1983) list of values (LOV).

Major Findings

The age perception of older Japanese respondents of our sample is on average 8 years younger than their actual biological age. T-tests for the equality of the mean values for men and women of our sample on actual age, cognitive age and the difference between actual age and cognitive age did not reveal any significant statistical differences. On a scale from 1 to 5, our sample of Japanese older respondents gave a top score of 4.73 to “warm relationships with others,” followed by 4.71 for “security.” The least important values were respectively: “sense of belonging” with 3.72 and “excitement” with 3.71.

Despite the fact that a cross-cultural comparison is difficult since equivalence of meaning and measurement is not guaranteed, a tentative interpretation of the ranking similarities and differences between older Japanese and British respondents seems to point to a strong importance of “security” for both groups but to a substantial ranking difference of the importance of “self-respect,” ranked first by British but fifth by Japanese respondents. In addition, Japanese respondents give top ranking to “warm relationships with others,” while this comes third for the British. The oft-reported collectivist culture and the harmony-seeking behavior of the Japanese may explain this difference, even though we are aware that such kinds of broad generalizations about a culture should be interpreted with great care. Finally, “fun and enjoyment in life” as well as “being well respected” appear on average less important for British than for Japanese respondents.

For respondents up to the cognitive age group of 60 years old, “fun and enjoyment in life” is ranked first or second and drops down to third for those perceiving themselves in their 70s and 80s. For UK respondents, the ranking is much lower at 5 or 7 for people in their 50s, 60s and 70s cognitive age groups. “Warm relationships with others” tends to stay in first or second position for Japanese respondents with no trend in relation to cognitive age. There is also no trend in relation to cognitive age for UK respondents, but the ranking is lower, in third or fourth position. “Security” comes third for Japanese feeling younger than 50 years old, moves to the second or third most important value for those who consider themselves in their 50s, 60s and 70s, and reaching first importance for those who consider themselves in their 80s. The ranking pattern of UK respondents is very similar. “Being well respected” is also a value showing a big jump (from seven to fourth place) in importance for the group of Japanese respondents feeling in their 80s. The available rankings of UK respondents also show an increase in ranking with higher perceived age.

In sum, our results do not support the argument that cognitive age is biased by a Western emphasis on youthfulness and therefore not applicable in Japan. Further, Japanese senior consumers—while also sharing a number of similarities in terms of personal values by cognitive age group—appear to value fun and enjoyment more than their counterparts in the UK and the US.
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Full references available on request.
When Imagining Oneself as the Victim Is Not Always Beneficial: The Impact of Differences in Perspectives on Effectiveness of Charitable Advertisements
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ABSTRACT
Effectiveness of charitable appeals that describes situation confronting beneficiaries (e.g. victims of plight) might depend on the ease with which ad audiences process information of these appeals. This paper investigates the interactive impact of perspectives that people take to process charitable appeals, and vividness of information described on effectiveness of these appeals. We show that increasing vividness of information about beneficiaries increased their likelihood to help and actual monetary donation when participants took a beneficiary-perspective; but decreased these effects when participants took a donor-perspective to process the appeal. Evidence suggests that these effects are mediated by ease of processing.
The Influence of Victim-Unitization on Charitable Giving
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People react strongly to images, names, and personal stories of individual victims. However, when it comes to helping large numbers of victims, charitable reactions are typically muted. Two patterns of findings have been documented. First people are “scope insensitive.” When asked how much money they would donate to save 2,000, 20,000, or 200,000 migrating birds from drowning in oil ponds, people indicated they would give only slightly more to save 200,000 birds than to save 2,000 birds (Desvousges et al. 1993). Second, people show a “singularity effect:” They donate more to help a single child identified with a photo and a name than to help several children (Kogut & Ritov 2005a, b). Thus, though tragedy often occurs on a large scale and requires action that takes the quantity of victims into account, both the scope insensitivity and singularity effect literatures suggest that it is in these cases that reactions are often most muted.

The singularity effect is driven by an increase in sympathy and concern for a single individual. Previous research has suggested that people react more strongly to individual victims than multiple victims because single units are perceived as more internally consistent than multiples (Kogut & Ritov 2005b). Individuals are perceived as more coherent entities, or “entitative,” than disaggregated groups, which causes their salient attributes to be perceived as psychologically coherent. This in turn makes trait judgments more extreme for individuals than for groups. However, groups can also be entitative; those that are presented with higher coherence and unity receive more extreme judgments than those that are not (Hamilton & Sherman 1996; Mishra 2009; Geier, Rozin, & Doros 2006).

We hypothesize that unitizing multiple victims increases the coherence of their defining attributes. When those victims are defined by positive attributes, sympathy and concern should increase when these multiple victims are unitized. However, by the same logic, unitizing will not always lead to a more favorable response than disaggregated victims. Any victims with unfavorable defining attributes should be judged as more unfavorable when presented as a unit (see Mishra 2009 for a product-related example of this). Thus, sympathy and concern should be diminished when unfavorable victims are unitized and donations should suffer in turn.

In this article we show that people can react more strongly to a large number of victims if they are presented as a single, coherent unit. In three studies, we manipulate the quantity of victims and the way in which multiple victims are presented (disaggregated or unitized). In Study 1, participants made hypothetical donations to save 2,000, 200,000, or a flock of 200,000 birds. Though participants’ donations were not different for 2,000 and 200,000 birds, donations were significantly higher for a flock of 200,000 birds than the disaggregated 200,000 birds. In Study 2, hypothetical donations were made to save 1, 200 or a herd of 200 gazelles. Similar results were observed, and could be explained by participants’ emotional reaction to the manipulation. Study 3 involved actual donations. Though donations were lower for 6 disaggregated children than for a single child, donations were significantly higher when the same six children were said to belong to one unit. As entitativity research would predict, this effect held only for children with positive traits. In fact, the pattern reversed for unfavorable children: Donations were lower for the family of 6 child prisoners than the disaggregated 6 child prisoners. Participants’ feelings of sympathy and concern explain these effects.

These results show that the singularity effect is much more general than originally thought. Single victims are just one example of a unit. The process of increased sympathy and concern that underlies the assessment of a single victim also extends to unitized multiple victims. Therefore, these results suggest a simple way to increase prosocial behavior toward multiple victims. However, there is also an unfortunate effect to unitizing some victims. We show that unitization effects reduce prosocial behavior toward some less favorable victims. In these cases, sympathy and donations are higher if the multiple victims are presented as disaggregated.

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Leapfrogging Over the Joneses: When Equality Increases Conspicuous Consumption Among Bottom-Tier Consumers

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

It is a well-known and well-deplored fact that less well-off people spend more on conspicuous consumption and save less as a proportion of their income than richer people (Bagwell and Bernheim 1996; Duesenberry 1949; Veblen 1899). Economists have argued that one solution to this problem is to reduce the inequality of wealth (possessions or income) in social groups through income or consumption taxation (e.g., Frank 1985b, 1999). This recommendation is based on the existing “Keeping up with the Joneses” or possession gap hypothesis, according to which reducing inequality, by shrinking the gap among consumers in the group, should reduce the envy and boost the satisfaction of consumers in the bottom tier and thus reduce their consumption (Bagwell and Bernheim 1996; Börs and Tillmann 1985; Christen and Morgan 2005a; Duesenberry 1949; Moav and Neeman 2008). However, this hypothesis overlooks the fact that reducing inequality can increase the gains in status resulting from conspicuous consumption for people at the bottom of the distribution, which may have the unintended effect of actually encouraging these people to consume.

In this research, we examine how the distribution of wealth in a social group affects choice between consumption and saving among bottom-tier consumers. We hypothesize that reducing inequality (i.e., increasing the proportion of people with an average level of possessions or income) reduces envy but encourages consumption among bottom-tier consumers because it increases potential position gains resulting from consumption. We call this the position gain hypothesis and argue that it will only hold true when a status goal is important (i.e., people care about improving their social position) when consumption is conspicuous, social competition goals are primed, or the environment is competitive. However, when people care about their personal satisfaction (i.e., a status goal is not important), when consumption is inconspicuous, social indifference goals are primed, or the environment is cooperative, reducing inequality will indeed reduce consumption in the bottom tier as predicted by prior research. We test these hypotheses in five studies.

In Study 1, we tested our position gain hypothesis against the existing possession gap hypothesis. We manipulated between subjects the distribution of people’s endowments with a conspicuous product—the number of rose bushes in the front garden. In the scenario, 10% of people had no rose bushes (bottom tier). Forty percent of people had one to two rose bushes in an equal distribution, whereas only 20% had one or two rose bushes in an unequal distribution. We asked how envious people in the bottom tier were and how willing they would be to buy three bushes (and thus surpass people with one or two bushes). We found that bottom-tier people were less envious but spent more in the equal (vs. unequal) distribution. This shows that conspicuous consumption is driven by position gains rather than envy, which supports our position gain hypothesis rather than the existing possession gap hypothesis.

In Study 2, we further disentangled between the competing hypotheses and tested an alternative explanation (that greater consumption in the equal distribution might be due to the desire to join rather than leapfrog over a large group of people). The participants read a scenario about choosing a wedding gift for a classmate and judged how willing they would be to trade up from the bottom-tier to the middle (third)-tier gift in an equal or an unequal distribution. To test the competing hypotheses, we directed people’s attention to the possession gap or the position gain in the distribution. To test the desire to join vs. surpass more people, we placed the majority of people (40%) in the bottom tier or in the second tier of the distribution and measured participants’ willingness to spend money on a third-tier gift as well as their overall WTP for a gift (hence their choice of a tier in the distribution). As predicted, we found that higher equality increased spending in the bottom tier when people focused on the position gain but decreased spending when people focused on the possession gap. This effect was consistent regardless of the location of the majority group or the type of dependent measure, which shows that greater spending in the equal distribution is due to people’s focus on the position gain and their desire to surpass rather than join more people in the distribution.

In Study 3, we tested the role of status goal importance by manipulating product consciousness and explored the role of position gains and satisfaction as motivators of consumption decisions. Participants read three scenarios (house garden, home decoration, and ski trip) and judged how willingly bottom-tier people in an equal or an unequal distribution would spend money on conspicuous products (rose bushes in the front garden, bigger televisions in the living room, and branded scarves for a ski trip) or inconspicuous products (pine trees in the back garden, bigger mirrors in the living room, and unbranded scarves for a ski trip). We also measured satisfaction with current possessions and the degree to which each type of spending would boost status. We found that higher equality boosted both perceived position gains and satisfaction with current possessions. But because conspicuous consumption is motivated by position gains and inconspicuous consumption is motivated by satisfaction, high equality increased spending on conspicuous products and decreased spending on inconspicuous products.

In Study 4, we further tested the role of status goal importance by priming the goal non-consciously and examined whether the effect of inequality carries over to the broader definition of status in terms of income. First, the participants engaged in a scrambled sentence task, which primed a goal to compete or to focus on self-satisfaction. Then they studied a newsletter about their rival colleagues, which featured an equal or an unequal distribution of their salaries. Finally, the participants chose between an expensive conspicuous restaurant and an inexpensive inconspicuous restaurant for dinner with these colleagues. We measured participants’ preference for the conspicuous restaurant, and found that an equal distribution of income increased the preference for the conspicuous restaurant when they were primed to compete, but decreased it when they were primed to focus on satisfaction.

In Study 5, we provided a more realistic and social test of status goal importance by manipulating the competitiveness of the social context. The participants faced the same scenario and choice as in Study 4, except that in the competitive group condition, the scenario featured rival co-workers, and in the cooperative group condition, it featured old friends. As predicted, high income equality strengthened people’s preference for the conspicuous restaurant in the “rivals” condition but weakened it in the “friends” condition.

In summary, we show that reducing inequality increases conspicuous consumption among people in the lowest tier of the distribution across various consumption decisions, definitions of status, and distributions. Our results provide insights about the drivers of conspicuous consumption and the potential effectiveness of wealth redistribution policies and thus have important implications for future research and public policy.
When Not Redeeming a Coupon Feels Like Missing More Than Its Value
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
While marketers’ investment in coupons has been rising coupon redemption has been declining (Ives 2003). Increasing coupon redemption rates without increasing costs (e.g., for the purpose of increasing volume or reducing stocks) is an important marketing problem. This problem represents a more general question of what drives consumers to exploit opportunities in the marketplace.

The current research suggests that instead of trying to increase coupon redemption by increasing the value consumers would attain by redeeming (the more ‘bang for your buck’ approach), marketers can do so by increasing consumers’ perception of what they would miss-out on by not redeeming. To illustrate the difference, consider the case that a coupon offers two mutually exclusive redemption options (e.g., either a restaurant dinner or an evening cruise). Note that the value from redeeming the coupon for the restaurant (e.g., enjoying a good dinner) is not affected by the presence of a competing redemption alternative. However, consumers may feel that by not exploiting the coupon they miss both of its redemption alternatives. This feeling reflects an inflated perception of loss, since the two options are mutually-exclusive. To avoid the stronger negative feeling, caused by the inflated perception of loss, consumers are shown to be more likely to redeem the coupon. Thus, by issuing a coupon with mutual-exclusive redemption options, marketers can increase coupon redemption rate without increasing other costs.

How come consumers overestimate the implications of not redeeming a coupon that offers mutually-exclusive redemption options? Building on previous research on counterfactuals and mutability (Kahneman and Miller 1986), we suggest that, when it is easy for consumers to mentally simulate counterfactuals of exploiting all the coupon’s options, they imagine and desire doing so. As a result, they feel in possession of this counterfactual outcome (Peck and Shu 2009). Subsequently, not exploiting the coupon feels like losing both of its redemption options.

In five studies, we manipulate how mutable is the induced conflict between a coupon’s redemption options (i.e., how easy it is for consumers to mentally simulate a counterfactual of exploiting both of the coupon’s options). We argue that the conflict is more mutable when it was formed incidentally (e.g., the consumers cannot redeem both options since the two accidentally happen to co-occur) rather than intentionally (e.g., the coupon provider intended the options to be mutually-exclusive). Moreover, the conflict is more mutable before (vs. after) consumers choose which of the coupon’s option to redeem.

Both of these factors, namely, the manner in which the conflict was formed (studies 1-2, 5) and whether a choice between redemption options has already taken place (studies 3-4) were manipulated. When either factor rendered the conflict between a coupon’s redemption options more mutable, consumers were found to overestimate what they would miss by not redeeming the coupon, and to subsequently be more likely to redeem.

The broader implications of these results to exploitation of opportunities in the marketplace are explored in two additional studies (studies 6-7). These studies replicate the results of studies 1-5 in the context of mutually-exclusive profit opportunities that are available for a businessperson (e.g., conflicting business meetings). Consistently with studies 1-5, individuals are more likely to invest resources in exploiting an opportunity to attain future profit, when it is presented as part of a mutually-exclusive set of opportunities, and the conflict between the opportunities (i.e., what renders them mutually-exclusive) is more mutable.

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People are “wrong too often when they are certain they are right” (Fischhoff, Slovic, and Lichtenstein 1977). Indeed, what consumers think they know can be quite different from what they actually know (Moorman et al. 2004). The concept of emotional calibration, or the match between one’s objective emotional ability and subjective perceptions of that ability, has been demonstrated to lead to more effective consumer decision making (Kidwell, Hardesty, and Childers 2008b). However, previous research has yet to identify the underlying processes which influence the relationship between calibration and decision quality. Three studies identify motivation to be at the root of calibrated decision making, which leads to more explicit methods of information processing. Conversely, miscalibrated individuals are less motivated and more likely to rely on implicit information processing, which was found to lead to suboptimal decision outcomes.

Emotional Calibration, Motivation, and Dual Processing

Emotionally calibrated individuals have the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotional information to make decisions, as well as the confidence in themselves to utilize their emotional ability when faced with a decision. Self-assurance and conviction from knowing that one is good at performing tasks will motivate an individual to work hard toward making a high quality decision that is consistent with that self-assurance (Ortony et al. 1988). Therefore, confidence in one’s high level of ability should lead to increased motivation in a decision task. For example, when faced with a decision among a variety of healthy and unhealthy food options, an emotionally calibrated individual should be more motivated to consider their feelings associated with each alternative and to incorporate those thoughts into their food choice.

This increased motivation of emotionally calibrated consumers should lead to a more explicit style of information processing during decision making. However, if an individual lacks motivation from insufficient confidence, ability to utilize emotional information, or a combination of both when faced with a decision, they will be less likely to explicitly consider decision information and instead be more likely to rely on implicit associations formed by the automatic collection of information in one’s decision environment (Dasgupta and Greenwald 2001). Given that explicitly processed information is more thoughtfully considered as opposed to implicit information, explicit processing should lead to better decisions.

Study 1

Study 1 provided an initial test of the conceptual framework underlying emotional calibration effects. Food choice was selected as a the substantive context in all studies given the prevalence of obesity (Livingstone and Black 2003; Nestle 2003) as well as the influence that emotion exhibits in food choice decisions (Tice, Bratslavsky, and Baumeister 2001).

Two-hundred thirty-one undergraduates completed the CEIS (Kidwell, Hardesty, and Childers 2008a), related confidence items, and measures of motivation and explicit processing. Then, participants completed a food choice task where they chose items from a fictitious restaurant menu. Results demonstrated that emotional calibration was positively related to motivation (B=.17, t=2.76, p<.05), motivation was positively related to explicit processing (B=.25, t=3.73, p<.05), and explicit processing was negatively related to caloric intake (B=-.16, t=-2.45, p<.05). Thus, study 1 provided initial support for the hypothesized process underlying emotional calibration effects on decision quality.

Study 2

To further investigate the process underlying emotional calibration effects, we manipulated calibration levels by providing underconfident participants positive false feedback to make them emotionally calibrated. Additionally, we investigated implicit processing mechanisms through the use of the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998) to provide a comprehensive view of emotional calibration.

Individuals were recruited to participate in this study based on pretesting which determined they were high in emotional ability but low in confidence. Then, two groups were formed and both received false feedback. One group was made emotionally calibrated by receiving positive feedback on their performance, while the control group received negative feedback which kept them emotionally miscalibrated. Measures of explicit processing and total calories were included as in study 1. Participants also completed IAT trials related to the tasty=unhealthy heuristic introduced by Raghunathan, Naylor, and Hoyer (2006).

Results demonstrated that calibrated individuals were more likely to explicitly process (B=.28, p<.05) and less likely to process implicitly (B=-.27, p<.05). Furthermore, miscalibrated individuals were less likely to process explicitly (B=-.34, p<.01) and more likely to demonstrate implicit associations (B=.26, p<.05). Explicit processing was found to be negatively related to total calories (B=-.32, p<.01), while implicit processing was positively related to total calories (B=.41, p<.01). These results further support the process linking emotional calibration to improved decision making.

Study 3

Study 3 investigated the effects of training emotional ability (thus making individuals calibrated) and subsequent decision making processes and outcomes. Individuals were chosen via a screening process similar to study 2, except that overconfident individuals were selected to participate. Participants were divided into two groups, one of which received training in emotional ability. The control group received cognitive ability training. Participants then completed similar measures to study 2 except that participants completed food diaries for the two days after the study.

Results demonstrated that emotional miscalibration was negatively related to explicit processing (B=-.37, p<.01) and positively related to implicit processing (B=.39, p<.01). Explicit processing was found to be negatively related to caloric consumption (B=-.32, p<.01), while implicit processing was positively related to caloric consumption (B=.28, p<.01).

Across three studies, links between emotional calibration and decision quality are established. Emotional calibration was found to increase motivation. Motivation subsequently led to more explicit processing and less reliance on implicit associations. Lastly, processing styles influenced overall decision quality. This research has both theoretical implications associated with identifying the.
mechanisms which underlie emotional calibration as well as practical implications for consumers, public policy officials, and health care professionals who are interested in controlling consumption-related behavior, particularly food choices.
The Role of Identity in Disposal: Lessons from Mothers’ Disposal of Children’s Products
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ABSTRACT
The research question that this study asks is: How are we what we dispose of? The study uses in-depth interviews with mothers to answer this question by building a new model of disposal and identity. The interview findings demonstrate that disposal is a consumer behavior that is used to build, maintain, and signal both individual and social identity. Complexities, conflicts and coping strategies are an inherent part of disposal as an identity marker. And the boundaries between disposal and consumption are more permeable and fluid than previously supposed by theory. In short, this study brings together the a priori themes of disposal, identity, and motherhood, to present new insights into each of these three areas critical to consumer behavior research.
The Effect of Flat Shipping Fee and Free Shipping Threshold on Consumer Evaluations
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

According to Forrester Research, Inc. the online spending in US was $141 billion in 2008 and will reach $156 billion in 2009 (Ranasinghe and Yee 2009). Given the large number of products ordered online, an important decision related to online and catalogue retailing is how to design and communicate shipping fees to potential customers. Shipping fees not only significantly influence order incidence rates and average expenditures (Lewis 2006), but are also considered a major reason for consumers to abandon their shopping cards and discontinue the purchase process (Schindler, Morrin and Bechwati 2005). The purpose of this research is to understand how consumers evaluate and respond to different shipping fee structures.

Online and catalogue retailers have a variety of options with regard to shipping fees. A common practice is to waive shipping fees for orders that reach a specific dollar amount threshold (Lewis, Singh and Fay 2006). For example, Staples (www.staples.com) and Office Depot (www.officedepot.com) offer free delivery for orders above $50, and The Vitamin Shoppe (www.vitaminshoppe.com) offers free shipping for orders above $99. Another commonly used policy is to charge a flat shipping fee independent of order value similar to what Swanson Health Products ($4.99 for any size order, www.swansonvitamins.com) and Ann Taylor Loft ($6.00 standard shipping for all orders, www.anntaylorloft.com) are doing. The flat shipping fee could also increase according to a step function as order size increases, for instance $5.99 for orders below $25, $6.99 for orders $25.01 to $35.00 and so on. Given the variety of shipping practices in the marketplace and the level of experimentation occurring online (e.g., Amazon.com decreased its free shipping threshold from $99 to $25 in 2003, Lewis et al. 2006), and the lack of academic research in this domain, there is a need to better understand consumers responses to different shipping fee structures, and provide guidelines to companies on how to communicate them to consumers.

In this paper we systematically investigate how consumers perceive and respond to two common shipping fee structures—flat fee shipping and free shipping threshold. We argue that the flat shipping fee and the free shipping threshold policies differ in the frame of reference from which evaluations and choices are made. Specifically, consumers being charged a flat shipping fee use as a reference point the expected shipping charge (e.g., the shipping fee last paid or the average shipping fee based on past experiences), whereas consumers facing a free shipping threshold policy use as a reference point the free shipping offered for orders exceeding the threshold. The flat shipping fee consumers are likely to consider as a transaction cost that every consumer is incurring and evaluate it based on prior experiences and/or knowledge. The free shipping threshold consumers, however, are likely to think of the charge for offers below the threshold as a penalty or loss, and of the (lack of) charge for offers above the threshold as a bonus or quantity discount. Therefore, the two shipping fee structures are predicted to influence offer evaluations differentially based on whether the offer value exceeds the free shipping threshold or not.

We test our predictions in a series of two studies. Study 1 demonstrates that consumers evaluate the offer more negatively and are more likely to abort their purchase when a free shipping threshold is provided and they do not cross the threshold compared to a flat shipping fee. For order values above the free shipping threshold, consumers evaluate the offer more positively and are less likely to abort the purchase when a free shipping threshold is provided compared to a flat shipping fee. Study 2 suggests that the free shipping threshold serves as a reference point, and consumers evaluate the offer relative to this reference point. Importantly, when an alternative reference point is provided, the free shipping threshold does not play a role anymore.

Our results have important implications for the marketing theory and practice. From a theoretical point of view our study provides evidence about the differential effect of flat fee and free shipping threshold policies on evaluations and behavioral intentions, and clarifies the process driving the results. Regarding insights for practitioners, our results suggest that managers may provide alternative reference points to consumers to make free shipping thresholds (and the shipping charge in general) less salient. This motivates consumers to move to higher order values and evaluate the overall offer in a more positive way. When the average order value is below the optimal free shipping threshold, firms are better off by employing a flat fee shipping policy than a free shipping threshold policy.

REFERENCES


Heterogeneity of Deal Proneness: A Human Capital Approach
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Deal proneness is defined as “a general proneness to respond to promotions because they are in deal form” (Lichtenstein, Netemeyer, and Burton 1990, p.55). Much previous research provides uni-dimensional understanding of deal proneness; deal proneness and price/deal search, which is an element of deal-prone behaviors, is the function of one’s opportunity cost. Although the notion of opportunity cost provides reasonable explanations for deal-prone behaviors, it does not account for the complexity of the behaviors. In fact, economics-based perspectives identify two determinants of deal-prone behaviors: (1) opportunity cost and (2) the cost of deal proneness (i.e., search, locating, and use). Previous research on deal proneness mainly addresses the former determinant, and research on the latter is limited with an exception of a few studies.

This study attempts to uncover the heterogeneous nature of deal proneness in relation to the cost of deal proneness that is determined by “human capital in shopping.” “Human capital is basically knowledge, skill, or expertise embodied in people and acquired through investments in formal or informal education, training, or learning by doing” (Ratchford 2001). Human capital is domain-specific, and we contend that the possession of human capital in shopping determines the cost of deal search and how consumers take advantage of deals. Phenomenological interviews with 25 participants were conducted.

Findings include (1) the heterogeneous nature of deal proneness —value-mining, price-mining, and encounters, (2) strategies of deal-prone consumers with a high level of shopping capital—creating shortcuts, prospective thinking, and engineering deals, and (3) the sources of deal gratification resulted from different goals of deal-prone behaviors.

Human Capital in Shopping and Deal proneness. Shopping is a practice that requires not only monetary resources but also non-monetary resources, such as time and cognitive effort. Participants believed that deal-prone shoppers obtain monetary returns in exchange for time and effort on searching for deals. We interpret that different levels of deal proneness reflect individual’s cost of deal proneness.

What emerged from the data is that the expected cost of deal proneness is not the same for everyone. Cost of deal proneness, time and effort on-deal purchase, varies by the possession of human capital in shopping, that is, market knowledge and shopping skills. Consumers with shopping capital are like to perceive cost of deal proneness low and are likely to engage in deal-prone shopping so that they can maximize the utility of the purchase. Specifically, three deal-shopping strategies were identified, which differ based on cognitive ability that commands skills and knowledge in shopping: Value-mining, price-mining, and encounters.

Value-Mining. For value-miners, finding the “best deals” is the shopping goal. “Best deal” refers to getting the maximum quality for the price. These consumers are value-conscious as well as price-conscious, and thus pursue maximum quality per dollar rather than merely a low price.

Because value-mining shopping assesses relative value between price and quality, it demands processing a greater amount of information. Participants solve the problem of demand for information search and process by developing strategies that efficiently screen irrelevant information. These strategies (i.e., creating short-cuts, prospective thinking, and engineering deals) make information processing more efficient, resulting in processing a greater amount of information.

Price-Mining. Price-mining refers to making an effort to find the lowest price for the quality that the consumer chooses. Price-mining browse for the best price for a relatively small consideration set. For price miners, reference price is the gauge. If the price offered is lower than the reference price, the consumer is likely to choose the deal. Developing a reference price is an important part of the information search process and makes shopping quick and easy. Compared to value-mining, analysis shows that price-mining involves less strategies, less information filtering, and less alternatives.

Encounters. The last type refers to being prone to deals that consumers incidentally encounter on the spot, “encounters.” Nowadays, consumers encounter sales promotions whether they are particularly looking for a deal or not. When consumers assess the value of a deal, sometimes they are drawn into the deal even though the product was not in the shopping list: consumers buy something for the sake of the deal. On-deal purchase through encounters is not based on human capital in shopping as much as value-mining or price-mining.

Deal Gratification. Our participants commonly expressed that they gain great enjoyment and satisfaction from deal-prone shopping. The gratification results from the goal of deal-prone shopping: to save money. We found different sources of deal gratification from the different forms of deal search. In the case of value-mining, a consumer’s gratification is attributed to achieving the maximized value. Gratification through price-mining arises from reduction of spending. Lastly, in the case of on-deal purchase through incidental encounters, the idea of saving money provides psychological justification for spending.

Taking advantage of deals appears to be a simple shopping behavior on surface uniformly motivated by monetary savings. However, our data shed light on the dynamics of how possession of human capital in shopping determines the type of deal search, the complexity of strategies of deal shopping, and the variance in the source of on-deal post-purchase satisfaction.

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this research, we argue that brand relationships that are formed in early childhood have unique properties that make them especially prone to create judgments in favor of brands. This is because they were first experienced when the individual lacked ability to defend against advertisements. That is, children do not consistently recognize an advertiser’s intent to persuade them consistently until age seven or eight (Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1977). In their influential persuasion knowledge model, Friestad and Wright (1994) argue that as individuals age and gain persuasive knowledge, they correct for previous bias through a process called change-of-meaning. However, Petty and Briñol (2008) assert that bias correction is best facilitated when motivation and ability to process information are high. Based on this position, we suggest that individuals may not be aware of their previous biases (i.e., favorable attitudes toward a brand that were developed before the development of persuasion knowledge), and subsequently do not correct bias spontaneously.

Because early childhood brand relationships are situated in the past, we argue that they are housed in the autobiographical memory store. Autobiographical memories are those memories that comprise one’s life story, and are believed to be of fundamental significance to the self (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce 1999). As a consequence of their importance to the self, autobiographical memories tend to be affect-laden (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce 1999). Previous consumer research on autobiographical memory has found that cueing autobiographical memories can lead to attenuation in information processing, due to their affective nature (Sujan, Bettman, and Baumgartner 1993). We test our theoretical model by introducing a variable that could override expected biases in judgment and enhance an individual’s capacity to correct bias toward the brand (Petty and Briñol 2008). While people are able to hold a large number of beliefs toward an object, only a smaller set are accessible at a given time due to constraints in cognitive capacity (Doll and Ajzen 1992). This ability to control attention and engage in effortful, attentive processing is known as working memory capacity (Barrett, Tugade, and Engle 2004).

Because people tend to use the knowledge that is most accessible to them in forming judgments (Feldman and Lynch 1988; Smith 1990), and because positive affect is likely to cause biased evaluations (Batra and Stayman 1990; Isen and Shalker 1982; Mackie and Worth 1989; Schwarz and Clore 1983), we seek to draw attention away from affective attributes and toward other product attributes that can be evaluated more critically (e.g., nutrition). Thus, we aim to make the utilitarian aspects of the product more accessible than its hedonic aspects. Because high levels of affect are chronically more accessible than less polarized levels of affect (Feldman and Lynch 1988; Tajfel 1969), we expect that highly positive affect will retain its accessibility and interfere with the individual’s capacity to correct bias.

In experiment 1, we test our developmental stage hypothesis by comparing an early childhood advertising icon (Tony the Tiger, continuously and heavily advertised to children since 1951 and presumably would have been experienced at a very early age) with a late childhood (after age eight) advertising icon (M&Ms characters, introduced in 1998, after participants in the study would have developed persuasion knowledge). Eighty-two participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: early (Tony the Tiger) or late (M&Ms) childhood. After being exposed to an image of the childhood advertising spokescharacter and visualizing a memory of it, participants completed a feeling thermometer as an affect measure. Participants then read one of two passages concerning an ostensible seminar topic that their college of business was considering offering. One passage contained information on children’s inability to defend against advertisements due to developmental constraints (heightened accessibility to bias correction) and the control passage contained information on the elderly’s inability to defend against advertisements due to cognitive decline. Participants then rated an associated fictitious food product (Kellogg’s Frosted Puffs for Tony the Tiger or M&Ms Puffs) on an inventory of five nutrition-related product attributes (e.g., fiber content) embedded within nine other product attributes (e.g., stays crunchy in milk). Results of experiment 2 support our hypothesized relationship between affect, stage of development, and accessibility to bias correction. As expected, there was no significant difference in judgment among participants in the late childhood consumption condition (M&Ms). Participants in the early childhood condition (Tony the Tiger) who felt lower levels of positive emotion toward it evaluated an associated product extension as less nutritious than participants who experienced higher levels of positive affect when bias correction was made accessible.

In experiment 2, we address limitations in experiment 1 by substituting a more subtle bias correction manipulation (priming) and measuring judgment toward an original product (Frosted Flakes) rather than a fictitious product (Frosted Puffs) in the same procedure as experiment 1. Consistent with the previous experiment, we observed a significant 2-way interaction of prime and affect on the judgment dependent variable. When primed for health, participants who were cued for memory of an early childhood spokescharacter (Tony the Tiger) and felt higher levels of positive affect toward it evaluated the associated product extension as less nutritious than participants who experienced lower levels of positive affect.

Results from this research indicate that affect-laden memories of childhood advertisements can result in judgments in favor of a brand. Results also indicate that the stage at which childhood advertisements are encoded into memory matters, as more favorable judgments are observed for participants cued for memory of early childhood advertising, but not for participants cued for memory of late childhood advertising. We attribute these differences to the development of persuasion knowledge in late childhood that facilitates skepticism toward advertisements. However, this skepticism appears to be directed only to advertisements seen after persuasion knowledge is gained. Furthermore, adults sometimes fail to correct bias, as has been previously supposed. Finally, we find that enhancing capacity to correct bias is limited in its effectiveness to consumers who are relatively less vulnerable (i.e., experience lower levels of felt affect toward early childhood advertising objects).
Young Consumer’s Immersion in an Artistic Experience: 
The Case of the Annisettanta (The 1970s) 
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Bernard Cova, Euromed Management Marseilles-France and Bocconi University Milan, Italy

ABSTRACT
One way to reduce the distance between the consumers and the aesthetic object is the mobilization of referents which secure the consumers and facilitate their immersion. In this paper we used the Annisettanta (The 1970s) exhibition held in Milan in 2008 as a kind of laboratory to investigate if young subjects can immerse themselves into an experiential context which is made of referents that are mainly alien to them. The results show that together with the lack of understandable referents it is the inability to create a link between these referents which constitutes a barrier to immersion.
A European Philosophical Psychology of Asian Media Marketing Consumption: From Audience Absorption to Appropriation/ Alienation

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Communication studies frequently represent audiences as always having already arrived at conclusions about media content. Hermeneutic consumer research, on the other hand, along with reader reception theory, emphasizes the process of personal judgment, our perceptual projection of meaning in understanding advertising or branding as a prelude to persuading ourselves to purchase.

Engaging with familiar brand narratives on screen media (or indeed in shopping malls) we actively absorb and anticipate their presence, forming likely stories of product experience, put to the test in our “trying out.” We appropriate our meanings, affirming selves as consumer-citizens.

Media marketing itself constructs a preferred reading of events, emphasizing a connotative dimension to screen content: it seeks consumer identification with that interpretation (“Coke conquers adversity!”) and the latter’s appropriation by audiences in understanding their purchasing selves. Buying extends or extrapolates our interpretive immersion in such marketing narrative and the experience of identification to everyday life: it brings sense and sensation “back home.”

In this spatio-temporal model of the relationship between media marketing and audience, brand managing sets out to align consumer attitudes or position people on cultural horizons of understanding product parallel to those on screen. Audiences, interpreting and identifying with advertising, overcome distance-or express alienation.

In a brief episode of bank branding research at the University of Science, Penang, Malaysia (Universiti Sains Malaysia), we considered Chinese, Indian and Malay graduate student attitudes evoked in the small stories of focus groups as an exemplar of these hermeneutic categories applied to processes of human communication. Set alongside such “data” in later research can be the blogs and micro-blogs, the longer stories available in social media online.

Respondents viewed (several times) and discussed three bank branding videos, guided by the second author. These brief cinematic texts were chosen for their public availability on YouTube as well as their aesthetically rich narrative texture. Two of the authors viewing banks (Bank Simpanan National and Public Bank) are Malaysian, the third is international with a local presence (HSBC):

BSN: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Luy9RaitM3o

English

HSBC: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVnHHieR-DM&NR=1 Cantonese, with English Subtitles

Public Bank: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XILz1fEgxj4

English

“Identification” is a hermeneutic concept: it can be defined by referring to Ricoeur’s (1981) concept of separation in space and time underwriting cultural distance. As in the case of Bank Simpanan branding, marketing seeking consumer identification moves towards overcoming such distance from audience horizons of understanding and, where successful, aligning intended consumers to appropriate a brand for use within their life-worlds. In this theoretical framing, perceived distance between textual and audience cultural horizons of understanding is never procured by author (as with Brecht’s dramatized “distancing”) but is the audience’s achievement.

The BSN branding attempts de-distancing, to celebrate its being “everywhere, we can help you in many ways” (female Chinese). By foregrounding or prioritizing children, a focus of “human interest in our lives,” and using terms like “us,” “we” and “you” ( ... “they seek for our engagement in the video ( ... ) to be in, together with the bank” (male Malay) (emphasis in original). But for a female Malay in his group, its customer address to business groups, families and older people, does not “touch” her generation of students. She may have been absorbed in attending to content, but the text offers no horizon of understanding the world which she can share, no point of view or person with which she can “connect.” Instead, in a “personal” self-distancing reading, rather than being “progressive” as BSN branding claims, she claims “they are one step behind.”

HSBC may present itself as the world’s local bank. But the research here suggests a failure in connected understanding, as regards both consumers producing coherent brand narrative meaning and (more fundamentally) branding establishing cultural proximity to consumers. In one group, participants severed themselves from content by asserting that what the bank presented as people’s “needs” was for them only what they might have “wanted.” Both our Chinese and Malay responses to HSBC branding evoke cultural distance, albeit that a male Malay presents himself discursively as more aesthetically aware and has therefore tolerance for complex cinematic narrative. Without perceived cultural closeness enabling their understanding, audiences are not able to articulate and align with prescriptive narrative on the marketing screen, becoming instead analytically alienated.

Because it is clearly “at odds” with the genre of which the two preceding narratives are defining instances (despite the issues raised in their discussion), the Malaysian Public Bank branding is deemed by our consumers to have an uncertain source. In this consensus, they declare a set of community assumptions guiding perception of corporate branding and its function.

Media and marketing text in consumption is content continually viewed from a spatially and temporally situated as well as habituated horizon of understanding or physically located and locally familiar cultural framework (in)forming the reading audience’s activities. In this paper we argue for consumer responses to media underwriting the social uses of advertising as cognitively structured. Looking is intrinsically informed, culturally and physically positioned or perspectival awareness that what one is seeing instantiates a type of already experienced phenomena.

Cognition is embodied interpretive awareness. Hence, audience perception is essentially time-taking, mediated by a knowledgeable anticipating of screen narrative and their formation of its content-assembling an account rather than the positivist’s immediate reaction to screen stimuli.

Producing branded meaning is cognitively play-like, involving consumers in paradoxical escape from their material world: immersed, they flexibly assemble textual evidence rather than engage in duty driven work. The cognitive processes in play during the formation of personal and program identity in a consumer’s continuing construction of narrative constitute the plasticity of projection, a necessarily future-oriented “throwing” of meaning on screen: our always already anticipating and articulating media marketing’s stories is experientially universal.
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Visual Typicality and Novelty as Joint Predictors of Aesthetic Preference: The Influence of Design Expertise and Product Category Interest
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Visual typicality (i.e., goodness of example for a category) and visual novelty (i.e., originality) have been found to affect aesthetic preferences for products, but to suppress each other’s effect (Hekkert, Snelders, and Van Wieringen 2003). On the one hand, people appreciate ease of classification and processing and thus prefer visually typical designs (Loken and Ward 1990; Schwarz 2004; Whitfield and Slatter 1979; Winkielman et al. 2006). On the other hand, novel designs are unusual and unexpected, and therefore a good way to draw the attention of consumers (Hekkert et al. 2003).

In this study we looked into this issue, and show that the relative influence of visual typicality and novelty is moderated by (a) the generalized design expertise and sensibility towards product aesthetics (Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics —CVPA, by Bloch, Brunel and Arnold 2003), and (b) consumers’ interest in the product category.

Design preferences of designers are found to differ from those of people with less design training (Hsu, Chuang and Chang 2000; Whitfield and Wiltshire 1982). However, it is not clear why these differences in aesthetic preferences between design experts and novices exist. According to Hekkert et al. (2003), experts suppress an initial affective response for typical instances, and they base their aesthetic judgment more on considerations of novelty. Hekkert et al. failed to find support for this notion in their study on car design, where expertise was operationalized as product category expertise (i.e., knowledge about cars and the automotive industry). However, with the focus on aesthetic judgments, expertise on design is likely to be a more relevant measure than product category expertise. Similarly, Leder and Carbon (2005) posited that people who have an interest in aesthetics might react more positively to innovative designs, while others choose more conventional designs. However, they provided weak and inconsistent evidence for this idea. Thus, there is no conclusive evidence about differences in the relative influence of visual typicality and novelty on aesthetic preference between design experts and novices.

Next to design expertise, there may also be an effect of product category interest on the relative importance of visual typicality and novelty in aesthetic preference judgments. For Silva (2006), product category interest is seen as a necessary condition for judgment on the basis of distinctiveness (and arguably novelty). Related to this is the finding of Ward and Loken (1988), that uniqueness (a construct similar to novelty) is valued for products that people are interested in because they are important to the self-concept. At the same time, a typical product appearance that aids fast categorization seems advisable when people do not consider the product to be important or interesting. In such cases consumers want to minimize their effort (Hoyer 1984), and this means that visual typicality is likely to have a stronger impact on product preference/ choice. This same reasoning might be applied to aesthetic preferences, and for this reason we also look to product category interest as an explaining factor for why people would find typical products less and novel products more attractive.

Method
A first group of 207 respondents from a consumer internet panel of a European University rated the visual attractiveness of 20 product pictures for each of 10 product categories (200 pictures in total), and the CVPA and interest scales in an internet questionnaire. A second group of 53 respondents rated the same 200 product pictures on visual typicality and novelty.

Results
A regression analysis on the mean visual attractiveness ratings for each product confirms that typicality and novelty are joint predictors of attractiveness (Beta typicality=.546, p<.01, Beta novelty=.574, p<.01); together they explained 40.7 % of the variance in the attractiveness ratings overall.

Over product categories, visual typicality is a more important criterion for aesthetic preference for consumers that are less sensitive to the aesthetic quality of design (i.e., score lower on CVPA). The influence of visual novelty on aesthetic preference increases with CVPA level, but only above a certain threshold for novelty. In addition, the study shows that both visual typicality and visual novelty are a relatively more important criterion for aesthetic preference for consumers who are more interested in the product category. Thus, with high product category interest the influence of both visual novelty and typicality becomes more pronounced.

Conclusion and Discussion
This study provides evidence for the moderating influence of design expertise and product category interest on the relative influence of visual typicality and novelty in aesthetic preference. Visual typicality is a more important criterion for consumers that are less sensitive to the aesthetic quality of design (i.e., score lower on CVPA), as their judgment is influenced more by ease of processing. On the other hand, the influence of visual novelty increases with CVPA level, but only for products above a base level of novelty. In addition, both visual typicality and novelty are more important in determining aesthetic preference when people are more interested in the product category. Furthermore, this study replicates, extends and generalizes the previous finding of Hekkert et al. (2003) that visual typicality and novelty are joint predictors of aesthetic preference over a larger set of products and product categories.

This study provides insights into the relative importance of visual typicality and novelty in aesthetic preference. The results thereby heighten insight into aesthetic preference formation and the influence of design expertise and product category interest in this, and help companies in determining the appropriate level of visual typicality and novelty in their designs. Furthermore, following an inspection of designs and their ratings it seems that products that have a reasonably typical ground shape, but that are different in color or material —making them easy to recognize (and typical) but different enough to capture interest (i.e., novel)—tend to be preferred by consumers.

REFERENCES


**The Manner of Art: An Aesthetic Influence on Evaluation**

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Visual images consist of both content and manner, and each of these components influences consumer judgments. However, the influence of manner is less obvious and not as well understood. Extant literature has amply demonstrated the influence of image content on consumer evaluations (Childers and Houston 1984; Edell and Staelin 1983; Miniard et al., 1991; Mitchell and Olson 1981). Other research suggests that regardless of what a visual image depicts, the aesthetic qualities of the image have an influence on such evaluations (Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003; Charters 2006; Hoegg and Alba 2007; Peracchio and Meyers-Levy 2005). In the current research, we build on Hagtvedt and Patrick’s (2008) research on the Art Infusion Effect to investigate the influence of manner (the structuring of formal qualities that result in an aesthetic whole) on consumer evaluations of brands associated with artworks. Specifically, we focus on the influence of manner in representational paintings that serve as the visual image in product design (Study 1) and in advertisements for consumer products (Studies 2–4). There are varying degrees of artistic manner in all visual images, but this manner is especially salient in images explicitly recognized as artworks (Hagtvedt, Hagtvedt, and Patrick 2008; Hagtvedt and Patrick 2008). This focus is also justified from a managerial point of view, given the widespread use of art images in marketing efforts (Hetsoni and Tuckahinsky 2005; Hoffman 2002). We demonstrate that the operation of an art-is–schematic heuristic underlies Art Infusion, and that this heuristic 1) is evoked when consumers focus on the manner rather than the content of the artwork; 2) operates regardless of contextual fit between the artwork and the associated product; 3) does not require extensive cognitive resources to operate; 4) is diminished in its influence when the use of artworks is rendered commonplace (ordinization).

Study 1 was a 2 (fit: high vs. low) x 2 (salience: content vs. manner) between-subjects field study, conducted in a bar, which demonstrates that although the contextual fit between the image and the product associated with the image determines the influence of that image on brand evaluation, the salience of manner eliminates this differential influence. Two wine labels were custom made, featuring an art image with a low versus high fit with the product category of wine. For each participant (patron of the bar), the bartender would pour a sample from one of the two wine bottles while manipulating the salience of content versus manner via a seemingly casual comment. After sampling the wine, each participant provided a brand evaluation. Results revealed the expected fit x salience interaction (M(high, content)=5.39 vs. M(low, content)=3.68, F(1, 56)=4.79, p<.05, partial η²=.09).

We replicate these results in a lab experiment, using a different manipulation (concrete versus abstract mindset) to encourage the salience of content versus manner. The rationale for the manipulation is that a concrete mindset (pertaining to lower-level, detailed conceptual) is associated with specific product-related information tied to the content of a visual image, while an abstract mindset (pertaining to higher-level, holistic conceptual) is associated with the general, schema-based inferences tied to the manner. Study 2 was a 2 (fit: high vs. low) x 3 (mindset: concrete vs. abstract vs. no instructions control) between-subjects experiment. The stimuli were ads for a fictitious nail salon featuring art images with high versus low fit with this product category. Consumer mindsets were manipulated with a ladder of task from the extant literature. Study 2 revealed the expected fit x mindset interaction (M(high, concrete)=4.97 vs. M(high, abstract)=4.39 vs. M(low, concrete)=3.22 vs. M(low, abstract)=4.11, F(1, 99)=5.81, p<.05, partial η²=.09).

We further theorize that a manner-based evaluation, as it is conceptualized here, entails a heuristic, schematic processing style, rather than the more cognitively demanding analytic processing required for evaluative judgments based on contextual fit. Study 2 was a 2 (salience: content vs. manner) x 2 (cognitive load: high vs. low) between-subjects experiment which demonstrates that although the processing of content requires extensive cognitive resources, the processing of manner does not. The stimulus was an advertisement for a fictitious fitness center featuring an art image that was incongruous with this product category. This incongruity only translated to less favorable brand evaluations in the content-salience condition without heavy cognitive load, as evidenced by the expected salience x cognitive load interaction (M(content, high)=3.78 vs. M(manner, high)=4.08 vs. M(content, low)=2.56 vs. M(manner, low)=3.65, F(1, 157)=7.56, p<.05, partial η²=.05).

Finally, study 4 demonstrates a boundary condition for the favorable influence of manner. While a content-based evaluation requires the inference of specific brand-related information based on what is depicted, a manner-based evaluation requires only the general recognition of artistic manner. However, the link between this recognition and a favorable brand evaluation depends on the degree to which the artistic manner is perceived as special, and in study 4 we demonstrate the boundary condition of “ordinization,” in which the image is made to seem more ordinary or commonplace. Participants were given a small booklet with consumer product ads featuring art images. The target product to evaluate was either in the first or last ad in the sequence, the rationale being that in the latter case the previously viewed ads featuring art images highlight the frequent use of art images for marketing purposes and thus ordinarize the art in the target ad. The target ad was for Savine Dinnerware (fictitious brand), featuring the painting The Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh. The study was a 2 (ordinization: high vs. low) x 2 (salience: content vs. manner) between-subjects experiment, and results revealed the expected ordination x salience interaction (M(high, content)=5.41 vs. M(high, manner)=4.97 vs. M(low, content)=5.39 vs. M(low, manner)=5.78, F(1, 99)=5.81, p<.05, partial η²=.06).

**REFERENCES**


Aesthetic Appraisal of Product Designs: Independent Effects of Processing Fluency and Arousal

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers’ aesthetic appraisal of products depends on the presence of particular product design properties, like typicality and complexity (Berlyne 1970; Veryzer and Hutchinson 1998). Two processes that are closely related to these design properties and that influence aesthetic appraisal are processing fluency and arousal. Even though the importance of these processes has been demonstrated, at present contradictory theories exist regarding the direction of these effects and the combined effect of processing fluency and arousal. Aesthetic appraisal has mostly been studied using polygons, patterns or art as stimuli (Kunst-Wilson and Zajonc 1980). These stimuli can only be valued for the aesthetic pleasure they bring about. However, products serve a utilitarian purpose and are not purchased for aesthetic pleasure only (Creusen and Schoormans 2005). Products are thus evaluated with a different goal in mind than artificial stimuli, which may influence the effect of processing fluency on the aesthetic appraisal of the product (Armstrong and Dentweiler-Bedell 2008). The present research specifically focuses on understanding aesthetic appraisal of product designs.

Processing fluency is defined as the ease with which the cognitive apparatus identifies the physical stimulus (Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman 2004). Past research has demonstrated that typicality positively affects processing fluency. Because typical products are processed more fluently, people experience pleasurable feelings, which result in greater aesthetic appraisal (Posner and Keele 1968). However, consumers may also consciously search for atypical product designs (Baumgartner and Steenkamp 1996). Schoormans and Robben (1997) reconciled these opposing effects by demonstrating that typicality has an inverted U-shaped relationship with aesthetic appraisal for product packages. Correspondingly, several authors theorized that processing fluency can have both a positive and a negative relationship with aesthetic appraisal (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1999). Fluent processing can be pleasurable through a process of immediate understanding. The negative effect of processing fluency may arise through the process of potential understanding (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1999). Then, pleasure is found in the successful solving of a “puzzle” because the perceived stimulus is not immediately correctly categorized (Mandler 1982). Hence, we hypothesize that for product designs an optimum level of processing fluency exists and that processing fluency can have a negative relationship with aesthetic appraisal (Hypothesis 1).

Arousal is the psychobiological state of alertness or excitation of a person (Berlyne 1960). Often, an inverted U-shaped relationship between arousal and aesthetic appraisal is described. In general, arousal has a positive impact on aesthetic appraisal. However, extremely high levels of arousal are considered unpleasant, which will decrease aesthetic appraisal (Berlyne 1971). In accordance with findings of Martindale, Moore, and Borkum (1990), who did not replicate an inverted U-shaped relationship, we expect that for product designs, arousal will not reach extremely high levels, suggesting that a positive relationship exists between the arousal induced by a product design and aesthetic appraisal of this design (Hypothesis 2).

Some researchers concluded that the effect of arousal on aesthetic appraisal interacts with cognitive processes (e.g., processing fluency) (Crucian et al. 2000), while others believe that both processes affect aesthetic appraisal independently (Berlyne 1960; Zajonc 1980). Hekkert, Snelders, and Van Wieringen (2003) showed that novelty (assumed to induce arousal) and typicality (assumed to influence processing fluency) interact in their effects on aesthetic appraisal. Even though novelty is assumed to induce arousal, this has not been validated. It may well be that these properties influence aesthetic appraisal entirely through processing fluency (Neiss 1988). Accordingly, it can be argued that Hekkert et al. (2003) merely demonstrated an effect of processing fluency, rather than a combined effect of processing fluency and arousal. Accordingly, at present no evidence against Berlyne’s (1960) theory that the arousal experienced for an object can directly influence aesthetic appraisal exists. In fact, for other arousing properties, the theory may still hold. In support of the latter, recent research has shown that cognitive and affective processes can sometimes influence aesthetic appraisal independently (Homburg, Koschat, and Hoyer 2006). Indeed, it is likely that certain product design properties induce arousal that affects aesthetic appraisal in an automatic manner, rather than first being cognitively processed. For other properties (e.g., color saturation), the relationship with induced arousal has been validated as well as their influence on aesthetic appraisal (Valdez and Mehrabian 1994). For these properties, however, the combined effect of processing fluency and arousal has not yet been examined. We hypothesize that processing fluency and arousal can influence aesthetic appraisal of a product design independently (Hypothesis 3).

In the current research, processing fluency was manipulated by means of prototype deviation, resulting in different levels of typicality. 3-D digital stimulus products were created by a trained designer by changing the shape of a typical rectangular toaster in the level of roundness in five steps. Arousal induction was operationalized by increasing the saturation of the color red given to the designs by 10% in five steps (Valdez and Mehrabian 1994). Accordingly, a total of 25 (5 levels of prototype deviation × 5 levels of saturation) digital pictures of toasters were created. Two pre-studies showed that the manipulations were successful and no confounding effects were present. During the main study, aesthetic appraisal was measured for all stimuli. Next, participants (N=60) completed a categorization task wherein reaction times were measured, which served as a measure of processing fluency (Posner and Keele 1968).

Regression analyses using aesthetic appraisal as the dependent variable and processing fluency, arousal, and their interactions as the independent variables supported our three hypotheses. Specifically, we found that a decrease in processing fluency resulted in an increase in aesthetic appraisal. Arousal had a significant positive effect on aesthetic appraisal, R²=.820, F(2, 22)=50.1, Bprocessing fluency=.138, Bavoral=.149, all p’s<.001. Furthermore, the interaction effects of processing fluency and arousal were not significant, suggesting that processing fluency did not interfere with the effect of arousal on aesthetic appraisal. Furthermore, arousal did not influence reaction times, while prototype deviation did, providing additional support for the independent effects of processing fluency and arousal.

Our results show that arousal and processing fluency can simultaneously and independently influence aesthetic appraisal. This
implies that when aesthetic appraisal is at the optimum for processing fluency, it can be lifted through arousal inducing properties.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Customer loyalty represents a critical issue for firms that try to create enduring relationships with their customers, which helps explains the multiplicity and diversity of loyalty programs (Palmatier et al. 2006). However, most existing research indicates that the success of these programs is questionable and that their effects have only limited scope (Dowling and Uncles 1997; O’Brien and Jones 1995; Sharp and Sharp 1997). Prior studies note the relative ineffectiveness of loyalty programs but, owing to behavioural methods they use, they leave in the dark the possible reasons for negative assessments. Besides, staying at a general level, very few qualitative approaches consider the causes of potential negative perceptions of loyalty programs and the marketing practices on which they are based (Fournier, Dobscha, and Mick 1998; O’Malley and Prothero 2004).

In the light of scarce information about perceptions of loyalty programs, which represent main tools of relationship marketing, this study explores the negative elements perceived by customers that may lead them reject membership in such programs. Using an exploratory study of 15 customers who resisted joining a loyalty program, this research attempts to answer three questions: What reasons do they give to explain their refusal? What is their aim exactly? What individual and situational characteristics might influence these justifications?

Entry into loyalty programs primarily is motivated by a gain or use that the consumer expects to attain. However, research provides widespread evidence of the effect of autoselection, which poses the crucial question of how retailers can attract occasional and not only regular customers who are naturally loyal to a particular point of sale. Besides, questions about privacy and discrimination raise concerns about loyalty programs (Wendlandt and Schrader 2007). In addition, other factors are likely to provoke customer resistance to loyalty programs, such as perceived attempts by the seller to influence them, the level of engagement required, and subsequent appeals to which members are subjected (O’Malley and Prothero 2004). As Friestad and Wright (1994) suggest, consumers’ “metacognition” about persuasion mechanisms may increase their perception of influence attempts thus hampering their will to participate in relationship marketing. This article thus explores how practically consumers negotiate their refusal to join loyalty programs and what reasons they put forward to support their decision. We seek to understand whether this resistance follows from previous bad experiences and what situational and/or psychological antecedents play a part in customers’ refusal. In this respect, we investigate individual characteristics that are likely to influence consumer resistance and have not been addressed in previous studies.

Because of the extent, novelty, and lack of prior investigation into this issue, this study adopts a qualitative, in-depth approach, based on the analysis of discourses by 15 informants who have refused loyalty cards, including free ones offered by retailers. Five informants had never possessed a card, and the other 10 owned one or two that they had never used. Because age appears to influence the informants’ cognitions, this study adopts a homogeneous split, based on the average age of the sample, 47 years, which matches the median that falls between 22 and 70 years. It seemed equally important to vary the size of the households and the family structure, which both influence the amount and nature of purchases. The approximately two-hour respondent interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed sequentially, which allowed for control of the progressive development of themes and provided a guideline for choosing subsequent profiles. Four resistance themes emerge from the discourses: the unacceptable invasion of privacy that programs impose; shifts of interpersonal frames of reference and domestic values being unduly appropriated by the marketing sphere; suspected dishonesty of companies; and perceptions of the poor value of the programs, such that the rewards do not compensate for the overall inconvenience.

The results suggest reasons that consumers might refuse loyalty cards, which, except the perceived unbalance between rewards and nuisances, have less to do with the content of the scheme itself than to what such programs represent in relation to the marketplace. The informants are recalcitrant about such forms of loyalty because customer–company relationship appears as a commercial strategy, whose hidden profit objective is masked by rhetorical discourse and fallacious methods. This resonates with O’Malley and Prothero’s (2004) contribution but extends it two ways: firstly, it shows that informants’ alleged resistance do not solely derives from previous bad experiences and feelings about the program, but from an extended sympathy for more vulnerable customers who may be victims of companies’ interests; secondly, it accounts, other than plain rejection of loyalty card, for various resistant behaviours that are less discernible but possibly more detrimental to firms, such as opportunist and disloyal behaviours. Our findings also show that informants have developed a “marketplace metacognition” (Friestad and Wright 1994) that influences their perceptions of the consumer society and the loyalty devices that companies use to capture them.

This knowledge makes them circumspect in their responses to every attempt used by companies to create a relationship. The perception of a mismatch between the “Market World” and the “Domestic World” or “Civil World” (Boltanski and Thévenet 2006), as well as the psychological reactance, need for cognition and cynicism that characterize this group of consumers, play key roles in their refusal. As a consequence for practitioners, relational approaches are inappropriate for these consumers and a better strategy would be to maintain a transactional orientation toward them. In addition, the informants’ inferences about corporate dishonesty and unethical practices suggest the need for more transparency, respect, and ethics, as well as the more moderated and timely use of marketing techniques. The possible consequences of consumer resistance also suggest many avenues for further exploration. Because of their metacognition about market function, customers who resist loyalty programs may develop other negative perceptions of companies’ practices. Their more general tendency to doubt the allegations of the firms and disloyalty toward ads, offers and labels represent additional areas that could benefit from further development of this research.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Conspicuous consumption plays a significant role in shaping preferences for prestigious products purchased or consumed in public contexts (Braun and Wicklund 1989; Bagwell and Bernheim 1996). Veblen (1899) asserted that consumers use product prices as a means of ostentatiously displaying their wealth, power, or status. The phenomenon of conspicuous consumption has also been identified with its upwardly mobile citizens (Veblen 1899).

Many studies have illustrated that Asians are very conspicuous consumers (Dubois and Duquesne 1993; Phau and Prendergast 2001; Tai and Tam 1996). This may be because Asian societies have experienced rapid economic growth and unstable social class movements over the past 20 years (Jin and Sternquist 2003). Many luxury good purchasers in these societies search for the top brand in any category to make sure it matches their status and broadcasts their success to others. For consumers in these societies that were originally in the lower social status, they frequently perceive luxury goods as a passport or shortcut for entering elite social circles.

Sales clerks in luxury product stores normally treat their customers very well to promote good shopping moods and induce impulse purchasing behavior (Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoyl, and Nesdale 1994; Rook 1987; Rook & Gardner 1993). However, many times these sales clerks work on commissions. They frequently try to pre-screen their customers and treat them differently. To “effectively” improve their performance, they may focus on the most potential consumers to offer their best service and neglect the consumers that don’t look like they will be making a purchase. Since luxury brands normally incur a premium price, the easiest way for the sales clerk to pre-screen their customers may be based on their dress and behavior (Stead and Zinkhan 1986).

If the major purpose of the luxuries purchasing is to match the consumers’ taste and personality, snobbish encounter service provided by the store may cause the consumers to avoid the store. However, if the major shopping purpose of the consumers is for conspicuous consumption, the snobbish treatment offer by sales clerks may trigger the immediate urge for the consumers to show that they indeed have the income or wealth to purchase the luxury goods, and thus, impulse purchase the luxuries in front of the sales clerk.

From a sociological standpoint, building one’s social identity is especially relevant in societies characterized by high income disparities and status mobility (Featherstone 1991). In these emerging societies, conspicuous consumption may serve as a way to establish one’s social identity (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999; Arnold and Quelch 1989). The impulse purchasing behavior of luxury goods may therefore be justified when one’s social identity is challenged.

The chances of making an impulse purchase of a luxury good may increase when a person is shopping with someone they believe is important. This will enable them to receive immediate feedback from these important people. It may also release the feelings of constraints for consumers in collectivist societies when making the impulse purchase (Lee and Kacen 2008; Lou 2005).

This study intends to explore how “bad” service encounters trigger the purchasing urge in a luxury goods store in an Asian emerging market. Does snobbish service encounters trigger the urge to save one’s social identity and make a luxury good impulse purchase? Does a consumer accompanied by a close friend moderate the proposed relationship? Theories of luxury goods, impulse purchase, and normal influences are discussed to developed research hypotheses. A 2 (snobbish service vs. excellent service) x 2 (single vs. accompanied by a close friend) between group factorial design on 160 female consumers in Taipei, Taiwan was conducted to examine the causalities between the determinants and the urge to save social identity and the impulse purchase of luxury goods. In the experiment, the participants were informed that the scenario was in a clothing store selling prestigious designer labels.

The results of this study demonstrate that consumers in an Asian emerging market could be triggered to make an impulse purchase of a luxury good, not because they received excellent service in the store, but because they encountered snobbish service, especially when shopping with a close friend. These results reveal important information and implications regarding consumer education in these societies. This study demonstrated that the presence of a close friend increased the urge to make a purchase (Lou 2005). Shopping with a close friend boosts the urge to make an impulse purchase to save the damaged social identity.

Easy credit systems in many societies frequently cause consumers to overspend (Schor 1998). The prevalence of credit cards in the economies cause the impulse purchase of luxury goods more easily. In the past, as long as the consumers did not carry enough money, they could not make an impulse purchase of high priced luxury goods. However, credit cards make this purchasing behavior available, even though the consumers could not afford the price.

While not all impulse purchasing is bad for a consumer, impulse purchases of luxury goods may be burdens for consumers with limited financial resources. The rapid economic growth and unstable social class movement over the past 20 years in the Asian societies caused many consumers to use conspicuous purchasing behavior to claim their social status. Consumers in these societies consider luxury goods as status goods that can broadcast their social elite identity. In many situations, the product features of luxury goods become less important in the purchasing decision. This is why brand name piracy is very serious. Consumers may not be educated enough to evaluate the features and functions of the product itself, but to purchase it based on the brand name.
**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Conceptualization

Many years ago Leibenstein (1950) highlighted the importance of “signalling effects” on consumption, which means that the utility derived from a product is enhanced or decreased due to the fact that “others” are purchasing and consuming it or due to the fact that the product bears a higher or lower price. In marketing it was taken for granted that “people buy luxuries to impress”: most consumer research has implicitly assumed that luxuries are consumed for social signalling purposes. However, there is a scarcity of empirical support to this claim. This study tries to plug this gap by providing empirical support to a number of antecedents of three luxury consumption effects. It aims to improve the existing theoretical understanding of the psychological antecedents and signalling behaviour of luxury consumption.

Specifically, a veblen effect arises when consumer preference for a good increases as a direct function of its price; a snob effect when preference for a good increases as its quantity in the market is decreased; and a bandwagon effect is observed where consumer preference for a good increases as the number of people buying it is increased. As Vigneron and Johnson (1999) have noted, these effects are particularly observed in luxury product markets.

Research on luxuries’ consumption has led to more recent evidence that calls for a distinction between socially-oriented and personally-oriented luxury consumers (Wong and Ahuvia 1998, Tsai 2005). The origins of these two orientations can be traced in an individual’s self-concept. Some individuals focus more on the “internal domain” and their self-related goals or needs (independent self-concept); while others are more concerned about the interpersonal domain, the opinion and/or reaction of others and their external “persona” (inter-dependent self-concept). This literature advocates that consumers with an independent self show a more personal orientation in the way that they consume luxuries (focusing on their hedonic, utilitarian and self-communication goals) whereas consumers with inter-dependent self care more for the social impact of such consumption (such as the three investigated effects).

The existing work has not paid sufficient attention to the social effects (i.e., the bandwagon, snob, and veblen effects). It is not clear how exactly the self orientations impact on the consumption of luxuries. Against the previous background, this study proposes that these effects are driven by both an independent and an inter-dependent self-concept (they are both personally and socially-driven behaviours) and that a number of relevant traits act as mediators between the self-concept(s) and the signalling behaviour.

With the help of the literature and qualitative exploratory research (interviews with managers of luxury products) the following four traits emerge to be related to the bandwagon, snob and veblen effects: need-for-uniqueness, vanity, status-seeking, and susceptibility to interpersonal influence.

Need-for-uniqueness (NFU) is “the trait of pursuing differentness relative to others through the acquisition, utilization and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one’s self-image and social image.” NFU is positively related to both independent and inter-dependent self concepts and is hypothesized to be an antecedent of both snob and veblen effects, while negatively related to a bandwagon effect.

Vanity has a physical and an achievement dimension. Vanity is hypothesized to be positively related to both independent and inter-dependent self concepts. In addition vanity is an antecedent of a veblen effect (i.e., expensive luxuries), a snob effect (i.e., rare luxuries) and a bandwagon effect (i.e., through consumption of popular luxuries) as well.

Status-seeking is defined as the “process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of products that confer and symbolize status.” It reflects a social orientation and it is hypothesized to be positively related to the inter-dependent self (and negatively to the independent self). In addition, using the same argumentation line, status-seeking is hypothesized to be an antecedent of the veblen, snob and bandwagon effects.

Conformity (consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence–CSII), refers to the need to “identify with or enhance one’s image in the opinion of significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brands.” This trait reflects a social orientation and as such is hypothesized to be positively related to the inter-dependent self (and negatively to the independent self). CSII is an antecedent of bandwagon effects and it is negatively related to snob effects.

**Method**

Data were collected by the “drop and collect” survey method in a randomly selected sample of 431 consumers of luxuries in London. Three mediated structural models with the following variables were estimated: (independent and inter-dependent) self-concepts as antecedents (exogenous variables), need-for-uniqueness, status-seeking, vanity and susceptibility to interpersonal influence as mediators, and bandwagon, snob and veblen behaviour(s) as outcome variables.

**Major Findings**

Bandwagon behaviour is mostly influenced by inter-dependence. Managers of luxury goods who want to position their products as popular luxuries should focus-with this order-on enhancing their products’ projected status (status from popularity/conformity), normative (fit-in) messages, and (physical) vanity/attractiveness appeal; while avoiding “stand-out” (avoidance of similarity) messages.

Snob behaviour is mostly influenced by independence. Managers of luxury goods who want to position their products as exclusive luxuries should focus-with this order-on status derived from exclusivity, creating an aura of scarcity and uniqueness, and (physical) vanity/attractiveness appeal; while avoiding conformity (fit-in) messages.

Veblenian behaviour is only very slightly influenced by inter-dependence. Managers of luxury goods who want to boost consumption of their luxury products using (very expensive) price-signalling should focus-with this order-on communicating messages coherent with the traits of these target consumers: status messages (status from prestige-pricing since, for the purely conspicuous consumer, the satisfaction comes from audience reaction to the wealth displayed), (physical) vanity/attractiveness appeals, as well as on scarcity and uniqueness messages based on creative counter-conformity.

These results contribute to understanding in depth the antecedents behind the signalling behaviour of consumers of luxury goods. This behaviour is both personally meaningful and socially driven. These findings provide practical help to managers in a) segmenting their markets, and b) evaluating and predicting the reaction of consumers to changes in their offerings and communication campaigns.
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(II)Legalization of the Role of the Nation State in the Freedom to Consume the Internet: Consumers’ Understanding of and Reactions to Internet Censorship in Turkey

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper examines the area of social media in questioning the intersection of “civil society” and “the state.” Firstly the paper discusses the construction of these entities “civil society” and “the state” before contextualizing the role of the internet and access to the internet within Turkey. Turkey provides an interesting context for the study of resistance and expression in the era of web 2.0 and the growth and prevalence of social media. Drawing on literature on consumer behavior in online environments and resistance, the paper discusses the banning of social media such as YouTube in Turkey.

The Internet is conceived as a network without borders and boundaries. It is argued that on the Internet information travels freely, without interruption or interception by national governments. National boundaries increasingly become obsolete as websites are accessible in the same way wherever people are located. The impact of the Internet on national boundaries, cultures and trade has been described as resulting from the qualities of “information;” “information wants to be free” (Brand 1987). However, several countries such as China, Turkey and North Korea restrict access to certain websites. The aim of this study is to understand the consumers’ reactions against censorship on the Internet in Turkey. The focus is on the reactions of consumers to the ban on YouTube in Turkey. This study is positioned within broader work such as that by Hall (1986) and Gramsci (prison notebooks) which discuss the tensions between the state and civil society. These studies made explicit reference to the role of the “free press” within these struggles while this study repositions this debate to within the contemporary social media landscape. Drawing on frameworks such as resistance and the role of the state in shaping our consumption and expression this study aims to provide an insight into Turkish consumers’ understanding of and reactions to information restrictions imposed on social media such as YouTube.com.

Whereas China’s internet censorship sought to reinforce the Communist Party’s views (e.g., McKinnon 2008), the censorship introduced in Turkey was either based on the premise that some users insulted Turkishness and Ataturk (as explained above) or that some websites were promoting malicious material such as porn, paedophilia, etc., as seen by the statements of the RSF (RSF 2009). This paper moves beyond the neo-liberal versus neo-Marxist battles over the need to reduce or increase the role of the nation state in regulating the market and social spaces in society which are well rehearsed by thinkers such as Stiglitz (2002) and Ohmae (1990), and instead questions what happens when the state acts to distance the consumer from their global peers.

Drawing on the literature on resistance (e.g., Dobscha 1998; Kozinets and Handelman 1998) and on ethnography (e.g., Kozinets 2002), this study interprets the data about consumers understanding of and reactions to this removal of choice of consuming YouTube. In the first stage of data collection, 12 informants are interviewed by using purposive sampling (following Patton 1990), and in the second stage of data collection, a 2-year ethnography has been undertaken.

The data interpretation and analysis reveal that the negotiation of the role of the state and civil society continues in the era of social media and that discourses of globalisation which propose empowerment for the consumer, underestimate the continuing role of the state in shaping the reality of consumers. Furthermore, our paper contributes to the furthering of debates around consumer empowerment, the role of the state and globalisation and technology by illustrating the methods of resistance which consumers employ in coping with state intervention into their consumption practices. It is also interesting to note that much of the discourse which emerges focuses on the impediments to consumption which such state intervention/ control has resulted in, rather than to objections to freedom of expression on a socio-political level. This can be viewed as evidence of ideological expansion of the consumer society within the sphere of civil society.
Reconstruction Theory: Towards an Understanding of How Media Scheduling Influences Memory for Advertising
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In a recent USA Today (“Cingular Wireless” 2005), there was a full-page ad for Cingular phone service, and two pages later, a smaller, “teaser” ad. In contrast, during the 2005 Super Bowl, Cadillac had 5-second spots (“0-60 in 5 seconds”) touting their new model, which were later followed by longer, 30-second commercials. Both these examples demonstrate that media planners recognize that ad exposures can be complementary. With the increased cost of reaching consumers, it is not surprising that advertisers are looking for more creative ways to get more impact for their advertising dollars (Rothman 1989). Other than the design of advertising messages themselves, the issue of how to best schedule advertising delivery is perhaps one of the most important and practical issues facing advertisers (Longman 1997). Research has shown that the same ad campaign can lead to very different levels of consumer memory depending on how it is scheduled (Zielksie and Walter 1980). Unfortunately, the media model one adopts is often based on agency affiliation (e.g., Heflin and Haygood 1985) rather than being motivated by one theory versus another. Early research in marketing recognized the importance of both theory and practice in understanding advertising’s longer-term effects (Strong 1977). This current research investigation is more theory driven in order to develop insights for practice.

A stream of research exists in the psychology literature which could deepen our understanding of the processes that impact media scheduling. This research on the “spacing effect” examines the advantage in memory for repeated items that are separated by time or other material (i.e., spaced) compared to repeated items that are presented in succession (i.e., massed) (Janiszewski, Noel, and Sawyer 2003). This effect has been found in a variety of information settings, such as memory for nonsense syllables, words, sentences, pictures and faces (Dempster 1996), and most relevant here, it has been found for both television commercials (e.g., Singh et al. 1994) and print ads (e.g., Appleton-Knapp, Bjork, and Wickens 2005). This research on the spacing effect seems relevant for marketing researchers interested in advertising scheduling as it examines how repeated material interacts with different presentation schedules to impact memory. In a recent meta-analysis of the spacing effect Janiszewski, Noel and Sawyer (2003) found support for two main “spacing effect” theories: study phase retrieval and reconstruction. A third theory, encoding variability, received marginal support but has been very prevalent in marketing as an explanation of some repetition effects (Singh et al. 1994). An examination of these theories could enhance our understanding of the spacing effect and its underlying processes. This would have both practical and theoretical implications for marketers.

Encoding variability theory has been dominant in the marketing literature (e.g., Singh et al. 1994; Unnava and Burnkrant 1991), especially as it relates to memory for advertising. The theory states that objects possess different features—contextual, structural and descriptive features. The theory accords an advantage to spaced presentations since spacing gives people the opportunity to encode different features of an item at different points in time. This allows them to create multiple retrieval routes and leads to better recall. Memory for an ad can be enhanced if different executions are presented over time because more memory traces would lead to better ad recall. Practically, this would suggest advertisers have different formats of their ads (rather than repeating the same commercial).

Recently researchers have demonstrated that study phase retrieval is a better explanation than encoding variability for the spacing effect in an advertising setting (Appleton-Knapp, Bjork, and Wickens 2005). Study phase retrieval theory states that when a consumer sees a series of advertisements for a brand, that they use the second ad exposure to bring to mind the first ad they saw. The second ad, therefore, refreshes memory for the first ad. Reconstruction theory says at the time the consumer sees the second related ad, they engage in either a superficial or great amount of processing depending on the accessibility of the first occurrence. If ads are spaced, they will engage in a deeper level of processing. A greater amount of elaboration at the time of the second presentation would lead to better ad memory.

Using repeated brand-attribute word pairs for several fictitious brands (e.g., in the automobile category-Lancia: Heated seats; Lancia: Anti-lock brakes), Noel (2006) showed that reconstruction is a more appropriate explanation of spacing effects compared to encoding variability theory. However, he did not rule out study-phase retrieval as a potential explanation for his results. Additionally, prior research has not empirically tested reconstruction against study phase retrieval. We believe that when advertising is presented over a longer time period and ad memory is accessed even later, that reconstruction theory would provide a better model for advertising researchers and practitioners to consult when scheduling their ad exposures.

In two experiments, using a variety of paradigms and measures adapted from the verbal learning literature, we examine reconstruction theory to determine if it best explains the spacing effect in advertising. Our first experiment examines a factor that could help establish dissociations between study-phase retrieval and reconstruction theories. We focus on the length of retention interval. In our second experiment, we focus on the impact spacing has on memory for either the first or the second presentation of a repeated item. This would provide additional insight into the underlying mechanisms that govern the spacing effect. In both of our experiments, we found reconstruction theory to be the most robust explanation for the results. Our results by no means contradict the previous findings supporting study phase retrieval (Appleton-Knapp, Bjork, and Wickens 2005; Verkoeijen 2005). We simply establish conditions under which another theory might have greater explanatory power. These results point to the need for a multi-factor theory to explain the spacing effect. We end with a discussion of the implications of these findings for theory and practice.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The current research examines the carryover effects that expectancy disconfirmation can have on second party product evaluations. These effects are shown to occur through a generalized distrust mechanism, consistent with the bias model of distrust (Darke and Ritchie 2007).

Product performance has obvious implications for consumer judgment. In particular, performance is a reliable predictor of satisfaction, which in turn affects complaining behavior, word of mouth, and future patronage (Szymanski and Henard 2001). Consumer reactions to product failure have traditionally been understood in terms of an attributional/affective process. For instance, Folkes (1984) found that product failure that was attributed to factors under the control of the firm led to anger and vengeance seeking against that firm. While traditional research has focused on implications for the same target product, more recent studies suggest product failure can also lead to carryover effects for different products with the same brand name, or to similar products from closely related competitors. For example, failure of a brand extension can reflect back on the parent brand (Ahluwalia and Gürhan-Canli 2000), or carryover to immediate competitors that sell similar products (Kumar 2005). Roehm and Tybout (2006) found that scandalous product failures carried over to closely related competitors that sold similar products (from Burger King to Hardee’s, which are both highly associated with hamburgers), but not to competitors that sold somewhat different products (from Burger King to Dairy Queen, which also sells hamburgers but is more strongly associated with ice cream). A similarity mechanism is said to underlie these negative carryover effects (e.g., Feldman and Lynch 1988), where carryover occurs when the brands or products are perceived as closely related to the initial brand/product that failed. Recent evidence suggests that affective transfer can also play a role (Yeung and Wyer 2005).

Our own research contributes to this literature by showing such carryover effects can also apply to dissimilar second-party products, through a distinct mechanism relating to the generalized distrust evoked by the initial product failure. These predictions were based largely on the bias model of distrust (Darke and Ritchie 2007; Darke et al. 2008), which suggests that generalized distrust occurs when consumers learn advertisers have misled them, and that this form of distrust has the power to create persistent negative bias in consumer judgment towards a broad range of advertising sources in the future. Importantly, the bias model assumes that misleading ads produce generalized suspicion through negative expectancy disconfirmation, where the misleading ad increases expectations to a level that is later disconfirmed by other information (see also Rotter 1971).

We conducted an experiment involving a situation in which an initial product’s performance failed to live up to the expectations created by an ad claim, and then examined the effects this had on trust and evaluations for a very different second-party product. We independently manipulated both performance (success vs. failure vs. control) and expectations (high vs. low) for the initial product in order to test whether the carryover effects were driven by negative disconfirmation per se (i.e., high performance expectations and poor performance). As mentioned, our main interest was in learning whether negative disconfirmation would lead to negative carryover effects on evaluations even for a very different product category (from a stain remover to headphones) through generalized distrust. The results supported these predictions. The fact that the carryover effects operated over such different product categories argues directly against a similarity based explanation for the observed effects. Additional measures of attribution and negative affect were also included, and meditational analyses suggested these variables were also unable to explain the observed carryover effects.

A number of additional findings were consistent with the prediction that the generalized suspicion created by negative disconfirmation led to a persistent bias in judgment. Specifically, there was evidence for a negativity bias in that, while negative disconfirmation led to generalized distrust, positive disconfirmation (i.e., performance that exceeded expectations) did not lead to generalized trust in the second party firm. In addition, rather than potentially diminishing the effects of generalized distrust, the opportunity to actually test the second product led to a confirmatory bias, where the initial effects of generalized distrust on product evaluations were further intensified by testing the second product.

This research adds to the expectancy disconfirmation literature by showing that consumer distrust is an important byproduct of expectancy disconfirmation that can lead product failure to have much broader carryover effects on subsequent evaluations than has been previously demonstrated. The current evidence also adds to existing research on consumer distrust (e.g., Darke and Ritchie 2007; Darke et al. 2008). In particular, the finding that negative disconfirmation is the key factor causing deceptive advertising to induce generalized distrust helps better clarify the conditions required to generate such distrust. Finally, the evidence for the negativity and confirmation effects provides additional evidence for the biased nature of distrust, which is one of the central contents of the bias model.
Portfolio Advertising as an Instrument to Strengthen the Corporate Brand in a Complex 
Brand Architecture
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Nowadays, a lot of companies have complex brand architecture structures with a corporate brand at the top and strong product brands below. Whereas the corporate brand is often unknown to many consumers, the product brands, which have distinctive brand images, are usually known. In recent years, many companies seek to strengthen their corporate brand and try to attract the consumer’s attention to it. Portfolio advertising, that means the simultaneous presentation of corporate brand and product brands, may show a potentially suitable instrument for some companies in order to strengthen the corporate brand through its well-known product brands. This means that a corporate brand with complex brand architectures profits from its product brands by positive image spill-over effects resulting from a mutual presentation with its brand portfolio. As a theoretical basis, impression management could be a suitable explanation: Similar to a CV that presents a job applicant positively through abilities and skills, a corporate brand can provide proof of competence in the eye of the consumer by presenting its product brands. Important for such a mechanism are the hierarchical structures of complex brand architectures. At the top of such an architecture is the corporate brand at the primary level. Objects on a primary level normally are of an abstract nature like corporate brands have (e.g., Unilever). At the secondary level, the product brands are arranged as basic categories. Objects in such categories generally evoke considerably more specific associations and are usually more familiar to the consumer (e.g., Dove, Rexona, Becel, Pfanni and Magnum). For the effects of portfolio advertising it is important that from the consumer’s view the fit between the product brands is high and that the product brands are categorised in the category of the corporate brand. It is assumed that these requirements may be necessary to generate positive effects of portfolio advertising on the corporate brand as well as on the product brands. In three experiments important variables are analysed in order to investigate under which circumstances positive transfer effects of product brands on the corporate brand occur. In previous studies, it appears that often researchers have analysed the transfer effects of corporate brand on the product brand or the brand portfolio (e.g., Brown and Dacin 1997; Bräutigam 2004; Biehal and Sheinin 2007). Mostly they focused on strong corporate brands. Goertz (2007) is one of the only researchers who analysed the effects of product brands on the corporate brand. She showed that a weak corporate brand benefits from the simultaneous presentation with strong product brands. Nevertheless, it is unclear if one strong product brand may be sufficient in order to generate similar positive effects on the corporate brand just like several strong product brands do. Therefore, experiment one will focus exclusively on a weak corporate brand. It appears doubtful if the presentation of a weak corporate brand (e.g., Kraft) with one single product brand (SPA) (e.g., Milka) is already sufficient to create such a positive leverage on the corporate brand as it is known from brand alliance research (Esch et al. 2009; Simonin and Ruth 1998). In this case, the fit between product brands seems to play an important role. If consumers perceive the fit between product brands as high, they will relate the product brands to the corporate brand. As a result of experiment one, the corporate brand could be strengthened. Furthermore the effects of portfolio advertising on product brands are analysed, because it not useful for a brand manager to strengthen the corporate brand while weakening its product brands through portfolio advertising. Experiment one and an additional study show that also product brands could benefit from portfolio advertising, but only if the fit between product brands is high. In experiment two, the amount of product brands as well as the processing depth of consumers are taken into account. The complexity of the advertisement might be higher with an increasing number of product brands. In case of high processing depth of the consumer, the degree of activation and liking rises with increasing complexity in the way of a reversed U-function, but decreases at a certain degree of complexity (Berlyne 1960). Experiment two confirmed these assumptions. In case of low processing depth, experiment two shows that the influence of portfolio advertising on the corporate brand is less strong, but has a linearly increasing run. Because of the consumer’s low processing depth towards the advertising, the positive effects of the product range are supposed to be stronger (Chernev 2003a; 2003b; 2006). In experiment three, the transfer effects of the corporate brand and strong existing product brands on a new, yet unknown product brand are analysed. It is assumed that there could be a double positive effect of both the corporate brand and existing product brands on a new product brand. In separate experimental treatments, the new, unknown product brand is presented alone, paired with the corporate brand, with product brands and with both corporate brand and product brands. The results indicate that the new product brand was judged worse by all test persons when presented alone and best when presented together with corporate brand and other existing product brands. Altogether, the three experiments show that both a corporate brand and product brands can benefit from portfolio advertising. In practice, such an instrument may be practical for a company with complex brand architecture. However, a manager should consider the processing depth of the consumer as well as the amount of product brands has to be considered when using portfolio advertising. The fit between product brands plays a central role as it has to be high for portfolio advertising having a positive effect. Nevertheless, multiple advertising repetitions could possibly lead to an increase of a low fit over time. Moreover, such an advertising instrument could also be used for the actualization of the brands in case of multiple brand management.
Mimicry and Postcolonial Advertising
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ABSTRACT

Emulation is usually understood as admiration and imitation of another individual’s behavior. Through a discursive analysis of advertising in India, we offer a richer understanding of emulation as an ambivalent performance. We interpret emulation as postcolonial mimicry. Our postcolonial interpretation helps in understanding the elided dimensions of antagonism, irony, and alterity in emulation. In emphasizing mimicry we explain the relationship of postcolonial subjects to the West and interpret advertising discourse as an expression of this relationship.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The traditional disconfirmation paradigm (cf. Oliver 1997), according to which consumer satisfaction is a positive function of the extent to which the perceived performance of a product, a service, or a firm offering in general equals, or exceeds, individual pre-purchase expectations, has received several criticisms over last decades. Research has stressed problems regarding both the nature and the role of the comparison standard, i.e., expectations (e.g., Cadotte, Woodruff, and Jenkins 1987; Ofir and Simonson 2007; Spreng and Olshavsky 1993); the term against which such a standard is compared, i.e., product performance (e.g., Bassi and Guido 2006); as well as the potential effects of contextual factors on consumer product evaluation (e.g., Fournier and Mick 1999). The present study contributes to addressing these issues by presenting and testing a preliminary version of the Knowledge-Hope Model (hereafter K-H Model) of consumer satisfaction (Guido 2010). This model provides a re-formulation of the traditional framework. By integrating the Means-End Chain Theory (Gutman 1997) and drawing on the Dichotic Theory of Salience (Guido 1998; 2001), the K-H Model posits that consumers use different criteria to evaluate firms’ offerings, depending on the consumption context.

The Means-End Chain Theory (Gutman 1997) suggests that the product knowledge a consumer holds in mind is hierarchically organized along at least three levels of abstraction. The first two, and relatively more concrete levels incorporate a product’s attributes and its consequences represented as mental schemata. The third, higher-order, level contains self-knowledge elements which refer to individual hopes connected with personal goals. The K-H Model hypothesizes that consumers evaluate products not only at concrete levels, considering perceived attributes and consequences, but also at a higher level of abstraction, in relation to the extent to which these consumers perceive their personal hopes to be achieved through the consumption of that products. The model therefore considers both schematic product knowledge and personal hopes as standards of reference in product evaluation and satisfaction judgment. These comparison standards are thought to act, respectively, through a salience and a relevance mechanism, in accordance with the Dichotic Theory of Salience (Guido 1998; 2001). The salience mechanism should occur when a consumption experience is perceived to be contextually incongruent with product schemata (schema-incongruity), while the relevance mechanism should occur when the same experience is perceived to be contextually congruent with personal goals (goal-congruity). Following this reasoning, the K-H Model suggests that consumer satisfaction tends to be a function of either schematic product knowledge or personal hopes associated with consumption, depending on specific contextual factors. Motivational dominance and personal involvement were considered in this research as contextual factors that can moderate consumers’ evaluation processes. The former is based on the Reversal Theory (Apter 2001) and refers to the extent to which consumers tend to engage in either rational/planned behaviors (telic consumers) or irrational/playful behaviors (paratelic consumers). The K-H Model suggests that telic consumers, who are more likely to buy utilitarian products, evaluate their purchases more rationally (knowledge-based evaluation). Conversely, paratelic consumers, who are more willing to buy hedonic products, evaluate their purchases more affectively (hope-based evaluation). On the other hand, personal involvement, defined as the perceived relevance of a consumption experience (Zaichkowsky 1994), determines the amount of psychological effort consumers devote to product evaluation. The proposed model suggests that consumers devote fewer efforts to evaluate low-involvement products, thereby following only one of the two routes to satisfaction (as in a heuristic evaluation). Conversely, they devote a greater amount of effort to evaluate high-involvement products, thereby following both the rational and the affective route to satisfaction (as in a more systematic evaluation).

The K-H Model was tested in two connected studies using more than one thousand undergraduate students as experimental subjects. Participants were invited to evaluate, in a between subjects experimental design, four branded products which were found in a pre-test to be widely consumed by the target population. These products were: (1) Dash laundry detergents (as a telic and low-involvement product); (2) Epson printers (as a telic and high-involvement product); (3) Campari Mixx ready-to-drinks (as a paratelic and low-involvement product); and (4) Guru clothing (as a paratelic and high-involvement product). The pilot study was carried out on 200 subjects (40% M, 60% F; average age=21-23 years) in order to detect their means-end chains regarding the four branded products. The ladders procedure was followed to analyze data. The main study was carried out on 830 subjects (40.6% M, 59.4% F; average age=21-23 yrs.) by administering a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire contained measures of the relevant constructs such as: (1) a list of product-specific items, developed from the pilot study’s results, to assess the hypothesized antecedent variables (i.e., schema-incongruity and goal-congruity); (2) an adapted versions of Bassi and Guido’s (2006) scale of satisfaction; (3) the Paratelic-Dominance Scale (Gotts, Kerr and Wangeman 2000), to measure the paratelic versus telic dominance of respondents; (4) Zaichkowsky’s (1994) involvement scale; and (5) two socio-demographic questions on gender and age.

Results from both a hierarchical regression analysis, with dummy variables and interaction terms, and a sub-group regression analysis (R’s ≥ .40) supported the proposed model. They showed a determining effect on consumer satisfaction of the two hypothesized antecedent variables, i.e., schema-incongruity (as an indicator of a knowledge-based evaluation) and goal-congruity (as an indicator of a hope-based evaluation), and revealed a moderating role of motivational dominance and involvement in the expected direction. More specifically, results obtained under a telic dominance-low involvement contextual condition (Dash laundry detergents) showed that schema-incongruity is the only determinant of satisfaction (β=.66, p<.001). Results in the telic dominance-high involvement condition (Epson printers) showed that schema-incongruity exerts a negative effect on the dependent variable (β=.50, p<.001), while goal-congruity positively influences satisfaction with a secondary effect (β=.26, p<.001). On the other hand, in the paratelic dominance-low involvement condition (Campari Mixx ready-to-drinks), goal-congruity was found to be the only determinant of satisfaction with a positive effect (β=.60, p<.001). And results in the paratelic dominance-high involvement condition (Guru clothing) showed that both schema-incongruity and goal-congruity influence satisfaction, exerting a negative and a positive effect (β=.23, p<.001; β=.52, p<.001, respectively), with goal-congruity playing the main determining role in product evaluation.
This research successfully tested the K-H Model, which seems to provide a promising explanatory framework of consumer satisfaction in alternative to the traditional paradigm. In this model, contextual factors such as the consumers' motivational dominance and involvement are explicitly considered as moderators of the psychological mechanisms leading to satisfaction, insofar as these factors determine the nature and the degree of complexity of product evaluation. Firms should manage their offers carefully, by taking into consideration contextual factors. They should focus their marketing efforts on either product knowledge elements or personal hopes, depending on which of these two aspects primarily guides consumers' product evaluations in a specific context.

REFERENCES


Mental Accounting of Time Versus Money
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
After people incur costs to get future benefits, they usually track these costs in their “mental accounts” and are keen to receive the benefits when they become available. An advance purchase of a football-game ticket may initiate a football-game account, which is settled in the black if the consumer receives the benefit by attending the game or in the red if the consumer forfeits the benefit by missing the game (Prelec and Loewenstein 1998; Thaler 1980; 1985; 1999). Prior research suggests that mental accounts are opened at the time costs are incurred and then closed at the time benefits are either accrued or forfeited (Thaler 1980; Prelec and Loewenstein 1998).

We introduce the notion that costs and benefits can occur either in the same “accounting period” (day, season, etc.) or in different periods. Therefore, individuals might not always construe the temporal gap between costs and benefits as a single accounting period; accounting periods might exist independently of a category’s cost-benefit timeline. Building on this notion, we propose that mental accounting of time is comprehensive because it considers not only costs and benefits, but also accounting periods. Our key argument is that monetary costs are tracked irrespective of accounting periods but temporal costs are written off at the end of the period in which they are incurred. Thus, accounting periods lead to a time-money asymmetry in the tracking of costs and, consequently, in the likelihood of seeking benefits.

We present four studies that test our predictions. Supportive results arise from a mental-accounting scale (study 1), hypothetical skiing situations (studies 2a and 2b), and a field study (study 3). While studies 1 and 2a employ student participants in the laboratory, study 2b relies on adult participants from an online panel of a market-research firm, and study 3 uses adult movie-theater patrons. Across all studies, the accounting period x type of cost interaction emerges. We also show the underlying process via mediation, and contrast our results with payment depreciation (Gourville and Soman 1998). We observe that our effects are not driven by a gradual process of costs depreciating over time, but by a sudden change in accounting periods.

Our results contribute to research on mental accounting, as well as time-money differences. We introduce accounting periods as a new determinant of cost-benefit coupling (Prelec and Loewenstein 1998)—one that affects time and money differently, and is distinct from depreciation (Gourville and Soman 1998). Also, while we agree that time and money may not be fungible across different accounts (Rajagopal and Rha 2009), we propose that, within an account, money will be fungible, whereas, the fungibility of time will vary with accounting period. And, while we agree that the sunk-cost effect can be weaker for time (Soman 2001), we argue that this time-money difference depends on whether costs and benefits are in the same accounting period or different periods. It seems plausible that accounting periods might moderate other time-money differences documented in the literature such as those relating to risk preferences (LeClerc et al. 1995; Okada and Hoch 2004), search (Monga and Saini 2009; Saini and Monga 2008), and mindsets (Liu and Aaker 2008; Mogilner and Aaker 2009).

In conclusion, we show that the effects of accounting period are asymmetric for time versus money. Expenditures of time and money lead to different results when the accounting period is different, but to similar results when the accounting period is the same.

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

Tea began as a medicine and grew into a beverage. In China, in the eighth century, it entered the realm of poetry as one of the polite amusements. The fifteenth century saw Japan ennoble it into a religion of aestheticism—Teaism (Okakura 1964). With participatory observation in the tea ceremony and interviews with the tea master and her students, this research examined how the Japanese Tea ceremony can be luxury for those who practice it, both a host and guests. It found that the tea ceremony consists of contrastive concepts; rules and restrictions v. play and entertainment, chaste v. expensiveness. Using all capabilities, the host and guests create luxury time and space together, totally isolated from outside of the tea room.

**“Paradise Lost: The Making of Shangri-La”**
*Russell Belk, York University, Canada*
*Rosa Llamas, University of León, Spain*

The enthralling mystique of the story in the novel “Lost Horizon” (Hilton, 1933) about Shangri-La, a paradise on earth somewhere in Tibet, has lived in the Western imagination and inspired its quest for centuries. The Chinese Government has put an end to this restless search, finding the official Shangri-La in Yunnan Province. In this videography we research the making of the still under-construction Shangri-La as a Disneyfied tourist destination based upon three keystones: sacralization, ethnitization and exoticization. We take a step further and bring to the fore the economic, social, environmental and cultural utopias and dystopias attached to this new paradise.

**“Portalxbox—A Videographic Study on a Brand Community”**
*Stefânia Almeida, FACE/PUCRS-Brazil, Brazil*
*João Fleck, PPGA/UFRGS-Brazil, Brazil*
*Jose Mazzon, USP Brazil, Brazil*
*Uptal Dholakia, Rice University, USA*

Our goal with this videography is to understand more about Brand Community. To reach our objective we’ve chosen to interview members of a videogame community: Portalxbox. The community directed at users of Microsoft Xbox players is one of the biggest communities of Xbox Worldwide, with a total of 70,000 members.
Extended Abstract

Consumer research, as it is currently manifested through members of the Association for Consumer Research, is a distinct discipline with strong ties to marketing. The field initially developed with theories from psychology and economics. As it matured, consumer research emerged into a multidisciplinary field, incorporating sociology, anthropology, geography, and history among others. Today consumer researcher is a field of study that in and of itself is a legitimate and does not have to provide implications for specific audiences such as consumers, governments or businesses. As such, understanding consumer behavior for its own sake is just as important as it is to understand for instance the history of our solar system.

While the study of consumer research does not need an audience that can benefit from the research in order to be legitimate, it is well established that both policy makers and businesses can benefit from advancing theories of consumption. The question then is how to best facilitate knowledge transfer from consumer research as an academic field to marketing practice.

Knowledge that is developed by consumer researchers transfer to marketing practitioners in numerous ways. Business students get exposed to consumer research through textbooks and articles and through interactions with academic scholars. When students later enter the workforce they may bring some of that knowledge to their profession. Another way knowledge is transferred is through consulting practices, where academics share their expertise with businesses. In addition to this, joint academic and industry initiatives, such as the Marketing Science Institute provide additional forums where consumer research scholars and industry practitioners interact. Finally, marketing practitioners get exposure to consumer research through books and journals that are specifically written for a practitioner audience.

The question is whether these modes of transfer of knowledge from consumer researchers to the industry are adequate. It appears that much of the advances that are made in consumer research never reaches a wide industry audience or takes a very long time before it does. For example, the few journals that are targeting industry practitioners provide access to only a fraction of relevant consumer research. Could a better knowledge transfer be achieved, resulting in more informed and enlightened industry professionals? Are there ways in which knowledge developed by consumer researchers could be better translated to speak to the industry audience? These are examples of questions that this roundtable will address to explore how to maximize the societal impact of consumer research.
Inside Marketing: A New Odyssey

Chair:
Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada

Participants:
Julien Cayla, University of New South Wales, Australia
Kalman Applbaum, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA
Franck Cochoy, University of Toulouse, USA
Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Liz Moor, Goldsmiths College, UK
Lisa Penaloza, EDHEC, France
Don Slater, London School of Economics, UK

Overview of the Roundtable

In the summer of 1986, a group of researchers set out to discover new facets of consumer behavior. It was an attempt to rediscover consumers and consumption, after a period where consumers had all but disappeared from marketing journals such as the Journal of Consumer Research (Wells 1991). The Odyssey gave a new impetus to cultural and sociological approaches to researching consumer behavior (see Arnould and Thompson, 2005 for a review of the field). As Cochoy (forthcoming) argues, this stream of research, while very insightful, had led to a kind of theoretical bubble by almost exclusively focusing on one aspect of consumption—the consumer—at the expense of other critical players in the framing of the “consumption game.”

In comparison to the impressive amount of resources, time, and energy going into researching the inner life of consumers, a rather minor effort has been made to study the growing army of economic actors whose work it is to define markets, position and “culturally entangle” products and services, and, more generally, give shape to the consumer culture as we know it (Callon, Meadel, & Rabeharosoa 2002; Slater 2002a; 2002b). Indeed, the system of provision of goods and services is a central actor in “bringing things forward” and making them meaningful and recognizable for consumers, through, for example, product design, packaging, display strategies, commercial architecture, branding, advertising and promotional activities. Furthermore, marketing’s raison d’être is to connect products and services with consumers and to the “outside” more generally (such as “the public,” “markets,” “investors,” etc.). Accordingly, the outside has become increasingly aware of the infiltration of everyday life by contemporary marketing activities that grow ever more intense through the proliferation of branding, promotions, solicitations, loyalty programs, and personalized product offers (Frank 2000; Klein 1999; Moor 2007). From this perspective, must we not assume that consumption always is a reflexively structured act of behavior; that the varied practices of consumption are part and parcel of a dialectic of economic and cultural processes with marketing playing a central role in the social construction of these processes?

We would suggest that any successful theorization of contemporary consumer practices and ideologies requires us to also and simultaneously examine the marketing work through which products and services come into being, acquire meaning for consumers and obtain economic value by positioning them within the competitively optimum definition of a market (Slater 2002). We, thus, argue for adopting a “political economy of consumption” approach (see Pietykowski 2007) if we are to prevent our work from re-producing (or continuously re-inflating, to stay within the metaphor) the consumer bubble of consumer research, which is caused, according to Toby Miller (2007, p.4), by a single-minded and one-dimensional pursuit of knowledge by “professors earnestly spying on young people at the mall, or obsessively staring at them in virtual communities.”

In the spirit of the Odyssey, our first objective with this roundtable is to facilitate and stimulate a new type of intellectual journey, which focuses on the many actors and objects that constitute and animate the marketplace. Beyond consumers, Cochoy highlights two other actors that “frame the consumption game;” 1) marketers (a label that combines a number of economic actors such as designers, research and development teams, statisticians, market researchers, etc.) and 2) market devices, objects and technologies. When we look outside marketing and consumer research, we find an emerging stream of research that looks at the role of marketers in strategically constructing specific consumer subjectivities (Applbaum 2004; Dávila 2001; Mazzarella 2003). While this work represents diverse schools of thought and epistemological approaches, they all try to “render accessible the various ways of knowing and doing of market and advertising practitioners” (Cook 2006, p. 534). There is also an equally important stream of research, which looks at the third element of Cochoy’s equation, the objects and market devices that animate and make up the market (see Callon, Millo, and Muniesa 2007). Drawing on the social studies of markets in economic sociology, these bodies of work focus on the tools and material actions that make markets exist, at least temporarily (see also D. Slater 2002; Don Slater & Tonkiss 2001). It mines the practices of economic agents and the tools they use as a way to study the shaping of markets.

Yet, when looking at the prominent marketing text books and journals we learn very little about the ways these various actors, including, of course, the consumer, but also the myriad technical devices used by marketers in their everyday work, shape exchange relationships, configure markets, stabilize and de-stabilize products and services, govern consumer behavior, and produce economic value.

This roundtable is designed to discuss the value and possibility of developing these two streams of research. We bring researchers coming from various fields—sociology, cultural studies, history, anthropology and marketing—to discuss new ways to think about consumption and about consumer research. We will start with a general discussion to highlight the tenets of our approach before moving to the two specific streams of research already highlighted. At the end of this session, our goal is to generate an agenda for future research and begin a new intellectual odyssey.
Questions for Discussion:

1. Theories of Marketing and Marketing Theories
   - Is studying consumption the same as studying consumers?
   - Has our tradition of “obsessively staring at consumers” (Toby Miller’s charge) neglected to take into account in a sufficient manner the political economy of consumer behavior?
   - Can we theorize consumption without at the same time theorizing marketing?

2. Marketing Practice
   - What do we gain from turning the research gaze to marketing practitioners?
   - How do we blend studies of marketing practice with more traditional consumer research?

3. Market Devices
   - Can our tradition of consumer research really be done, let alone enriched, by a study of market devices (that, in the extreme, leave out the consumer altogether), as Cochoy argues?

Selected Bibliography


The material world (Gould, 2006) and the marketplace (Bonsu and Belk, 2010; O'Guinn and Belk, 1999; Rinallo 2009; Scott and Maclaran, 2009) and, more in general, consumer research studies have so far attempted to illuminate spiritual/religious experiences and their relationships with consumption (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Muñiz and Schau 2005), most studies have only been concerned with the sacralisation of the secular. Only few (Arnould and Price 1993; Arnould, Price, and Otnes 1999; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Kozinets 2001; Lyon 2000; MacDannell 1998; Miller 2005). Rather, institutionalized religions have lost authority on public issues and, more generally, individuals are increasingly free to create their own religions based on the competing (and somewhat complementary) spiritual resources that are currently proliferating (Heelas et al. 2005; Roof 2001). Other work has instead examined the marketing practices of established and emerging religious institutions (Cook 2008; Einstein 2008; Moore 1995; Twitchell 2004; 2007), usually Christian Churches. Scholarship on immigrants in western countries has instead highlighted the political role and identity value of religious consumption practices such as, notably, those by Muslim consumers (e.g., Sandıkcı and Ger 2005; Kılıçbay and Binark 2002).

In consumer research, and specifically in consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2006), sacred and profane aspects of consumer behaviour have been at the center of debate for long time (i.e., Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; see also Belk and Wallendorf 1990; Hirschman and LaBarbera 1990). However, while magico-religious metaphors have been widely employed since then (Arnould and Price 1993; Arnould, Price, and Otnes 1999; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Kozinets 2001; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Muñiz and Schau 2005), most studies have only been concerned with the sacralisation of the secular. Only few consumer research studies have so far attempted to illuminate spiritual/religious experiences and their relationships with consumption and the marketplace (Bonsu and Belk, 2010; O’Guinn and Belk, 1999; Rinallo 2009; Scott and Maclaran, 2009) and, more in general, the material world (Gould, 2006).

To further the debate, we outline some key themes offered as starting points for this roundtable discussion, although we expect that interaction among participants will bring the debate in unanticipated directions.

- Marketers’ sacralization of the mundane—Marketers and brands increasingly call upon spiritual meanings to enhance the value of their products, services, experiences, and retail settings.
- Consumers’ search for spiritual meanings in consumption of the mundane—Consumers, often organized in communities, infuse their everyday consumption patterns with spiritual meanings, which are often not intended or even inspired by marketers.
- The commodification of the spiritual—Religious institutions and spiritual leaders “sell” products, services and transformative spiritual experiences in a competitive marketplace.

Extended Abstract

The goal of this roundtable is to gather together scholars interested in bringing fresh views on a cultural tension that is at the center of both age-old speculation in philosophy, theology and social science, and the life of countless individuals living in postmodern societies: the relationship between the material and the spiritual, the sacred and the profane. Speakers who have committed to be present at the session have conducted relevant fieldwork in a variety of empirical settings across the world. Despite a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, presenters share the view that is that in today’s post-disenched world, a variety of agents—religious institutions, spiritual leaders, and increasingly marketers and consumers—interact and co-create spiritual meanings in a global “supermarket of the soul.” Specifically, a common premise shared by all presenters is that today’s consumers have an unprecedented degree of agency and creativity in the co-creation of authentic spiritual meanings from a variety of sources, local and global, and sacred and profane alike. We expect that the theme of this roundtable will attract a variety of scholars interested in the topic and generate a lively debate enabling a better understanding of how marketplace actors and forces shape spiritual experiences in globalized, capitalist societies.

The theme we want to explore in this roundtable is arguably timely. Nowadays many competing religions, spiritual philosophies and approaches provide cultural and spiritual resources to individuals in rich western nations, who are however increasingly free to mix and match from different sources to customize their own spiritual life. Alongside this spiritual bricolage behavior by consumers in more secular societies, is the consumption behavior of immigrants who bring with them their religious practices that are adapted to local contexts and often made available to western citizens, thus adding to the spiritual resources made available to the mainstream consumer culture.

In recent years, scholarly work from a variety of disciplines has touched upon related issues. In social science, many contributions have argued that the disenchantment of the world (Weber 1922) and secularization of society (Hammond 1985; Wilson 1969) has not really occurred (Berger et al. 1999) as in postmodern times new forms of faiths and spiritualities are flourishing (Detweiler and Taylor 2003; Heelas 1996; 2008; Lyon 2000; MacDannell 1998; Miller 2005). Rather, institutionalized religions have lost authority on public issues and, more generally, individuals are increasingly free to create their own religions based on the competing (and somewhat complementary) spiritual resources that are currently proliferating (Heelas et al. 2005; Roof 2001). Other work has instead examined the marketing practices of established and emerging religious institutions (Cook 2008; Einstein 2008; Moore 1995; Twitchell 2004; 2007), usually Christian Churches. Scholarship on immigrants in western countries has instead highlighted the political role and identity value of religious consumption practices such as, notably, those by Muslim consumers (e.g., Sandıkcı and Ger 2005; Kılıçbay and Binark 2002).

In consumer research, and specifically in consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2006), sacred and profane aspects of consumer behaviour have been at the center of debate for long time (i.e., Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; see also Belk and Wallendorf 1990; Hirschman and LaBarbera 1990). However, while magico-religious metaphors have been widely employed since then (Arnould and Price 1993; Arnould, Price, and Otnes 1999; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Kozinets 2001; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Muñiz and Schau 2005), most studies have only been concerned with the sacralisation of the secular. Only few consumer research studies have so far attempted to illuminate spiritual/religious experiences and their relationships with consumption and the marketplace (Bonsu and Belk, 2010; O’Guinn and Belk, 1999; Rinallo 2009; Scott and Maclaran, 2009) and, more in general, the material world (Gould, 2006).

To further the debate, we outline some key themes offered as starting points for this roundtable discussion, although we expect that interaction among participants will bring the debate in unanticipated directions.

- Marketers’ sacralization of the mundane—Marketers and brands increasingly call upon spiritual meanings to enhance the value of their products, services, experiences, and retail settings.
- Consumers’ search for spiritual meanings in consumption of the mundane—Consumers, often organized in communities, infuse their everyday consumption patterns with spiritual meanings, which are often not intended or even inspired by marketers.
- The commodification of the spiritual—Religious institutions and spiritual leaders “sell” products, services and transformative spiritual experiences in a competitive marketplace.
The consumption of spiritual goods. The marketplace offers an abundance of spiritual goods that are consumed in rich ways. Of particular interest are the discourses and practices that surround spiritual goods and the process through which consumers imbue spiritual consumption practices with meanings that often intertwine the political with the sacred.

Researcher reflexivity in studying spiritual experiences. Studying spiritual experiences, particularly in interpretive consumer research, poses special challenges to researchers who have to question the impact of their religious worldview (or lack thereof) on their relationship with informants and interpretation of research findings.

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Roundtable

Sustainability in the 21st Century:
Conquering Hurdles, Building Bridges, Spanning Disciplines

Chair:
Susan Dobscha, Bentley University, USA
Jim Freund, University of Lancaster, UK

Participants:
Eric Arnould, University of Wyoming, USA
Stacey Baker, University of Wyoming, USA
Gary Bamossy, Georgetown University, USA
Bill Kilbourne, Clemson University, USA
Pierre McDonagh, Dublin City University, Ireland
Lucie Ozanne, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Andrea Prothero, University College Dublin, Ireland
Michel Strahilevitz, Golden Gate University, USA

Extended Abstract

Marketing and consumer research has so much to offer in the 21st century’s greatest challenge: creating cultures of sustainability. As a domain, sustainability research is inherently transdisciplinary, but suffers from a lack of integration between the disciplines that are attempting to tackle it, and until recently, a widescale lack of interest from those parties most implicated in the need for change: corporations and consumers. While sustainability as a research domain has a rich history spanning many decades, it has not had the impact on society that other disciplines have achieved (examples include nutrition, substance abuse such as anti-smoking campaigns, and other social justice domains).

It is the complexity of sustainability that simultaneously fuels and confounds those of us who choose to undertake research on this important topic. A recent two-day research roundtable (TCR) brought together many important thinkers on sustainability. While the dialogue generated during those two days was stimulating and thought provoking, it clarified how difficult it will be to bring the sustainability agenda into its rightful place at the centre of marketing and consumer research. Another roundtable at ACR also attempted to push forward the sustainability agenda by allowing researchers from the primary theoretical perspectives in the field to work in small groups to generate research questions. While this approach proved fruitful within groups, the inevitable time constraint did not allow for conversation to take place across perspectives.

This E-ACR roundtable will encourage further conversation on this fascinating topic by allowing more global perspectives to be aired. By locating this roundtable at European ACR, an opportunity is given to a wider group of researchers working in this area to provide conceptual insight that may have been overlooked at the two North American conferences. The American sustainability debate is primarily concerned with issues such as overconsumption, materialism, oil security, dependence on the automobile, and “clean coal;” whereas climate change, peak oil, and food security have been more central to the European discourse. But all nations today need to work together to cope with global threats of resource shortages such as peak oil, and pollution problems such as climate change. The perspectives and responses to these challenges is quite different in the developed world–where consumers are being asked to consume less–and in the developing world–where sustainable development is required to avoid an acceleration of these problems. Also, while the effects of global heating are likely to be most damaging around the equator, peak oil will make most impact on developed nations. Consumers, corporations, governments and the media are struggling to keep pace with the speed of cultural change which is needed to adapt to these ecological changes and minimize their negative impacts--and consumer culture is at the heart of this process.

We would like to begin the roundtable with a brief presentation by Soli Townsend from Futerra who will discuss her experience of the realities of trying to help corporations behave and communicate in a more sustainable way. This introduction will give the roundtable discussion some degree of focus and structure and allow those in attendance an opportunity to challenge their own assumptions and pave the way for moving the sustainability agenda forward. Consumer researchers can and should be using their skill and insight and resources to help understand how consumers and marketing practitioners can be encouraged to create cultures in which sustainability is a central value, and personal and social status are determined by reduced and sustainable consumption.
There is a growing number of *Journal of Consumer Research* papers that have advanced our understanding of the cultural context of brands, in particular, within China, as well as a burgeoning literature on brands in *Consumption Markets and Culture*, *Journal of Consumer Culture* as well as in anthropology, geography, and sociology journals, among others. How do consumer researchers utilize and benefit from such interdisciplinary research? What is our distinctive perspective? Now is a good time to take stock of this literature, and make connections to emerging concepts of co-creation, social media, and working consumers. The focus was on how researchers have approached global brand culture, how to make a contribution, and what to do about “everyone else” who is publishing in the area, often without notice of consumer researchers’ fine work.

A *brand culture* perspective reveals how branding has opened up to include cultural, sociological, and theoretical inquiry that both complements and complicates economic and managerial analysis of branding. An emphasis on brand culture forms part of a larger call for inclusion of cultural issues within the consumer research canon, reinforcing a basic CCT premise that culture and history can provide a necessary contextualizing counterpoint to managerial and information processing views of branding’s interaction with consumers and society.

If brands exist as cultural, ideological, and sociological objects, then understanding brands requires tools developed to understand culture, ideology and society, in conjunction with more typical branding concepts, such as brand equity, strategy, and value. A brand culture perspective acknowledges brands’ representational and rhetorical power both as valuable cultural artifacts and as engaging and deceptive bearers of meaning, reflecting broad societal, cultural, and ideological codes. Within this framework, brands are not only mediators of cultural meaning–brands themselves have become ideological referents that shape cultural rituals, economic activities and social norms. For example, strong brands constantly develop prescriptive models for the way we talk, the way we think, and the way we behave–our goals, thoughts, and desires. Furthermore, brands may pre-empt cultural spheres of religion, economic activities and social norms. Through such pre-emptive actions, brands can become ideological bearers of meaning, reflecting broad societal, cultural, and ideological codes. Within this framework, brands are not only mediators of cultural meaning–brands themselves have become ideological referents that shape cultural rituals, economic activities and social norms.

Brand culture can be seen to constitute a third arena for brand research–in conjunction with traditional research areas of *brand identity* and *brand image*, brand culture provides the necessary cultural, historical and political grounding to understand brands in context. Brand culture research occupies the theoretical space between strategic concepts of brand identity and consumer interpretations of brand image, shedding light on the gap often seen between managerial intention and market response.

To name just a few recent examples, Cayla and Arnould adopt a cultural approach to branding in the global marketplace based on informed historical and cultural analysis of brands, and discuss how global myths might be targeted to build global brands. Cayla and Eckhardt’s research evokes the modernity of Asian branding, emphasizing how brands help construct “imagined communities.” Working with anthropological concepts, Askegaard has discussed brands as global ideoscapes, and Holt draws upon cultural history to provide an explanation of how American cultural branding targets market mythology. Zhao and Belk have traced the cultural genealogy of Chinese branding, and Dong and Tian have shown how Chinese consumers engage with Western brands in complex ways, informed by particular cultural histories.

Greater awareness of the associations between the traditions and conventions of culture and the production and consumption of brands helps to position and understand branding as a global representational system issue. Furthermore, a cultural perspective highlights the materiality of brands–their non-symbolic, non-rhetorical, non-discursive tangible presence. Studies that extend brand research into cultural and historical realms may provide an essential bridge between our understanding of, on the one hand, value residing within the product or producer intention, or on the other, wholly created by individual consumers or brand communities, thus building potential bridges to *Service Dominant logic* concepts, for example. In other words, along with brand identity and brand image, the realm of brand culture serves as a necessary complement to understanding brand meaning and brand value creation.

The 2010 EACR conference offered a nice opportunity to reflect on what we know about global brand culture, dissect (possible) underlying tensions between US and “rest of world” perspectives, and prepare researchers to engage with “hot topic” interdisciplinary scholarship about brands. We gathered researchers in the area to discuss how consumer research contributes to a growing interdisciplinary conversation, and how brand culture research sheds light on basic issues of consumer agency, consumer behavior, and consumer culture. Stefano Pace opened up the discussion with the provocative idea that new media forms may create new brands–automatically. Other researchers discussed how brand research interacts with practice (Elliott), and how brands operate as “ideoscapes” in global culture.
(Askegaard), how brands intersect with trust (Gustafsson), how brands and identity interact within culture (Borgerson, Cava, Davis, and Giesler) and how non-Western perspectives enhance brand research (Eckhardt, Wattanasuwan, and Zhao).

Selected Bibliography


Roundtable
Bridging Together Anti-consumption and Consumer Resistance: Concepts, Concerns, Conflicts, and Convergence

Chair:
Hélène Cherrier, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
Bernard Cova, Euromed Management Marseille, France
Mike Lee, University of Auckland Business School, New Zealand
Dominique Roux, Université Paris-Sud, France

Participants:
Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Russell Belk, York University, USA
Jan Brace-Govan, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling, Scotland, UK
Daniele Dalli, Università di Pisa, Italy
Markus Giesler, York University, USA
Margaret Hogg, University of Lancaster, UK
Rob Kozinets, York University, Canada
Nil Özcağlar-Toulouse, University Lille Nord de France, LSMRC, France
Sharyn Rundle-Thiele, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
Avi Shankar, University of Bath, UK
Lionel Sitz, EM Lyon, France

Extended Abstract
Consumer resistance and anti-consumption are without doubt topics of growing interests not only in consumer behaviour studies but also in the fields of sociology and cultural studies. The interest is such that the Journal of Business Research, Consumption, Markets and Culture, the European Journal of Marketing and the Journal of Consumer Behaviour have dedicated special issues on these topics. Furthermore, the Association for Consumer Research provided financial support to sponsor the latest anti-consumption/consumer resistance conference held at Euromed Management Marseille in 2010, which also received a combined approval from the French National Research Agency (ANR) and the French Marketing Association (AFM).

The discussions and publications that accompany the growing interests in the fields of consumer resistance and anti-consumption seem most clearly to advance our understanding of the motivations, processes and consequences of consumers’ ways of opposing, escaping or altering consumption. The vast topics include current issues of environmental preservation, animal rights, anti-globalization, anti-nuclear stances, brand avoidance, voluntary simplicity, second-hand consumption and alternative retail channel as well as liberatory consumption, subcultural affiliation, neotribes, emancipation, empowerment, sovereignty, working consumers and the development of alternative lifestyles.

In view of the diversity of topics and the inevitable rising interest in the fields of consumer resistance and anti-consumption, it is now time to clearly stipulate the conflicts and convergences between each topic. On the one hand, consumer resistance is frequently conceptualized as a “resistance against a culture of consumption and the marketing of mass-produced meanings” (Penaloza and Price 1993, p.123) and on the other hand a review of recent literature shows an apparent consensus in describing anti-consumption as “a resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment of consumption” in general (Zavestoski 2002, p.121). In stressing anti-consumption as a “resistance to” and consumer resistance as a “resistance against,” what are the divergences between each topic? Similarly, in stressing both topics as a resistance, what are the similarities between consumer resistance and anti-consumption? Along these inquiries, we question the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological implications in stressing the conflicts and convergences between anti-consumption and consumer resistance. We question: what is, what fields of study fit in, and how to study anti-consumption research and/or consumer resistance? We inquire: who does, how do they, and why do they perform acts of consumer resistance and/or anti-consumption? We wonder how was, how is, and how will be the different approaches to consumer resistance and/or anti-consumption?

In response to these questions, we organize this roundtable for interactive discussions around the conflicts and convergences between anti-consumption and consumer resistance. Our aims are threefold. First, we hope to highlight the topics of anti-consumption and consumer resistance to the ACR members. Both topics are of interest to consumer behavior researchers who study not only topics of green consumption, social marketing, or consumer emancipation but also brands, advertisement, consumer relationship marketing, retailing, or consumer culture to name a few. Second, we will orientate the discussion to identify the conceptual, theoretical and methodological conflicts and convergences between anti-consumption and consumer resistance. We wonder if the similarities and differences between each topic will be grounded on notions of personal versus communal expressions, modern versus post-modern selves, creative versus resistant identities, positivist versus interpretive inquiries, or qualitative versus quantitative methods. Finally, the roundtable will offer a platform for developing collaborative studies. Topics of consumer resistance and anti-consumption are still relatively new and a widespread development of empirical studies seems to be a necessary precondition for improving our understanding of consumers’ ways of opposing, escaping or altering consumption.
While we do not call participants to hold any particular knowledge of anti-consumption and / or consumer resistance, the format of the roundtable commits to an emic perspective. At the beginning of the roundtable, narratives/quotes will be presented to the participants. The narratives/quotes will be shown using a PowerPoint presentation and read in a theatrical format. The aim is to re-contextualize the synopsis, the scene and the characters and convey the feelings and emotions attached to each quote / narrative. By exposing the roundtable participants to a diversity of narratives / quotes, we hope to explore what makes someone identify with anti-consumption or consumer resistance and what does it say on the conflicts and convergences between topics of anti-consumption and consumer resistance. To make the discussion interactive and engaging to all attendees, we invite participants to bring to the roundtable narratives / quotes from their own research or personal life experiences. Participants should feel free to present their narratives or personal stories if they believe those that have been presented are missing conceptual, theoretical or methodological perspectives or if they feel curious about how a group of peer would classify their data.

Opposition to consumption is probably inevitable. What is less inevitable is an understanding of consumers’ ways of opposing, escaping or altering consumption. This roundtable offers to make the evitable inevitable by discussing concepts, frameworks, theories and fields settings in consumer resistance and anti-consumption.

References
**Roundtable**

**TRANSFORMATIVE CONSUMER RESEARCH: Postcards from Europe**

**Chair:**
Ekant Veer, University of Canterbury, New Zealand  
Graham Austin, Montana State University, USA

**Discussant:**
Andrea Prothero, UCD Quinn School of Business, Ireland

**Participants:**
Laurel Anderson, Arizona State University, USA  
Graham Austin, Montana State University, USA  
Stacey Baker, University of Wyoming, USA  
Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Australia  
Jan Brace-Govan (Monash University, Australia)  
Susan Dobscha, Bentley University, USA  
Pierre McDonagh, Dublin City University, Republic of Ireland  
Gergana Nenkov, Boston College, USA  
Naiya Ordabayeva, INSEAD, France  
Julie Ozanne, Virginia Tech, USA  
Lucie Ozanne, University of Canterbury, New Zealand  
Nil Özcaglar-Toulouse, University of Lille, France  
Michal Ann Strahilevitz, Golden Gate University, USA  
Ekant Veer, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

**Extended Abstract**

This roundtable has been proposed to continue dialogue as to how Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) can be planned, conducted and disseminated in an effective way. ACR president David Glen Mick called for greater consumer research on transforming the lives of consumers 5 years ago (Mick 2006). This roundtable has been proposed to determine what can be done to best address the calls made by Prof. Mick by drawing together researchers to share ideas and experiences. The roundtable will follow on from the very well attended TCR Roundtable at E-ACR, Milan (Veer and Hunt 2008). The current roundtable will focus on the importance of TCR in Europe, what obstacles or issues are specific to TCR researchers in Europe, and how TCR projects in Europe can benefit from shared knowledge from our colleagues based in other parts of the world. To meet this end, the panel for the proposed roundtable consists of experienced and emerging TCR researchers from all over the world.

**Background**

David Glen Mick describes the mission of TCR as being a form of research that “…makes a beneficial difference in the lives of consumers, both present and future generations, through the chosen focus and conduct of specific research, and in the communicating of its implications and usefulness.” More simply stated, TCR is “…consumer research in the service of quality of life” (Mick 2006, p. 3). Since 2006, a number of initiatives have seen TCR become more salient as a field, including a special issue dedicated to TCR in the Journal of Consumer Research, a dedicated annual conference, and a listserv email system for TCR researchers. Building on this momentum (mostly generated in the US), this roundtable’s coordinators hope to encourage more dialogue on TCR in a European context.

The recent JCR special issue outlines the diversity in topics associated with TCR, ranging from health (Berger and Rand 2008; Sharpe 2008), to environmental conservation (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008), to issues related to poverty and wealth (Talukdar 2008). The field extends far beyond these topics as evidenced by recent TCR conference discussions. Furthermore, a book scheduled to be published in 2011 is dedicated to essays and research in TCR, demonstrating substantial growth in the field. A number of European researchers are actively engaged in TCR (such as those named as participants for this roundtable) and further collaboration and dialogue are necessary to better understand how the European context may facilitate or hinder TCR. The following section will outline the purpose of the roundtable.

**Roundtable Purpose**

Rather than focusing on one or two “experts” in the field, the proposed roundtable will be interactive in nature to encourage a flow of dialogue between attendees. The proposed roundtable will:

1. Encourage active and critical dialogue between persons engaged with TCR research. Participants will discuss what has and has not been achieved in the past 5 years (in both Europe and North America as well as other parts of the world);

2. Address what specific issues or obstacles European TCR researchers face. How can we learn from one another to ensure these are minimized or removed altogether for researchers in the field? One particular aim is to see researchers based in different continents share experiences that may benefit those based in Europe.
Roundtable Structure and Content

The proposed TCR roundtable will encourage open dialogue from all panel members and attendees. The role of the discussant will be to ensure free-flowing dialogue and to lead the discussion as needed. We propose focusing on three discussion areas to help guide the session and ensure that contributions are made from all participants. The proposed questions are:

1. What has the TCR movement achieved in the past 5 years and what impact has this had for both consumers and academics?

2. What is the current “health” of TCR in Europe and what needs to be done to ensure that high quality European TCR continues? What issues still remain that make TCR difficult to carry out and disseminate? In particular, what issues are specifically related to European researchers and European contexts? How can these issues be overcome, and what can be learnt from other researchers that can be used to encourage new researchers in the field?

3. What avenues for high quality, high impact research collaboration exist among the attendees that can ensure that dialogue continues beyond the roundtable setting?

The following section outlines the expected contributions from the roundtable.

Contributions and Implications

One of the key contributions of this roundtable will be its assessment the health of TCR research outside of North America. By focusing on European contributors, European issues and European contexts, a diverse range of issues can be addressed that may not have been considered or voiced elsewhere. Strategies to encourage TCR and high impact research will be discussed at the roundtable, offering new and old participants alike opportunities to continue growing the field of TCR. We hope that the roundtable encourages collaborations between researchers by creating networks, facilitating research opportunities, and promoting further dialog.

References


WORKING PAPERS

The Role of Techniques of Neutralization in Using Double Standards
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Abstract
Despite the growing number of studies dealing with corporate and consumer ethics, empirical research about double standards remains scarce. The few studies dealing with this topic indicate that people rate corporate unethical actions as less admissible compared to similar consumer actions. However, little is known about the processes underlying the double standard concept. This research investigates whether the techniques of neutralization, indicated as having much potential explanatory power in the ethics area but, however, rarely investigated, could provide a meaningful way of approaching this phenomenon.

Analyzing Consumer Culture Dynamics through Text Analysis of Media Discourse: A Sociological Approach
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Extended Abstract
This paper, inspired by cultural sociology (Spillman 2002) and cognitive sociology (Zerubavel 1997), aims to show the strength of text analysis of media discourse for grasping the dynamics of shared meaning in consumer cultures. In the 1980s, several consumer researchers, now mostly known as proponents of Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005), analyzed social values in consumption through content analysis of visual data such as advertisements (Belk and Pollay 1985; Gross and Sheth 1989; Tse, Belk, and Zhou 1989) and comics (Belk 1987; Spiggle 1986). This paper tries to revitalize the research tradition using a sociological approach.

This paper raises three reasons why analyzing text data of media coverage is one of the best ways to grasp cognitive changes shared among media, marketers, and consumers in a macro context. First, recent technological innovations in freeware software enable researchers to conduct reliable morphological analysis of the Japanese language (Jin 2009). Second, text analysis allows measurement of the dynamics of consumer culture in a quantitative manner. The author agrees with cultural sociologists’ contention that culture is no more intrinsically difficult to measure than other social phenomena (Jepperson and Swidler 1994; Mohr 1998). Third, text analysis is an appropriate strategy for understanding the role of language in the formation of consumer culture. As cognitive sociologists argue, language constitutes the way we see our lives (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Cerulo 2002). People can share their personal experiences with others only when language is available; with language, memories can actually pass from one person to another even when there is no direct contact between them (Zerubavel 1997). Therefore, text data, which shows how people use language to interpret their lifeworld, can serve as a faithful mirror of cognitive changes shared in a society.

This paper argues these points by analyzing the “healing boom,” the largest consumer culture in Japan at the turn of the century. Since the late 1990s, many firms in different industries have launched a large number of “healing” products and services. This boom drastically changed the shared meaning of healing in Japan. According to K?jien 5th edition (1998), which is the most authoritative Japanese dictionary, the verb iyasu (heal) means to cure somebody’s disease or injury, satisfy hunger, or mitigate emotional pain. However, Gendai Y?go no Kiso Chishiki (Encyclopedia of Contemporary Words) 2003 Edition explains that iyashi shijo (the healing market) is a market of goods and services that are useful for creating psychological security, and nowadays, various kinds of consumer goods such as books, music, paintings, movies, massages, drinks, food, and clothing, which are intended to help people relax, fall under this rubric. From these differences, it can be seen that the linguistic meaning of healing has changed.

The data is based on 8,033 magazine article titles from 1988 to 2007 from 465 magazines collected from the database of Oya S?ichi Bunko Magazine Article Index that covers almost all popular magazines published in Japan.

This paper shows that four findings from the text analysis of magazine article titles support the change of language usage regarding healing. First, while these words had been largely unknown outside the psychiatric profession, the noun form of iyasu (heal), and iyashi (healing), are now frequently used in conversations. Second, the unusual passive voice expressions such as iyasaretai (I am healed) or iyasaretai (I want to be healed) are now common. The number of appearances of each conjugated forms of the verb iyasu and the irrealis form, iyasa that constitute such a passive voice outreached other forms since 2001. Third, the new expression iyashi-kei (healing type) began to be used frequently for describing certain kinds of things that relieve stress as well as laypersons who just help others to relax but are not religious persons or healers. Fourth, the meaning of healing differs between women and men: the meaning is diversified. For women, healing means relaxing their body and mind, while for men, it means sexual image of females. This is from a correspondence analysis between the top five magazine genres and the top thirty keywords in titles.

CCT defines consumer culture as a system that makes consumers’ collective sense of consumption environments and orients their experience and lives (Kozinets 2001). Cultural sociologists define culture as processes of meaning-making (Spillman 2002). These definitions resonate with each other. To understand how consumer cultures make the collective sense, consistent measures must be applied. Quantitative analysis can shed light on such dynamics and can be expected to complement rich findings from qualitative analyses.
Approach Versus Avoidance Motivations in Food Selection

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Food Selection

Food selection is an important aspect of consumer behavior that ties to psychology and public health. It is important because food is one of the most fundamental consumer goods and this can be seen in the length of its history and the dollar volume of its contribution. Food selection is also important for the information it reveals about the underlying mental choice process. It has important practical implications because of the health implications that affect the selection of food and the health consequences that arise from diet and weight.

Because of the centrality of food choice, considerable research has explored the issue. Asp (1999) categorized the reasons for food selection as cultural, psychological, lifestyle, and food trends. This categorization is useful, but provides little information on relative importance of these factors. One study that rated the relative importance of factors found that the most important factors to customers were taste, cost, nutrition, convenience, and weight control (Glanz, Basil, Maibach, Goldberg, & Snyder, 1998). Research also suggests that food selection can be a complex decision (Mela, 1999). Whether the difficulty is a result of these multiple motivations or factors is not clear, but evidence suggests that food choice is further complicated by the provision of nutrition information (Schiebhenne, Miesler, & Todd, 2007).

Despite some general understanding on the issue of food selection, critical questions remain. One fundamental question is whether people approach or avoid food based on its intrinsic value or its nutritional qualities. Research has demonstrated that approach and avoidance motivations appear to be of considerable conceptual and empirical utility in understanding human behavior (Aaker & Lee, 2006; Elliot, 2006; Higgins, 1998). These drives push people toward some behaviors and away from others. How relevant is the approach avoidance distinction in food selection?

In the context of consumer decision making, some research has shown that many consumers make use of a negativity bias that focuses on reasons to rule out options in the marketplace (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1989). Some evidence also suggests that this effect is more prevalent when consumers are trying to reduce risk (Ahluwalia, 2002).

In the specific context of food selection, there is evidence of the importance of avoidance motivation, as might be the case when people have health conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, or diabetes. Some support for this process can be seen in the findings that the negativity heuristic appears to operate with nutrition labels (Balasubramanian & Cole, 2002). Additional support for the importance of an avoidance motivation can be seen in findings where consumers can be so “fat phobic” that they miss the big picture such as total calories (Chandon & Wansink, 2007; Wansink & Chandon, 2006). So a fundamental underlying question to food selection is to what extent is the selection of food based on the avoidance of “bad” things such as fat or a drive toward the “good” things such as taste (Hasler, 2008).
Methods

This research consisted of a survey of a nationally representative sample of 12,638 people that was part of an annual panel survey called ConsumerStyles. For this research, questions on the topic of food and nutrition were analyzed.

Approach and Avoidance Measures. One question listed 23 nutrients, and asked people which elements they thought were very important for them. The list included Vitamins A, B vitamins, C, D, and E, protein, unsaturated fat, flavonoids, dietary fiber, magnesium, phosphorous, carbohydrates, omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, calcium, antioxidants, potassium, lycopene, pre- or probiotics, iron, copper, zinc, and folic acid. The next question asked if they were trying to avoid any of the following: cholesterol, salt, total fat, saturated fat, high sugar, high calorie, pesticides, processed foods, food additives, caffeine, artificial sweeteners, genetically modified foods, red meat, animal products, and low-fat versions of foods.

Results

A two-step cluster analysis resulted in two clusters, which conform to “approach” and “avoid” motivations. Specifically, one cluster appears to demonstrate a cognitive avoidance of elements of food elements, especially fat. This constituted nearly half of the population (58%). Conversely, the other 42% appeared to be more driven by “approach” motivations, seen in higher reported levels of consumption of many foods including fruits and vegetables. Overall then, there was a higher percentage of people avoiding elements in their food than those that were approaching. Interestingly, the two clusters differed in their actual eating habits, with the “avoider” cluster eating an apparently “less healthy” diet than the “approach” cluster.

A direct comparison between approach and avoidance strategies to food was conducted by comparing questions that asked which of 23 nutrients people thought were very important with the questions which asked which of the 15 things they were trying to avoid. The results demonstrated that people were slightly more likely to be seeking nutrients in their food (M=.42) than avoiding things (M=.38; t (12,639)=16.1, p<.001).

To further investigate approach versus avoid tendencies, an analysis compared the relationship between the approach or avoidance of food elements with the physical health of respondents and their behavioral eating habits. The results show that those who have been diagnosed with a nutrition-related disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol were much more likely to avoid certain elements of food than those not so diagnosed (Ms=.43 versus .36, F [1, 12368]=302, p<.001); however, there was no difference between these groups on their approach to nutritional elements (Ms=.43 versus .42, F [1, 12368]=1.1, p=.29). Approach factors were more strongly associated with the level of consumption of these foods (average r=.21) than avoidance factors (average r=.12).

Discussion

This study supports approach and avoidance motivations (Elliot, 2006). People who have been diagnosed with a nutrition-related health condition are much more likely to avoid foods than those without such a diagnosis; however, there are no differences in approach of particular nutritional elements, suggesting that “good” factors are universally appealing.

References


Medical Chic: The Consumption of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Urban China

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Extended Abstract

Medical knowledge produces particular visions and understandings about the world, the body, and the self (Foucault 1973). Although traditional Chinese medicine is often threatened by the globalization of Western biomedicine in its place of origin, in recent years it
has also been reinvented into a preventative medicine for a hip, middle-class, and cosmopolitan lifestyle that emphasizes on personal well-being (Farquhar 2001; Zhan 2009). In this paper, we examine how traditional Chinese medicine practice is transformed by Western biomedical knowledge in contemporary China. We seek to understand how Chinese consumers appropriate and negotiate the tensions between two conflicting medical cultures to construe a cosmopolitan lifestyle (Croll 2006; Rofel 2007). Debates on traditional Chinese medicine and biomedicine often evolve around the tensions among tradition, modernity, and science. Such discursive tensions reveal how knowledge, identities, and communities are constituted at a time of rapid social changes.

In the global era, cosmopolitanism is transnational in scope and reflects a willingness to experience multicultural diversity through consumption such as travel (Hannerz 1990; Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Cosmopolitanism is considered to produce different styles of consumption between high-cultural-capital consumers who are more likely to prefer the exotic, and low-cultural-capital consumers who are more inclined to the familiar (Holt 1998). Cosmopolitanism as the hedonistic and ideological manifestation of the global marketplace reproduces colonialism in the post-colonialist era, and structures consumption experiences in ways that privilege the Western ideal of the rational and autonomous individual (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). It has become a new ideological tool to subsume and manage cultural diversity within a global structure of common difference (Wilk 1995).

However, these notions of cosmopolitanism have also been criticized as Euro-American centric and hardly reflecting the more recent experiences of the emerging economies such as China, Turkey, India, and East Asia (e.g., Cheah 2006; Ong and Nonini 1997; Yashin 2002; Zhan 2009). The meanings of cosmopolitanism are constantly reproduced and are over time recycled in different geographic locales. Cosmopolitanism in contemporary China emphasizes the domestication of the world through consumption, and it highlights the renegotiation of China’s position in the world (Rofel 2007). We seek to examine the Chinese construction of cosmopolitanism in the contested field of medicine.

Medical knowledge is often socially constructed by a variety of work processes rather than discovered (Armstrong 1994; Bynum 2006). Over the course of Western medical history, different schools of medical thought are linked to different ideologies (Desmond 1989; Jewson 1976). Although Western medicine strives to become scientific since the time of Hipppocrates (Bynum 2006), the link between medicine and science is only invented in the twentieth century. Western medicine is introduced to China by missionaries as a way to demonstrate the superiority of Christian civilization (Unschuld 1985). The establishment of modern medical schools further institutionalizes Western medicine. During the 1900’s Republican revolution, Chinese medicine came to be seen as an emblem of the old regime to be demolished. With the founding of PRC in 1949, attempts have been made to standardize medical practices to meet Western standards of medicine and to integrate Chinese medicine into China’s health care systems (Taylor 2000).

With the ascending consumer culture in recent years, traditional Chinese medicine is reinterpreted as a cosmopolitan alternative to Western biomedicine in urban China (Zhan 2009). A new concept of sub-health is construed to describe and characterize the health condition of the urban middle-class Chinese consumers who often work long hours under tremendous pressure. Practitioners in Shanghai and Beijing promote sub-health as a state between being healthy and being ill, and apply it to people who suffer from symptoms such as low energy, fatigue, insomnia, heart palpitation and a general sense of being unfit. Traditional Chinese medicine is reinvented as a superb cure and as a preventive medicine for such sub-healthy condition. In this paper, we seek to understand how Chinese consumers negotiate the tensions of the modern and traditional, the old and new, and the Western and Chinese in their choices of medical service.

A two-step study was developed to understand the transformation and changes of traditional Chinese culture under globalization. At the first stage, we collected advertisements of Chinese medicine to examine its commercial construction. Advertisements were selected from newspapers and magazines for the general public, based on how interesting and rich they can help to reveal the contested discursive debates between Chinese and Western medicine. Semiotic analysis was conducted to understand how discourses of Western medicine and scientism have been appropriated to promote Chinese medicine, which is based on different theoretical origins.

At the second stage, we conducted depth-interviews with both consumers and doctors of traditional Chinese medicine in order to develop a holistic understanding of how traditional Chinese medicine has been reinvented and how Chinese consumers negotiate the conflicting discourses of medicine in their choices of medical service to construe a cosmopolitan lifestyle. All of our forty-one interviews were started with grand tour questions regarding the meanings of traditional Chinese medicine, and followed up with probing questions about how it was used and understood (Thompson 1997; McCracken 1988). The informants were also shown some of the ads we selected and their responses were solicited (Scott 1994). The interviews lasted from half an hour to two hours, and were audio-taped and later transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed through an itinerary process (Spiggle 1994). Prelim analysis has yielded rich theoretical insights.

The rise of biomedicine in Western societies resonated with the industrial revolution and was better adapted to the industrial age than any other alternative forms of medical knowledge. It is also the dominant form of medical practices in today’s China. Far from extinction, traditional Chinese medicine is constantly contested and reproduced by its daily encounters with Western biomedicine. In this process, traditional Chinese medicine has also been exoticized and then used to construct a cosmopolitan identity by the emerging middle-class consumers in urban China. The marginality of traditional Chinese medicine is often turned into a vantage point from which the discourses of knowledge and identity can be developed. We have explored how consumers seek to negotiate a cosmopolitan identity through their choices of medical service. Preliminary findings show that traditional Chinese medical knowledge has offered a system of cosmopolitan values that go far beyond medical discourses of healthcare during the country’s rapid social changes. Implications on theories of global/local encounter are also discussed.

Selected References


Chinese consumers are currently exposed to numerous and diverse levels of authentic product offerings at their everyday marketplace. Offshore manufacturing companies within this wider region (Liu and Wang, 2009, Staake et al., 2009, Vann, 2006). As a result, cultural factors have been more recently attributed to the noticeable increase of consumerism along with the considerable expansion of authenticity in the evaluation of authenticity. More specifically, Peirce’s work has linked certain types of cues (indexicality) with certain kinds of phenomenological experiences (iconicity). Thus, indexical authenticity refers to the original or real thing, while iconic authenticity refers to an authentic reproduction. As a result, “authenticity can be both a social construction and a source of evidence” (Grayson and Martinec, 2004, p. 310; Belk and Costa, 1997; Phillips, 1997). Spiggle (1994) argues that this has destabilized the fundamental concept of authenticity. Moreover, in combination with the proposition that “authenticity is a fluid concept that can be negotiated” (Goulding, 2000, p. 837), further research within consumer research has been called for (Penaloza, 2000). Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore empirically consumers’ perceptions of authenticity in the context of Chinese market offerings.

**Exploring Consumers’ Perceptions of Product Offerings’ Authenticity within Contemporary Asian Markets**

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**Extended Abstract**

Throughout history consumers have demanded authenticity; from the interest in authentic religious relics in Europe between ninth to the eleventh centuries (Phillips, 1997) to the demand of authenticity in the modern day consumptions in a wide variety of market offerings (Alexander, 2009; Beverland, 2006, Handler and Gable, 1997).

Nevertheless, many postmodern writers have argued that technology advancement and global commercialism have undermined consumers’ ability to distinguish the difference between the real and the fake (Orvell, 1989), while some argue that consumers are no longer interested in telling the difference between the two and even seem to often prefer the easily accessible replica to the more inaccessible original. Frow (1997) argues that this has destabilized the fundamental concept of authenticity. Moreover, in combination with the proposition that “authenticity is a fluid concept that can be negotiated” (Goulding, 2000, p. 837), further research within consumer research has been called for (Penaloza, 2000). Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore empirically consumers’ perceptions of authenticity in the context of Chinese market offerings.

**Authentic and Unauthentic Product Offerings**

In consumer research the term authenticity has been used to describe something to be genuine, true, and not to be a copy or imitation (Stern, 1992; Peterson, 1997). Grayson and Martinec (2004) propose a useful foundation for the assessment of authentic market offerings. Based on Peirce’s (1998) philosophy of signs, they supported the importance of indexical and iconic cues in the evaluation of authenticity. More specifically, Peirce’s work has linked certain types of cues (indexicality) with certain kinds of phenomenological experiences (iconicity). Thus, indexical authenticity refers to the original or real thing, while iconic authenticity refers to an authentic reproduction. As a result, “authenticity can be both a social construction and a source of evidence” (Grayson and Martinec, 2004, p. 310; Belk and Costa, 1998; Kozinets, 2001).

Even though, we are still not comprehensive with regards to under what circumstances consumers’ assessments of authentic market offerings would emphasize iconicity or indexicality, a clear distinction between authentic and inauthentic product offerings has been identified in previous research (Peirce, 1998; Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006).

With this study, we address Chinese consumers’ perceptions of authenticity. It has been noted that most existing studies approach authenticity as “a general preoccupation of modern Western culture” (Jacknis, 1990, p.9), and as a result examine it at large within Western contexts and hence neglect to address it as a phenomenon with considerable universal implications. We thus chose to explore the Chinese consumer market not only because of its considerable size, but mainly because of its consumers’ differences in beliefs and attitudes in relation to many aspects of consumer behaviour in general, and authenticity in particular. These differences due primarily to cultural factors have been more recently attributed to the noticeable increase of consumerism along with the considerable expansion of offshore manufacturing companies within this wider region (Liu and Wang, 2009, Staake et al., 2009, Vann, 2006). As a result, Chinese consumers are currently exposed to numerous and diverse levels of authentic product offerings at their everyday market place.
Method

In order to explore Chinese consumers’ perception of authenticity in the context of market offerings, in-depth interviewing has been selected as our data collection method. This is primarily because in depth interviews are concerned with how participants actively create meaning (Silverman, 2001). We conducted forty five in-depth interviews with Chinese male and female participants from mainly rural areas and within the age range of eighteen to forty years old. The participants for this study were recruited as following. Firstly, we employed the snowball sampling method, asking the interviewees to recommend close friends as respondents for the study. Secondly we created and posted flyers in several universities of Beijing asking for interviewees for a research project on brand perceptions and rewarding them with gift vouchers for their participation. The concepts emerged were analyzed using the interpretive thematic analysis technique (Spiggle 1994).

Findings

Our findings revealed that consumers, within the Chinese marketplace, do not evaluate product offerings based on the binary relationship between perceived authenticity and inauthenticity. In contrast, they view authenticity evaluation as relational and hierarchical, rather than in terms of originality and uniqueness. As a result the following two additional types of authenticity emerged:

Domesticated. The term “domesticated” refers to the products offered by local joint-ventures of foreign-run factories. Our respondents evaluate these products as less authentic, due to the identification of an inauthentic property within them. Consequently, they seem to have difficulties accepting that foreign branded products that are made in China or anywhere else than their country of origin are the “real thing”. According to our participants, “domesticated authenticity” is different from “true authenticity”, since it does not possess the same saliency.

Mimic. Our participants describe mimic products not as fakes but as less than perfect versions of the original ones. They recognise that they are inferior to the original ones because they fail to attain the same high standards. However, they support that they mimic the original ones in a relatively positive and sincere manner. More importantly, they clearly differentiate mimic products from counterfeits, as the latter are not simply seen as inferior versions of original products, but as inauthentic ones. Thus, mimic products are been considered by Chinese consumers as unavoidable and useful elements of today’s market economy.

In sum, this study provides insights into how consumers within heavily commercialised markets evaluate the authenticity of product offerings. Moreover, our findings present a tool to marketing practitioners, which will assist them in creating new consumer segmentations’ based on the above proposed classification of different levels of authentic product offerings, while preserving their brand equity and consumers’ long-term relations.

References

The Effects of Pre-visit Attributes on Active Consumption of Museums Experience
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Extended Abstract
Like many services, the museum product is delivered with methods of simulating interest, also it is able to engage and provide a platform on which consumers could directly interact with the museum through their prior knowledge or static and visual facilities provided inside the museum (Gilmore and Pine, 2007; Goulding, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Prentice, 2001; Welsh, 2005). Meanwhile, within the marketing and sociology literature, researchers have developed a strong empirical case for a model of consumption which clearly identifies pre- and post-visit stages and attempts to establish how changes in variables in one stage of the model would affect other stages; for example how prior experience and knowledge influence consumption choices (Alderson et al., 2007; Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu and Darbel, 2008; Dimaggio, 1987; Holt, 1998; Lareau and Weininger, 2003; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Prentice, 2003). This study is an attempt to take another step toward the above argument within the context of museum exhibits in Scotland.

Csikszentmihalyi (2008) and Driver, Brown and Peterson (1991) stress that enjoyment is the focal driver of optimal experience which is affected by knowledge, intrinsic motivation and level of participation. Consequently, the consumers’ knowledge is described as the level of experience and familiarity that an individual has with a product prior to conducting an external information search (Alba and Hutchinson, 2000; Dodd, Laverie, Wilcox and Duhan, 2005). According to Kerstetter and Cho (2004), prior knowledge can be classified as familiarity, expertise and past experience. The role of nostalgia (e.g. a yearning for the past) can be also added to the factors affecting consumption of cultural products which falls into two types: lived and learned (Goulding, 2001; Goulding and Domic, 2009; Sierra and McQuitty, 2007). Within the specific field of cultural consumption, Bourdieu’s (2007) notion of processes of consumption of cultures and lifestyle are widely cited, in relation to cultural capital as an influence on the context of popular and fine arts (Gans, 1974; Prior, 2002). Arguably, Bourdieu did not provide a clear statement about the nature of cultural capital, in particular the relationship between class and status, which has led to a variety of interpretations of his work (Alderson et al., 2007; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007; Savage, Gayo-Cal, Ward and Tampubolon 2005; Swartz, 1998). Therefore, three theoretical perspectives have emerged and are usefully summarised by Peterson (2005) and Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) namely homology, individualism and omnivore-univore argument. Later work has developed this argument to include additional categories: ‘paucivores’, whose members engage in an ‘intermediate’ level of cultural consumption across a range of activities and ‘inactives’ who have low probabilities of engaging in most cultural activities (Alderson et al., 2007). Moreover, the museum visit can be defined as a cognitive effort whose objective is educational and cultural or active visitors rather than passive and uncritical recipients of information and consumption of heritage (Bagnall, 2003; Guintrache and Passebois, 2009).

Finally, intrinsic motivation is another prominent pre-visit factor in cultural tourism consumption. Prentice (2004) applies Stebbins (2001) conceptualisation of the motivations for serious leisure to the study of cultural tourism motivation. He stresses that some cultural consumers are motivated by attaining stages of achievement, the acquisition of particular knowledge and the desire for long-term benefits which can be categorised into personal and social rewards.

Minor attention has been given to level of engagement during consumption and how cultural consumers engage with a cultural place (Chhabra, 2008; Coulter, Price and Feick, 2003; Goulding, 2000; Welsh, 2005). Welsh (2005) argues that the main mission of cultural places, particularly museums, is to evoke activities around three main domains: materiality (i.e. objective conditions of cultural place), representation (i.e. the scope of information that emerges from the cultural institution) and engagement (i.e. the multiple ways cultural consumers use to create images of their self-images). As museums recognise the greater complexity of their relationships with consumers, they have developed new mechanisms for enhancing the degree of engagement. Furthermore, Edmonds, Muller and Connell (2006) classify four core categories of interaction in art places namely static, dynamic-passive, dynamic-interactive and passive-interactive. It can be argued that these four categories can be seen in almost all museums and art galleries. Moreover, personal and social benefits in the consumption stages act as drivers, and effort may therefore be invested into the visit whereby the level of prior knowledge and expertise of the individual (i.e. cultural capital) are mobilised in order to achieve such rewards (Bourdieu, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Driver et al., 1991; Malone, 1981; Stebbins, 2007). In addition, according to service dominant logic, the motivation of consumers to actively participate in the production of a service (e.g. actively engage in co-creation of the cultural tourism experience), is dependent on consumers’ operant resources such as expertise, specialised cultural capital and knowledge (Arnould, Price and Malshe, 2006; Vargo and Lusch 2004). Thus, co-creation of value is desirable as it gives service facilitators the opportunity to better understand their potential (e.g. product and/or service) from consumers’ perspective (Elgar, 2008; Vargo and Lusch 2008).

With a particular focus on cultural tourism consumption, the paper examines the main influential factors of optimal experience namely cultural capital, familiarity and intrinsic motivation (i.e. rewards) and their relation with level of engagement from active and inactive consumers’ perspectives. The qualitative data analysis process for the study followed a step by step procedure used by Boyatzis’ Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) by employing 23 semi-structured interviews in order to meet the mixed social class criteria. Informants were approached through theoretical purposive sampling techniques (Bryman, 2008). Interviewees were invited to discuss their visiting experience to art galleries and museums in three main stages of visit namely pre-visit, during-visit and post-visit in Glasgow or Edinburgh in the prior twelve months. Furthermore, photographs were used as a stimulating source for generating debates about level
of engagement in this study (Collier, 1957; Gotschi, Delve and Freyer, 2009). The researchers showed different photos about visual and static objects in museums and art galleries and asked how visitors felt about each object. Our emerging findings reveal how paucevores and inactive consumers differ in their degree of participation within cultural places. Following this, the analysis of findings indicates three types of cultural visitors within museum exhibits namely: passive, interactive and self-directed/self-educated. It is expected that these contribute to the existing knowledge on cultural consumption within museums and art galleries. Cultural visitors derive meaning during their actual visit to art exhibits through the consumption of objects and influential factors such as their knowledge, expertise and intrinsic motivation which they have amassed. This research outlined the above aims to go some way towards informing this field of study.

References
Food labels are supportive of their diet-related health needs. The reasons given for not reading food labels were further related to internal understanding of the nutritional information on food labels, or that they do not know what information to evaluate on the label when to weight- and diet-related disease concerns and could also explain the great interest in “low in fat” and “low in cholesterol” nutrient scores from the labelling tasks shown that the respondents did not necessarily have an understanding of how to use food labels. Different motivations were found to encourage the use of food labels, although first-time food purchases seemed to be the single most important motivation. This highlights the importance of the role of food manufacturers in ensuring that products are provided with food labels that comply with the regulations. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that the expiry date and the ingredient list were used most. It was conceptualised that the information on the food label and the consumers’ evaluation thereof might influence their decision to purchase a product. The higher the consumers’ perceived risk associated with the use of the product, the more involved the consumer would be in the search for and evaluation of product information (Schiffman, & Kanuk, 2007). This implies that consumers differ in their motivation to search for or use information on food labels and that their search for information on food labels might be active or accidental (Grunert & Wills, 2007), although it would be affected by the extent to which they understand the information. Consumers’ understanding of information on food labels is dependent upon their cognitive abilities to read and interpret the information on the label (Cowburn & Stockley, 2005). Therefore, the consumers’ understanding of the information would determine how and if the information on food labels is use when food choices are made. Internal (demographic characteristics and situational factors) and external influences (food labelling regulations, food manufacturers, food label information and product attributes) that would have a direct effect on the consumers’ understanding and use of food label information was also considered in the conceptual framework.

Combined stratified and judgemental sampling methods were used to recruited 174 respondents, 18 years or older and involved in the purchasing of household food products. The sample was recruited in two neighbouring cities, Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom, which are located in the North West Province of South Africa. These two cities were chosen to increase the socio-economic diversity of the target population (PCC, 2007). Data were collected by means of questionnaires that were completed through face-to-face encounters, at selected supermarket chain stores (Shoprite, Checkers and Pick ‘n Pay). Both open and close-ended questions were included in the questionnaire, that was organised as follows: section A contained relevant demographic and food-purchasing behaviour questions; section B focused on the use of information on food labels and section C aimed to determine the relationship between the respondents’ understanding of the information on food labels and their ability to make informed food choices. The latter was determined by asking the respondents to complete predetermined food labelling tasks. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, no. NWU-0056-08-S1.

The results indicated that the majority of respondents’ food choices are influence by the information on the food label. However, scores from the labelling tasks shown that the respondents did not necessarily have an understanding of how to use food labels. Different motivations were found to encourage the use of food labels, although first-time food purchases seemed to be the single most important motivation. This highlights the importance of the role of food manufacturers in ensuring that products are provided with food labels that comply with the regulations. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that the expiry date and the ingredient list were used most. The frequent use of nutritional information related to the fat and cholesterol content of the product was also cited. This might be due to weight- and diet-related disease concerns and could also explain the great interest in “low in fat” and “low in cholesterol” nutrient content claims. However, the great interest in fat and cholesterol information and relatively low interest in the use of nutrient content claims, such as “low GI”, “low in sugar” and “high in fibre”, could provide support for the findings that consumers have an inadequate understanding of the nutritional information on food labels, or that they do not know what information to evaluate on the label when making food choices. Although food labels were generally regarded as easy to use, the respondents disagreed with the statement that food labels are supportive of their diet-related health needs. The reasons given for not reading food labels were further related to internal

Adult Consumers’ Understanding and Use of Information on Food Labels: A Study Among Consumers Living in the Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp Region
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Extended Abstract
This study investigated adult consumers’ understanding and use of the information on food labels. Research in South Africa addressing this issue is minimal, although it required especially when considering consumers’ limited nutritional knowledge to make healthy food choices (Spowart, 1998) and the amendment to the food labelling regulations. Therefore, the study’s objectives were to identify what information consumers use on food labels, as well as what difficulties they experienced when using food labels, and then to explore their reasons for not using food labels. The relationship between consumers’ understanding of the information on food labels and their ability to make informed food choices was also investigated. Difficulties consumers’ associate in the understanding and use of food labels are required, so that recommendations can be made to food label regulators and food manufacturers.

It was conceptualised that the information on the food label and the consumers’ evaluation thereof might influence their decision to purchase a product. The higher the consumers’ perceived risk associated with the use of the product, the more involved the consumer would be in the search for and evaluation of product information (Schiffman, & Kanuk, 2007). This implies that consumers differ in their motivation to search for or use information on food labels and that their search for information on food labels might be active or accidental (Grunert & Wills, 2007), although it would be affected by the extent to which they understand the information. Consumers’ understanding of information on food labels is dependent upon their cognitive abilities to read and interpret the information on the label (Cowburn & Stockley, 2005). Therefore, the consumers’ understanding of the information would determine how and if the information on food labels is use when food choices are made. Internal (demographic characteristics and situational factors) and external influences (food labelling regulations, food manufacturers, food label information and product attributes) that would have a direct effect on the consumers’ understanding of information on food labels and their ability to make informed food choices was also considered in the conceptual framework.

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The results indicated that the majority of respondents’ food choices are influence by the information on the food label. However, scores from the labelling tasks shown that the respondents did not necessarily have an understanding of how to use food labels. Different motivations were found to encourage the use of food labels, although first-time food purchases seemed to be the single most important motivation. This highlights the importance of the role of food manufacturers in ensuring that products are provided with food labels that comply with the regulations. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that the expiry date and the ingredient list were used most. The frequent use of nutritional information related to the fat and cholesterol content of the product was also cited. This might be due to weight- and diet-related disease concerns and could also explain the great interest in “low in fat” and “low in cholesterol” nutrient content claims. However, the great interest in fat and cholesterol information and relatively low interest in the use of nutrient content claims, such as “low GI”, “low in sugar” and “high in fibre”, could provide support for the findings that consumers have an inadequate understanding of the nutritional information on food labels, or that they do not know what information to evaluate on the label when making food choices. Although food labels were generally regarded as easy to use, the respondents disagreed with the statement that food labels are supportive of their diet-related health needs. The reasons given for not reading food labels were further related to internal

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions: low intellectual investment, high intellectual investment, and control. It is recommended that food label regulators and manufacturers include the use of colours, pictures and different languages on food labels to support consumers in their use thereof. The use of colour and pictures on food labels could also address language barriers and the illiteracy experienced in South Africa. Future research in this field should be performed on a larger scale that includes more consumers, supermarkets and provinces in South Africa. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study are of value to food labelling regulators and manufacturers, but also to those involved in the field of consumer education.

References

**Investment of Self Into Products**

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**Extended Abstract**

Imagine that you are working on your car, building a patio, or making a bookshelf. The process may require your physical involvement (changing a particular part of the engine, placing stones for the patio, cutting and staining the wood for the shelves) and/or intellectual involvement (designating the problem with the car, designing the patio or the shelves). How would these types of involvement affect your evaluation of the final product? Which factor will be the most important for you? Would the effect of type of (physical vs. intellectual) involvement in the process depend on individual differences?

These questions are important if companies want to influence and optimize value derived from consumers’ involvement in the production process. Participation of consumers in the production process (i.e. what Toffler referred to as “prosumption”) may create additional value for consumers and add to the quality of one’s life (Xie, 2005; Troye and Supphellen, 2008). However, in order to influence and optimize value derived from prosumption, companies need to know what kind of activities in the production process appeal to different types of consumers.

While previous research has identified prosumption as a valuable tool to understand and to enhance consumption experience, surprisingly few theoretical and empirical studies have focused on this phenomenon (Xie, Bagozzi and Troye, 2007). Little is known about the processes that underline prosumption behavior. We draw on findings from person-object literature (Belk 1988; Richins 1994; Pierce, Kostova and Dirks 2003) to investigate prosumption. Research on person-object relationship indicates that investing the self into the target (creating, shaping or producing an object) results in the most powerful association between the self and the object since one invests labor, time and one’s self in this process. During the production or modification process, investment of self into the product can be through intellectual and/or physical involvement. Intellectual involvement entails intellectual stimulation, creativity or choice in the process. If one uses his/her intellectual labor during prosumption activities, then the product may represent the ideas the person has generated and, therefore, may become part of the extended self. Therefore, intellectual stimulation in the process may transfer part of the self to the focal product, and affect personal relevance and evaluation of the product.

Labor creates a sense of ownership and identification with the product. Marx (1867) indicated that a person is the owner of his labor and has rights over production that involves his labor. You may feel that a sweater you have knitted, or a car you have worked on is special since it absorbed your labor and time. In some cases, people may value self-made products even more than expert-made ones (Norton and Ariely, 2007). Therefore, use of physical labor during prosumption activities may enhance identification with and attachment to the product, and contribute to the value derived from prosumption.

The first study examined the relationship between products and consumers in detail by looking at how intellectual investment during production shapes how consumers relate to products. We hypothesized that higher levels of intellectual investment in the process will enhance evaluation of the product. Also, we proposed that identification with (hypothesized to be the cognitive dimension of person-object relationship) and attachment to the product (hypothesized to be the affective dimension) mediates the impact of intellectual investment on product evaluation.

The study was a three-group between-subjects design (where intellectual investment in the process was manipulated at three levels). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions: low intellectual investment, high intellectual investment, and control.
In all conditions, participants were given a coffee tumbler with a removable blank insert. The base of the tumbler could be twisted off to remove the inner insert, and one could draw or write on the insert before reinserting and twisting on the base. In the low intellectual investment condition, participants were provided with 12 stickers from which they could choose one to stick onto the blank insert for the tumbler. In the high intellectual investment condition, the participants were provided with colored pencils, a marker, alphabet stickers and eraser. Also they were given an example sheet which included the same 12 figures from the low intellectual investment condition. They could use this example sheet to get some ideas, or they could use other figures/ shapes they wanted. They were encouraged to be creative in this condition. In the control condition, participants could not work on the tumbler. They were encouraged to examine the tumbler but could not modify or change it in any way. In order to equate the time spent with the tumbler, in the control and the low intellectual investment conditions, the participants worked on a filler task while the tumbler was in front of them. Then, all the participants answered identification, attachment, and product evaluation questions. As predicted, the product was valued more highly when the production process required higher levels of intellectual investment. Also, results showed that identification with and attachment to the product mediated the impact of intellectual investment on product evaluation. When consumers engage in prosumption with a chance of intellectual involvement, they become more attached to the product and identified more with it.

Study 1 looked into one single dimension of prosumption, which is intellectual investment in the production process. Next, we want to investigate how physical investment in the production process affects evaluation of, identification with, and attachment to a product. Future studies will also look into possible moderators (need for cognition, creativity, need for stimulation) that may affect the value derived from intellectual and physical investment during prosumption.

We make several contributions to the literature. First, we operationalize identification with and attachment to a product in measurable and tangible terms. This enables us to measure personal relevance of products when consumers are involved in the production process. Next, we demonstrate that intellectual investment during prosumption enhances product evaluation by altering the personal relevance of the product. We extend past research by suggesting the factors of prosumption that affect person-object relationship and overall evaluation of a product.

**Exploring Consumers’ Perceptions of Brand Personality: A Qualitative Approach**
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**Abstract**
The existing literature on brand personality has focused on the brand personality construct, developing a brand personality scale and the effects of brand personality on other brand-related variables. There is a lack of in-depth consumer research investigating what factors shape consumers’ perceptions of brand personality. The current study addresses this gap by conducting sixty-six depth interviews with the purpose to explore how consumers form their perceptions of different dimensions of brand personality identified in Aaker’s (1997) scale (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness). This knowledge provides insight into how to develop tailor-made strategies to strengthen (or downplay) particular personality dimensions.

**Factors Influence British Muslim Clothing Choice In The United Kingdom (Uk)**
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The purpose of this study is to investigate factors influence British Muslim clothing choice in the UK. To enable the study to meet the aim, objectives have been developed such as examination of the role of ethnic identification (Donthu and Cherian 1992), acculturation (Owneby and Horridge 1997; Penaloza 1994) and religiosity (McDaniel and Burnett 1990) on British Muslim clothing choice. Also an examination on how social influence (informational and normative influence) (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Bearden et al. 1989) and clothing benefits play a role in influencing British Muslim clothing choice.

This study will focus on British Muslims as they have been recognised as one of the fastest growing ethnic minorities and the group makes the second largest population in UK after Christian (UK National Statistics 2001). The population is growing fast over the last five decades from 21,000 to 1.6 million and likely to be doubled by 2021 to around 3 million (Lewis 2007). The choice of British Muslims is partially one of convenience and also because no studies have done to understand the British Muslims consumption although the population have been identified as untapped market and estimated to have spending power of at least £20.5 billion (Salzman 2007). The sample groups for this study consisting of second generations of British Muslims in UK as review of the ethnic minority consumer behaviour studies in the UK shows that considerable research has been devoted to the understanding of consumer behaviour of the first generation (such as Makgosa 2007) or comparison between the first and later generations (such as Jamal 1998; White and Kokotaski 2004). Furthermore, British Muslim population has the youngest age profile of all the UK population (UK National Statistics 2001).

This study consists of two phases; qualitative phase which involved focus group and interview method and quantitative phase which will be implemented via a survey questionnaire. Qualitative research is employed in the first phase because it produces rounded contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data (Mason 2002). Initially, focus groups were formed for the purpose of exploring British Muslims clothing consumption while the interview sessions were carried out to ensure all the facets of the
constructs (religiosity, acculturation, ethnic identification, social influence and clothing benefits) mentioned in the conceptual model are captured. Information generated from the focus group and interview contributed toward survey development that will be carried out in the next phase. Therefore, this study contributes to the whole picture by taking the advantage of both qualitative and quantitative methods as majority of the studies on ethnic minority were conducted using the qualitative method (Jamal 1998; Lindridge and Hogg 2006; Sekhon 2007), neglecting the possibility of making generalisation.

Preliminary analysis of the data from phase one, which aimed to explore the British Muslims clothing consumption, showed that respondents have expressed positive views with regards to the clothing available in the high street fashion retailers in the UK. They chose to shop in the high street fashion retailers because the style and design available are according to their preference and they were able to get a wide range of clothes. In addition, respondents mentioned that clothes available in the high street are good in terms of its quality and well priced. The findings also suggest that religion plays a huge role on British Muslims’ clothing consumption. This is reflected in their clothing choice whereby majority of them will firstly consider clothes that have styles and design according to the Islamic perspectives as been laid down in Quran and Sunnah. Other than that, brand names of clothes have not been considered as important factor that may influence their clothing consumption although previous research indicated that it does influence consumer clothing purchasing (Kawabata and Rabolt 1999; Kwan et al. 2004; Zhang et al. 2002) however, it was an important consideration when the respondents were younger or in high school. Among the respondents, clothes have been viewed as a vehicle to express someone’s personality and identity. In addition, clothes have also been used to attract others’ attention and to fit in or associate with certain group. Other factors that affected the British Muslims’ clothing consumption include the reference group influence. Family members are the most common type of reference group that influence their clothing choice. Apparently, friends and media did not influence their clothing consumption.

The study aims to make practical contributions by discussing implications for marketing mix developed by the retailers and manufacturers of fashion clothing. As been suggested by Nwankwo and Lindridge (1998), ethnic marketing cannot be successful unless it is strategically driven. In this sense, retailers and manufacturers of fashion clothing may develop an effective marketing programme which consists of ‘product’, ‘price’, ‘promotion’ and ‘place’ that blends to target the British Muslims in UK.

References


The Construal of Brand Extensions: The Effects of Abstract vs. Concrete Mindsets on Product Judgement and Evaluation

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Based on Construal Level Theory we tested the assumption that depending on people’s mindset (abstract vs. concrete) judgement of perceived similarity and evaluation would be based on different dimensions. Data from two studies suggest that participants in an abstract mindset base their judgement of similarity and their overall evaluation on shared high-level features of the brand’s prototypical product and the new product (i.e. main purpose). Participants in a concrete mindset however, additionally base their judgment of similarity and their overall evaluation on shared low-level features of the brand’s prototypical product and the new product (i.e. composition).

In light of the high costs and risks involved with introducing a new brand it has become a popular strategy of companies to launch a new product under an already existing brand name (brand extension). Past research on brand extension has identified perceived fit (i.e. perceived similarity) between the new product and the parent brand as the most important predictor for a successful brand extension (e.g., Aaker & Keller, 1990).

However, fit or similarity may be perceived on different dimensions with different results. For example, Barilla tomato sauce is similar to Barilla products such as pasta sauces of appearance and composition. Both products are red, liquid, and made of tomatoes. Barilla Parmesan cheese does not at all resemble any other Barilla products on this dimension. But Parmesan fits the product line on another dimension. It shares with the other products the purpose of why or wherefore they are used (e.g., to have an Italian meal).

We draw upon the findings of Construal Level Theory (CLT, Trope & Liberman, 2000) to predict when consumers are more likely to base their judgment of similarity on the dimension of composition in contrast to the dimension of main purpose and vice versa. CLT posits that individuals can construe stimuli either in terms of concrete, detailed and incidental features (low-level construals) or in terms of abstract, global and central features (high-level construals) (Trope & Liberman, 2003). Construal levels can be determined by situational (e.g., psychological distance) as well as through an individual chronic tendency toward a more concrete or more abstract cognitive style (Trope & Liberman, 2000; Vallacher & Wegener, 1989). Furthermore low-level construals of action address the question of how one would perform an action, whereas high-level construals of the same action answer the question why one would perform an action (Eyal, Liberman & Trope, 2009). Past research has shown that for individuals in a concrete mindset, low-level features of a product hold relatively more value than for individuals in an abstract mindset, whereas for individuals in an abstract mindset high-level features hold relatively more value than for individuals in a concrete mindset (Trope & Liberman, 2000).

Assigning the propositions of CLT to brand extensions, we hypothesized that people in an abstract mindset would base their judgment of perceived similarity of parent brand and brand extension on shared high-level features. That is to say, they would base their judgment of similarity and liking of a brand extension on perceived similarity of why and wherefore the brand’s products and the new product are typically used (e.g., their mean purpose). People in a concrete mindset however, would additionally base their judgment of perceived similarity of a brand’s products and a new product on shared low-level features. That is to say, they would also base their judgment of similarity and liking of the brand extension on perceived similarity of how the brand’s products and the new product are composed (e.g., fabrics, consistency, colour).

We tested our hypotheses in two studies. In the first study data for 39 hypothetical brand extensions were assessed from three groups of participants. One group rated the fit of the brand extensions with the respective parent brand on the dimension “mean purpose” and “composition” on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (does not fit at all) to 7 (fits very well). Another group rated the same brands and products for perceived overall similarity on the same 7-point scale. From a third group we obtained an overall evaluation of the brand extensions and of the parent brands on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). All participants completed the Behavior Identification Form (BIF, Vallacher & Wegner 1989). We divided participants according to their BIF score into abstract or concrete thinkers by a median split and calculated the ratings for both groups. Thus we had for each brand extension ratings of overall similarity, similarity in composition, similarity in purpose of use, product liking and liking of the parent brand by abstract and by concrete thinkers. These data allowed us to test our hypotheses in an item-based analysis.

The results provide support for our hypotheses. Similarity on the dimension “mean purpose” perceived by abstract thinkers predicted the overall similarity perceived by abstract thinkers and the general attitudes towards the extensions of abstract thinkers. Similarity on the dimension “composition” as perceived by abstract thinkers did not predict perceived overall similarity nor general evaluation for participants in an abstract mindset. However, both similarity on the dimension “mean purpose / context” and “composition” as perceived by concrete thinkers predicted overall similarity and general evaluation as rated by this group.

In study 2 we selected four products which concrete and abstract thinkers had rated equally high similarity in composition and purpose (e.g., Persil dishwasher tabs) in study 1. Participants were pre-screened for possible usage (e.g., whether they had a dishwasher). Only participants to whom the brand extensions were relevant (e.g., because they owned a dishwasher) were included in the study. Participants saw advertisements of the brand extensions, which either emphasised similarity of shared purpose (e.g., cleans) or similarity in composition (laundry tabs and dishwasher tabs) through their slogan. All participants saw two products advertised by composition similarity and two products advertised by purpose similarity. Participants indicated their liking for each brand extension on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”). Participants then completed the BIF in order to measure their level of abstractness.

Product ratings were collapsed over all products. As hypothesised, participants in an abstract mindset liked the brand extensions better if they were advertised with a slogan emphasising shared purpose than when the advertising slogan emphasised similar composition, whereas participants in a concrete mindset slightly preferred brand extensions when the advertising emphasised similar composition than when it emphasised shared purpose.

We will discuss further moderators such as distance for example that may influence the success of brand extensions by the weight given to specific dimensions of similarity.
Children’s Preferences of Package Design
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Abstract
This research explores influences of package design on children’s preferences in three aspects: shape (straight or rounded), figurativeness, and complexity. Analysis of data from 766 children 3-12 years of age reveals that, unlike prior findings on gender differences in adults’ preferences for straight or rounded shapes, children generally prefer rounded package shapes. Meanwhile, the results indicate that children prefer realistic, figurative package design and that children’s preferences for complex package shapes increase with age.

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The Negotiation and Consumption of Mediated Masculinities in the Artistry of the Male Self
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Extended Abstract

Feminist critic Judith Butler records gender identities as ‘a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being’ (Butler, 1990: 33). In reference to Foucault’s technologies of the self, Whitehead concludes ‘for the subject to “create itself as a (masculine) work of art” it must reach for those ideal(ised) representations of gender that surround it. Consequently, being masculine must be constantly engaged with, worked at, and explored’ (Whitehead, 2002: 215-216). Foucault’s work distinguishes between juridical power and regulatory power, advising that whilst the latter exercising of power appears more autonomous, he warns how it can be most powerful when it is least repressive (Foucault, 1980). Take in point the mass media; when we are presented with mediated images appealing to individuals to engage in practices that will in turn offer self-fulfilment and self-improvement, in essence we are being instructed ‘to work on ourselves to make sure that we are this kind of person’ (Lawler, 2008: 57). Similarly Cronin identifies consumerism to be a technology of the self whereby discourses of advertising herald the choice and the power within individuals to transform themselves, that is transform themselves through the purchase of the suggested advertised product (Cronin, 2000). It can be deduced that although the modern Western world is not being ruled by any sovereign or juridical stronghold per se, this has become virtually unnecessary as Western society so tightly govern themselves through what Foucault terms ‘techniques of normalisation’, or ‘governmentality’.

Foucault’s critical ontology of the present can be attributed with renewing focus on the relationship of the individual embedded within their community, and thus to the wider power structures within which they consequently exist. This provocation offers a unique realm for us to consider contemporary society, its freedom and its constraints (Moss, 1998: 16). In particular, Kimmel cautions against contemporary considerations of freedom, a freedom his research reveals is often devoid of moral and ethical responsibility and more importantly, adult support and guidance. He is concerned ‘today’s young men are coming of age in an era with no road maps, no blueprints, and no primers to tell them what a man is or how to become one’ (Kimmel, 2008: 42).

In considering the individual’s existence within its culture, while Foucault locates the subject within their own social group, literary theorist Stanley Fish identifies this social group as being one’s ‘interpretive community’. Yannopoulou and Elliott specify that interpretive communities when considered in relation to advertising, have been envisioned as ‘a cultural formation with a shared social and historical context that results in similar interpretations, with particular reference to the use of discursive modes of interpreting media content’ (Yannopoulou and Elliott, 2008: 12). It is within this context that the male subject is thus considered.

This research follows a Life-History Analysis whereby in-depth interviews have been conducted to consider on one level young Irish men’s negotiation and interpretation of advertising material in order to unearth in Holland’s terms the subject’s ‘identity theme’ or ‘life theme’. The second section of the in-depth interview serves to reconstruct the subject’s life story. In Foucauldian terms, such life stories will determine the men’s practices of the self, how they go about constructing their self as a ‘work of art’. I draw upon Mick and Buhl’s (1992) Meaning-Based Model of Advertising Experiences to conceptualise my consideration of an individual subject immersed within a socio-cultural context whereby their constitution of their self is embedded within their life theme and life projects.

Initial analysis indicates young Irish men are vocally supportive of shifts in Irish men’s roles from dominant patriarchal positions to a more ‘feminised’ or what has been recently termed, ‘metrosexual’ men. However a deeper-rooted connection to traditional Irish masculinity appears difficult to sever, leaving a contradiction between what one says and how one performs his masculinity.

Regarding construction of the male body, preliminary research suggest respondents draw heavily from mediated resources, akin to Ancient Grecian schools of ethics, to acquire tools and practices for self-constitution. Sources such as Men’s Health website and magazine are tools young men reference to develop techniques for diets, weights regimes and other such body-altering procedures. Practices to enhance the male physique were primarily followed with a specific goal-oriented rationale, for example, participation in triathlons or for work-related purposes.

Those respondents dwelling in a rural Irish town displayed a distinct consciousness of their self, and how this self could be acted out within the confines of this community. There appeared unwritten rules of acceptability as to how one behaved and dressed ‘down the town’. In particular one respondent, a relatively high-profile music band member, struggled greatly with his ‘mediated self’ and his ‘home self’, rigorously policing his self to ensure he was not seen to be ‘stepping up above the crowd’.

In the literature consideration is given to Bly’s (1990) proposal that young men in Western society are at a loss for masculine guidance and a lamentation of the departure of ‘traditional’ society initiation ceremonies. However this research suggests a rite of passage does take place for young Irish men, for better or for worse; the ceremonial site taking the format of the ‘auld lad’s pub’, and the ritualistic practice his ‘first pint of Guinness’ followed by a ‘whiskey chaser’. The elder, be it father, or stranger, witnesses the ‘young fella’ taking his first sup, and there’s no time for ‘squeamishness’ in this ‘manly’ space.
Ernest Dichter, Motivation Research and the Making of the Disembedded Consumer, 1939-1965
Stefan Schwarzkopf, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Summary & Conceptualization
Karl Polanyi’s Great Transformation (1944) described the transition of European societies during the nineteenth century from market economies to fully fledged market societies. While the former described one form of economic exchange, the latter term signified a society transformed in such a way that social institutions were built around the needs of supposedly self-regulating markets. Polanyi’s analysis focused almost entirely on the world of work, production and on market-related exchange processes, which meant that the realms of consumer behavior and of value-creation through consumption were ignored to some extent.

I argue that the twentieth-century consumer was characterized by a similar process of disembedding as described by Polanyi and that the Austro-American consumer researcher Ernest Dichter (1907-1991) played a key role in preparing the ideological framework necessary for this process to succeed. While for Dichter consumer behavior was of course submerged in social relationships and cultural patterns, consumer imagery and consumers’ desire were an essentially personal, individual affair. Dichter believed that human beings across the whole spectrum of cultures, social classes and races had the same innate drive to consume and express their individual needs through the acquisition of material goods. The logic of social relationships which inhibited consumer desires was described by Dichter as inherently restrictive and detrimental because this logic was imposed by religion, social mores and laws. Dichter thus turned on its head the formerly accepted view that inhibited and restrained consumer desires were a necessary part of consumer welfare and wider social stability—i.e., the connectedness of present and past consumer relationships within which it was once firmly embedded as a secondary activity. In Dichter’s research reports and his various other publications, being a consumer became the central form of human existence, the core of a person’s raison d’être.

Method
In order to assess Ernest Dichter’s role in the creation of the concept of the disembedded consumer, an analysis of around one hundred of Dichter’s consumer and motivation research reports has been conducted. Access to the original reports has been provided by the University of Vienna and by the Hagley Museum and Archive, Delaware. Both archives hold over 4,000 unpublished research reports and studies of the Institute for Motivational Research and this study for the first time subjected a selection of this primary material to a cross-sectional, cross-country and cross-temporal meta-analysis through historical contextualization and the method of content analysis. Hitherto, historical and theoretical analyses of Dichterian motivation research relied almost exclusively on Dichter’s published material and his autobiographical accounts. The unpublished research reports written for clients of the Dichter Institute give a first-hand account of his international activities and the changes they underwent between the late 1930s and the late 1980s. Of these 4,000 consumer and market research studies, reports compiled for American, British, German, French and Australian clients have been selected. Further, reports for clients from the automobile industry (Ford, Volkswagen), the cosmetics (Lever Brothers, Schwarzkopf), foods (Cadbury’s, Nestle, General Mills) and clothing industries (DuPont) and from the supermarket retail sector (Tengelmann) have been selected as they are representative of the spectrum of industries that drove the growth of postwar consumer society. The same is true for the countries selected for this study, which represent societies that saw extensive growth of their consumer sectors during the postwar period.

For the analysis, a twenty-five year period from 1939 to 1965 was chosen, the period when Dichter had been at the peak of public notoriety and popularity with industrial clients. The research reports were analyzed through content analysis and close reading, two methods adapted from literary criticism, where alternative patterns, shifts in denotation and connotation, the emergence of new terminology, the strategic application of rhetorical devices, and modes of confusion, contradiction and the re-definition of terms are studied. This study therefore follows a type of marketing research as advocated by Barbara Stern (1990), Stephen Brown (1999; 2005) and others. The study however moves beyond literary analysis and historically contextualizes Dichter’s research reports by, for example, taking into account that from the mid-1950s more competitors moved into the market for motivation research and Dichter had to increase the range of methods he provided. Key moments in the social and cultural history of the United States and Western Europe provided milestones at which changes in Dichter’s language and rhetoric were studied. These milestones were the years of 1945 (end of World War II), 1948 (Berlin crisis and begin of ERP), 1950 (outbreak of Korea War), 1953-54 (US recession), 1957 (Sputnik crisis and publication of Vance Packard’s Hidden Persuaders), 1961 (Apollo program and Kennedy’s tax cuts), and finally 1964-65 (Johnson’s “Great Society” speech, War on Poverty, Civil Rights Act, Ralph Nader’s Unsafe at any Speed and the ensuing consumer rights movement).

Findings & Discussion
Academic interest in Ernest Dichter and motivation research has been growing since the late 1990s (Stern 2004). Yet analyses of Dichter’s research have so far always relied on a small range of published material and have either tended to portray him as a “guru”-type of newcomer (Fullerton 2007) or focused on his role in the emergence of interpretive consumer research (Tadajewski 2006). While these are legitimate perspectives on Dichter’s research they tend to be void of historical-political contextualization and they position Dichter merely within debates over rival methodological-theoretical traditions in consumer research rather than discussing the political-economic role of such traditions and the nature of modern consumer capitalism per se. Explorative and interpretive research into consumers’ emotional relationships to brands, into the uses of group interviews and the psychological reality of consumer fantasies was already conducted by social researchers like Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Herta Herzog and by research-intensive advertising agencies.
like JWT from the late 1920s (Schwarzkopf 2010). The origins of such modes of consumer interpretation are not to be sought in Ernest Dichter and the paradigmatic shift that emerged with Dichterian motivation research does therefore not primarily lie in his methodology, epistemology and axiology as such. The significance of Ernest Dichter and his take on motivational consumer analysis is to be found in the transformation he brought about in the public imagination of what consumer desire was and what significance “libidinal drives” had for the political economy of consumer capitalism. The role of Ernest Dichter and of motivation research within consumer research therefore needs to be investigated using methods and theoretical frameworks that are essentially outside the canon of consumer research today, i.e. the theoretical arsenal of political and economic anthropology and of political philosophy.

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**Spiritual Motivated Tourism of Older Adults**
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**Abstract**

This paper explores the influence of spirituality on the tourist motivations of older adults. Spirituality and spiritual development are explained. Spiritual needs and travel motives of older adults are described and research propositions elaborated which suggest that senior tourism can be spiritually motivated (Key words: spirituality, older adult, tourism).

The need to go beyond the traditional socio-demographic approach of senior consumer markets to integrate elements of human development and gerontology has been suggested (Guiot, 2006). Spirituality and spiritual development are such elements.

The theory of the chronological and sequential development of spirituality (Fowler, 1981) identifies the last part of life as favourable to increased spiritual development and the achievement of spiritual maturity, thus making spirituality and spiritual development legitimate in research work on the consumer behaviour of older adults.

An extensive inter-disciplinary literature review in the fields of psychology, sociology, psychiatry, gerontology and consumer behaviour was undertaken, which leads to the description of the spirituality of older adults and their spiritual needs. Testable research proposals for the influence of spiritually motivated consumer behaviour of older adults are presented, with tourism as the chosen as field of implementation.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Spirituality and Related Concepts.** Spirituality originates in one’s personal quest for meaning. The identification of the characteristics of spirituality (Ulvoas, 2009) leads to the following definition of the concept: “Spirituality is the construction of the meaning of one’s life. It appeals to one’s ability for transcendence and its objects are the inner self, alterity and the sacred. It is the interconnection of these objects that enables the holistic perspective on life and provides its meaning”. Spirituality involves a spiritual identity, which can be religious or non religious, and a level of spiritual commitment. Religion, as “a unified system of beliefs and practices related to the sacred” (Delener, 1990), is the most common form of spirituality. It has two dimensions: religious identity (the tradition within which the members of a specific religious group practice their religion, for example Christianity) and religiosity, which is one’s level of religious commitment.

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1 Transcendence corresponds to “an individual’s capability to step out of his/her immediate perception of time and space and to see life from a wider, more detached angle” (Piedmont, 1999).

2 Alterity should be understood in a broad sense and includes other human beings, nature and the universe (Ulvoas, 2009).

3 The sacred is “a perception of either a divine being or a sense of ultimate reality or truth” (Larson et al., 1998): God, gods, a divine being, the supreme energy, the wholeness of life.
The Spirituality of Older Adults. The spirituality of older adults stems from their cognitive maturity and their ability for gerotranscendence, which Tornstam (1994, 1999) describes as a “shift from a rational and materialist perspective to an increasingly cosmic and transcendent one”. Spiritual development is a mechanism which enables older adults to cope with the losses associated with old age (in physical and intellectual capabilities, in body image, of the usual place of residence) and to defend themselves against age related aggressions such as ageism (Mattes, 2005; McFadden, 1996). Their increasing consciousness of their own mortality can generate strong anxiety (Urieun, 2008), which spiritual growth can help reduce, as it involves finding the meaning of one’s life and death and a reflection on after life (Ita, 1995).

Spiritual needs of older adults thus involve: restoring personal dignity and transcending the losses and handicaps of old age; reducing death anxiety, accepting to die and preparing for dying; finding the global meaning of one’s life, believing in the continuity of life and caring about future generations; establishing positive relationships with others, reducing guilt and reconciling; and establishing an intimate relationship with the sacred (McKinley, 2001; Fry, 2000).

The Travel Motives of Older Adults. Over the past twenty years, the following motives for tourism have been identified for senior travelers:

- Travel for as long as they can enjoy good health and sufficient physical abilities.
- Find intellectual and spiritual stimulation through the practice of new and interesting cultural and intellectual activities.
- Escapes the constraints of daily life, rest and relax.
- Practice physical activities, in relationship with nature.
- Enjoy a harmonious social life while visiting friends and family, and/or meeting new people.
- Visit familiar places and enjoy atmospheres of which they are nostalgic.

(Shoemaker, 1989, 2000; Lieux and al., 1994; Backman and al, 1999; Sellick, 2004; Vincent and De Los Santos, 1990; Kim and al., 2003).

These motives are congruent with the push-pull theory of Iso-Ahola (1983,1989) which presents travel motives as: to leave one’s own personal routine or stressful environment, socialize, practice introspection, and to seek personal satisfaction associated with the assets of a given tourist destination.

Research Hypotheses for the Spiritually Motivated Travel of Older Adults

The existence of spiritual motives for consumption has been suggested (Skousgaard, 2006). In this context, the search for self-fulfilling activities and a growing demand for holidays with a meaning leads us to suggest that senior tourism can be spiritually motivated. The paralleling of seniors’ travel motives and their spiritual needs, leads to the following proposals:

Senior tourism is motivated by a quest for meaning, especially the meaning of their life (H1):

H1a: The senior traveler will be motivated to visit places which have a meaning in the context of his own life.
H1b: The senior traveler will be motivated to visit people with whom the relationship is meaningful.

H1a can be tested through the interest of senior travelers for visits of places they have already lived in earlier in their lives and the return to which is a kind of personal pilgrimage.
H1b can be tested through the interest for visits to friends and family, alumni clubs, and people with whom there is a need to reconcile.

The desire for relaxation, interaction with human alterity and nature and the quest for spiritual stimulation can be linked to the objects of spirituality: the inner self, alterity and the sacred. This translates into the following research propositions:

Senior tourism is motivated by a search for connection with the objects of spirituality (H2): the inner self, alterity and the sacred:

H2a: The senior traveler will be motivated by introspection and the exploration of his inner self.
H2b: The senior traveler will be motivated to deepen his relationship to others.
H2c: The senior traveler will be motivated to deepen his relationship to nature.
H2d: The senior traveler will be motivated to visit places and people for the purpose of deepening one’s understanding of and relationship with the sacred and reflect on afterlife.

H2a can be tested through the interest for meditation, spiritual retreats, walking and hiking, and the search for peaceful places which create a favorable context for introspection.
H2b can tested through the interest for group tourism, tourism for single seniors, the desire to travel with a friend or a significant other and the desire to visit friends, family and people with whom there is a meaningful link.
H2c can be tested through the interest for visits to natural sites and ecotourism.
H2d can be tested through the interest for spiritual and religious tourism, historical and cultural visits.

Tourism provides numerous opportunities for the exploration of the objects of spirituality. The retrenchment from one’s usual life environment and the relaxation associated with travel create a favorable context for the work of interconnection. The visits of places and people which have a special meaning in the life of the senior traveler facilitates the reading of his own life history, which in turns contributes to assembling the pieces of his life puzzle.

Conclusion and Further Research

This paper provides a conceptual framework for the study of the influence of spirituality on the tourism of older adults, a growing and economically significant segment of the tourism market. Further research is necessary to examine our research propositions and field work is currently being undertaken for that purpose.
Reducing Plastic Bag Consumption: A Community Approach to Social Marketing

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Abstract
Traditionally, CSR discourse has focused on multinational corporations. However, the present work’s starting point was the following question: can consumer-leaders and responsible SMEs help foster societal change toward sustainable consumption? By drawing on the literature about ethical consumption and community-based social marketing, we suggest community leaders and small organizations can play a major role in this process. Through the use of news articles, broadcasts, websites, and documentaries, we compiled the Modbury case. Modbury, an iconic ‘plastic bag-free’ English town, is used as an exemplar of how a consumer activist alongside small firms can change communities, and encourage environmentally-friendly consumer behavior.
Acculturated in Homeland: Consumer Culture in Morocco
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Extended Abstract

Acculturation is traditionally oriented mainly towards consumers’ identity construction in Western contexts. For instance, Peñaloza (1994) studied consumption experiences of Mexicans in the US and provided a dynamic approach to acculturation models. Oswald (1999) worked with Haitian immigrants in the United-States. She sees acculturation as a form of cultural swapping and argued that immigrants borrow cultural elements of home country and host country. Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard (2005) surveyed Greenlanders’ acculturation in Denmark. They argued that transnational consumer culture is an acculturative agent. In this view, post-assimilationist theory allowed broader understanding of acculturation by pointing out cultural adaptation within a country. While existent literature contributes to give insights of immigrants’ acculturation, it does not consider acculturation when global market culture penetrates roughly one’s land. In that specific case, consumers would face a new consumer culture. We argue that this specific “cultural shock” may be similar as immigrants’ cultural shock when they settle in a host country.

Therefore, we ran a study on consumption culture in Morocco. Ger and Belk (1996) argue that extension of capitalism in Less Affluent World is not the exact replica of what happened in the West. However, three conditions are necessary: availability of many products in the market, sufficient purchase power to buy them, and actual purchase willingness among the targeted consumers. Many foreign products and French products more specifically are available for a couple of years. On the other side, local products quality has increased. Purchasing power as well has increased thanks to women at work, higher average education level and credit boom. Finally, buying and consuming is now part of everyday life.

To capture the essence and meanings of consumers’ experiences (Peñaloza, 2001), we based our research on ethnographic research. 10 in-depth interviews of an approximate length of 85 minutes have been carried out with both Moroccan consumers living in Casablanca and experts (with marketers as they are “consumer culture builders”) (Belk 2006). The interviews were integrally transcribed. These interviews have been complemented by participant-observation activities with informants including going shopping, and observation at multiple shopping areas, supermarkets and traditional, which were either photographed or written up in field notes. In order to increase our understanding, we collected secondary data, selecting advertisings and articles in local newspapers and magazines. Interviews were analyzed in alternating between the specific case of each interview and the interviews taken as a whole, and by making use of observation and literature.

At micro level, analysis results highlighted three relation modes to the penetrating global consumer culture. These modes are similar to assimilation, hyperculture and pendulum revealed in Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) study on Greenlanders integration to Danish society. Our informants did not express best-of-both-worlder position. So far, urban Moroccan consumers may adopt the appearing consumer culture (market rules acceptance), reject it (market avoidance) or negotiate (oscillation between cultures). Informants who showed strong market rules acceptance don’t question market mechanism. They accept the rules. Individuals may experience hedonism when shopping and feel in harmony with the image they have build of what is shopping in the West. Others may be confronted to socialization problems. They don’t reject the rules but they have to learn to cope with. On the other side, some informants expressed market rejection. They defend Moroccan identity and showed faith to traditions. So far, they consume the way they were educated to. Religion matters may raise barriers to credit. Informants may try to negotiate with the market. They oscillate between two cultures. For instance, trust may be negotiated. In Moroccan tradition, trust relies on the seller. Consumers may rely on the seller to be convinced of the brand quality or the product origin.

At individual level, three implications are observed. First, interviews provided evidences of personal gratification. Indeed, shopping and consumption provide pleasure and gratification for many consumers who recently achieved comfortable income (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Second, identity self express through consumption. For instance, clothes seem important to the self-express (Marion 2003) and show generation gap. Mothers would dress up in djellabas whereas daughters would wear blue jeans, symbol of modernity that they want to represent. Third change concerns social status expression. Traditionally, family name would express social status without any other sign. Nowadays, individuals found a way to express or pretend higher status through conspicuous consumption.

At family level, we pointed out emergence of nuclear family. Family is more oriented towards nuclear family than extended family as it was before. For instance, less couples share their home with their parents. We observed changes in decision roles, especially due to women at work.

At societal level, time perception has changed. Religious feasts used to schedule time and consumption. Religious feasts, indeed, would induce expenses in food but as well in clothing. Nowadays, permanent sales make consumers buy all year long delicatessens and new clothes for children. Another societal change concerns religion. Informants expressed turning point in the way to celebrate religion feasts. Whereas before, extended family would sacrifice a sheep for the Aid El Kebir feast. Nowadays, new nuclear families may not sacrifice at home.

As stressed by Ger and Belk (1996), our fieldwork shows that there is at the same adoption and rejection of the consumer culture. Acculturation experience questions identity: individuals who leave home society to settle in a host country rebuild his/her identity (Jun, Ball et Gentry 1993; Oswald 1999). So, do Moroccan consumers faced to the new consumer culture. Besides, the present study opens new research opportunities. We did not go deeply in generational conflicts, neither in identity losses. How do individual cope with growing materialism when they were educated in spiritual ways? How do they cope when children are more educated for the new market rules than their parents? This overwhelming may be interesting research topics for it may raise deep changes in Moroccan society.

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**The Joint Effects of Choice Assortment and Regulatory Focus on Choice Behavior**
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**Extended Abstract**

Recent studies on the impact of assortment type on consumer brand choice suggests that the decision to increase the size of the brand assortment can decrease market share for the brand when the assortment type is “nonalignable” as opposed to when it is “alignable” (Gourville & Soman 2005). In other words, assortment type moderates the effect of assortment size on consumer brand choice decisions. However, the existing literature does not take into account consumers’ chronic or self regulatory focus as a construct while testing this moderating effect of assortment type on consumers’ brand choice behavior.

Companies’ target segment may include both promotion focused and prevention focused consumers. Studies involving regulatory focus theory and its effects on consumer behavior suggest that, consumers’ evaluation of products and their choice decisions are influenced by their regulatory goals (e.g. Aaker & Lee, 2001, Avnet & Pham, 2004).

Thus, we construe that it is necessary to introduce consumers’ chronic or self regulatory focus as a theoretical construct while studying the impact of the moderator assortment type on the effect of assortment size on consumer’s brand choice decisions. Specifically, we seek to answer the following question:

**Will assortment type moderate the affect of assortment size on consumer’s brand choice behavior differently for consumers with different chronic or self regulatory focus?**

We construe that consumers while making choices from alignable assortments make their choice decisions in accordance with their self regulatory focus with the aim of fulfilling their self regulatory goal. With increase in the size of assortment, as consumers make their choices, perceived fulfillment of their self regulatory goal increases. This leads to an increase in the confidence of consumers on their choice decision with increase in size of the assortment. Specifically we hypothesize that, for an alignable assortment in a within brand choice context, the perceived confidence level of promotion focused as well as prevention focused consumers in making the correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment increase with increase in size of the assortment (Hypotheses 1a & Hypothesis 2a). For a nonalignable assortment however, the perceived success (failure) of prevention (promotion) focused consumers in being able to avoid (not being able to gain) negative(positive) attributes increases as the size of the assortment increases. Thus, increase in size of a non alignable assortment affects the confidence of promotion and prevention focused consumers on their choice decision in a non uni-directional manner. Specifically we hypothesize that, for a non alignable assortment in a within brand choice context, the perceived confidence level of promotion focused consumers in making the correct choice from the assortment and their level of preference for making a choice from the assortment decrease with increase in size of the assortment. For prevention focused consumers, the corresponding perceived confidence level and the level of preference for making a choice from the assortment increase with increase in size of the assortment (Hypothesis 1b and Hypothesis 2b).

An expected choice behavior arising from the our predictions in alignable choice sets is that promotion- (prevention-) focused consumers are more likely to choose an option that maximizes (minimizes) the level of the positive (negative) alignable attribute. In other words, they are not expected to exhibit a tendency towards the compromise option within the alignable choice set, which is significantly different from what the compromise effect literature would suggest. In relation to this line of thought, we identify ‘need for justification of choice decisions to others’ as a potential moderator that can moderate the effect of consumers’ regulatory focus on their choice decisions when choices are made from alignable assortments consisting of compromise options. Simonson (1989) has theorized that when consumers expect to justify their choice decisions to others, then as compared to when they do not expect to justify their choice decisions, compromise effect will play a stronger role since under high need for justification, due to uncertainty about the preferences of others, selection of a compromise/middle option is perceived by consumers as to be the safest option with the smallest maximum error, easier to justify and less likely to be criticized.
We propose that:

When consumers while making choice from alignable assortments consisting of compromise options do expect to justify their choice decisions to others, then the need to maintain their self regulatory focus should be mitigated by the need to maintain their self regulatory focus. The choice decision should thus be the compromise option irrespective of consumers’ self regulatory focus.

When consumers while making choice from alignable assortments consisting of compromise options do not expect to justify their choice decisions to others, then the need to maintain their self regulatory focus should be mitigated by the need to maintain their self regulatory focus. The choice decision should thus be in accordance with the self regulatory focus of consumers (Hypothesis 3).

Two studies were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The objective behind conducting Study 1 was to test Hypotheses 1 & 2. We adopted a 2 (Consumer’s self regulatory focus: Promotion vs. Prevention) * 2 (Assortment type: Alignable vs. Non alignable) * 4 (Size of assortment: 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5) between-subjects ANOVA for this study.

The objective of conducting Study 2 was to test Hypothesis 3. To test Hypothesis 3, we manipulated the participants’ level of need for justification of choice decisions to others into two different levels-high and low. Subsequently, we assessed the choice of compromise vs. non compromise options made by the promotion and prevention focused participants, the assortment type in consideration being alignable.

The results of the two studies support our predictions. From a theoretical stand point, the present study contributes to the existing literature in the following way:

The study explores the relatively understudied field of research which involves the impact of assortment type on consumer brand choice behavior and shows that assortment type may not necessarily influence consumer’s brand choice behavior uniformly, if consumers’ regulatory focus is taken into account as a theoretical construct while testing this relationship.

References


Sex Role Conflict and Consumption Patterns at Work: A Study of Working Women in Non-Western Cultural Context

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Abstract

The role of working women in business life is changing noticeably in non-western cultures, which also affects their consumption patterns. This study aims to contribute to the literature by investigating if and how women alter their sex role orientation and the role of consumption in this process as a key component of identity. In-depth interviews were conducted with working women from different social and cultural backgrounds in Turkey. The preliminary findings of the study show that, in spite of the blurred boundaries between work and private life, some women still feel restricted about their consumption choices especially in male-dominant environments.

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How Consumers Use a Product Meaningfully: A Classification of Consumers as Value-Creating Practitioners

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This study identifies and analyzes a spectrum of consumption practices emerging from qualitative case study research. The empirical phenomenon revolves around a traditional low-involvement consumption object which has lately experienced a reawakening to unforeseen popularity. It has become used by different kinds of consumers in various new contexts and in several inventive ways. These contexts and ways differ significantly from the original purpose and meaning-connotations. The analysis draws from sociological practice theory and previous research on consumption practices. As a result of the analysis, eight consumption practices are identified. The study brings a new perspective by identifying four different consumer types based on their experience and their conservative or
innovative orientation toward the consumption object. The resulting classification illustrates that value is being created through different practices based on the consumer-practitioner’s experience and orientation toward the consumption object.

Within consumer research, there is a long tradition of studies concerning the ability of consumption objects to function as transmitters of cultural and social meaning (e.g. Belk 1988, Mick 1986, McCracken 1986). However, as Douglas Holt (1995, 1) argues, studying the consumption object itself as a vessel of meaning is less relevant than studying how different kind of consumers use the object in meaningful ways. From a practice theoretical viewpoint, consumption can be understood as a process where consumers engage in appropriating and appreciating acts motivated by utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes (Warde 2005). Thus, even though practice theory is culturally oriented, the source and locus of cultural meaning is understood to be embedded in practices and not in the consumption objects themselves (Reckwitz 2002).

In previous research, Holt (1995) discusses consumption practices from the point of view of individual consumers, who engage in practices to build their identity or to personalize consumption items to acquire meaning, for instance. The recent Schau et al. (2009) typology of practices focuses on the social aspects of consumption through brand community practices like social networking and community engagement. Despite these insightful contributions (see also Gregson et al. 2009, Shove & Pantzar 2005), consumption practices are still a fairly undiscovered territory in marketing and consumer research.

The empirical phenomenon of this study has emerged around a traditional Finnish product, the Reino and Aino slippers, which are indoor shoes previously connected with elderly people. The product’s appearance has remained the same throughout decades, which is why there is a sense of authenticity and nostalgia connected with it (cf. Brown et al. 2003). Recently, the product has experienced a reawakening from a relatively stable, mundane product toward an extremely popular and multi-faceted consumption object as the meanings associated with wearing the slippers have multiplied and diversified dramatically. People of all ages have started to wear them in new contexts and situations. The consumption object is now used among other things for the purposes of rebelling against conventional dress codes or commemorating loved ones, depending on the consumer. At the same time, the producer and marketer of the slippers has not conducted intensive marketing management.

In generating data from the empirical case study, multiple methods are used in order to triangulate the findings and to generate as rich and varied an understanding of the phenomenon as possible (Gummesson 2005). The design follows the principles of interpretive research (e.g. Hudson & Ozanne 1988, Hirschman 1986). Data was generated through 18 semi-structured interviews. In addition, 18 hours of participant observation and ad hoc interviewing was conducted at several field sites such as an old-age home, a workplace and a factory outlet store. Secondary material for the study was obtained from internet discussion boards, blogs, newspaper articles and advertisements. The dataset also includes photos taken by the researcher or published in the internet.

As a result, eight consumption practices emerge from the data. From the basis of these practices, four different consumer types are identified: the creative consumer, the individualist consumer, the sociable consumer and the traditionalist consumer. Of these types, the creative and individualist consumers have an innovative understanding of the consumption object, whereas the sociable and traditionalist consumers take a more conservative orientation. On the other hand, the creative and sociable consumer types are more often novices whereas the individualist and traditionalist consumers are more experienced.

The creative consumer engages in practices of customization and crafting with the aim of making the consumption object more personally inspiring. The individualist consumer has assimilated the product into his or her self-concept, using the innovative practice of parading to emphasize the product as part of the quest for individuality. The sociable consumer uses the consumption object in socializing with other people. For them, the product becomes material for practices of storytelling and gift-giving as well as creating a sense of belongingness. Lastly, the consumption object usage for traditionalist consumers is already repetitive and normalized. For them, retaining the product in its original form through grooming or making a statement based on the traditional values connected with the product is important.

The tentative results and the emerging framework contribute to the recent discussion about consumption practices in marketing. Drawing from previous research, the practices that emerge from the data are theoretically sound. Furthermore, the study provides a new perspective by illustrating how consumption practices vary according to the type of consumer who engages in them. Unlike in a brand community where each member comes to acquire shared practices of creating value (Schau et al. 2009), consumption practices can also differ based on user experience and orientation. This provides a new basis for the company in their desire to support and enable consumers to create value for themselves by using the consumption object. Thus, the company may need different strategies for the more experienced users and the novices, as well as the innovatives and conservatives, who use the product in different and sometimes conflicting ways. While current sales are increased by novice sociable consumers who are enthusiastic to spread the word, it might be the traditionalist consumers who remain loyal to the product even after the more ephemeral trend passes.

References

First Jointly, Then Separately: A New Approach to Address Complexity in Product Evaluations
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Abstract
Product complexity has been described as a major challenge in preference measurement. This paper discusses various ways to deal with large numbers of attributes and levels. Usually, attribute importance is initially appraised by self-explicated questions which has little similarity to a real purchase decision. Therefore, we suggest the use of information display boards to identify the attributes being relevant in product evaluations on the individual level. This information is then used to adapt the pairwise comparison-based preference measurement (PCPM) approach to elicit consumer preferences subsequently. The promising results of an empirical study on mobile phones are outlined.

“What I Really Detest as a Polish Immigrant is Other Poles”: Class and Consumption Among Eastern European Immigrants in London
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Extended Abstract
Polish immigrants have made their presence highly visible on the British market as both consumers and producers during the last six years. Their influence on the new consumption tastes and habits emerging within the mainstream British culture has been notified by researchers, journalists and politicians. Regardless of that diverse research and continuous media hype, however, Eastern European immigrants are still regarded as a heterogeneous group of consumers. Being the most sensitive indicators of ethnic stereotypes, the latest advertising campaigns in the UK show that all Poles eat and celebrate in the same way around the same religious festivities, despite their social and cultural differences. The way in which Polish immigrants differ in their preferences and tastes for consumption and spending should be observed not only in a local context of the host culture, but also in the historical context of the Polish past, including a pre-commercial past of the communist era.

In this paper, in order to understand how class divisions affect consumption and consumer identity of Polish immigrants, I will debate the historical underpinnings of ‘classless’, communist society from the pre-1989 Polish past (Bauman 1982; Doma?ski 2002; Blazyca and Rapacki 2001; Mayer 2002; Ekiert and Hanson 2003) and compare it to the current debates on class in the UK (Crompton 1993; Savage 2000; Skeggs 2004). In the historical part of my argument, the major theories of class from the communist and capitalist society will be summarised and subsequently related to the empirical data collected through my ethnographic research conducted in London in the years 2007-2009 among Polish immigrants who moved to the UK after the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004. Remarkably, in diaspora studies there has not been much interest in internal class distinction when it comes to the characteristics of social conditions of Eastern European migrants (Lamont 2000). In consumer studies, diasporic communities are investigated according to the ethnic markers, whilst class is regarded as one of many social factors which consumers bring from ‘home’ and apply within the conditions of the host culture. This perception of diasporic homogeneity contrasted with local diversity has reinforced the motivation of marketers to create ethnic shops and places of consumption for the particular “others”, where mixing with other ethnicities is still very rare and the demarcation line of distinction, however symbolic, can be discouraging even for the immigrants themselves. Although the political advantage can be more than meaningful for consumers who decide to mobilise their ethnic identity through ethnically orientated consumption, class mobilisation is not recognised in that way.

The main methodology applied to this research is socio-psychological analysis of class identity of immigrant consumers (Argyle 1994; Huddy 2001; Hogg 2006). Empirical data have been produced through deep interviews, narrative survey and participant observation. The survey served as a platform for both: retrieving descriptive data on subjective class awareness and positioning of objective class distinction according to the classical Weber’s theory of stratification. This combined methodology allows for the inclusion of subjective experience of living and interacting with class structures, while it also overcomes the limitations of the traditional class location theory.
which does not acknowledge individual perceptions and feelings about class belonging. As has been observed by researchers in social sciences, especially in postmodern interpretivist studies (Bauman 1992; Thompson, Stern, and Arnould 1998; Brown 2003), economic theories operating mainly with class-placement questions have been historically one-sided with little insight into the sociological and psychological complexity of class consciousness and class identification. On the other hand, posing an open question on self-identification in relation to class enables a critique of personal attitudes and individually interpreted determinants of one’s life world structure (Schutz 1967; Thompson 1998). To understand how subjective perception of social class structures contributes to the construction of the life world structure of immigrants, I apply the open question followed by the allegorical questions from the life-related areas, such as work, leisure, life goals, and forms of social engagement (Clifford 1986). Following the achievements of postmodern ethnography in personal experience methods (Clondinnin and Connelly 1994; Clair 2003), I link the results from the deep interviews with the textual expression and consider both them as existential and performative situations (Spiggle 1994). Stories collected across the sample have been interpreted as socio-psychological and cultural events in which participants crystallise their answers to profile their desired identity. Through the observation of everyday life activities and socio-psychological analysis of consumer stories, I have tried to establish the ground of the main cultural differences in taste and aspirations among immigrants.

I will argue that class is a crucial dividing factor in consumption among immigrants coming from the racially and religiously homogeneous society. However, this is not the same concept of class which the local culture had adapted and still uses in their stratification of social difference. My empirical findings show that the idea of class among immigrants is interpreted against the native backdrop of culture and history, while the local environment serves as the playground of proving internal class divide (Kearney and Beserra 2004). This interesting juncture of past and present, of the host culture and the home culture, after Bourdieu (1984) recognised as habitus, provides a theoretical challenge to the ethnically dominated approach to consumption among migrants, in which consumer behaviour is motivated by ethnic belonging and unity (Schiller and Wimmer 2003). As this case study shows, immigrants make every effort to differentiate themselves within the same ethnic group and use class distinction as the most effective mechanism of separation, rather than unification, amongst each other (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Although the first and most desirable evidence of distinction is that of “successful adaptation”, it is not always followed by financial independence or professional settlement.

Polish immigrants coming to the UK after 2004 group themselves arbitrarily according to fluctuating needs, interests and accidental connections, with little recognition of the class system rooted in the capitalistic consciousness. It is very difficult to observe any patterns of distinction in their consumption practices which would define their attachment to high or low culture, high or low taste in consumption in the Weberian sense of the terms. From the point of view of Arjun Appadurai (1996) these are the “disjunctive flows” which shape class belonging of immigrants, and which subsequently defeat the classical understanding of class per se, derived from the imperial experience of the West. When either adapted or creatively interpreted, consumption practices of immigrants reveal unpredictability and contingency in the organisation of cultures, tastes and lifestyles. It is not evident, as Zygmunt Bauman argued, that in this chaotic landscape of distinctions, previously existing social divisions and forms of inequality become irrelevant in favour of self-identification and elective consumer attachments (Maffesoli’s neo-tribes (1995). This research shows that consumer culture of immigrants, although characterised by affectual involvement, short-lived networks of affinity, group stylisation, and self-fashioning (all typical of the post-modern neo-tribal consumerism) indicates strong relations with class politics of identity derived from inequality between producers and consumers. Even though the Polish past of the post-war period had been subordinated to the communist ideology of collectivism and class equality, the present aspirations of Polish immigrant-consumers have been clearly motivated by distinctive materialism played against other fellow countrymen. This class struggle inside one ethnic group intensifies the hierarchic social positioning among its members, but it also isolates them from active participation in emancipatory politics within the host culture. It has been concluded that negotiating ethnic identity, which could contribute to a politically-orientated consumption (authenticity, tradition, national culture), is hindered by the internal differentiation exercised mainly against a backdrop of native habitus with its past and present legacy.

References
Coping with Brand Break-Ups: How Attachment Style Predicts Consumer Vengeance
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Abstract
Attachment styles influence a variety of interpersonal relationship behaviors. Recently, marketers have begun to examine the role of attachment styles in consumer-company interactions. We contribute to this budding research area by studying whether attachment style affects reactions to negative outcomes in consumer-company relationships, such as service failure. Evidence suggests that attachment style does predict behaviors such as complaining and that attachment style may be a useful way of understanding and predicting such consumer behavior.

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Abstract
Geopolitical disputes often trigger consumer animosity, turning a foreign brand’s otherwise positive country-of-origin perception into a serious impediment to its success. Building on psycholinguistic research, we propose a theoretical framework elucidating how consumers react to different types of brand naming strategies. We demonstrate that brand names localized via certain strategies not only benefit from the positive aspects of their country-of-origins but also are immune to animosity. We also show that consumer animosity is not necessarily a generalized, chronically stable construct as extant research suggests; rather, consumers disapprove of foreign brands only when the exporting nation’s misdeeds are made salient.

Crossing into the New Year through the Chinese New Year Reunion Dinner: The Case of the Chinese Ethnic Consumers in Malaysia
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A stream of consumer research has investigated consumption symbolism in the context of festivities such as Thanksgiving, Halloween and Christmas. However, little is known about social meanings associated with festivities in a non-Western context. This working
paper is based on an extensive ethnography of Chinese New Year reunion dinner and associated consumption activities among Chinese Ethnic Consumers in Malaysia. It explores the symbolic meanings, motives and practices predominantly characterized the reunion dinner consumption. The analysis sought to identify conceptual categories and themes which similarities and differences between the different age groups of respondents are explored.

An Exploratory Study of UK Teenage Behaviour in Online Social Network Environments
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Extended Abstract
Use of online social networks (OSNs) has grown significantly in recent years (69% penetration of the UK Internet population in 2008 c.p. 59% on 2007: Nielson, 2009 p2) and has generated significant changes in communication patterns and identity development. Facilitators such as Facebook, My Space and Bebo enable users to build social networks and converse online with friends, relatives and other like-minded individuals. OSNs are used by all age groups but are most popular with the young (55% of US teens use OSN: Pew, 2007 p11) Thus, as the heaviest OSN users and an important emerging consumer market in their own right, teenage behaviour is deserving of specific attention.

This paper discusses the exploratory stage of a substantive project investigating UK teenagers’ use of online social networks (OSNs) to construct and present their self-identity over time. Specifically, it aims to understand teenage habits and motivations in the OSN environment and the effect on the development of their self-identity and social network formation.

Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework was drawn from literature on: the self; the extended self; social identity; group and social networks. Additionally, recent teenage literature is used to apply theories to a modern teenage context.

Teenage Consumption Culture
Teenage years are a critical development period in establishing self-identity. Teenagers are subject to immense change in body and mind, struggling to assert independence from their parents whilst simultaneously “fit in” with their peers. Unsure of their new roles, insecure and uncertain how to behave, teens are desperately trying to ascertain “who they really are” and thereby gain a sense of their own self-identity (Piacentini and Mailer, 2004; Tsu Wee, 1999).

Whilst teens today share same goals as previous generations, this cohort differ as they have grown up with computers and the Internet (61% use the Internet daily; Pew, 2007). Thus their relationship with digital technology is more intuitive; they interact faster and can manage huge quantities of information simultaneously (Powell, 2007). They use digital media, mobile phones, the Internet, instant messaging and OSNs to structure their world and manage their lifestyles (Spero and Stone, 2004).

Self-Identity and the Extended Self
Self identity is defined as the beliefs a person holds about his/her attributes and how they evaluate these qualities (Solomon et al, 2006). It encompasses role identities, personal attributes, relationships, fantasies, possessions and other symbols (Schouten, 1991). Belk (1988) conceptualised that individuals perceive an actual and ideal self and use consumption to close the gap; termed symbolic self-completion.

Products with symbolic values are used to aid this self-completion and communicate it to others. Similarly, individuals receive and decode symbols used by others and interpret their identity accordingly (Belk et al 1982). In the context of OSNs, digital stimuli may be used to extend the self in a similar way to products independent of ownership (Schau, H.J. and Gilly, M.C., 2003).

Social Identity, Group and Social Network Theories
Social identity derives from group theory and represents the public as opposed to private self. It purports that people evaluate themselves in terms of their social groups, moulding multiple identities for different situations, roles and company (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Social identity evolves via a process of social categorisation, identification and comparison and between individuals and their referent groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Feedback from other group members is used to guide their behaviour and integrate group norms into their own social identity. (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Self-definition develops over time as a result of experimentation, experience, interaction and feedback from others (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987).

Teenagers are highly susceptible to peer pressure, so constant immersion in social groups is essential to enable them to develop and discover their true self. This generation tends to be more protected than previous generations, and teenagers are subject to tighter restrictions on their public freedom. OSNs may therefore serve as a surrogate for face-to-face contact with friends.

Traditional social network theory asserts that groups exhibit strong ties within and weak ties between other groups. Relationships with active contacts such as friends and family are thus strong ties, whilst relationships with passive contacts such as acquaintances and ex-colleagues are weak ties. Individuals with strong ties living in close proximity are more likely to share information and ideas. Thus information is assumed to travel quickly within communities but slowly across them (Sun et al, 2006; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). As OSNs allow users to interact with a wider range of individuals and groups they may alter the process by which teenagers develop their social networks and groups.
Methodology

An interpretivist approach was adopted to explore teenagers’ behaviour in OSN environments. To develop a framework for the substantive research study, qualitative data was gathered about teens’ habits, motivations, behaviour and interactions within OSNs via “spoken diaries” and interviews.

A convenience sample of 10 teenage participants (5 male, 5 female aged 13-17 years) maintained diaries of their OSN activity over a two week period. Participants were sourced via personal contacts and a local school. Ethical implications were sensitively considered.

Data collection was primarily via “spoken diaries”, participants recorded their entries into digital dictaphones. This “teenage friendly” method was selected to reduce the onerous nature of diary keeping, thereby yielding richer data. Participants were briefed in their own homes by the researcher and were issued with a set of guide questions. They were also encouraged to record any other relevant details. Participants’ activities within the OSN environment were monitored for the duration of the research and they were contacted mid-way to check on progress and address any questions or concerns.

Post research participants were debriefed and asked to evaluate the “spoken diary” research experience in addition to any other data relating to the core topic of teen behaviour in the OSN environment.

Findings to Follow

The study is being conducted during January 2010 so there are no findings at this point but they will be available for the revised submission stage. The data will be transcribed in full and analysed using NVIVO8 qualitative analysis software.

References


Interactive Advertising Uses and Gratifications: A Comparative Analysis of Factors Motivating Media Use for Two New Product Types

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Based on uses and gratification theory, this working paper investigates consumers’ media usage motivations for different interactive media channels when they want to learn more about two different types of new products (consumer good versus consumer durable). An online study was conducted (N=330) to explore the motives that drive the usage of a product’s Web site, blogs or bulletin boards.

Preliminary findings suggest that information needs for a new consumer good are significantly lower than those for a new consumer durable. Additionally, findings indicate that the motives to use interactive media differ significantly between different media channels.
Our personal perception of our age does not necessarily meet with the perception of our environment. Age is shaped and reshaped in the interaction and communication with others. I focus different discursive practices as narratives, talk and images that create age in accordance with Nikander’s (2002) view:

[...] the focus [...] is exclusively on the communicative and dialogic processes in and through which situational meanings of age and aging emerge in interaction. (Nikander 2002:13)

The aging consumer is constructed in the process of articulation (in accordance with Laclau & Mouffe 1985) and they identify themselves by being identified in a mutual world (Berger 1966). The discursive practices are represented by interviews of people involved in media and advertising and also by other texts and images related to aging in our society. The analysis resulted in five discourses named senior, radical, forever young, hedonist and soulful and experienced. With these discourses I contribute to a perspective on aging in a marketing context which is close to what Katz (2005) calls cultural aging. Instead of cultural aging I use the concept cultural age which defines age as constructed through representation, interaction and communication. Age is not seen as a chronological course of events but is negotiated each time. We all have a specific chronological age but also a cultural age which construct us as young or old. In all contexts whether it would be an elderly care setting or a shopping setting, we should be aware of how our contemporary consumer culture is constructing new consumer identities.

Cultural Age

Maria Suokannas, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland

The chronological age concept is problematic if it is the only one defining an older consumer. With the cognitive age concept identified by Kastenbaum & Derbin & Sabatini & Artt (1972) and Barak & Schiffman (1981), aging gets more dimensions as consumers own perspective on their age is involved. Their age is now defined through how old they feel and how active they are and even more through their lifestyle. Although cognitive age is a useful concept from a marketing point of view (Stephens 1991) it originates in the chronological age concept. In this working paper I will put forward a culturally constructed view on age (Suokannas 2008) and describe how the age identity is constructed and negotiated constantly in the realm of marketing. By this, marketing practitioners are seen as key actors in creating consumer categories by different communicative acts (advertising, selling, talk about older consumers). With this approach I follow the track of seeing marketing as a discursive practice (Hackley 2001 & Svensson 2003).

To see marketing as an active creator of roles, identities and norms is mainly included in academic discussions (Hackley 1998, 1999, 2001, Penaloza & Gilly 1999, Hänninen 2004, Puustinen 2004). If an aging consumer is categorised based on the marketers chronologically segmented market he or she will be entangled and passivated. Taking a more culturally constructed view on the aging consumer the dynamics of societal aging discussions will be included. By this point of view we get a more sensitive way of communicating with the older consumer and avoid stereotyping.

Culturally Constructed Age Identity

With a cultural perspective on age identity I want to enhance an understanding for how talk and images create interpretive patterns that construct an older consumers identity and age. Concepts from a discourse analytic context will be used to reach the goal.

Our contemporary society is more and more described through consumption and we are often defining ourselves through consumption of different products. Arnould & Thompson (2005:868) analyse consumer identity projects and refer to consumption by which consumers both create and search for an identity. This perspective on identity includes products or brands. On the other hand consumer culture theorists are more and more interested in how different market practices shape the consumers’ subject position. I will present an analysis that emphasizes how identity is constructed or subject positions are created through discursive practices. These practices are here represented by the analysis of interview transcripts, texts in trade magazines and advertisements. I see that these discursive practices thriving on the market produce “certain kinds of consumer positions that consumers can choose to inhabit” (Arnould & Thompson 2005:871). Sometimes consumers do not even have a choice but are forced into certain positions especially when it comes to aging. The older consumer has been either invisible or only seen as interested in products or services that were age-related.

Our personal perception of our age does not necessarily meet with the perception of our environment. Age is shaped and reshaped in the interaction and communication with others. I focus different discursive practices as narratives, talk and images that create age in accordance with Nikander’s (2002) view:

[...] the focus [...] is exclusively on the communicative and dialogic processes in and through which situational meanings of age and aging emerge in interaction. (Nikander 2002:13)

The aging consumer is constructed in the process of articulation (in accordance with Laclau & Mouffe 1985) and they identify themselves by being identified in a mutual world (Berger 1966). The discursive practices are represented by interviews of people involved in media and advertising and also by other texts and images related to aging in our society. The analysis resulted in five discourses named senior, radical, forever young, hedonist and soulful and experienced. With these discourses I contribute to a perspective on aging in a marketing context which is close to what Katz (2005) calls cultural aging. Instead of cultural aging I use the concept cultural age which defines age as constructed through representation, interaction and communication. Age is not seen as a chronological course of events but is negotiated each time. We all have a specific chronological age but also a cultural age which construct us as young or old. In all contexts whether it would be an elderly care setting or a shopping setting, we should be aware of how our contemporary consumer culture is constructing new consumer identities.
Different Age Discourses—cultural Age

The discourses are the result of an analysis of interviews with 11 marketing practitioners (autumn 2005) and 34 ads aimed at the senior market (from 2001-2007). Furthermore 16 trade magazine articles (from 1989 to 2006) addressed at marketers mainly, were analyzed. Carabine’s (2001:281) framework for doing discourse analysis structured the steps taken in the initial analysis. The sources of data was identified by using database searches (combining keywords as older consumer or babyboomers for example) by contacting media agencies that either had been active in the senior marketing context or were key players on the market or were recommended by other agencies. Images were gathered from magazines whose target group were senior consumers (found on their media cards).

In the interviews the focus was on “culturally shared meanings and institutionalized or culturally standardized discourses on which the descriptions have been based” (Moisander 2001 158,161) and on “the interview as cultural script application” (Alvesson 2003:20). Both the interview transcripts and the trade magazine texts were analysed by identifying themes that positioned the older consumer in a way that could be summarized. In the process of identifying the discourse the following theoretical concepts were used: chains of equivalence, antagonism and the positioning theoretical concept lived ideology. Chains of equivalence (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002) are ways of creating meaning for the consumer category older consumer by using the same words and at the same constructing an identity that positions the category. An example is when we can read the following combination of words “they have money, time and are active”. These words contradict a position where older age means thriftiness and withdrawal, for example. When an utterance is antagonistic I see two identities as mutually exclusive (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002). An example of this is when someone states that the future older consumer born after the second world war is more “international and hedonistic” than those older consumers that were born before the-war. With the concept lived ideology controversies in different utterances were extracted. When some of the interviewed state that “older consumers are really important and valuable” as a consumer category but later on in the interview say that having a product labelled as a “senior product” is not recommended, it is defined as lived ideology.

The following themes were extracted from the texts using the analytical concepts described above. These themes could be defined as “discourse topics” (Wodak 2001), “building blocks” (Svensson 2003) or as “steps in the dance” (Edley 2001) for the discourses presented here: Activity, antiseniorism, body-mind (spiritual age), change agent, cognitive age/feel-age, commodifying, diversifying, forever young, gender, gloominess, hedonist, invisible, move with the times, market opportunity, naturalistic, nonsegmentation, not-born-before-the-war, radicality, rock-around-the-clock, quality-conscious, social creativity , stereotyping, wisdom.

The images in the study were used more for illustrating and underlining the discourses but were analyzed with the different themes in mind. The pictures were seen more as an incisive cultural product that shows how age is interpreted. It is not the “language ‘of’ advertising” but “the operation of language ‘in’ advertising, as one aspect of the operation of language across and ‘in’ all of society” (Kress 1987:123-124)

What Next?

The real challenge in the future is to create appropriate, vital communicative practices with the older consumer. When different tensions giving birth to controversies between discourses are noticed, the goal of finding the best communicative practices can be achieved. Dialogues and communication are born in the realm of tensions (Marková 2005) so this will be the starting point for my future research. It will be developed within the following themes: The ageing soul in an ageing body, Visualizing ageing ideologies, Commodifying ageing, Communicative acts enhancing age and defying age stereotypes.

References
Postmodern Paradoxes in Thai Consumer Identity
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Abstract
This paper draws on subjective introspections of a Thai national to explore some of the paradoxes of consumer identity for Thais in a Western context. Postmodern consumer culture theory posits identity as a fragmented concept decoupled from fixed reference points such as class, gender and geography and constructed partly through consumption. Viewed from within a Buddhist system of values, notions of identity and consumption raise profound contradictions. The paper seeks to open up new perspectives on identity and consumer culture with an Asian standpoint within a globalised context.

Product Placed Versus Product Interacted: Does It Matter?
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Abstract
An increasing part of marketing budgets goes into brand placements. Yet, the question as to whether they are actually effective has not always been answered in the same way. We suggest that one factor increasing visual placement effectiveness is protagonist-brand-interaction. Three versions of the same movie varied type of brand placement (protagonist-interaction, no-interaction, no placement). Protagonist-interaction increased memory, product attitudes, and purchase intent. Female consumers were also willing to pay more for products that were handled by a protagonist. Non-interacted brand placement had no influence on attitudes and intentions.

The Effect of Systems of Thought on Brand Scandal Spillover: Holistic versus Analytic Cognition Moderating Scandal Spillover and Denial Effects
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Recent high-profile product recalls (Tang 2008) and more stringent product-safety legislation (Birch 1994; Patterson 1993) have led to increased consumers’ exposure to negative brand publicity. Product-harm crises or brand scandals lead to significantly decreased preferences and purchases for the scandalized brands and their family (Sullivan 1990) as well as their competing brands (Roehm and Tybout 2006). Recent research has demonstrated that consumers engaged in different systems of thought are more or less susceptible to negative brand publicity (Monga and John 2008).

Extending prior work, our research examines how different contents of negative publicity and systems of thought jointly affect consumer reactions to brand scandals and the spillover correction effects of denials. We argue that whether the contents of negative brand publicity are intrinsic or extrinsic to the product itself determines the degree to which individuals process the negative information as a focal point versus a context and that this relative difference subsequently affects the type of judgment bias they make. Holistic
thinkers tend to focus more on relationships among objects and events and analytic thinkers tend to focus more on a discrete focal point from its context (Nisbett et al. 2001).

These distinct differences between holistic versus analytic cognitive styles lead us to predict that when negative publicity is directly associated with issues intrinsic to the product itself, for example, poor product quality or risks of injury threatening consumer safety, the focal components of negative publicity become more salient, and thus analytic thinkers might make more biased judgments for the scandalized brand than holistic thinkers might. Monga and John (2008) depicted this case and showed that when participants were presented with negative publicity about a new car with manufacturing problems, analytic thinkers were prone to more biases than holistic thinkers. We argue that the converse should show the opposite results. When negative publicity is not directly associated with the product itself, but related with issues extrinsic to the product, for example, manufacturing process causing a water pollution or recent Tiger Woods’ multiple mistress scandal linked with brands using him in their ads (e.g., Nike or Gatorade), consumers would attend more to the contexts of the brand scandals than the focal points of the scandalized brand itself, thus it leads to more biased judgments of holistic thinkers.

Furthermore, we argue that the effects of brand scandal denials will also depend on which cognitive thinking mode is active. Since scandal denials are perceived to be informative, when consumers consider the brand scandal as diagnostic, but to be redundant when they do not argue that when the contents of the negative brand publicity are intrinsic to the product itself (Roehm and Tybout 2006), denials will attenuate the harmful effects of the brand scandal for analytic thinkers, but not for holistic thinkers. In contrast, when negative brand publicity information is extrinsic to the product itself, scandal denials will be more effective for holistic thinkers than for analytic thinkers.

We begin our hypothesis testing by demonstrating the effects of holistic versus analytic cognitive styles on brand scandal spillover in a fictitious situation where a brand scandal is extrinsic to the brand itself (Experiment 1). Next, we investigate the moderating role of thinking modes on the effects of scandal denials involved with the negative publicity extrinsic (Experiment 2), and intrinsic (Experiment 3) to the brand.

In Experiment 1, participants were asked to read a fictitiously created water pollution scandal regarding Nike athletic shoe factories and then indicate brand attitudes for Nike in general and the likelihood of its competing brand, Reebok, polluting nearby waters. Then they responded to ten items on a holistic scale (Choi et al. 2003). Regressing thinking styles (holistic versus analytic) on brand scandal spillover supported our prediction. In the context of negative publicity involved in the issues extrinsic to the product itself, holistic thinkers evaluated its parent brand more negatively and indicated the higher likelihood of Reebok’s water pollution than analytic thinkers did ($\beta$ Nike=-.490, $t=-2.694$, $p=.013$; $\beta$ Reebok=.51, $t=-2.65$, $p=.015$).

To investigate the role of cognitive modes moderating the effects of brand scandal denials, in Experiment 2, participants were primed with holistic versus analytic thinking styles by completing sentences in a short story about a trip to a city by filling in proper pronouns (i.e., I, my, me, mine versus we, our, us, ours; Kühhn et al. 2001). Then they were presented with a brand scandal about Nike’s water pollution and then an article introducing its competing brands, Adidas or Converse’s launching new athletic shoes with or without the denial of water pollution. Participants indicated the likelihood of Adidas or Converse’ polluting nearby waters. A 2(thinking styles: holistic versus analytic) x 2 (brand similarity: high, Adidas versus low, Converse) x 2(denial: yes versus no) between-subjects ANOVA revealed a significant three-way interaction ($F(1,103)=9.277$, $p=.003$). Subsequent analyses showed that there was a two-way significant interaction between thinking styles and denial in the high brand similarity condition ($F(1,53)=9.245$, $p=.004$). We also found a marginally significant main effect for thinking style, indicating that holistic thinkers are more susceptible to the brand scandal spillover ($F(1,53)=3.258$, $p=.077$) than analytic thinkers are. Contrasts revealed a marginally significant brand scandal spillover correction effect of a denial for holistic thinkers, but its boomerang effects for analytic thinkers. When denial was provided in the article, holistic thinkers indicated decreased likelihood of Adidas’ water pollution compared to when denial was not included in the article ($M_{no}=4.69$, $M_{yes}=4.405$). In contrast, analytic thinkers indicated significantly increased likelihood of Adidas’ water pollution when denial was included in the article ($M_{no}=3.292$, $M_{yes}=4.405$; $F(1,25)=6.547$, $p=.016$).

In Experiment 3, we tested our prediction in the context of negative publicity intrinsic to the product itself. Thinking style manipulation was the same as used in Experiment 2. Participants were presented with a fictitiously created McDonald’s food hygiene law violation scandal about using expired hamburger meat and breads. After reading the scandal story, they indicated the likelihood of Burger King and Outback’s food hygiene law violations and also of other filler brands. They then read an article introducing KFC or Outback’s new programs employing organic produce from environmentally friendly farming methods. The new program article was also varied with or without denial of food hygiene law violation. Participants then indicated the likelihood of KFC or Outback’s food hygiene law violation. A 2(thinking styles: holistic versus analytic) x 2 (brand similarity: high, Burger King versus low, Outback) repeated-measures ANOVA with thinking styles as a between-subjects factor and brand similarity as a within-subjects factor revealed a marginally significant main effect for thinking styles ($F(1,220)=3.048$, $p=.08$) and a significant main effect for brand similarity ($F(1,220)=73.33$, $p<.001$). Replicating the results of Monga and John (2008), the data showed that holistic thinkers were less susceptible to the negative brand publicity than analytic thinkers were ($M_{holistic}=5.095$, $M_{analytic}=5.603$). This effect was greater for the participants in the conditions of Burger King than Outback ($M_{burger king}=5.919$, $M_{outback}=4.779$). As expected, a 2(thinking styles: holistic versus analytic) x 2 (brand similarity: high, KFC versus low, Outback) x 2(denial: yes versus no) between-subjects ANOVA revealed a significant three-way interaction ($F(1,211)=8.207$, $p=.003$). This interaction effect qualified the main effects for thinking style, indicating that holistic thinkers are more susceptible to the brand scandal spillover effect of a denial for holistic thinkers, but its boomerang effects for analytic thinkers. When denial was provided in the article, holistic thinkers indicated decreased likelihood of Adidas’ water pollution compared to when denial was not included in the article ($M_{no}=4.46$, $M_{yes}=3.292$). This effect was greater for the participants in the conditions of Burger King than Outback ($M_{burger king}=5.919$, $M_{outback}=4.779$). As expected, a 2(thinking styles: holistic versus analytic) x 2 (denial: yes versus no) x 2(scandal content: intrinsic versus extrinsic) between-subjects design in Experiment 4, we intend to increase the robustness of previous results and directly test the effect of the scandal content. The results of Experiment 4 will be presented at EACR 2010 with a complete working paper.
Fancy a Cuppa: Online Consumer Co-creation of the PG Tea Monkey Brand
Kimberly Sugden, University of Oxford, UK

Abstract
As social media websites escalate in popularity, the study of co-creation of brands in online communities is of increasing importance for understanding dynamic consumer loyalty preferences. Early analysis by Armstrong & Hagel (1996 & 1997) and Kozinets (1999), emphasized the growing importance of empirical research that studies the effect of virtual communities on brand equity.

Through the analysis of the PG Tea Monkey online community case, this working paper explores why consumers choose to participate in co-creation of brands, how online communities contribute to the spokes-character and parent brand image, and what (if any) influence online brand loyalty has on marketplace purchasing for co-creators.

Introduction
Co-creation is an emerging construct (Vargo & Lusch 2004) in the Consumer Culture Theory literature (Arnould & Thompson 2005). To date, researchers have explored co-production of services, in which participation is inherently mandatory and there is little emphasis on brand building in the creation process (Lengnick-Hall: 1996; Prahalad & Ramaswamy: 2000; Fischer & Otnes 2009). Other empirical studies have examined the psychological effects of the self-serving bias and participation choice in co-production of products or services (Bendapudi & Leone 2003). Their quantitative analysis suggested that consumers do exhibit the self-serving bias, in taking more credit and less blame in co-production of goods, however, this can be reduced by offering consumers the choice to participate, making co-creation more meaningful and genuine.

Despite this early research, very little has been written on why consumers choose to co-create brands. This working paper utilizes the theoretical framework outlined by Schau, Muñiz & Arnould (2009) to place consumer value co-creation within thematic categories and practices. Communication patterns in Monkey brand communities were coded as welcoming, empathizing, governing, evangelizing, justifying, staking, milestoneing, badging, documenting, grooming, customizing, or commoditizing to capture new insights into the value consumers receive and generate for firms through co-creation.

Specifically, this case study aims to illuminate the powerful role of spokes-characters as their own unique brand and the influence co-creation has on both character and parent brand identities. The PG Tea Monkey is a particularly interesting study, as the company ITV Digital Broadcasting created and used Monkey as their spokes-character for one year before going bankrupt in 2002 and transferring character rights to Unilever for PG Tea promotions in 2007. Outcomes of this project have the potential to reduce the information gap between how brands are marketed, what consumers feel and communicate about brands, and how consumer relationships can best be cultivated through social media.

Methods
Methodologically, this study utilizes a qualitative instrumental case design, interpretivist epistemology, and a philosophical hermeneutics perspective (Arnold and Fisher 1994) to better understand the consumer behaviour at the heart of the co-creation of the PG Tea Monkey. I have explicitly chosen this brand because of its large online following, rich consumer involvement through text, photos, and video, and because it represents a definitive study of a UK brand, when previous studies have largely represented US products.

Netnographic observation (Kozinets 2002) is utilized to collect and analyze the multiple Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, and fan sites, in order to understand the perceptions and values of consumers as they are co-creating the Monkey brand online. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with consumers to examine their deeper feelings towards Monkey, perceptions of the PG brand, tea purchasing and consumption behaviour, and reasons for co-creating online.
Preliminary Findings

Netnography results showcase overwhelming positive consumer attitudes towards Monkey, with a surprising majority of consumers anthropomorphizing Monkey and involving him in everyday life. Consumer involvement ranged from knitting custom hoodie sweaters for Monkey to “keep his little hands warm,” according to one respondent, to Facebook posts of encouragement for Monkey to run for Prime Minister. Other brand fans created custom video adventures, and posted cleverly funny photos of Monkey toys acting as humans and going on family holidays. Interestingly, parent brand PG tea was infrequently mentioned alongside consumer adoration for Monkey, however, leading to a large disconnect between Monkey and PG brands.

Specific analysis of several Facebook Monkey fan sites revealed that many consumers view Monkey as a separate entity, “friend,” or “family member” not tied to a parent brand. They ask Monkey to do things like run a race, come over for a cuppa, or marry them as if he were real. Of special note was the fact that one Facebook fan page had a glitch that made every day Monkey’s birthday, resulting in several personal greetings like the one posted by one respondent (10 October): “Monkey you older than my Gran. Watch you don’t burn your little Monkey hands with all those candles.” Analysis using linguistic tag clouds emphasized the frequency of such words as “love” “friends” “fans” “like,” and specific examples of “naked” (to encourage Monkey to run a race naked in London) and “vote” (to garner support for Monkey as Prime Minister), were used with significantly more frequency that “PG” or “tea,” which would have linked the Monkey spokes-character back to the parent brand.

Additionally, consumer interviews confirmed the disconnect between the Monkey and PG tea brands. While respondents had happy, positive reactions to Monkey, and recalled the character as something that they liked, many did associate him with the parent PG brand. Additionally, despite positive feelings towards Monkey and recognition of his cultural impact, as one respondent commented: “People use stock phrases don’t they around–and when the adverts first came back people would yell ‘Monkeh’ and impersonate Johnny Vegas,” loyalty towards Monkey did not necessarily translate to liking or purchasing of PG brand tea.

Conclusion

This working paper expands the study of consumer co-creation by analyzing how online communities foster brand co-creation, and why consumers choose to participate. While consumers felt strong emotional attachments to the Monkey brand, this case study showcases that disconnects may be present when transferring online community loyalty and affinity to the parent product brand and to consumption behaviours. Future research in other Fast Moving Consumer Goods online communities should be examined to see if similar findings occur, or if Monkey is a particularly unique example of the spokes-character brand being revered more than its parent brand.

References


Seeking Meaning outside the Consumer Culture

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Abstract

This paper provides the preliminary findings and theoretical background of research that introduces an understudied context to marketing: intentional communities (IC). A grounded theory approach is taken, where data was collected from multiple sources and here the in-depth semi-structured interviews are the main source of data reported. The research aims to understand sources of meaning...
outside the consumer culture. Literature within materialism and anti-consumption are explored along with the existential framework provided by Fromm (1978). Preliminary findings suggest that potential/members of IC seek an escape from consumerism as well as state of ‘being’ where interpersonal relationships and sharing source meaning.

### Meaning, Materialism and Anti-consumption

Through the symbolic value identified in symbolic interactionist theory, material possessions can express social power or be used as means of self-expression (Solomon, 1983). Possessions can also express cultural categories and principles, create and sustain lifestyles (McCracken, 1990). There is much research on the power of possessions as a source of meaning yet there seems to be a lack of interest on the meanings of ‘not possessing’ (Richins, 1999) which in turn has led to an insufficient conceptualisation of sources of meaning outside of the consumerist culture. This research positions literature on materialism and anti-consumption within Fromm’s (1978) existential classification in an attempt to highlight the meanings of not consuming.

Richins and Dawson (1992) have suggested that materialism is a value orientation whilst Belk (1984) states it to be a behavioural trait. Both views agree that materialistic individuals are possessive in nature and the acquisition of material possessions form the greatest source of satisfaction, happiness and well-being. On the other hand, anti-consumption has been described as a “function of a preference to consume one object over another” (Zavestoski, 2002, p.121) as well as “a resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment or rejection of, consumption more generally.” (Zavestoski, 2002, p.121) implying a more general ‘failure to consume’ (Gould, Houston and Mundt, 1997). The two existential modes introduced by Fromm (1978) assist with positioning traits of materialism and anti-consumption in relation to the desire to not consume, or the desire to reduce consumption.

### Having and Being

Based on an understanding of the symbolic power of possessions Fromm (1978) suggests that there are two modes of existence; having and being. He states that individuals can rely solely on material possessions for meaning, but argues that this type of existence encourages possessiveness and suggests meaning can be bought, hence implying a materialistic lifestyle. He further argues that consumerism is a reality of ‘being’ through ‘having’ and encourages individual’s to look outside the consumer culture for meaning and experience ‘being’ where interpersonal relationships and sharing are the greatest source of meaning. Yet it is not clear if an attempted escape from consumerism is an active effort to experience ‘being’.

### Intentional Communities

There has been research on contexts that create alternative spaces such as festival gatherings like Burning Man (Kozinets, 2002) as well as counter cultural resistance movements (Holt, 2002), along with studies on utopia consumption spaces (Maclaran and Brown, 2005) that seek to explain consumer’s desire to escape consumerism. However they conclude that these spaces are either temporary, findings are insufficient to argue it’s an ‘escape’ or do not lead to consumer activism that results in a resistance movement. This paper suggests that a detailed look into intentional communities (IC) as a research context can help solve the problem of temporality as well as ensuring an active engagement with anti-consumption on the behalf of the consumer. IC have the potential to uncover sources of meaning outside consumerism as they are permanent living spaces where individuals who share a passion for communal living come together in an effort to share their lives with likeminded individuals. Often this includes a decrease in the number of individual possessions due to the importance of interpersonal sharing (Christian, 2003).

### Methodology

A constructivist grounded theory approach was taken (Charmaz, 2006). Data was collected in two countries; Turkey and Australia allowing for insights on how anti-consumerist individuals located in countries with different levels of materialism interact with the prevailing DSP (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003; Ger and Belk, 1996). This study is not intended to provide a cross-cultural analysis. In total 28 interviews were conducted; 16 from the Turkey and 12 from Australia.

Several sources of data have been utilized with in-depth semi-structured interviews with member and potential members of communities being the main source of data. Additionally, 4 IC were visited, 4 alternative lifestyle festivals, several open public meetings of IC have been attended and an online forum of an eco-community has been studied over a period of 2 years. Field notes and memos ensured detailed descriptions of the visited communities (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001). Preliminary findings, supported by visual data will be presented within the poster.

### Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings of this study indicate that within the reasons for individuals joining intentional communities a desire to escape consumerism and realising a ‘being’ sense of existence were most important. One interviewee offered both motivations by stating:

It has a greedy nature (consumerism), buy buy buy this is yours, yours, yours. I mean there is this flow where you look for satisfaction within what you have, especially within material things. At Imece (the Turkish eco-community) all satisfaction lies within what you feel, the things you do with others, how harmonious you are with others.

Additionally, there is an active effort on behalf of the members for utilizing sources of satisfaction outside the consumer culture. An interviewee underlines this by suggesting:

I don’t drink milk. I don’t like milk but I drank that milk (referring to the milk from the goat she milked). Now this is important because I don’t buy milk when I go shopping- its not important to me, but eating something you were involved in producing is totally different. I planted those broad beans, then came back for the harvest and ate them. I can’t explain my feelings. I mean it
was kind of like a thank you to the beans but also an applause for myself; good for me, I have successfully raised broad beans! It’s a source of satisfaction.

**Conclusion**

Considering the gaps within existing literature in materialism and anti-consumption in explaining the phenomenon of not consuming, this research suggests a closer look into IC. This can generate better understandings of meaning outside consumerism and offer insights into the realities of utopia in the eyes of the consumer who wants to escape from a consumerist escapade. Preliminary findings suggest that realising a ‘being’ existence and participation within the production of meaning are of central importance.

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**Implicit and Explicit Sexual Orientation, Attitudes toward Advertising, and Self-reported Physiological and Psychological Well-being**

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In the present research we conceptualize sexual orientation as an attitude, and use contemporary implicit and explicit attitude measures to assess sexual orientation. In doing so we consider the possibility of implicit and explicit conflict with regard to sexual orientation (i.e., explicit preference for opposite-sex erotic stimuli, but implicit preference for same-sex erotic stimuli; or vice-versa). Indeed, preliminary studies have revealed almost no correlation between implicit and explicit measures of sexual orientation. We investigate how implicit and explicit measures predict responses to advertisements depicting heterosexual and homosexual themes, as well as self-reported physiological and psychological health.

From 1997 to 2003 American clothing retailer Abercrombie and Fitch (A&F) published a quarterly “magalog” (magazine + catalog) featuring a highly sexualized advertising campaign for the brand, which was targeted to 18-24 year olds. Many of the articles in the magalog addressed racy topics (group sex, interviews with adult film stars) and many ads featured nude models, causing numerous Americans to worry that the campaign was just soft-core pornography aimed at teenagers. As well, many of the ads featured ambiguously gay and lesbian imagery.

Previous research has examined how consumers’ attitudes toward homosexuality influence attitudes toward advertising featuring gay and lesbian models (e.g., Bhat, Leigh, & Wardlow, 1998; Hester & Gibson, 2007), but we know of no research examining how consumers’ sexual preferences influence their attitudes toward advertising featuring gay and lesbian models. Additionally, measuring sexual preferences is a notoriously difficult (and controversial) task (Sell, 1997). It is generally not considered dichotomous (i.e., heterosexual v. homosexual), but more of a continuum. Alfred Kinsey’s (1948/1998) original measure of sexual orientation was a seven-point scale anchored by “exclusively heterosexual” and “exclusively homosexual,” with a midpoint labeled, “equally heterosexual and homosexual.”
Even defining sexual orientation has been a challenge, with one summary concluding that, “Sexual orientation is most often described as including behavioral, affective (i.e., desire or attraction) and cognitive (i.e., identity) that occur along continua,” (Dolan, 2005; p. 14). That summary sounds very much like the tripartite model of attitudes (see Breckler, 1984). If we think of sexual orientation as an attitude, we may be able to apply other aspects of attitude research to the study of sexual orientation.

Attitudes serve a number of important functions (Katz, 1960)–they help us to navigate the world, seek out rewards, avoid punishment, etc. Having strong, easily accessible attitudes actually contributes to physiological health (Fazio & Powell, 1997). However, attitudes can also be quite complex: individuals who hold evaluatively inconsistent beliefs toward a single object are said to be ambivalent. For example, one may believe that abortion is both necessary and morally wrong. If strong, accessible attitudes promote health, it follows that attitudinal ambivalence might undermine health, or daily functioning. Indeed, individuals who are ambivalent regarding certain personality traits (e.g., high extraversion, low need for affiliation) experience more disrupted marriage, more intimacy low points, and more relationship dissatisfaction (Winter et al., 1998). One area in which attitude ambivalence might be particularly important is sexual preference. Individuals who have a clear, strong, easily accessible sexual identity ought to be generally healthier than those who do not. In a related vein, individuals who show ambivalence regarding gender identity experience less positive, and more negative affect (Robinson et al., 2001). Psychologists formerly referred to sexually ambivalent individuals as “ego-dystonic homosexuals,” and counted them among those who may require clinical treatment. One obvious difficulty with assessing sexual preference is that homosexuality is generally socially undesirable, and individuals may be unwilling and/or unable to admit their homosexuality to others or themselves—“closeted,” or “repressed” homosexuals, respectively, in the vernacular. Recent advances in research on attitude measurement have uncovered techniques for obviating “willing and able” problems in assessing attitudes toward socially undesirable topics (e.g., racial prejudice; Fazio et al., 1995). These new measures were called implicit attitude measures (Greenwald et al., 1998), in contrast to traditional explicit (self-report) attitude measures. The present research aims to assess sexual preference using both explicit and implicit measures, and to use implicit and explicit measures of sexual preference to predict responses to advertising, as well as a variety of health-related outcomes (e.g., positive and negative affect, health complaints, visits to health center, school performance, etc.).

A series of three preliminary studies suggest that simple and explicit measures of sexual orientation are uncorrelated, and that individuals who show the highest levels of implicit-explicit conflict (i.e., explicit preference for opposite-sex stimuli, but implicit preference for same-sex stimuli; or vice-versa) tend to report suffering more somatic symptoms, and tend to score lower on a number of measures of psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Unfortunately, neither implicit nor explicit measures (nor the interaction thereof) seem to predict liking for advertisements depicting a variety of heterosexual and homosexual themes. [The EACR conference seems like an excellent opportunity to receive suggestions on how to proceed with the research.]

This line of research has the potential to enhance our understanding of sexual preference, implicit and explicit attitudes, attitude ambivalence, responses to advertising, and, not least, to identify potentially at-risk individuals.

References

Unpacking the Ethically-Minded Consumer: Understanding the Role of the ‘Personal Journey’ Life Project
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Extended Abstract
The reach of ethical consumerism has dispersed from the cultural fringes to infiltrate mainstream society (Crane & Matten, 2004). Researchers’ efforts to understand this burgeoning movement, though sparse, have generally taken a modelling approach, focusing on ‘ethical’ purchase decision-making in sharp detail. In this study, we break from this research tradition, employing an ethnographic approach to gain new insight and unpack the ethically-minded consumer. We step back from the mechanics of their purchase decision-
making; attempting to open the lens and bring the background into focus. We aim to extend the limited understanding of ethically-minded consumers by unravelling the life projects shaping their identities, focusing their world view and motivating their consumption. Through exploring the lives of 12 ethically-minded consumers, the metaphorical ‘personal journey to enlightened consumption’ emerged as a significant life project undertaken to edge closer to their ideal ethical lifestyle. This ‘ethical’ life project and other integrated emergent themes are presented in this paper.

We employed multiple ethnographic methods with 12 informants over nine months. All informants lived in urban/suburban locations, and were diverse in the extent to which their ethical concerns infiltrated their lives. The informants completed semi-structured depth interviews, which lasted for one to three hours. They then selectively participated in various methods, including accompanied shops, written/photographic shopping diaries, and projective interviews. We participated in ‘ethical’ film nights, sewing workshops, community workshops and informal social events. A grounded approach was taken to analyse open-coded observations and memos, using abstraction and constant comparative analytic techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Spiggle, 1994).

**Emergent Themes**

*The Personal Journey to Enlightened Consumption.* Metaphorically on a ‘personal journey to enlightened consumption’, the informants’ ultimate goal was to live an entirely ethical/sustainable lifestyle. This vision was a reoccurring life theme (Mick & Buhl, 1992). How this life theme was revealed in their own ‘personal journey’ life project (Mick & Buhl, 1992) was unique to each informant—no two journeys were the same. Their ‘journey’ started with an initial “awakening” (Ethical Crusader)–the awareness of an issue that strongly resonated with their values (e.g. animal welfare). Each ‘journey’ was gradual, unfinished, and convoluted; each step forward increasing the scope of ethical concerns integrated into daily life and the size of immediate ethical consumption goals. The informants often sensed that while they were “doing the best for where [they] are at” (Ethical Crusader) they were also compromising their ideal vision in their current shopping/consuming choices, leading to a feeling of dissatisfaction and motivating further progress along their journey.

Several sub-processes underpinned progression along the personal journey: building knowledge bases; prioritising ethical concerns; disconnecting from the mainstream and connecting with alternatives; and evolving identity. These sub-processes were not linear—they could occur simultaneously and were interconnected.

**Building Knowledge Bases.** As Information bricoleurs, rifling through and collating pieces of information from various trusted off-line and on-line sources, the informants gradually built their understanding of ethical issues, practical solutions, tacit knowledge, and self-awareness.

**Prioritising Ethical Concerns.** Informants prioritised primary ethical concerns (e.g. fair trade) that were researched and aligned purchasing/consumption behaviours were planned and practiced until the behaviour became habitual. These primary ethical concerns were then integrated into daily life, becoming consistently practiced, effortless and threaded into self-identity. The informants also had secondary ethical issues that augmented their decision-making, along with other considerations such as cost and convenience. These secondary ethical concerns were not actively planned or habitually developed, and were less likely to be practiced.

**Disconnecting from Mainstream Market and Connecting with Alternative Systems.** The informants actively and discursively sought disconnection from the mainstream and connection with alternative marketplaces. Varying greatly—from making their own products to joining cooperatives, this disconnection enabled the informants to consume ethically, connect directly with the foods/products they consumed, and build community relationships beyond the transaction (Kozinets, 2002). Having this connection heightened the meaning of consumption.

**Evolution of Ethical Identity.** The informants gained meaning, expressed their values and constructed their sense of ethical identity through their buying/consuming choices (Belk, 1988; Kleine & Kleine, 2000). ‘Ethical’ identity was projected through visible symbols such as clothing, posters, and home furnishings. Starting their journey with a single-issue ethical identity (e.g. waste reduction), they gradually expanded to a complex, multi-issue identity as they weaved additional ethical concerns into their lives.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

In observing the mundane lives of urban-dwelling ethically-minded consumers going about their usual daily routines, we answer the call of Kleine, Schultz-Kleine and Kernan (1992) who contend that profound consumer understanding is embedded in mundane daily life. Our informants lived, desired and consumed within the frames of mainstream society. They were not in a self-contained eco-community or enacting their alter-egos in exotic situations. This mundane context offers rich and authentic insight underrepresented in consumer behaviour studies (Kleine, Schultz-Kleine, & Kernan, 1992).

In this study we extend the understanding of life themes and projects in the context of ethical consumerism. The ‘personal journey’ metaphor reveals the life project undertaken by ethical consumers towards attaining their vision of the ‘good/ethical life’. The ‘journey’ also illustrates some of the road blocks that can emerge along the way. A key road block was the clashing of competing life projects. As multidimensional individuals balancing life projects (Kleine et al., 1992), attempts to escape the market and consume ethically were constrained/thwarted by competing life projects such as ‘career’ and ‘parenthood’ that remained defined by the mainstream cultural ideals (Thompson, 1996).

This ethnography discovered an intentional ‘collective’ of informants that extend Kozinets’s (2002) conception of consumer emancipation as being temporary. While the disconnection was not yet complete, this process of distancing from the mainstream/market had become a way of life. These ethically-minded consumers were attempting to re/connect with alternative markets as an ongoing and sustainable practice. In this context, the ethical consumerism movement can be viewed as a shift towards emerging ‘alternative’ instrumental and connected marketplaces (Hinrichs, 2000). Viewing this burgeoning consumer movement through the frame of emerging markets offers exciting research opportunities and sobering insight for firms/practitioners entrenched in the mainstream market logic.

**References**


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**Predicting Contest Proneness and Participation**

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**Introduction**

Fast Moving Consumer Goods manufacturers face a continuing battle for supermarket shelf space driven by the penetration of store brands and increased manufacturer brand price discounting. The result is a resurgent interest in understanding consumers’ propensity to engage in non-price promotions (Kalra and Shi 2009). This study firstly identifies the impact of consumers’ economic, hedonic and search costs motives on proneness to contest-sweepstake participation. Secondly, it examines the relationship between proneness and prior contest-sweepstake participation. Thirdly it examines, though use of a promotion choice game, the relationship between contest-sweepstake proneness and preference for choosing a chance-based promotion over the reward of a certain price discount.

**Conceptual Development**

Research suggests that promotion proneness is often context-specific, that consumers derive economic and hedonic benefits from participation and that some consumers are more prone to non-price-based promotions than others (Lichtenstein, Netemeyer and Burton 1990; Ailawadi, Neslin and Gedenk 2001, Garretson and Burton 2003; Sudbury and Simcock, 2008)

Promotion proneness research has examined differences between the motivations for engaging in different forms of sales promotion and has demonstrated that consumers are prone to using them for both economic and hedonic reasons (Chandon, Wansink and Laurent, 2000; Garretson and Burton, 2003; Prendergast, Poon, Tsang, and Fan, 2008). Hedonic benefits provided by sales promotion include exploration, self-expression and entertainment (Chandon et al. 2000; Schindler, 1989) and have been associated with differences in the psychographic profiles of shoppers and their proneness to sales promotion (Ailawadi et al 2001; Bucklin and Lattin, 1991). It is expected that hedonic motivations are strongly associated with participation in contest-sweepstake related promotions.

Sensitivity to economic benefits, the costs of searching for goods on promotion and the willingness to trade off product quality have been shown to affect price-based promotion proneness (Blattberg, Busing, Peacock and Sen, 1978; Martinez and Montaner, 2006). There is less evidence however to understand economic and search cost factors and their association with non-price promotions. It is expected that these motivations are less likely to be associated with contest-sweepstake proneness and participation.

**Methods and Measures**

The data were obtained using computer aided telephone interviewing (CATI). The sampling frame was a major Australian metropolitan city. The final sample consisted of 500 primary household grocery buying adults aged between 18 and 75 years.

Psychographic measures for this study were based on Ailawadi et al. (2001) and Martinez and Montaner (2006). The scale for contest-sweepstake proneness was based on Lichtenstein et al (1995). A modified gambling enjoyment scale was based on the work of McDaniel (2002). All items were measured on 7 point Likert-type scales. Measures for prior promotion participation were developed specifically for the study. Propensity to participate in contest-sweepstakes was measured by summing responses to a repeated measures brand promotion choice game whereby participants were asked to choose between varying levels of a price discount or participation in a game-of-chance with a potential monetary reward.

**Results**

Convergent and discriminant validity was examined through confirmatory factor analysis and found to be appropriate. Reliability analysis through examination of Cronbach’s alpha found all scales to be acceptable and sufficiently robust.

Multivariate regression was employed to analyse the relationship between variables associated with hedonic, economic, and search cost motives and contest-sweepstakes proneness. Overall the model explained 35% of contest-sweepstake proneness (F, 17.28, p<.001).
There was no association between proneness and search cost factors of brand loyalty, shopping planning, shopping time pressure and household storage space. For economic motives proneness was negatively associated with quality consciousness (\(?=.-.09, p<.05\)) but positively associated with financial constraints (\(?=0.08, p<.05\)). No association was found for price consciousness. Much of the explanation of proneness is derived from hedonic motives including gambling enjoyment (\(?= .26, p<.001\), motivation to conform (\(?= .22, p<.001\), mavenism (\(?= .13, p<.01\), shopping enjoyment (\(?= .11 p<.01\), innovativeness (\(?=10, p<.05\), and impulsiveness (\(?=09\)). No association was found for variety seeking.

Further regression, controlling for age, gender and income, was undertaken to assess the relationship between contest-sweepstake proneness and prior participation in such promotions (\(?= .38, p<.001, [R^2, .15, F, 22.78]\)). Similar analysis was undertaken (in a constrained promotion choice situation) to assess the relationship between proneness and the propensity to choose a game of chance promotion over a certain price discount (\(?= .20, p<.001, [R^2, .04, F, 5.48]\)). A final bivariate regression examined the relationship between past behaviour and current propensity to choose a game of chance over a certain price discount (\(?= .13, p<.05, [R^2, .02, F, 8.04]\).

**Conclusions**

This research supports calls by Prendergast et al. (2008) and others for increased investigation into non-price sales promotion and the psychology behind consumer engagement with such promotions. Results indicate contest-sweepstake prone consumers enjoy gambling and having the chance to win, crave the approval of others regarding their purchase decisions and have mavenistic tendencies. Contest-sweepstake prone consumers also enjoy shopping and may be quite impulsive when faced with in-store contest and sweepstake activity. They also have financial constraints that may promote participation in games. The research raises questions as to the relationship between proneness and participation in such promotions with a weak explanation found for the relationship between proneness and non-price promotion choice in the promotion game. Questions also exist about the causal nature of the relationship between prior participation and future participation. Managerially, manufacturers who facilitate and encourage consumers’ engagement through ease of participation, attractive prizing, and a small win, may find some reprieve from a discount mentality, add interest to a category and improve brand associations with consumers.

**References**


**How Do Postconsumers Navigate the Multiple Orders of Contemporary Consumer Society?**

**Emotion and Reason in Young Consumers’ Narratives of Consumerism**

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**Extended Abstract**

In this paper, we study the ways in which young Finnish consumers negotiate and construct local meanings of consumer culture in forming their identities as consumers. Drawing from the literature on postmodern consumer culture (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995, Firat and Dholakia, 2006, Firat, 2001) and cultural models of consumption (Holt and Thompson, 2004, Quinn and Holland, 1995 [1987], Thompson and Arsel, 2004), we explore the ways in which the contemporary consumer, the “postconsumer” (Firat, 2001, Firat and Dholakia, 2006), navigates the different and sometimes conflicting social orders that contemporary consumer culture entails. The aim is to contribute to the literature on postmodern consumer culture by empirically elaborating on the concept of postconsumer, who seeks
several different lifestyles and experiences that provide meaning in the present (Firat, 2001, Firat and Dholakia, 2006).

In the context of a Nordic welfare state we identify two different cultural models of consumerism: a puritan model of rational consumer who controls his or her wants and emotions; and a hedonist model of a playful consumer who seeks meaning and personal gratification through consumption. In depicting consumption in terms of controlled need satisfaction and uncontrollable desire, these models draw from two different cultural discourses of consumption that characterize modern consumer societies (Belk et al., 2000, Campbell 1998, Slater, 1997). The need talk has its origin in a puritan-inspired utilitarian philosophy of comfort and satisfaction, while the want and desire rhetoric has its origin in a romantic-inspired philosophy of pleasure seeking (Campbell, 1998).

Our empirical analysis is based on written consumer narratives collected by means of 1-2 page essays written as class assignments by 159 upper secondary school students between the age of 16 to 19. We use these narratives selectively, focusing our analysis on the ways in which the rhetoric of emotion (want) and reason (need) is used in the texts to construct culturally intelligible consumer identities. The interpretive framework that guides our analysis is based on a theoretical and methodological perspective that is often referred to as the cultural approach to consumer research (Arnould and Thompson, 2007, Arnould and Thompson, 2005, Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). More specifically, we draw from the literature on postconsumer culture (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995, Firat and Dholakia, 2006, Firat, 2001), cultural models (Holt and Thompson, 2004, Quinn and Holland, 1995 [1987], Thompson and Arsel, 2004), and the narrative approach to social inquiry (Rappaport, 2000, Moisander and Eriksson, 2006).

In the narratives that we analyze, young consumers represent themselves as being caught in the middle between the traditional puritan and the contemporary hedonist models of consumption. On one hand, they express moral views and values that guide them to buy products primarily for their functional purposes out of necessity. On the other hand, they also draw extensively from the hedonist model of consumption, according to which consumption is primarily about creating meaningful life experiences here and now.

Based on the narratives that we analyze, we identified three consumer models that create the basis of our study: traditional rationalist, rational hedonist and postmodern hedonist. These models navigate between different juxtapositions; needs and wants, feminine and masculine consumerism and rationality and impulsiveness, easing the tensions that arise from the differences between the cultural models of hedonism and prudence.

The model of a traditional rationalist describes a thoughtful and self-controlling consumer, restricted the most by the puritan ethos. Traditional rationalist sees rationalism as a virtue and thinks that only needs should be spend on, seeing careful spending as a necessary act. Occasionally traditional rationalist may spend money on desires, thus not consuming rationally. This leads into senses of guiltiness. The self-controlled and rationalist consumption is traditionally seen as masculine, spending on vanities and feeling guiltiness afterwards as feminine behaviour.

Rational hedonist has solved the crisis between rationalism and the ethos of consumption by combining them. Rational hedonist’s consumption is focused on desires which makes it feminine, but rational hedonist justifies her/his consumption by planning the consumption beforehand and making it in this way appear rational. This rationalization makes the feminine spending seem more masculine as rationalism is seen as masculine behaviour.

Postmodern hedonist enhances hedonism the most. Postmodern hedonist sees wants more important than needs, doesn’t plan consumption beforehand and doesn’t feel guilty when spending money on wants. Postmodern hedonist expresses the feminine spending style but consumes on a guilty-free masculine way at the same time.

The narratives show that both of the competing cultural sources of norms and values, hedonism and puritanism, affect the young Finnish consumers. Consumers can navigate between the seemingly very different norms and values and draw from each of them, creating their own ways of making sense of their consumerism. However, the hedonistic consumption seems to be non-existent for adults, as the (Finnish) adult consumers don’t express hedonistic consumerism in their narratives. This lack of hedonistic consumer ethos can be seen in e.g. Huttunen and Autio’s (2010) research. Although the puritan ethos of consumerism affects both young and adults, the hedonist model is clearly more embedded in young consumers’ narratives. As a result, hedonistic consumption can be seen as an unique part of young consumers’ consumerism.

Another significant finding is the collapse of the traditional masculine and feminine consumer positions. The narratives that we analyze show clearly that the traditional masculine and feminine consumer roles have changed, leading into new ways of combining both masculine and feminine behaviour.

As a conclusion, we argue that the liberation of gender-related consumer positions, the increased gender-tourism as well as the notable change from puritanism towards hedonism can be seen as unique characteristics of young Finnish consumers. These characteristics are unique to young consumers, as hedonistic consumerism and gender-tourism aren’t represented in the adult Finnish consumers’ narratives. However, the traditional puritan ethos is also still present, affecting the ways in which the young consumers make sense of their consumerism. This emphasizes the character of the contemporary consumer, the “postconsumer”, and how this postconsumer navigates the different and conflicting social orders that different versions of consumer culture entail.

References


### An Analysis of Hyperopic Consumers’ Perception of Indulgence Behaviors

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**Abstract**

In this study of “hyperopia” (i.e., an aversion to indulgence) we examine how different construal levels of restriction goals influence hyperopic consumers’ perceptions of indulgence behaviors. We propose a multiple-level construal level setting to examine this phenomenon. Preliminary results show that hyperopic consumers are less likely to indulge when their restriction goals are construed at “high” rather than “low” level. However, when their restrictions are construed at higher or “ultimate” level, hyperopic consumers feel it easier to indulge than when the goals are construed at just a “high” level.

### Imagining Place-Based Community Through Consumption? An Autoethnography

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This research is interested in the nature of community as it operates at the conjunction of consumption practices and place. In particular, this research focuses on the ways that consumption experiences within servicescapes may work to construct place-based community in the contemporary Australian inner city. The problem this study seeks to explore is if, and if so how, a community that is grounded in place may be constructed through the secondary relations and shared value generated through consumption experiences in servicescapes. The particular focus of this working paper is an autoethnographic exploration of the individual experience of that process.

This research adopts a postmodern definition of community, similar to that applied to consumer communities (e.g., Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007; Maffesoli 1996). These are conceptual and emotional communities that are freely entered into and experienced fleetingly. They tend to be abstract and mobile, existing only in the moment in which they are experienced as ritualised interaction. Because they are more attuned to reinforcing individual identity and emotion than contributing to a greater good, these communities have been criticised as shallow (Bauman 2001). However this research argues that a postmodern approach may be particularly suited to the gentrifying inner city, where a confluence of urban development activities and consumer culture would seem to be creating an environment that is conducive to both community, and individualism.

This is evident in the Australian inner city, where planning regulations seek to increase housing densities and services to create ‘urban village’ like centres of activity within pre-existing neighbourhoods. This collocation of retail, commercial, and residential amenities is promoted as a means of facilitating community-like interaction. However it is also associated with gentrification, which has been criticised as commodifying community, and privileging lifestyle-focused consumption as the model of neighbourhood experience (e.g., Zukin 1998). This research proposes that postmodern community presents an alternative perspective from which to explore this tension, because it allows for fleeting connections to be facilitated through consumption practices. The investigation also drew on theories from consumer research and sociology on the ways that individuals interact in servicescapes (e.g., Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999; Lofland 1998; Oldenburg 1999), and the ways the consumer value may be created in such contexts (e.g., Holbrook 1999), to consider how these connections may be facilitated, experienced, and related to place.

The first phase of this research focused on the subjectivity inherent in the assumption of shared value and identity being created through consumption experiences. To do so an autoethnographic approach was adopted, recording the author’s consumption experiences within the servicescapes of my new neighbourhood. As a research methodology, autoethnography allows the experience of the individual to be used reflexively to construct a narrative that can illuminate certain aspects of broader social phenomena (Ellis 2004). In this case the aim was to connect the personal experience of attempting to identify with a place-based community through consumption...
Social Sharing of Consumption-related Emotions: Benefit from What Your Customers Say About You

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Extended Abstract

Although previous studies have analyzed the role of emotions on consumer behavior, most of this research deals with emotion as an intra-personal private experience (Dubé et al. 2003; Phillips and Baumgartner, 2002; Zeelenberg and Pieters, 1999). However, emotions are so personally involving that people are inclined to speak with others about them. Social psychologists have labeled this behavior the “social sharing of emotions” (Rimé, 2007; Rimé et al. 1999). Early research focused on the sharing of traumatic situations but later studies documented that disclosure is broadly beneficial and applies to everyday life emotions of much lower intensity (Phillipot and Rimé, 1998). Thus, emotions associated to consumption experiences may not be as disruptive, but can and will still be shared with others in social interactions (Richins, 1997).

The process of social sharing of emotions involves (a) the evocation of the emotion in a socially shared language, and (b) at least at the symbolic level, some addressee (Rimé, 1987). This process usually takes place during conversations in which individuals openly communicate about their emotions and reactions. From a marketing perspective, we are most interested in the effect of sharing negative consumption related emotions on satisfaction because the impact it can have on their revenues, reputation, customer retention, ability to capture new customers, etc could be huge. Several theoretical arguments could account for such an effect, and depending on the mechanism invoked the effect of sharing on the sharer could be different.

In study 1, we explore the direction of the effects of sharing negative emotions on satisfaction and dissatisfaction. We propose that social sharing of negative emotions could have either a positive or a negative impact on satisfaction, depending on the relative influ-
nce of the mechanisms involved. We add a ‘positive emotion’ condition as a reference point and used a 2x2 between subjects design, with social sharing (sharing/no sharing) and the valence of the consumption experience (positive/negative) orthogonally manipulated. Ninety-eight undergraduate students participated in the experiment. In the ‘social sharing’ condition they were invited to write an e-mail about their experience to a close friend.

ANOVA showed that when the experience was positive, neither satisfaction (Mno_sharing=5.97; Msharing=6.20; F(1,46)=0.92; p>1), nor repurchase intention (Mno_sharing=5.98; Msharing=5.87; F(1,46)=0.13; p>1) altered as a consequence of sharing. On the other hand, findings showed that sharing negative consumption-related emotions led to an increase in dissatisfaction (Mno_sharing=1.67; Msharing=1.49; F(1,46)=4.92; p<0.05) as well as a decrease in repurchase intention (Mno_sharing=3.14; Msharing=3.20; F(1,46)=13.53; p<0.01). These results are consistent with the higher intensity of valence, which seems to cause this pattern (Mno_sharing=4.09; Msharing=4.72; F(1,46)=6.32; p<0.05). The interaction between valence and sharing was significant for satisfaction (F(1,94)=5.17 p<0.05) and repurchase intention (F(1,94)=7.14 p<0.01). In sum, findings point to a simple amplification mechanism: due to sharing, the experienced emotions amplify for negative episodes. Thus, corresponding consequences on satisfaction only appear for those negative events.

In a second experiment, our goal was to identify the factors that could shape the negative consequences of sharing negative consumption emotions. Emotions have often been conceptualized as general valenced dimensions, such as positive and negative affect (Elster, 1998; Forgas, 1995). However, recent research indicates that emotions with the same valence do not necessarily lead to the same coping strategies (Bonifield and Cole, 2007; Frijda et al. 1989; Yi and Baumgartner, 2004). Therefore, it seems appropriate to focus on specific emotions instead of valence. In this study we introduced two specific emotions: regret and anger. The main distinction between them is attribution (i.e., whether the consumer blames him/herself or a third-party such as the salesperson or the firm, respectively). Additionally, although social sharing of emotions is an obvious part of intimate relationships, it can also occur outside such relationships (for example, there are many opportunities for emotion sharing with non-intimates on the Internet). In this regard, we differentiated between sharing emotions with friends and sharing emotions with unknown people. This distinction is supported by literature about tie strength (Money et al. 1998).

Since anger has been associated with the goal of revenge, we expected that sharing the episode with prospective consumers (weak tie) would have a more positive impact on their satisfaction than if they shared it with friends (strong tie). The underlying reason is that the former facilitate goal attainment whereas the latter do not. That is to say, the wronged consumer could exact some revenge on the company by discouraging other consumers from buying the product from the same service provider. That extent is not viable when sharing with a friend who is not interested in the product category. However, regret has been linked to bonding and comfort search, which is more likely to be found among friends, who will listen and comprehend the wronged consumer. Consequently, we predicted that sharing a regretful consumption experience with friends would have a more positive impact on satisfaction than sharing it with strangers because it is easier to find comfort with the former than with the latter.

We used a 2x3 experimental design where we manipulated the specific emotions (anger versus regret) and the type of addressee (close friend versus unknown prospective consumers versus no sharing –control condition-). One hundred and eighty consumers participated in the study. Results revealed an interaction effect between addressee and specific emotion for satisfaction (F(2,174)=7.57; p<0.01) and repurchase intention (F(2,174)=5.51; p<0.01).

Results from experiment 1 were replicated. The data also revealed that individuals experiencing anger during a consumption episode and, consequently, blaming others for the situation, reported higher satisfaction (Munknown=3.77; Mfriend=4.20; F(1,174)=6.56; p<0.05) and intention to repurchase the product (Munknown=3.93; Mfriend=2.49; F(1,174)=5.32; p<0.05) when they shared anger with unknown consumers interested in the same product, than when they shared it with a friend. Interestingly, we also found that for angry consumers, there were no differences between sharing with an unknown consumer or not sharing at all in terms of satisfaction (Munknown=3.77; Mno_sharing=4.13; F(1,174)=0.47; p>0.05) and intention to repurchase (Munknown=3.93; Mno_sharing=3.98; F(1,174)=0.01; p>0.05). On the contrary, subjects experiencing regret during a consumption episode reported higher satisfaction (Munknown=2.66; Mfriend=3.95; F(1,174)=5.86; p<0.05) and repurchase intention (Munknown=2.10; Mfriend=3.47; F(1,174)=4.76; p<0.05) when they shared their emotions with a friend who could give them comfort than when they shared them with an unknown person (who would be less likely to understand them). Therefore, our hypothesis was supported.

With this paper we extend research dealing with emotions by showing the effect of socially sharing consumption-related emotions on satisfaction. At first sight, sharing negative emotions seemed clearly detrimental to consumers' satisfaction. However, focusing on specific emotions and the nature of the addressee helped us tune the initial conclusions. The managerial implications are straightforward if we consider the potential for consumer to consumer communication on the Internet. Although firms can not stop consumers' tendency to share their (negative) experiences with others, they have considerable freedom in creating opportunities for consumers to share their emotions about products through friends-based or more anonymous web-channels.

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Brands and Othering: A Study of Children’s Social Identity Formation
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
This paper examines the role that brands might play in the formation of children’s social identities. While existing research have examined how children understand brand symbolism (Belk et al., 1982) and are influenced by peers in brand choice and preference (Roper and La Niece, 2009; Grant and Stephen; Gunter and Furnham, 1998), few studies have looked at how children utilize brands as cultural resources in their identity work. We ask, “How do brand meanings condition children’s identities and how do children, through ongoing social interaction, draw on the discursive resources available to them to author their social selves?” Predicated on the notion that subjectively construed identities are available to children through processes of differentiation and exclusion (Hall 1996), this research focuses on the self-demarcating function of brand meanings. In this inquiry, children are found to author their identities in contrast to Other, in which brands play a crucial role as social symbols and resources through which such demarcation occurs.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Identity
Identity is something that is under constant change and renewal. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987:102) “self” is not a singular something that is waiting to be discovered, but rather, multifarious affair, multiply located in different kinds of linguistic practices that are articulated in and through time and space. From a discourse analytic point of view, identities need to be understood as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within particular discursive formations and practice. According to this tradition, identities are more a creation of difference and exclusion than a sign of unity (as in the traditional meaning of the word “identity”). Indeed, the potential of identity to function as a point of identification arises from its capacity to exclude and leave out (Hall, 1996:4).

Othering
These things said, construction of identity can be linked to the construction of Other, with such discursive acts representing opposite sides of the same thought process “I am me, because I am not the other” (MacNaughton and Davis, 2001:88). Scholars in many disciplines have argued that social and cultural identity is constructed upon the existence of Other. Cultural space and boundaries are demarcated by the medium of the Other. (Cromer, 2001)

Brands
Brands are central material for the formation of selfhood. In the process of identity construction brands function as social symbols and resources through which demarcation of us and them occurs. In this vein, brands function as parts of the extended self, enabling the integration of actual and ideal selves through emblematic meanings (Belk 1988). Brands also occupy a prominent place in the cultural landscape. Cultural codes, ideological discourse, consumers’ background knowledge and rhetorical processes play a part in individuals’ and groups’ relationships to branding (Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006:1). Brands are cultural artifacts that carry meanings that are produced and consumed through processes and practices of representation. (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006:10-11.)

METHOD
Conducted at an elementary school in an affluent area in the city of Espoo, Finland, this inductive study takes an interpretive perspective in an attempt to produce a rich account of the social identity practices of second graders aged 8-9 years old.
Aiming to understand how children construct their social identities through shared brand meanings, a focus group method (Moisander and Valtonen 2006) was chosen. Our data consisted of eight group discussions, with boys and girls interviewed separately for minimum distraction. These discussions had an average duration of 60 minutes, were audio recorded, transcribed (in Finnish) and then
translated to English. A grounded theory analysis of the data was undertaken (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Analytic emphasis was placed on children’s discourses of inclusion, exclusion and othering in the context of brands.

**FINDINGS**

Our study shows that children construct their social identity largely through articulating difference from and similarity to others. In focus group discussions, children were found creating a mutual world through discourse, in which some were included and others excluded. Within this discursive realm of persons and objects, children were active in negotiating such social categories as *Us and Them*, respectively *Divas and Tomboys*, and *Sporty Guys and Internet Nerds*. These identified categories and the subject positions of their members were under constant transformation and renewal as the young informants engaged in dialogues, exchanging and revising their views during group interaction.

In the focus group data, these discursive practices of exclusion and inclusion through which the children constructed their identities were performed on three levels. First, on the level of peers, children constructed clear in-groups and out-groups, using consumption and brand meanings as symbolic markers and discursive resources to articulate their collective identities and to express loyalty to their in-groups and antagonism toward their out-groups. Second on the level of reference groups, children articulated caricatured representations of the older children at their school and in the neighborhood, representing these reference groups as idolized role models and ‘more experienced guides’ in the world of brands. The most important reference groups identified in the study were the ‘divas’ and the ‘hip-hop boys’, whose behavior and choice of wear were discussed and described admiringly and in detail in the focus group data. While members of these reference groups were clearly looked up to, they were also represented as different and strange—the Other. Third, at the level of cultural models, the children that we studied engaged in collective identity construction by using iconic brands and celebrities as discursive resources. The Bratz doll, for example, constituted an important cultural model for girls’ feminine identity construction and sports celebrities constituted masculine identity models for boys.

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**The Dynamics of Post Millennium Consumer Utopia: Pluralism, Personalization, Participation and Personification**

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“The Modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful sage leading to a long ascent of stages.” H.G Wells (1866-1946)

Utopian visions have always reflected the need for a better world. The consumers’ world, as commercial it may be, rides on the wheels of human needs striving towards a better future. Marketing, by its self-utopian definition, caters to customer needs and makes itself as important to the commercial world as the discovery of the wheel was to its primitive counterpart. Highlighting its paradigm nature (Brown and Patterson 2000) and setting a challenge for the new millennium, the marketer’s utopia has been envisioned as the blending of high and low consumer culture (Hetzel 2000), consumer gender identity (Kacen 2000), consumer equality and a cashless society driven by socialist principles (Schroeder 2000), achieving freedom (Belk 2000) and true professionalism (Thomas 2000).

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1The term ‘Utopia’ was coined by Sir Thomas More as a title of his 1516 book as a name of an ideal society. Utopia means both nowhere (*eutopia*) and somewhere good (*eutopia*) (Kumar 1987: 24; Levitas 1990: 2).
is ironical to note that, while pursuing self-utopian vision, marketers promise utopia (in form of branded products and services) to customers—thus providing a sense of place (Davis, 1979; O'Guinn and Belk 1989; Koziens 2002; Maclaran and Brown 2005) to the ‘nowhereness’ of the term. Places like McDonalds (O’Neill 1993), Disneyland (Marin 1977), community festivals (Koziens 2002), technological sites (Sherry 2000) & festival markets (Brown 2005) are often cited as examples of living utopia. In this way, marketer’s promise is eutopian (providing sense of a good place) in nature while his vision (as a continuous search for perfection towards catering to consumer needs)—very utopian (Brown, 1996).

Research Themes

Utopia sits on two fundamental dimensions—space and perfection. In other words, it is a continuous search for perfection, as a meditation to current ideologies (Goodwin 2001), in space. In this way, consumers’ search for perfection is a reflection of private and collective dreams (Porpora 2003). The changing equations between the two fuel the kinetics of post millennium utopia. This research paper contributes towards the existing theory of utopia by studying consumer’s utopian consumptions—from a perspective of private dreams and collective idealisms—thus analyzing the dynamics involved in the consumer’s new sense of place in popular culture. It identifies four themes relevant towards investigating the post millennium consumer utopia. These elements are Pluralism, Personalization, Participation and Personification.

Pluralism envisages the increase in dynamic utopias defined by people in contrast to the static ones described by clerics (Kauffman 2002). The number of utopias, co-existing in consumer society (at the same time), tend to increase every decade. This reflects the state of articulation of perfection—which tends towards the epicenter of consumer democracy.

Personalization acknowledges the multiplicity in consumption patterns towards youtopia (Koziens 2002), that is, a consumer’s utopian constructions are derived from unique elements of different consumption experiences. This enables a higher level of personalization (of elements) of youtopia seeded from different places. The grains of matter, laying ground for the articulation of perfect world, are expected to be derived from various kinds of entertainment products. This granularity is expected to increase over time.

Participatory culture (Jenkins 2006; Kavoori and Punathambekar 2008) is a neologism which reflects the present state of collective utopia. Alpha consumers (Wolf 1999), popularly called as fans, play an increasingly important role in collectively contributing their shared utopia towards the product’s core/content. Participatory consumer culture, facilitated by platforms like youtube, facebook and twitter, has significantly ignited the kinetics of shared utopia.

Personification of heroes, objects and texts play an important role in self-prediction, fantasy fulfillment and escapism (Hirschman, 1983). The co-existence of collective idols and personal heroes reflect an attachment of utopian elements with the degree of personification (towards perfection). The increase in the presence of such personifications, over time, signals towards increase in granularity of utopian elements.

Research Site and Methodology

Entertainment products offer images of something better (Dyer, 1992) to escape into. Time and again, utopian representations (such as The Clockwork Orange, Startrek, the Starship Troopers, Matrix, etc) have been absorbed as mass media stories in the west. Co-relating the utopian nature of entertainment products (Dyer, 1977); researchers (Jameson, 1979) argue that, in order to provide pleasure, producers promise a portion of utopia to their audiences. Cinemas, around the world, have provided a distinct sense of place towards consuming utopias.

Indian cinema2 as defined by Encyclopedia Britannica (2009) is about “formulaic story lines, expertly choreographed fight scenes, spectacular song-and-dance routines, emotion-charged melodrama, and larger-than-life heroes”. It contains aspects of utopian representations such as usage of formulae (scripts) containing utopian elements, fantasy based poetry (Jennings 2003), romanticism and a sense of emotion. Indian cinema, cutting across consumers from different communities, income levels and demographics, acts as an appropriate site for the research theme. The movies based on utopian themes are divided across time. A content analysis of seven most popular (critically and fiscally) movie (for every decade—from 1950 to 2010) is performed. An initial qualitative analysis (Gestalt interpretation) of movies (segregated over time) is done using literary criticism (Inden 1999 and examining the films as texts—similar to works such as Belk (1987). The keywords derived from the qualitative analysis are coded and blind reviewed. A statistical analysis of keyword frequencies is performed to analyze intra- and inter-decade producer-consumer dynamic response for utopian content. In order to understand the participatory culture of fans—a Netnography is performed towards analyzing the emerging trends of increasing participation in lives of stars (often viewed as utopia personified). The findings of the study are presented with respect to the discussed research themes.

Preliminary Findings

The growing variety in acceptance of films (as entertainment products) depicts distinct consumers’ utopias—co-existing at the same time. The successful films during the early decades of 1950-60 mainly dealt with the popular belief of perfect world which reflected utopian pluralism via two states—victory of virtue over money (Mother India, Awara, Shree 420, Mera Naam Joker) and facets of romance in an orthodox society (Sangam, Guide, Mughal-e-Azam). With changing times, pluralism became quite evident as consumers’ choice for utopia echoed in success of films involving—post-liberalization land of equal wealth for all (Deewar, Trishul–1970s). Participatory culture (analyzed via netnography) of fans as stardom (from Rajnikant, 1970 to Aamir Khan, 2010) consumers has moved from offline meetings to online fan communities and twitter following—thus identifying new places for consuming personification of utopia. Romanticism and Personification of utopia has been carried by actors such as Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar (in 1960s), Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bacchan (1970s) to Ranbir Kapoor and Shahrukh Khan (post millennium). The research in progress analyzes finer elements of proposed theme towards providing new insights to the time-bound changes in consumer utopia based on private and collective dreams.

2Indian Cinema is existent since 1913. Famously called as Bollywood, it is the largest film industry in the World. It produces 300-400 entertainment products (or movies) every year.
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More to Loathe than to Love? The Reinforcement and Contestation of Stigma in the Reality T.V. Show “More to Love”
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Abstract
Stigma is a powerful phenomenon that, in many ways, places specific groups of consumers at the outskirts of the marketplace. Nevertheless, there are products and services which may appear to seek to confront stigmas while depending for their very the existence
on the continued stigmatization of groups of consumers. We aim to understand how consumers negotiate the paradox of products for which the stigma is necessary, yet contested through an examination of the logics that are shared by and unique to the various factions of consumers reacting to the reality television show More to Love.

Agency, Objects and the Dead: Can Consumer Culture Speak?
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Whereas the man in the Middle Ages were “very acutely conscious that he had merely been granted a stay of execution, that this delay would be a brief one, and that death was always present within him...” (Ariés, 1976: 45), death in the twentieth century has become the greatest taboo, out of step with an essentially death-fearing culture. A paradox arises: whilst the post-modern man or woman is deeply consumerist, he or she is also ambivalent about how to dispose of the objects of those who have died. The act, art and science of death-disposal of objects becomes a source of considerable anxiety for the consumerist families that are left behind.

How do we treat the objects of someone who has died? When someone dies, they leave their goods and material possessions behind them, and it then falls to others to assume responsibility for disposal or redeployment. And it is usually those material possessions that the deceased actively resisted inevitable disposal and decay while alive which retain the most significance and symbolic value for the living.

All people die and when they are dead their rights of ownership cease to be enforceable. Indeed their rights of ownership of their own materiality—of their body—cease to exist and it is therefore inconceivable to imagine how the wishes of the dead in relation to their possessions could be anything other than a vicarious legacy for others to either fulfil of disregard. Of course not all goods that were cherished by the deceased are valued by their inheritors and visa versa. It is perfectly possible to imagine a situation in which objects that were held with little regard or value by now deceased owners can come to assume particular significance for those coming into their possession. Likewise possessions that were important to people prior to death can and often are considered worthless by their new owners.

To what extent do the dead exercise agency over the objects they leave behind? And how do the living exert their influence over the objects they choose to accompany the dead they bury or cremate? The agency of these objects is scarcely explored by consumer culture theory. Death objects are a class of goods which have some kind of coherent permanence and presence beyond the boundaries of their owner’s inevitable mortality. They are objects that were once loved, more or less, but become orphaned. And yet, it can be argued that these ‘death objects’ do not die a natural death like they would in pre-modern times. One feature of contemporary mass consumption is that people acquire much more—and thus leave behind much more—than those that lived before them.

The requirement to dispose and distribute the accumulated goods of the dead is therefore a singularly significant feature of modern life. It is difficult to determine exactly what those near to death think about the accumulated material for which they are responsible. There is limited research on this, at least in the consumer research canon.

Examples of measured and planned- for divestment of material possessions after death (Miller, 2008) only illustrate further the perceived anxieties that one’s material remains can and do create unless managed and co-ordinated in some way.

Based on our provisional in-depth narrative interviews with the recently bereaved, it is clear that the possessions of the deceased assume different types of meanings and significance than those they were endowed with in life. The living relate to the objects of the dead in contradictory ways: while there is evidence that the death taboo is alive and well, there is also a new kind of materialistic discourse surrounding death objects which is akin to the commodity-fetish. Another set of interviews with ‘death service-providers’ reflects, and also sheds light on, the commodification of desire: ashes into diamonds, luxury coffins, customised crystal and glass jewellery, gold carriages, dove displays, elaborate and expensive memorials and so on. A new discourse about the agency, the ‘voice’ and ‘desires’ of the dead person(s) emerges from our findings. Is this discourse evidence that the living are intent upon erasing the marginalisation and criminalization of the dead or, on the contrary, further proof that postmodern men and women are so divorced from death that we feel we need to speak on its behalf?

Douglas and Isherwood (1978) famously described how goods serve to make stable and visible categories of culture, and death-object-relations make stable and visible categories of death culture. All value is placed on life, and as a corollary only the living are entitled to exercise material value and ownership. It is not simply a case of recognising that it is not normal to be dead, but further, that it is a crime to be dead, a crime for which one is punished for, by having one’s goods and possessions taken away, one’s assets frozen and seized, and one’s consumer rights removed. It was not always thus. Kellner (1989: 103) writes:

Things were quite different, Baudrillard claims, in other societies. In so called primitive societies there was no real distinction between life and death. One lived with the dead—their spirits, memories and achievements—and was early on initiated into the realm of the dead oneself, dying a symbolic death and being reborn into a symbolic world in which there was no difference between life and death. In these societies, symbolic exchange between life and death continuously took place, with gifts and ceremonies honouring the dead and favours or hostilities being visited on the living by the dead.

Is a ‘good death’ for the contemporary consumer, then, a gesture of defiance against modernity and a postmodern reaction to reclaim one’s death rights? If so, who speaks on its behalf? How can Consumer Culture speak about the desire to decriminalize death and the dead, to re-appropriate the agency of the objects of the dead and thus to reassert one’s rights to one’s own material wealth and symbolic value in death, and, ultimately, to acknowledge objects as agents to be revered, respected and cherished after death?

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“Written Just for Me?! The Role of Consumer-Related Factors in the Persuasiveness of Personalized Communication

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of personalized email newsletters in terms of increased attention, processing, attitude, intention, and behavior by means of an experiment (N=194). Participants randomly received either a newsletter containing one of three personalization strategies (identification, raising expectation of personalization, and contextualization) or a nonpersonalized one. Neither of the personalized messages was found to be superior to a standard message. However, a comparison of the personalization strategies showed that they were effective for different stages of the persuasion process, and the effects were moderated by consumers’ need for uniqueness, trust, and privacy concerns.

Does the Distribution-Sales Relationship Differ Between Channels and Countries? An Empirical Analysis

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Although it is intuitive that retailers should increase coverage of products that are selling well, it is somewhat less intuitive that retailers should take the risk of increasing coverage before sales increases have materialized in an effort to push these products on consumers. We use a simultaneous equation model to analyze sales and distribution coverage of two brands of an innovative new consumer durable in competing types of distribution channels in four European countries in order to examine whether retailers in different countries make their coverage decisions for a new durable product in the same ways.

A Typology of Consumption Value: Teasing out the Unique Properties of Utilitarian, Symbolic, Experiential, and Aesthetic Consumption Qualities

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In response to ambiguous and unclear conceptualization of well-known perspectives on consumption value, this research develops a typology of consumption. Based on a reading of relevant literature, essentially two dimensions give themselves-the purpose of the value and the nature of its attributes. In terms of purpose, value can be defined with respect to its ability to serve as means to some further ends versus its ability to serve as an end in itself. In terms of attribute nature, the attributes providing the value can be either immediately available for judgment through the consumers’ perceptual receptors or they may need to be construed in order to be judged properly.

(Key words: Consumption value, typology, utilitarian, symbolic, experiential, aesthetic)

Although consumers still, and to a considerable extent, derive value from bundles of attributes in terms of their ability to provide utility in relation to a consumers’ particular goal, other sources of value have been identified. Both symbolic and experiential or hedonic consumption have emerged and are now household names in the domain of consumer research, and more recently, the aesthetic aspects of consumption are receiving increased attention among consumer researchers. Unfortunately, these concepts are understood in diverse and sometimes overlapping ways.

This proposed research therefore seeks to identify unique categories of consumption value, including aesthetic value, that are distinguishable from one another and presumably have differential effect on consumer behavior. The current research develops a typology of consumption value bottom-up. Essentially, two dimensions present themselves, the purpose of the value (quality) and the nature of its attributes. In terms of purpose, value can be defined with respect to an object’s ability to serve as means to some further ends and its ability to serve as an end in itself. In terms of attribute nature, the attributes providing the value can be either immediately available for judgment through the perceptual receptors or they may need to be construed in order to be judged properly.

UTILITARIAN VALUE

Utilitarian value refers to something’s value as determined by its use or function. In this perspective, an object has utilitarian value to the extent that consumer find it useful to accomplish a goal they might have and the consumer’s endeavors are motivated by this extrinsic goal (Bettman 1979; Ratchford 1975).
A typical example of such value is the value a consumer obtains from taking allergy medicine in order to lessen bodily reactions to pollen. In this respect, utilitarian value is assessed against the underlying object’s ability to serve as a means to accomplish the end goal for the consumer. On the purpose dimension then, utilitarian value is a means to some further end.

Along the second dimension—attribute nature, the utilitarian perspective on consumption suggests that objects provide value or utility on the basis of their relatively objective and concrete features (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982).

**SYMBOLIC VALUE**

Symbolic value refers to the ability of a consumption object to, beyond the tangible, physical characteristics of material objects, carry cultural and personal meanings (Holt 1995; Levy 1959; Sirgy 1982). For example, if you consume artefacts because such objects classify you as culturally apt or rich in social capital the value of the underlying object is symbolic. In this respect, the underlying object functions as a social tool, serving as a means of communication between the individual and his significant references (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). Like utilitarian value, symbolic value is also defined in relation to some end or outcome. In particular, symbolic value is instrumental (means) in classifying consumers in desirable social strata and roles or providing a certain self-image (ends).

Unlike utilitarian value, however, symbolic value is not directly obtained from the physical attributes of the object, but rather built on non-product related or extrinsic entities, such as social groups or ego-identification (Keller 1993; Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason 1993), that consumers use to express who they are and who they are not. Instead of being taken at face value, product attributes are recoded into cultural meaning and or/social symbols (McCracken 1986) and the relationship between the underlying products’ physical attributes and the brands’ benefits are obscured or even vanishes (some brands of sunglasses comes without protection against ultra-violate radiation). Hence, along the second dimension in the proposed typology, symbolic value is classified as based on construed or cultivated attributes.

**EXPERIENTIAL VALUE**

The experiential or hedonic view of consumption suggests that a product has value to the extent that it offers enjoyment and evokes pleasurable feelings (Klinger 1971). As indicated by its name, the experiential view of consumption suggests that the consumption experience itself is important to consumers (cf. Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). According to this view, consumption must be seen not only as a means to some further end (e.g., exogenously given needs or desires, goals, etc.), but also as pleasurable in itself. When you indulge yourself with an ice cream, for example, you are likely to relate to the experiential aspect of the ice cream.

This intrinsic evaluation of consumption simultaneously distinguishes experiential value from utilitarian and symbolic value. By emphasizing the inherent qualities of consumption objects, this view suggests that products and services are satisfying in themselves. This implies that consumers seek products or services for their experiential aspects such as fun and sensory stimulation.

Experiential consumption is often contrasted with utilitarian consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Mano and Oliver 1993; Okada 2005). The major difference between the two is that whereas utilitarian consumption, as discussed above, is outcome referent, experiential consumption is pleasing in itself and it is product referent. An experiential motivation for watching television can then lie in the mere pleasure of the multisensory experience allowed for by your home theatre equipment rather than, say, a need for updating knowledge in some particular area (i.e. a utilitarian motive).

Like utilitarian, but unlike symbolic value, experiential value is directly available from the consumption object’s attributes. The positive states derive from direct and multisensory interaction with the product which in turn generates emotional arousal (Batra and Ahtola 1990; Holt 1995; Mano and Oliver 1993). Related to emotions, experiential value is more immediate than symbolic value, which must be construed through social and cultural processes.

**AESTHETIC VALUE**

An aesthetic judgment is one in which the subject reports a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on their experience with an object. It is the subject’s assessment of whether the object is pleasurable or not. Fundamental to aesthetic analysis in the philosophy of taste (Beadsley 1966) and an underlying reference for much consumer research involving aesthetics (Hirschman 1983; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Holbrook and Zirlin 1985; Veryzer 1993; Veryzer and Hutchinson 1998) is Immanuel Kant’s aesthetic theory (Kant 1790/1951). Kant’s perspective suggests that the aesthetic judgment made when a subject reports an experience of delight in the view of a certain object, is based on a “free interplay” between the stimuli of information perceived in the object and the conceptual representation of this information in memory (Allison 2001; Crawford 1974; Förster 2000). Aesthetic liking is the liking associated with this interplay.

Like experiential value, but unlike utilitarian and symbolic value, aesthetic value is determined by its ability to provide self-reward. The value of listening to music, for example, stems primarily from pleasant feeling or enjoyment the consumer gets from experiencing the music.

The satisfaction or feeling produced in the aesthetic judgment is disinterested, i.e., it does not produce a desire or interest in possession (Kant 1790/1951). That means that in making an aesthetic judgment, the subject takes no interest in the functioning of the object neither as she believes others perceive it, nor as she perceives it herself (Beadsley 1966).

Unlike utilitarian and experiential value, but like symbolic value, aesthetic value is found in the construed attributes of an object. Aesthetic liking, characterized by an attention to the intrinsic organization of the object’s various components irrespective of any extrinsic criterion such as consumption goals, is known as “purposiveness without a purpose” and makes the aesthetic judgment a gestalt-type judgment. Gestalts concern properties that are intrinsically determined as being part of a whole or a pattern, rather than being extrinsically determined (Katz 1950; Koffka 1935; Köhler 1929; Wertheimer 1938).

An important distinction between experiential and aesthetic judgment is that the former is associated with emotions and the latter with cognition. Sense-based judgments totally bypass cognition because sensation is directly linked to perception. They can therefore not be reflective and cognitive. Conversely, the aesthetic judgments, with which Kant is concerned, do involve cognition. Although it is the process of cognition rather than the result of it that is important, the judgment of taste is based on cognition. In judgments of taste, it is the cognitive activity of comparison that produces aesthetic pleasure.
REFERENCES

Imagined Brands in Global Brand Culture: China and the Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony
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Extended Abstract
Explorations in brand culture suggest: “If brands exist as cultural, ideological, and political objects, then brand researchers require tools developed to understand culture, politics, and ideology, in conjunction with more typical branding concepts, such as equity, strategy and value” (Schroeder & Salzer-Mörling, 2006). This paper looks at China’s paths toward the Olympics especially the opening ceremony.
in the context of China’s image and the international response from a cultural, socio-political perspective. We aim to reveal whether or not the Beijing Olympics, especially for the opening ceremony, represents the reality of China and further how the imagined China would be understood in coming decades by global consumers, politicians, academics, and managers both in China and abroad.

We challenge popular responses of some global consumers’ and media toward the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony as a singularly positive communication of Chinese national pride, sometimes evoking criticism regarding Chinese political issues. Under this circumstance, we adapted Anderson’s theory of “imagined community” (1996; Cayla and Eckhardt 2008) to conceptualize an imagined China as a way to interpret the “real China”. The imagined China is seen as a brand and a culture. Brand culture refers to “the cultural codes of brands–history, images, myths, art, theatre—that influence brand meaning and value in the marketplace” (Schroder 2009; p124). However, this paper challenges this definition and conceptualizes brand culture as all the activities and behaviours related to brands that not merely influence brand meaning and value, but also infuse culture with new meaning; and hence a new culture comes into being that contributes to the global brand culture, which can be seen to encompass consumer culture. In this respect, previous research often focused upon the influences of culture and history on brands (e.g., Borgerson and Schroeder 2003; Holt 2004; Cayla and Arnould 2009; Cayla and Eckhardt 2008; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling 2006). We argue that brand culture goes further than recognizing the roles that culture, in various guises, can play for brands and in branding processes. Rather, brands and branding participate in processes of creating culture. This paper considers brands and culture co-creatively. Further, the recent trend within global markets is increasing global cultural convergence and a need for local cultural differentiation (de Mooij 2003). In China’s context, we look at how the local brand emerges in the global arena, including the in-depth interpretation of local differentiation and global convergence through the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.

This paper employs both interviews with China-based consumers and managers and data from global media coverage of the Beijing Olympics. An interpretive analysis approach was followed including on-line, telephone, and face to face interviews; email correspondence; and visual analysis of the opening ceremony. Across methods, our questions were phrased to elicit global audiences’ discourses of the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony and imagined China. A total of 13 informants, including CEOs, brand managers, and consumers were involved in semi-structured interviews over a period of eight months. The interviews lasted between 40 and 75 minutes and were conducted both in English and Chinese, with translation from Chinese into English. Further, we have drawn upon interviews from global key media reports, such as CRI (China Radio International), Financial Times, The New York Times and etc.

With the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games on the evening of August 8th, 2008, the lavish display of cultural history by Chinese Film director Zhang Yimou, totally impressed, if not amazed, global audiences for its creativity, scale and complexity (Latham, 2009). A majority of global consumers conceived of the opening ceremony as the real representation of the imagined China— including economic creativity, cultural unity, political skill in harmonizing society and social fragmentation and multiplicity, and the emergence of marked differences of wealth, education, lifestyle, consumption patterns and media use across class, generational, gender, ethnic, linguistic, rural-urban and regional divides after the period of China’s adopting reform and opening-up policy.

The “real” China is expressed by the imagined cultural community with description of the historical Chinese culture as nostalgia and authenticity, as identity project construction and as dialectic image creation. Further, the real China is pictured by the imagined modern community with explanation of the modernity as against the “backward” image, as new modern China with the advanced technology, the historical culture reconstructed in modern life, and less political-centered community. However, some western journalists, despite to some degree silenced by the effective organization, massive technology, and impressive culture of the ceremony display, nevertheless attempted to unveil the “real” China behind apparent state propaganda, and official deception of the public through Olympic “fakery.” On this account, the not “real” China of the imagined China is illustrated through the opening ceremony.

Nevertheless, the Chinese government asked the western media to understand the circumstances of China’s uniqueness. Consequently, this paper indicates the use of the culture or history as recourse to developing a global brand through the expression of modernity, through maintaining the global convergence with the Olympics ritual and the expression of China’s modernity while focusing on the distinctive features of ancient Chinese culture, refigured with advanced technology and expressed in modern life. An open platform for discussion, thus controversial arguments and debate, between competing representations, understandings and identifications of China bring into discussion, and therefore infuse the imagined China with, new meaning and create a new culture where managerial staff, global consumers, and media are cultural actors.

Consumption, Ethnicity and Tensions in Non-Western Contexts: An Exploration of the Kabyle Minority in Algeria

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Introduction

In this paper, we propose to decipher how consumers live strong cultural, political and economic changes in transitional economies. Especially, we do focus on Kabyle ethnic minority group acculturation/ resistance to very recent exogamic marriages in Algeria. Algeria was a former French department (1830-1962) that experienced a socialist regime (until the 1990s) and the construction of a Nationalist Arabo-Islamic collective project as a firm reaction to the French Colonization. The rise of a consumer society since a decade (a capitalization turn) is then very recent and challenges social positions, identity projects and local practices. Within this context, we investigate the Kabyle sub-culture in particular. Kabyle people are a sub-group of a larger ethnic group named Berbers widespread across North of Africa, sharing their own language (Tamzight). Basically, it is a Mediterranean sociolinguistic group that faces a cultural assimilation (Arabic and French) as well as a mutation of its social organization. We propose in this paper to interpret tensions that occur in this minority that just opened up to Arab/ Kabyle mixed marriages. We choose marriage as a normative event that gives access to understanding identity negotiations.
Marriage “is not and has never been, and cannot be a private issue” (Levi-Strauss, 2002). It is driven by cultural and economic considerations. Then, marriage depends on some objectives that a society might manage to achieve through endogamy or exogamy. In the Kabyle context, starting the 17th century, local assemblies (Djemaa) did forbid both women and men to marry people outside their community (endogamy rule) otherwise they would not be eligible for heritage. This was in order to avoid the dislocation of lands and of the region. By studying the current period of a shift from endogamous to exogamous weddings in Kabyle sub-culture this research aims understanding how consumption mediates Kabyle identity projects.

Methodology
This paper is part of an ethnographic research on acculturation in Algeria. Authors collected data through participant observation, interviews and past/present wedding pictures. One of the authors did attend 16 weddings in Algeria (from preparation to ceremony). Marriages under study represent a “qualitative diversity” (Schwarz, 1990, p 41) rather a representative sample, couples having very diverse backgrounds, being between 23 and 42, living in Kabylia region or in Algiers. A two step analysis was performed: 1/ an interpretive approach followed Spiggle (1994) recommendations; 2/ A structural semiotic approach performed to capture the meaning of hundreds of wedding visuals’ from the 70s until now (Greimas & Courtès, 1986. Floch 1990, 1995).

Findings
Tensions Related to the Exogamic Marriages. Many conflicts were expressed. Most of the time, filiation issues were raised. An external alliance was lived as a rupture in the transmission of the Kabyle identity. 2 dimensions were greatly evoked by informants.

Language. Basically, the fact that Kabyle male choose Arab spouses is seen as problematic in terms defense and perpetuation of the Kabyle identity through language. Assumed is that language is mothers first competence. In the context of an oral culture, language is a central issue and the couple is a mean to maintain the persistence of the group which contrasts with the modern idea of couples as being the result of individual reflexive projects (Giddens, 1992). Women are then “guardians of the temple”. It is significant that in the case of our 16 marriages under study, none of the women did choose an Arab husband. Kabyle Women (even the youngest) seem to perpetuate endogamic rules.

Physical Difference. Another dimension of the filiation issue is related to physical appearance. Kabyle perceive themselves as physically distinct from the Arabs and basically much like Mediterranean (European) people.

Especially, all mothers whose sons married Arab women explicitly formulated physical appearance as an obstacle and tried to convince their son to renounce. Less than racism, we might interpret this as a fear of cultural dilution crystallized in the appearance issue. Also, the fear of negative critique by the community orient those reactions. The notion of clan in the Kabyle community is firmly internalized even by very educated people.

Yet those filiation elements were also paired with two other critical social dimensions that emerged from the field: customs/Islamic representations and social status.

Customs and Islamic Representations. Exogamic marriages were often a starting point to shift family discussions to debates on national identity projects expressing the fear of reinforcement of Arabo-Islamic ideology as a threat to the Kabyle existence. Some informants point out a less rigorous practice of Islam among the Kabyle.

For us it’s always a problem we never know exactly how to behave… (N., Female, 42)

Issues of risks of standardization of some behaviors like the separation of men and women during certain events therefore to respect the new allied families were raised during ceremonies preparation. Informants acknowledge that no one could resist the religious weighty argument, morality vs. freedom being a massive tension.

Also, customs specific to Arabs, their high level of spoken Arabic, or intense practice of Islam provoke anxieties among some Kabyle families that confide being lost in the interaction with the other side.

You see the table next to us all women wear scarves that’s an issue, really… even though M. does not wear it, I am disappointed with her family I am afraid of future problems. (M., Male, 65)

Social Status. Classic issues of social status were clearly raised and speak again of marriage as still being considered as a group/ alliance issue rather than an individual choice.

Basically, when the bride was both Arab and from a lower class position, tensions were at stake. Also, as Algeria is in a period of transition, tensions exist between families with similar economic capital but with very opposite lifestyles: French Heritage vs. Arabo-Islamic ideology. Finally, in some cases, Kabyle/ Arab tensions are diminished within a same traditional intelligentsia that emphasize modern codes especially in terms gender representations.

Those deep tensions will help going further informing our interpretations of consumption and ethnicity issues in non-western contexts as they lack theorisations in our field. Post-Post Colonial positions seem to be appropriated by Kabyle consumers to resist against a refashioned (“Arab/ Dominant group”) acculturation process-driven by the new flow of capital, goods, signs and human beings in Algeria.

Selected References
Most work on violence in media has focused on the negative effects of exposure. Yet little research has examined why violent content should be appealing. The current work investigates the idea that it is not the violence, per se, that is appealing, but rather the depiction of domination by the protagonist. We further investigate the idea that the violence can actually lower enjoyment due to the violation of norms of appropriate behavior. We test these ideas in two studies that manipulate domination and violence (Study 1) and the applicability of relevant social norms (Study 2).

Nearly all of the work on violent media has focused on the negative effects of exposure, with frequent calls to restrict its availability.
Much of this work, however, appears to overlook the popularity of such media. Violent video games, for example, account for nearly forty percent of sales in an industry that is now larger than the film industry (Entertainment Software Association 2009). Six of the top ten grossing movies in 2008 included notable violent content (IMDb 2010), and seventy percent of the most commonly viewed television contains violent content (National Television Violence Study 1998). In short, while much research has investigated the consequences of exposure to violent media, very little has examined why it should be so appealing.

The current work aims to investigate one potential cause of the appeal of fictionalized violence–dominance. Violent depictions in popular media often involve the physical domination of one party by another. Research in evolutionary psychology and fundamental human motivations support the idea that there are likely intrinsic rewards associated with physical domination, especially for men. In ancestral environments, males that could physically dominate other males would gain preferential access to limited resources. The selection of related physical traits, especially size and strength, are obvious in the sexual dimorphism that exists between males and females. We would also expect the selection of corresponding psychological characteristics that foster such behaviors–namely, a need for dominance. In short, we believe that one important reason for the appeal of violent media stems from its close link to domination.

We further argue that the actual violence in media (the physical harm inflicted on one individual by another) may not be appealing at all. Sparks, Sherry, and Lubsen (1995), for example, found that a popular movie was enjoyed no less after all violent content was removed; and Hansen (1990) found that violent content in a music video actually lowered its appeal. Zillmann (1998) has further argued that violence is actually distressing to most individuals.

We agree that the harm inherent in violent depictions is likely to inspire largely negative reactions, but we would add that this is likely moderated by the extent to which the violence violates prescriptions based on relevant social norms. That is, violence that does not obviously violate social norms is likely to be less aversive than violence that does. Even so, we would not expect such violence to inspire positive reactions per se. In short, we investigate the possibility that reactions to violent depictions are generally negative. This effect should be mitigated when the violence is not considered inappropriate. Moreover, violence that conveys domination by the favored character may even inspire positive reactions (at least in male viewers).

Overall, the current work is designed to investigate the idea that violent depictions can be appealing, at least for men, when they culminate in protagonist domination. We also explore the idea that the violence itself is unappealing, primarily because it violates social norms of appropriate behavior. We conducted two studies to test these ideas. In the first, we manipulated the violence and protagonist domination depicted in a clip from a violent video game. In the second, we examined reactions to a scenario describing a violent incident across individuals and contexts where we expected different social norms to apply.

Study 1 was a 3 (Violence: No violence vs. Violence and High Protagonist Dominance vs. Violence and Low Protagonist Dominance) x 2 (Gender) between-subjects factorial design. Participants viewed one of three video clips constructed by the authors using footage from teaser-trailers, in-game cut scenes, and actual gameplay for a recently-released videogame. Clips were constructed by adding different additional footage to a common two and half minute non-violent segment. In each case, one minute of additional footage was interspersed that contained either non-violent footage, violent footage where the protagonist dominated (High Dominance), or violent footage where the protagonist was dominated (Low Dominance). The latter two clips were designed to be equally violent. The final clips used the same 30 second introduction, had a common soundtrack, and were three and half minutes long. The primary dependent variable was attitude towards the videogame (measured by five items, α=.93).

ANOVA revealed main effects of both Gender and Violence and an interaction between the two (Fs(1, 154)=52.01, 3.90, and 3.36, ps<.001, .05, and .05). While men liked the game more than women (Ms=4.02 vs. 2.71), follow-up analyses within gender revealed that women liked the game less when it contained any violence (Mf_No_Violence=3.19 vs. Mf_High_Dominance=3.56 vs. Mf_Low_Dominance=2.60; post-hoc analyses revealed that only the first mean differed from each of the other two), whereas men liked the game less only when the protagonist was dominated (Ms=4.16 vs. 4.34 vs. 3.56; only the latter mean differed from each of the former two). Consistent with predictions, violent content did appear to lower attitudes, except in men when the violence portrayed high levels of protagonist domination.

Study 2 was a 2 (Situation: Real Life vs. Video Game) x 2 (Gamer Status: Regular Gamer vs. Non-Gamer) between-subjects factorial design in which participants were asked to read a brief description of a violent encounter that was ostensibly taken from either a newspaper article (Real Life) or a scene from a video game. Participants were categorized as gamers if they reported playing video games once a month or more (45%), and non-gamers if they indicated they played rarely or never (55%). The primary dependent variable was the extent to which participants considered the behavior acceptable (measured by four items, α=.82).

ANOVA revealed main effects of both the Situation and Gamer Status and an interaction between the two (Fs(1, 93)=97.16, 14.49, and 5.29, ps<.001, .001, and .05). Follow-up analyses showed that gamers found the behavior more acceptable than non-gamers in the context of a video game (Ms=4.24 vs. 2.79; F(1, 93)=20.37, ps<.001), but not in real life (Ms=1.36 vs. 1.00; F(1, 93)=1.05, p>.30), suggesting that gamers held different norms for acceptable fictionalized behavior than non-gamers, but that these norms did not influence the norms they applied to actual behavior.

References
How Brand Attitude and Loyalty Are Affected by Co-branding Types: The Role of Brand Identification

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Extended Abstract
An understanding of consumer identity (i.e., self-definition, Leary and Tangney 2003) is important in marketing because, if the consumer identifies with the brand, the consumer may feel that the brand is part of his or her lived world and feel an attachment with the brand (Mittal, 2006).

In these areas of inquiry, consumer identity construction typically involves the use of single brands. But, what if two brands are co-branded, providing a congruent or different combination of meaning which might result in a challenge to the identity project of the consumer? Co-branding entails combining two parent brands to create a single product or service (Leuthesser et al., 2003). The literature suggests that two brands’ concepts, which mainly refers to social status, need to be consistent in co-branding (Park et al., 1991). However, a brand’s identity value has much richer meaning than social status. For example, Apple’s innovative and unique culture helps to reflect more than social status, but a type of consumer identity. Though a constellation of products can be associated with similar social roles (Englis and Solomon 1995), each brand has its own identity value and culture meaning. Therefore, I propose that the congruency between the emotional, symbolic, spiritual and cultural meaning of two brands is a critical factor in influencing the success of co-branding. The goal of this research is to study how consumers perceive a brand’s identity value change in co-branding, which in turn influences their attitude and loyalty.

There are two branding strategies that aim to enact different identity values. The first one is emotional branding, which provides a resource of cultural meanings that help consumers to develop “emotional-based” identity (e.g., Macintosh (Mac) computers). Another one is conventional benefit-driven, attribute-oriented branding (e.g., Intel), which usually supplies “functional-based identity” that consumers draw on to enact their corresponding identity. Emotional branding is widely heralded as a key to marketing success and it helps to build strong consumer-brand relationship (Gobe, 2001). Thus my paper mainly focuses on emotional brands in two co-branding types (i.e., emotional-emotional and emotional-functional).

It is proposed that different co-branding types influence consumers’ attitude towards the brand alliance, attitude towards the emotional brand, and the loyalty of the emotional brand. And this effect is moderated by consumers’ identification with the emotional brand. Identification means the perception of oneness with or belongingness to the brand (Ashforth and Mael 1989). It is introduced as individuals attach different importance to a brand’s identity value. For those who are highly identified with an emotional brand, they are not happy with any co-branding type which might change or dilute the desired identity value. After all, a cool brand is nothing if not exclusive (Ebenkamp 1999), especially when the functional brand brings an undesirable mundane, commercial flavor. Thus, attitude towards the brand alliance and the emotional brand are more damaged when the emotional brand is co-branded with a functional one than with another emotional one as identified consumers feel that the cultural meaning is invaded and transgressed by a mundane brand. However, loyalty of the emotional brand does not change much as the relational bond is stronger for identified consumers (e.g., Elnwiller et al., 2006). In contrast, for consumers who are lowly identified with the emotional brand, they tend to think about the functional benefits, rather than the cultural meaning of the co-branding. As emotional-emotional co-branding delivers identity value at the abstract spiritual level, lowly identified consumers may not appreciate this alliance as the added functional benefits are not clear. Therefore, their attitude of the alliance, attitude and loyalty of the emotional brand decrease when the brand is co-branded with an emotional brand than with a functional one.

In an exploratory study, I conducted six semi-structured interviews of loyal Apple Mac users (basic themes can present themselves within six interviews, Guest et al., 2006) and used a netnography method to understand whether consumer identity can even be challenged in co-branding. Specifically, this paper drew on the co-branding of Apple Mac computers and Intel as the research site. Apple is an emotional brand (Belk and Tumbat 2002) whereas Intel’s processors are functional, basic and uncool business materials (Ritson 2006). Consistent with the proposed theory, the informants’ comments reflected the co-branding’s threats to their identity, which resulted in the feelings of being humiliated and beaten. Mac users once prided themselves as being different from PC users. But now Apple’s identity value was impaired by sharing similarity with PCs as Macs and PCs both run Intel.

Next, an experiment was designed to test how identification moderates the relationship between the co-branding type and attitude and loyalty of the emotional brand. The study was a 2 (co-branding type: emotional-emotional versus emotional-functional) design with a measured factor: identification (high versus low). The emotional-functional vs. emotional-emotional co-branding were Apple with Intel vs. Apple with Nintendo. Nintendo is an emotional brand in that it represents a culture of being cool, cute, clever, challenging, active and trendy (Borden, 2001). Eighty four current Apple users participated in the study. First they were asked to indicate their identification with Apple on 5 items (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). Based on a median split, participants were subsequently categorized as either high or low in identification. Next, they read a short paragraph about the co-branding of Apple with Intel (or Nintendo). They rated their understanding of each brand's cultural meaning, the fit between brands (adapted from Aaker and Keller 1990) and wrote down thoughts. Then, they rated their attitudes of the brand alliance and Apple and the loyalty of Apple (5 items adapted from You and Donthu 2001). Manipulation checks showed the cultural meaning of Nintendo was significantly higher than Intel.

Results indicated that there were significant interactions between co-branding types and identification on attitude towards the brand alliance, attitude towards Apple and loyalty of Apple (F(1, 80)=6.31, 6.13, and 3.6, p<0.05, p<0.05, and p<1). Specifically, attitude of the brand alliance, attitude of Apple and loyalty decreased when co-branding changed from the emotional-functional to the emotional-emotional when the identification was low (attitudes: M=1.93 vs. 72, 1.94 vs. .47, F(1, 80)=6.86 and 13.9, p<0.05; loyalty: M=5.06 vs. 4.07, F(1, 80)=6.96, p<0.05). The pattern was reversed when the identification was high (attitudes: M=.98 vs. 1.45; 1.56 vs. 1.50; F<1, p>.05; loyalty: M=5.48 vs. 5.52, F<1, p>.05).
The paper makes several contributions. Theoretically and practically, the paper introduces identity value congruency as an important factor that influences the success of co-branding. Highly identified consumers favor emotional-emotional co-branding whereas lowly identified ones like the emotional-functional ones more. And loyalty of the emotional brand is more robust for highly identified consumers when co-branding types change.

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Producers Consuming: Marketer Identity and the Creation of the Themed Retail Environment

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Extended Abstract

This paper reports an 18-month ethnographic study in Irish pubs in Toronto, Canada, to investigate identity creation processes in this socio-commercial space. However, rather than look solely at consumers’ identity projects in this space we take a less conventional step and cast the producer in the role of consumer; to investigate ways in which they use objects of consumption in the task of identity performance. Drawing from research on identity and co-creation we investigate how pub owner/manager undertake the marketing process, how the displays and practices that constitute the pub are informed by the marketer’s identity, how customer’s actions and reactions shape the pub, and how the particular, situated Irish pub cultures are produced. The Irish pub itself is not the unit of analysis; rather it is a very useful context to study up close how marketers’ identity projects meet consumers’ co-creation processes to create unique outcomes.

A large body of consumer research developed around finding ways in which consumers of every ilk use material and symbolic resources offered by the marketplace in their identity projects. Indeed, one of the cornerstones of CCT research is to investigate the co-constitutive, co-productive ways in which consumers work with marketer-generated materials to build diversified and contextually fragmented senses of self (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Objects of consumption are regarded not as cultural blueprints, but as marketer-produced symbolic cultural resources that consumers can use in an inimitable manner to produce the self one chooses (Holt 2002).

The idea of the active, empowered and productive consumer is also evident in research on co-creation (e.g., Vargo and Lusch 2004). In both, the role of the firm becomes diminished to a mere facilitator of consumer experiences rather than as a playful, industrious, creative agent like the consumer. We show this is not always the case as by giving due consideration to the many personal, social and cultural factors that constitute marketers’ lifeworlds we see how our informants produce a retail experience tied closely to their identity projects. Paraphrasing Arnould and Thompson (2005) [above] we also show how, on the one hand producers, like consumers, work with marketer-generated materials to build diversified and contextually fragmented senses of self, while on the other this constructed sense of self can inform or permeate the actual market offering available to consumers.

As well as a focus on co-creation we further incorporate two strands of organization identity literature. The first, termed organizational identity, deals with the socially agreed-upon understanding of central, enduring and distinctive features that constitutes the organization (Albert and Whetten 1985). For members of an organization it deals with the question asked of insiders, ‘who we are as an organization?’ However, it is not simply an internally determined concept, but also comprises interactions and inter-relationships between insiders and outsiders, and insider perceptions of outsider impressions. This necessitates an organization’s continuous formulation and
presentation of itself through ongoing processes of interaction with multiple stakeholders such as customers, media, and competitors (Ashforth and Mael 1996; Dutton and Dukerich 1991).

The second type, known loosely as ‘identity work,’ focuses on individuals’ active construction of identity in social contexts—how people negotiate issues surrounding self in organizational settings (e.g., Alvesson, Ashcraft and Thomas 2008). It refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of self (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). While this differs from the focus on the organizational-level Organizational Identity, we demonstrate that the particular nature of marketer identity, particularly in a context where the identity of the person is so closely tied to operations, necessitates a blend of this individual-level with a typically organizational-level of analysis. There is a reciprocal interplay between the two: much organizational identity is driven and determined by the owner, while much of the owner’s identity is in turn informed by the particular organizational structure and circumstances under investigation. It has long been the case with pubs, for instance, that the identity of the business is in large degree intertwined with that of the proprietor (e.g., Barich 2009).

The Irish pub serves as a very useful context for this particular study—seemingly ubiquitous, they are artificial, inauthentic and homogenous themed spaces (Brown and Patterson 2000). An entire industry has grown to support their global spread of with an accompanying script detailing the constructed standards to which the pub should adhere (Irish Pub Concept 2002). Yet despite attempts to commodify, commercialize and capitalize upon the Irish pub concept, diversity in that which constitutes an Irish pub flourishes, often with owner identity as a key variance. We see the pub owner as marketer who co-creates with customers distinctive outcomes, each of which constitutes a particularized version of the fabled Irish pub. We unpack and get at the cultural details and specificities that underpin their identities as pub owners and, keeping in view these personal identity projects, also investigate how the pub’s identity is formed.

To these ends we undertook a series of hybrid ethnographic cases centered on six different pub owners over 18 months. The focal informant in each is the pub owner. Each has sat for one formal interview (M’Cracken 1988), conducted in the owner’s pub and transcribed verbatim, which lasted from between 45 and 90 minutes. Questions explored informants’ experiences surrounding the business, their reasons for buying, rationale behind operational decisions, and future plans and goals. In addition, a detailed understanding of their personal histories, cultural understandings and life worlds emerged through formal interviews and general conversations with them and their customers and employees (participant-observation). Indeed, participant observation is a especially rich form of research in this site as fluid interactions with owners, customers and employees occur over a long period of time in a very natural and non-obtrusive manner.

References

Linearize This! Why Consumers Underestimate Food Portion Changes
and How to Help Them
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Extended Abstract
Past research showed that larger packages and portions lead to overeating because consumers grossly underestimate size changes. We show that this happens because people use the surface area of a package as an anchor for estimating its volume. Hence, a linearization of the estimation object (by decreasing the dimensionality of size change from 3D to 2D to 1D) and a linearization of the estimation process (by asking people to estimate each dimension) improve the accuracy of size estimations and nudge consumers towards healthier food choices.

Because large packages and portions lead to greater consumption, the trends towards supersized food portions and packages is
considered one of the prime drivers of the obesity epidemic (Cutler, Glaeser, and Shapiro 2003; Nielsen and Popkin 2003). Supersizing leads to overeating because people do not realize just how big these portions are. Therefore, improving people's size estimations is essential to help them choose smaller, healthier portion sizes (Chandon and Wansink 2007). In this research, we examine how consumers estimate changes in package and portion size and what can be done to improve their estimations.

Research in psychophysics has shown that people's estimations of object size follow an inelastic power function of its actual size (Estimated size=ax(Actual size)b, where b<1), which means that people underestimate the magnitude of size changes (Stevens 1986). Chandon and Ordabayeva (2009) showed that size estimations are even less elastic when a package increases or decreases along all three dimensions (height, length, and width) rather than a single dimension in space (e.g., only in height). However, we do not know why this happens.

We examine two potential causes of these psychophysical biases suggested in prior research (Raghubir 2007)—information integration (i.e., incorrectly integrating dimensions) and information attention (i.e., ignoring some dimensions). We hypothesize that the key problem is biased information integration caused by the reliance on a surface area model of size change (vs. the correct multiplicative one). Specifically, we hypothesize that to estimate changes in package size consumers rely on changes in the surface area of a package instead of changes in its volume.

Our model leads to several testable hypotheses. First, it predicts that consumers always underestimate size changes, even when they occur in 1D, more so when they occur in 2D, and even more so when they occur in 3D. So, linearizing size changes by decreasing the dimensionality of changes from 3D to 2D to 1D reduces the underestimation bias. Second, because it is an information integration and not an information attention bias, drawing attention to the fact that all three dimensions of a package change (i.e., by asking people to estimate the change in each of the three dimensions) does not reduce the underestimation bias. However, it is possible to improve people's size change estimations by simply multiplying their (linear) estimations of the change in each of the three dimensions. And third, package downsizing is less noticeable (and hence more effective) when a package is elongated along one dimension but decreased along the remaining two dimensions than when it is simply decreased along one dimension because the elongated package has a higher surface area than a package of equivalent volume but downsized in 1D. We test these hypotheses in four studies.

In Study 1, we explored the role of attention by studying size estimations of regular readers of the New York Times science blog, who are very attentive and motivated to be accurate. The participants saw pictures of 4 boxes of popcorn which increased either in 1D or 3D (between-subjects). Given the size and the price of the smallest box (A), the participants needed to estimate the sizes and prices of the remaining boxes. The results showed that the underestimation and dimensionality biases persist even among these highly involved and attentive individuals. Size estimations were significantly lower than reality, and size estimations and WTP were significantly lower in the 3D than in the 1D condition (b=.89 vs. .82 and b=.73 vs. .65 in 1D vs. 3D for size estimations and WTP, respectively).

In Study 2, we studied the effect of the two linearizing manipulations (dimensionality and decomposition estimation) on consumers' size estimations for increasing packages. The procedure was similar to Study 1, except that the popcorn boxes increased in 1D, 2D, or 3D, and in the decomposition estimation condition participants were also provided with the sizes of the dimensions of the smallest box (A) and were asked to estimate the dimensions of the remaining boxes before providing their size estimations for the entire box. As expected, we found that participants underestimated the magnitude of supersizing (b=.63), and more so in 3D vs. 2D vs. 1D (b=.48, .65, .73, respectively). Drawing attention to the fact that all 3 dimensions could be changing by asking participants to estimate the size of each dimension did not improve their size estimations (b=.62) and did not reduce the effect of dimensionality (b=.50, .54, .70 in 3D, 2D and 1D, respectively). All these results were also obtained when looking at WTP, supporting our hypotheses. In addition, the surface area model of information integration fit the data significantly better than the multiplicative model, suggesting that people indeed use surface area instead of volume to estimate changes in size.

In Study 3, we looked at increasing and decreasing package sizes and used real products (instead of pictures). Participants saw 4 increasing or 4 decreasing sizes (between-subjects) of a rectangular candle and a cylindrical candy box displayed on a table. We manipulated the dimensionality of size change and decomposition between-subjects as in Study 2. We found that, for both supersizing and downsizing, decreasing the dimensionality of size change improved the accuracy of size estimations. Interestingly, we found that size estimations were steeper and more linear (and hence more accurate) for downsizing than for supersizing (b=.75 vs. .85 for supersizing vs. downsizing, respectively). As in Study 2, the decomposition task did not improve size estimations or reduce the effect of dimensionality, and the surface area model predicted size estimations better than the multiplicative model.

In Study 4, we examined the prediction of the surface area model about preferences for downsized packages. This was a field experiment conducted in collaboration with P&G on a group of pet owners. Participants first made size comparisons and choices between a small pack of the competitor brand of dog food (5 lbs) and a regular size pack of the target brand (8 lbs) and then between the same small pack of the competitor brand (5 lbs) and a small pack of the target brand (5 lbs), downsized either by shrinking the original 8 lbs package in 1D (height) or by elongating it in height or width. As predicted, the elongated downsized packages, especially elongated in height, appeared to be larger and were more preferred compared to the package downsized in 1D.

In a final study in progress, we provide a conclusive test of the surface area model by examining its predictions against the conflicting predictions of the multiplicative, additive, and perimeter models when package dimensions change in opposite directions (e.g., the height of a cylinder increases, but its diameter decreases).

Understanding what drives the underestimation of size changes should suggest effective strategies to improve consumers' perceptions of supersized and downsized packages and portions. Our findings suggest that packages that linearize the estimation problem (by reducing the dimensionality of size change) should nudge consumers toward healthier choices.

References
Our preliminary findings suggest that the recent CO2 food labeling in Sweden is still very much confusing to consumers and more information on how to interpret the information needs to be available. So far, since the labeling began in the summer of 2009, it is apparent that the Swedish consumers included in this study have not yet completely accepted this new labeling, and have not yet recognized (or realized) the benefits of their individual decisions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through their own consumption. Several consumers expressed feelings of guilt since they knew they should make more conscious decisions but due to various reasons they often chose not to. For the consumers who do make conscious decisions of choosing products with lower CO2 emissions or with environmental labels there seem to be a symbolic meaning of “doing the right thing.”

Extended Abstract

I noticed the CO2 labeling on the MAX menu, only because I had heard about it, the print was fairly small and there was no information on how to read/interpret them. Maybe there has been information for the Swedish public on how to make more sound decisions based on the labeling, but for me as a visitor, it wasn’t quite obvious. I did notice that the burgers had higher numbers compared to the chicken and the vegetarian options but since I only eat a Max burger about once a year I wasn’t going to change my consumption pattern this time. I did notice an ad/poster for their falafel meal and it looked delicious and I thought to myself—next time I come here I want to try that… however, two weeks later when I went to Max again I ordered my favorite burger again…-Female, 34

An increasingly important topic in consumer behavior is the negative effects of the much-debated climate changes that have occurred around the globe in recent years. Part of the conversation has been regarding the carbon footprint of products that are produced and consumed. A carbon footprint is defined by Carbon Trust, an independent non-profit company set up by the United Kingdom’s government to support businesses in their move towards a low carbon economy as, “the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by a person, organization, event or product.” Carbon Trust calculates a product’s carbon footprint over the entire lifecycle of the product (Carbon Footprinting).

An increasing number of companies, some fearful of future governmental regulations and others, either try to gain a competitive advantage, or increase their return on investment by adhering to a social responsibility approach (Bloom et al. 2006). Some companies have taken a more aggressive approach by undertaking voluntary carbon footprinting of their products, reducing their overall corporate carbon footprint, and beginning to offer their customers the option of purchasing carbon offsets, and/or developing carbon offset programs of their own. For example, Bon Appetit, a unit of Compass Group USA, in 2007 announced a plan to reduce their carbon footprint by purchasing products produced within 150 miles of where it is to be served, as much as possible (Bon Appetit). In the United Kingdom, the Carbon Trust organization is involved with food labeling so consumers can make informed decisions regarding their food purchases. Local United Kingdom companies as well as international companies such as Coca-Cola and Kimberly Clark have committed to a trial of carbon footprint labeling on their products (www.foodnutritionscience.com). Other recent examples in service industries such as hotels, airlines, and car rentals, customers have the choice of offsetting the carbon footprint from the impact of these services, by paying a surcharge to the provider who, in turn, promises to make a contribution to the environment.

Max, a hamburger chain based in Sweden, is one of the first fast food businesses to address climate change (Rosenthal, 2009). Among other activities such as powering their restaurants entirely with wind energy, training on environmental issues for employees, and performing carbon offsets by planting trees in Africa to offset the negative impact of their operations, Max has also begun carbon labeling on all of their menu items. The carbon footprint information (kgCO2e) is placed on the menu to allow consumers the ability to “consider carbon emissions in their menu selection” (www.max.se). In addition, to the efforts of Max, Livsmedelsverket, the Swedish National Food Administration (2009), has come out with a recent report regarding environmentally effective food choices to guide Swedish and European consumers in their food choices. Although research has been done on cause-related and social marketing (Barone, Miyakazi and Taylor 2000), and its effect on consumer choice, there has been no research to date on the CO2 labeling of food. Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine the way consumers alter or do not alter their consumption decisions based on the information provided regarding CO2 labeling of goods and services. Some of the research questions we investigate are: Is the CO2 labeling and other environmental seals such as the Swen and KRAV in Sweden, helpful to consumers and does it help/deter the sales of that same product or shift the sales to other product/service categories. Due to the new food labeling attempts in Sweden, we chose to look at consumers in Sweden. As this study is exploratory in nature, a qualitative approach was taken. To date, data were collected through semi-structured depth interviews and written narratives from consumer blogs through netnography.

Our preliminary findings suggest that the recent CO2 food labeling in Sweden is still very much confusing to consumers and more information on how to interpret the information needs to be available. So far, since the labeling began in the summer of 2009, it is apparent that the Swedish consumers included in this study have not yet completely accepted this new labeling, and have not yet recognized (or realized) the benefits of their individual decisions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through their own consumption. Several consumers expressed feelings of guilt since they knew they should make more conscious decisions but due to various reasons they often chose not to. For the consumers who do make conscious decisions of choosing products with lower CO2 emissions or with environmental labels there seem to be a symbolic meaning of “doing the right thing.”

References

An Exploratory Study of Consumer Reactions to CO2 Labeling: The Struggle of Eating What You Want and Doing the Right Thing

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Extended Abstract

Estimation,” Journal of Marketing Research, 44 (1), 84-99.

An increasingly important topic in consumer behavior is the negative effects of the much-debated climate changes that have occurred around the globe in recent years. Part of the conversation has been regarding the carbon footprint of products that are produced and consumed. A carbon footprint is defined by Carbon Trust, an independent non-profit company set up by the United Kingdom’s government to support businesses in their move towards a low carbon economy as, “the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by a person, organization, event or product.” Carbon Trust calculates a product’s carbon footprint over the entire lifecycle of the product (Carbon Footprinting).

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References

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Shared Spaces and Personal Corners in Social Networking Websites: The Contracted and the Cryptically Revealed Self

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Extended abstract

Consumer objects and associated narratives lie in “the intersection of the personal and the social” (Hurdley 2006). Yet studies on consumer identity have focused on the relationship between possessions and individual identities (e.g., Schau and Gilly 2003) or possessions and collective identities (e.g., Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001) and there remains a notable gap in understanding the interrelationships between different levels of the self (Epp and Price 2008). This “in between space” (ibid) between personal, interpersonal and collective self (Brewer and Gardner 1996) has often been described as home to “friction” (Schau and Muñiz 2002) as the person seeks a balance of uniqueness and similarity to others (Snyder and Fromkin 1981). Prior research (e.g., Schau and Muñiz 2002) has investigated the tensions between the self and the social (Jenkins 1996) but these have been mostly associated with individual impression management concerns (e.g., in Belk and Watson 1998). However, this paper addresses the gap in the intersection of identities with a specific focus on the role of objects as relationship mediators (Douglas and Isherwood 1979). The concept of the “contracted” or “concealed self” (i.e. non-extending aspects of the self through consumption) is borrowed from Tian and Belk (2005) and explored further in this paper as a mechanism through which members of social networking websites (Facebook and MySpace) manage a balance between a sense of individuality and a simultaneous connectedness to multiple others in search of “the social link” (Cova 1997). Two strategies of either contracting or revealing the self are identified and explained in terms of simultaneously fostering shared social spaces and preserving individuality.

A corpus of interviews (individual and within friendship groups of network use) with eleven key informants over a period of four months, supplemented by interview, diary and introspective essay exploratory data, have provided accounts on the symbolic meaning (Elliott and Wattanasuwanden 1998) of the networked profiles' resources (e.g. photographs, textual status updates and comments) and have been interpreted based on grounded theory analysis procedures (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The Facebook profile of Julie, one of the research informants, contains more than four hundred photographs of her (either alone or with peers and posted both by her and by friends). However, Julie insists that “There is nothing about me here.” Unlike personal websites—which have been described as vehicles for conspicuous self-presentation (e.g., Schau and Gilly 2003)—social networking profiles can be construed not to be passively viewed but to be inviting group participation and involvement. Far from being closed spaces under the control of their owner, others can co-habit and ultimately co-write them, for example by posting photographs or links and engaging in conversation on each other’s profiles. The result is a shared space filled with communal acts which provide links to others (Belk 2010). Here the resources become “joint possessions” (ibid) and members become “users” of the resources in accomplishing social engagement and connectedness. Two strategies of retracting parts of the individual self to achieve this social, shared space are identified. First, retracting from the representation of the past and future self and focusing on its present. For example, Mia notes “Anything old won’t mean anything [to other people]” while “updating your self helps you keep in touch.” Second, retracting the personal or prior meaning of a possession and using it anew as a social prop. For example, an old fashioned family photograph previously displayed and cherished in the family home is now uploaded to an online account, attracting humorously mocking remarks from peers leading to a snowballing of comments.

While the individual self retracts in some senses to promote social involvement, it can be revealed and it can regain control and ownership of resources (Belk 1988) in individual spaces of “private meanings” (Richins 1994). However, tensions created through the need to ensure community participation in a primarily social space leaves the self looking for cryptic ways to express its individual aspects. A multilayered environment containing both shared, social spaces and individual ones with restricted access can be moulded with two cryptically revealing strategies. First, dividing the space and finding individual corners in a literal spatial manner alongside the shared spaces. Indicatively, the majority of Anna’s photographs contain candid shots with friends or tourist sites and are intended “to be shared with friends”, yet her profile photograph depicting her with a green hat bearing a four-leaf clover is a carefully constructed representation of her self: “My profile photo says who I am … I am Irish.” Tim, originally from Asia but studying at a British university, says: “Somewhere on my profile I have created an album about autumn in the United Kingdom. It means a lot to me. I took it for my niece to see, she loves tree leaves…” The second strategy entails subtly incorporating the individual self into the shared spaces. For example, Ross describes what kinds of status updates he prefers: “I would write ‘I just had an amazing sandwich–pastrami–from that amazing baguette shop I just found’. People could then comment on the place. They might have a story to tell about it, they might start a dialogue, someone might want to comment on the shop. It communicates something about your personality if it’s spontaneous like that. Otherwise you might as well walk around with a t-shirt saying what sandwiches you like.”

Thus, while different contexts have been described to trigger temporary shifts in identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986), the data reveals that contracting and partially or cryptically revealing the individual self within a social context becomes a tool in the hands of consumers for constructing a multilayered environment of shared social spaces and preserved individuality. This way individual aspects need not be given up in favour of the community as in the accounts of Ritson et al.’s informants (1996) nor does the shared environment have to remain socially undifferentiated. Rather, individual aspects can find their own nuanced ways to coexist alongside or within a social shared web of connectedness.

References


**Eager Vigilance in Consumer Response to Negative Information: The Role of Regulatory Focus and Information Ambiguity**

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**Abstract**

Research on negative information (e.g., Herr et al. 1991) has well documented that negative information compared to positive information of equal extremity can exert greater influence on consumption related beliefs and attitudes. Although considerable research has studied the impact of negative information, little attention has been paid to the information characteristics of negative information, especially ambiguity or certainty of the information. Nowadays, consumers have access to a wide variety of outlets for negative product information, including traditional media and new media, such as online news forums, webcasts and podcasts. The negative information consumers encounter in their everyday consumption setting is not always certain and clear-cut. For example, one cannot be certain whether the review for a restaurant from a stranger on internet forum is reliable; one cannot be sure whether to blame the company, the consumer or the situation for a product failure reported by another consumer. When consumers encounter such ambiguous negative information about a brand towards which they have an initially positive attitude, how will they react? Whether will they accept this information and downgrade their attitude toward the brand accordingly, or will they disregard it and maintain their initial attitude? Previous research on boundary conditions of negativity effect (Ahuwalia 2002; Ahluwalia et al. 2000) suggests that committed and non-committed consumers differ in their receptibility of the same piece of negative information. Committed consumers tend to counterargue the negative information concerning their beloved brand rather than passively accept it as non-committed consumers do. However, question still remains in the situation of early process of attitude formation, where consumers are not committed to the brand and are often actively referring to a variety of sources for product information of various qualities. Will they all be affected to the same extent by negative information? In this research, we draw on the literature from regulatory-focus theory (Higgins 1997), negativity effect (Ahuwalia 2002; Herr et al. 1991) and information ambiguity (Chaiken and Maheswaran 1994; Ratneshwar 1993) to provide evidence for the interaction effect of consumers’ regulatory focus and information ambiguity on the persuasiveness of negative information.

Regulatory focus theory proposes that promotion focus and prevention focus differ in their strategic inclinations for attaining desired
end-state or avoiding undesired end-state. Whereas the promotion focus is concerned with nurturance and advancement and is characterized by a strategic preference for eagerness means, the prevention focus is concerned with security and safety and is characterized by a strategic preference for vigilant means. In a series of signal detection studies where negative words were used as stimuli, Scholer et al. (2008) has found that prevention-focused individual as compared to promotion-focused individual exhibit a riskier bias of saying “yes” to ensure that negative stimuli are correctly identified, which was a reversal of traditional finding with no-words or neutral words used as stimuli. Building on the result of this research, we propose that when exposed to negative information about a product toward which consumers hold an initial favorable attitude, prevention-focused consumers are more eager to ensure the detection of the negativity in order to avoid the potential unpleasant outcome the product might bring about. This strategic inclination of eager vigilance is more likely to manifest when the situation is ambiguous. As indicated in the signal detection study (Scholer et al. 2008) that prevention-focused individuals show amplified risky bias when they are not sure whether the negative word is “old” or “new” (i.e., whether the negative word has been shown before). It is the uncertainty involved in the process of word recognition that triggers the prevention-focused individual to make a risky guess that the negative stimulus is an old one. They would rather err on the side of “false alarm” (i.e., wrongly accept the negative information) than on the side of “miss” (i.e., miss to take into account the negative information). Thus, we predicted that when confronted with ambiguous negative information (i.e., when there is doubt in the veracity of information or when the arguments are ambiguous), prevention-focused consumers are more likely to downgrade their attitudes and purchase intention toward the product to a greater extent than promotion-focused consumers; when confronted with unambiguous negative information, prevention and promotion-focus consumers should be both persuaded and largely downgrade their attitude and purchase intention, mainly due to the high diagnosticity of the unambiguous negative information.

Using experimental studies with a 2 (regulatory focus: promotion vs. prevention) × 2 (information ambiguity: ambiguous vs. unambiguous) between subject design, we tested our propositions across two different ambiguity scenarios: a). negative information from uncertain credibility source; b). ambiguous product failure in which the culpability is unclear. We also examined the underlying process which leads to the differential impact of ambiguous negative information as a function of regulatory-focus. For both studies, MSI netbook was used as the target product due to its low level of familiarity among the participants based on the results of a pretest. Various versions of negative messages pertaining to an overheating problem of MSI netbook were developed according to experimental conditions. Both studies followed the same procedure. Participants were first provided with a booklet of information about a new MSI netbook, which includes background information about the company, an advertisement of the laptop, and a positive review article from a PC magazine “PC world”. The information of the MSI netbook was specially designed to induce an initial favorable attitude toward the product. After reading product information, participants were asked to indicate their attitude toward the brand and their purchase intentions. They were then asked to complete two separate tasks, which were used to prime participants into either promotion- or prevention-focus. The first task asked them to write an essay about their dreams, hopes and aspirations (vs. duties, obligations and responsibilities); the second one reinforced the regulatory focus manipulation by requiring participants to play a memory game that was either promotion framed or prevention framed. After the regulatory focus manipulation, participants were provided with the updating negative message, followed with measures of attitude, purchase intention, process variables and manipulation check.

For each study, different methods were used to manipulate information ambiguity. Operationalizations of information ambiguity were construed on the basis of conceptions of ambiguity (Chaiken and Maheswaran, 1994; Norton, R.W., 1975), where ambiguous information is defined as “information that is amenable to differential interpretation and evaluation”. In Study 1, Information ambiguity was manipulated by varying the credibility of message source. For the unambiguous condition, the source was identified as an excerpt of an article in Consumer Reports. For the ambiguous condition, the counterpart was who was identified as a message from the internet (based on the results from pretests). In study 2, Information ambiguity was manipulated by varying the message content. For the unambiguous condition, the message clearly and precisely indicated that the overheating problem was caused by the design of the computer. For the ambiguous condition, no clear indication was given concerning the cause of problem. Instead, various possible causes (such as consumers’ misuse of computer, dust build-up in the cooling system, and design fault, etc.) were listed.

Results of the two studies provide convergent support for our hypothesis that prevention-focused participants are more likely than promotion-focused participants to be influenced by ambiguous negative information. For both studies, there was a significant interaction effect of information ambiguity and regulatory focus on both attitude change and change in purchase intention. In the first ambiguity scenario, mediation analysis indicated that the treatment effect was mediated by the perceived diagnosticity of negative information. More specifically, prevention-focused participants rated the negative information from the internet as more helpful and diagnostic than promotion-focused participants. It suggests that prevention-focused participants adopt more lenient criteria in accepting negative information. For the second ambiguity scenario, the effect was mediated by the causal inferences participants draw from negative information. When the culpability of the overheating problem is ambiguous, prevention-focused participants are more likely to attribute the cause of the problem to the company whereas promotion-focused participants tend to take into account all the possible causes (both internal and situational). To summarize, our results suggest that the impact of negative information on brand evaluations is not homogenous. Rather, it depends on information ambiguity and consumers’ regulatory focus. The detrimental impact of ambiguous negative information is amplified among prevention-focused consumers compared to promotion-focused consumers.

References
“Subcultures of Prosumption” – Prosumption as Distinction in Freeskiing

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Extended abstract

Since about thirty years, the emergence and rapid growth of so-called lifestyle sports such as Skateboarding, Snowboarding or Mountain biking has profoundly changed the landscape of the sporting world. Since they encompass not only novel practices of athletic endeavor, but also include practices of consumption of specific clothes, music or media (Wheaton, 2004), these sport scenes have been identified as sport subcultures that allow participants to construct and foster a subcultural identity (Donnelly & Young, 1988). Primarily, these subcultures have been subject to analyses based on Bourdieu’s (1984) work, demonstrating their hierarchical structure through mechanisms of symbolic inclusion and exclusion (Kaye & Laberge, 2004; Wheaton, 2000). However, since subcultural identities are largely based on consumption practices, participants are increasingly struggling over issues of authenticity (Beal & Weidman 2003) and commercialization (Wheaton & Beal, 2003), invoking new measures of distinction beyond mere sporting skill or the wearing “right” sneaker brand (Wheaton, 2003; Beal & Wilson, 2004). As a reaction, within such subcultures of sport increasingly practices can be observed that aim at creative production or transformation (Woermann, 2009). As these practices are not pursued for professional purposes and are still part of the leisure activities of participants, they can be identified as prosumption (Kotler, 1986; Toffler, 1980).

The paper examines the prosumption practices within the specific sport subculture of Freeskiing—an emergent lifestyle sport akin to Skateboarding, Snowboarding, and Surfing—and suggests identifying it as a Subculture of Prosumption. This notion seeks to expand the category of Subcultures of Consumption developed by Schouten and McAlexander (1995) in that not only symbolic acts of consumption, but also skillful prosumption serves as a central means of constructing a subcultural identity, demarcating distinctions and organizing intracultural hierarchies.

The viewpoint I suggest thus runs partly counter to an interpretation of the trend towards Prosumption as the advent of an individualized ‘Craft Consumer’ (Campbell 2005) who stands in stark opposition to soulless mass-production and commodification. Instead, a focus on the subcultural environment of prosumption practices suggests that prosumption should be seen as a functional equivalent rather than an antagonist of commodity consumption in that both provide complementing ways of reproducing subcultural meaning.

The article draws on an ethnographic research project of the Freeskiing culture that is designed to grasp the multiple dimensions of the complex meaning system of the Freeskiers’ life-world (Gobo, 2008). The ethnographic fieldwork makes primarily use of participant observation as well as audio- and videotaping of naturally occurring situations, and to a lesser degree on in-depth interviews as a means of triangulation (Blakie, 1991). Especially when studying bodily practices, it seems not sufficient to rely on narrations of actions, but to observe and participate in the practices first hand. In order to grasp the multi-faceted nature of Freeskiing and in particular the intertwining of scene and industry, data was not only collected during the daily training of the athletes and from their social life at events or contests, but also with regard to marketing or entrepreneurial activities or on trade fairs.

Prosumption practices therefore encompass a much greater range than just those which include the usage of media: Members of the subculture might knit their own beanies, redesign equipment by spray-painting them, construct their own obstacles in the backyard, or organize semiprofessional events. Although at the core Freeskiing is a bodily sport, consuming and producing media content makes up an important part of ‘being a Freestyler’: In an intensive circle of recording, assessing, editing, distributing, and watching of pictures and videos of Freeskiing, members of the subculture engage in what Ferrell, Milovanovic, and Lyng (2001) termed media practices which enhance and elongate the meaning of ephemeral events.

Freeskiers using photo- or video-equipment are an everyday sight in snowparks—often including sophisticated tools such as helmet cameras, special fisheye lenses, or camera booms. From time to time, the Freestylers organize special shootings in especially scenic or symbolic locations. In such cases, the athletic challenge is often of secondary interest. Instead, the meaning of the event as well as of the resulting pictures stems from the production as a common accomplishment of imagination, organization, athletic capability, and photographic skill. That the scene members observe themselves not just as consumers of a leisure activity, but instead as creative producers becomes especially apparent in the videos they create themselves as well as in professional productions since both feature not only skiing, but also reflexively feature making ski movies. Being a Freeskier—one can learn from these movies—means more than just skiing.

Through arrange of scene-specific practices, prosumption is deeply enmeshed into the cultural landscape of the Freestyle skiing community: At the core of the Freestylers’ aspirations lies—in their own understanding—the desire to express their own style, for example to develop one’s own way of doing a certain trick, to create a personal look in clothing or to design one’s own website in a certain manner. The degree freedom that defines Freeskiing in the understanding of its members is not just a freedom to choose—the foundational promise of the modern consumer society (Featherstone, 2001)—but a freedom to create something unique. Andreas Reckwitz (2007) has forcefully argued that the ability to create has become the signum of the postmodern subject since skillful creativity is seen as the true indicator of authentic subjectivity. The Freeskier thus seems to be a role model for the postmodern ‘creative subject’ he describes.
References

Two Defending Strategies of Threatened Brand Identity in Co-branding: The Moderating Role of Perceived Identity Fit
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Abstract
Brand identity is one of the most important drivers of a successful brand as it allows consumers to connect to a brand at deeper levels. However, little is known about whether a strong brand identity can hinder or facilitate a brand’s alliance with another brand. In this research, we investigate whether consumers with strong identification with a brand will perceive its alliance with another brand (co-branding) to be a threat to their own identity and how consumers address the threat by employing defensive strategies such as decoupling and biased assimilation.

Consuming Metaphors: Being a Consumer
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Extended Abstract
Consumption is a fundamental component of our society (Featherstone 1991 and Slater 1999). We find meaning in consumption, assert status through consumption (Veblen 1912), and define our relationships with consumption (Miller 1987). So common is our experience as consumers, that we use it as an analogy for understanding a wide array of other experiences (Phillips 2001).

Metaphors and analogies regarding consumption common in popular discourse include medical patients as consumers, citizens as consumers, students as consumers, and dating as consumption. Medical patients are told they are consumers and must take charge of their medical treatment, weighing choices of treatment and demanding quality service from doctors and hospitals. Citizens are marketed political ideas and they consume through voting. Schools treat students as consumers of education who pay with tuition for degrees. The dating scene is a consumerscape where individuals shop for partners.

But what is our experience as consumers? What does it mean to be a consumer? Consumption has been characterized by choice
through which consumers exercise individual preference (Gross and Hogler 2005) with firms hoping to satisfy the consumer (Phillips 2001). Consumer research has traditionally focused on choice processes and consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Consumer culture theorists have studied the cultural meanings of consumer actions. When we use analogies of consumers, what is the consumer experience we are invoking? A deeper understanding of the meaning and experience of consumption not only can provide insights for managers but also has implications for the welfare of the consumer. If we seek to improve the welfare of consumers (Mick 2006) then understanding what it means to be a consumer can help provide a baseline for improvement.

To begin, this study used the projective technique of collage creation to discover the meanings and feelings participants experience as consumers. Projective techniques are useful for uncovering structures and meanings that may be difficult to articulate (Rook, 1988; Zaltman 1996). Because consumption is a fundamental and taken for granted practice in the everyday life of the participants, the projective approach is well suited for studying the experience of being a consumer. Fifty-seven participants recruited from an undergraduate consumer behavior course, created collages depicting what it means to be a consumer and how it makes them feel. In order to encourage reflection on the topic and draw out distinctions, thirty-four participants created collages contrasting being a consumer to being a student while twenty-three participants created collages contrasting being a consumer to being a medical patient. The contrasts of student and medical patient were chosen because they are roles that are currently compared to roles of consumers in the common use of metaphor (i.e. students as consumer and patients as consumers). Metaphors work as phrases that linking two incompatible concepts (Searle 1979). And thus while the metaphors linking consumers to students and patients regularly in popular discourse, the roles are different. The collages of the participants comparing and contrasting their experience as consumers to other roles also provide a foil for interpreting the meanings and feelings of consumers.

For the collage creating task, no materials were provided and participants were encouraged to use any material they chose including magazines, newspapers, images from the internet, personal photos or drawings. In addition to creating a collage all participants wrote a short narrative explanation of their collage (narratives averaged between two to five paragraphs). Together, the collages and the narratives formed the text for analysis.

Preliminary analysis suggests that participants feel conflicted by their experience as consumers. On one hand, in their collages and narratives the participants demonstrate a sense of control and empowering expertise (particularly as contrasted to their roles as students and patients). They depict themselves as directing their lives and experiences through choices and selections. They show pleasure and delight in the wide array of products and experiences they consume. Yet they portray this enjoyment tempered by the feeling that they are at the mercy of pervasive marketing messages encouraging them to behave in ways counter to their best interests. This is contrasted particularly to their experiences as patients where they feel their best interests are protected. Their collages and narratives show them caught up in and powerless to escape the cycle of escalating needs. Participants reported feeling trapped by a flood of consumer products, pawns in the machinations of a consumer society.

References
# Author Index

**A**

Agudera, Michelle .......................... 207
Aitken, Robert ................................ 190
Al-Mutawa, Fajer Saleh ....................... 430
Albinsson, Pia A ..................................... 623
Alexander, Reppel .............................. 510
Alexandrov, Alexisha .......................... 483
Almeida, Stefania .............................. 549
Alperstein, Neil .................................. 341
Alvarez-Mourey, James ......................... 455
Anderson, Erin ................................. 612
Arnot, David .................................... 151
Ashworth, Laurence ......................... 542, 617
Atakan, Sukriye Sinem ......................... 571
Atik, Deniz ....................................... 584
Autio, Minna .................................... 602

**B**

Babakus, Emin .................................. 483
Bagozzi, Richard P. ........................... 571
Ballantine, Paul W. ............................. 196
Bardhi, Fleura .................................. 46
Basil, Michael D. .............................. 563
Batra, Wided ................................. 316
Bearden, William O. ......................... 547
Beer, Hanli de ................................. 570
Belk, Russell ................................. 429, 549
Benedetto, Anthony Di ......................... 575
Bertilsson, Jon ................................. 412
Bettyan, Shona ................................ 448
Beverland, Michael B. ....................... 231, 491
Binay, Itir ...................................... 596
Biswas, Dipayan ............................... 436
Blair, Kidwell .................................. 518
Blanchette, Annie .............................. 610
Bijleveld, Janke ................................ 532
Block, Lauren ................................. 461, 471, 481
Bock, Tine De ................................. 562
Boe, Mathias .................................. 432
Bonnemaizon, Audrey ......................... 316
Bonsu, Sammy .................................. 24
Borgerson, Janet L. ......................... 614
Bove, Liliana L. ............................... 231
Brace-Govan, Jan .............................. 1, 458, 596
Broniatczyk, Susan ......................... 457
Brownlie, Douglas ............................. 269, 82
Brucks, Merrie ................................ 524
Brunner, Christian Boris ..................... 543
Brunner, Thomas A. ........................... 482
Brunso, Karen .................................. 601
Buechia, Céline Del ......................... 477
Buchanan-Oliver, Margo ..................... 183
Burson, Katherine ......................... 515
Bussiere, Dave ................................ 158
Böltner, Sebastian ......................... 163

**C**

Caldwell, Marylouise ........................ 310
Campelo, Adriana ............................. 190
Cappellini, Benedetta ......................... 60
Carbon, Claus-Christian ...................... 532
Cardigo, Cristina ............................. 502
Carrigan, Marylyn ............................ 580
Carrington, Michal ........................... 599
Caru, Antonella ............................... 525
Cassinger, Cecilia ............................. 412
Cavallet, Ana Paula ........................... 438
Cayla, Julien .................................. 544
Chakravarti, Amitava .......................... 474
Chandok, Pierre ............................... 316, 621
Chang, Chun-Tuan ............................ 449, 498
Chattopadhyay, Amitava ..................... 588
Chen, Annie Hui-ling ......................... 469
Chen, Ting-Ting ............................... 449, 498
Chen, Wei ..................................... 604
Che, Helene .................................... 1
Childers, Terry ................................ 464
Chiou, Yh-Shen ................................. 536
Christidi, Sofia ................................ 624
Christodoulides, George ..................... 424
Chronis, Athinodoros ......................... 447
Chéron, Emmanuel J. ......................... 512
Cody, Kevina .................................. 385
Connell, Paul M. .............................. 64, 468, 524
Corcioni, Matteo ............................... 496
Costley, Carolyn ............................... 506
Cova, Bernard ................................. 467, 525
Cova, Veronique ............................... 467
Creusen, Marielle E.H. ....................... 528
Cross, Samantha N. N. ..................... 73
Czellar, Sandor ................................ 495
Dahl, Darren .................................. 435
Dalli, Daniela .................................. 465
Darke, Peter .................................. 542
Darmody, Aron ............................... 620
David, Hardesty ............................... 518
Davies, Teresa ................................. 9
Decker, Reinhold .............................. 586
Denegri-Knotz, Janice ......................... 373
Dennis, Noel .................................. 82
Desai, Kalpesh Kaushik ....................... 462
Demond, John .................................. 201
Dhoklaila, Nikhilsh ......................... 44
Dhoklaila, Uptal ............................... 549
Domma, Peter ................................. 426
Doster, Leigh ................................. 589
Dubelaar, Chris ............................... 458
Dubois, Pierre-Louis ......................... 136
Duffy, Deirdre ............................... 576

**E**

Eckhardt, Giana .............................. 46
Ekström, Karin M. ............................ 3
Elliott, Richard ............................... 566
Epp, Amber M. ................................ 85
Esch, Franz-Rudolf ........................... 543

**F**

Falces-Delgado, Carlos ....................... 475
Fang, Christina ............................... 474
Faro, David .................................. 515
Fernandez, Karen ............................. 219
Figueiredo, Bernardo ......................... 489
Fischer, Eileen ............................... 610, 620
Fitchett, James ............................... 214, 611
Fleck, João .................................... 549
Floh, Arne ..................................... 504
Fosse-Gomez, Marie-Hélène ................ 394, 581
Freeman, Lynne ............................... 207, 237
Friend, Lorraine .............................. 506
Froufe-Torres, Manuel ....................... 475

**G**

Gabrielson, Peter ............................ 380
Gallagher, Damian ........................... 249
Gatignon, Hubert ............................. 612
Gentina, Elodie ............................... 394
Germelmann, Christian ....................... 500
Ghazali, Ezlka .................................. 151, 354
Gnoff, Jürgen ................................. 275
Godefroit-Winkel, Delphine ................. 581
Gould, Stephen J. ............................ 495
Gram, Malene ................................. 479
Grappi, Silvia .................................. 108
Gressel, Justin ................................. 429
Groeppe-Klein, Andrea ....................... 500
Guido, Gianluigi ............................. 442, 545
Gutenberg, Frank Huber ..................... 417

**H**

Hackley, Chris ................................ 593
Hagtveld, Henrik .............................. 530
Halkias, Georgios ............................ 144
Hall, Michelle ............................... 604
Hamilton, Kathy .............................. 78
Hamner-Lloyd, Stuart ......................... 123
Hardesty, David .............................. 464
Hari, S ....................................... 544
Harrison, Tina ................................ 511
Hassan, Louise ................................. 444
Hemetsberger, Andrea ....................... 367
Hernansanz, Judy ............................ 441
Hewer, Paul .................................. 269
Hingorani, Anurag ......................... 207
Hirschman, Elizabeth ......................... 116
Hirschman, Elizabeth C. ..................... 91
Hjelmgren, Daniel ......................... 3
Hodgson, Julia ............................... 297
Huang, Chien-Yi ................................ 536
Huang, Lin ................................. 452, 495
Huang, Szu-Chi ............................... 77, 90
Hung, Iris W. ................................ 514
Hunt, James ................................. 575

**630**

European Advances in Consumer Research

Volume 9, © 2011
W

Waan, Fang .................................. 619, 628
Walsh, Gianfranco .......................... 444
Wallop, Luk .................................. 605
Watson, Stevie ................................. 91
Wattanasuwan, Kritsada ........................ 347
Wedell, Douglas .............................. 453
Weiss, Liad ................................... 517
Whelan, Jodie ................................. 588
Whelan, Susan ................................. 290
White, Katherine .............................. 435
Whitwell, Gregory ............................ 599
Wijland, Roel ................................ 275
Wilcox, Keith ................................ 461
Witner, Sarah J. S. ............................ 69
Wilson, Nikita ................................ 506
Wilson, Tony ................................ 526
Woermann, Niels ............................. 627
Wohlfell, Markus .............................. 290
Wong, Pheobe ................................ 64
Worlu, Preye ................................. 406
Wu, Shan-Min ................................ 449
Wyer, Robert S ................................. 514
Wänke, Michaela .............................. 574

X

Xiao, Na ........................................ 619, 628

Y

Yalkin, Cagri .................................. 540
Yannopoulou, China Natalia .................... 566
Yap, Jo En ..................................... 231
Yazıcıoğlu, E. Taçlı ........................... 492
Yoon, Carolyn .................................. 455, 571
Youn, Nara ................................... 593
Yucer, Ozge ................................. 471
Yióg, Haiyang ................................. 588

Z

Zarantonello, Lia ............................... 465
Zauner, Alexander ............................ 504
Zentes, Joachim ............................... 426
Zhang, Dan ................................... 575
Zhao, Anita Lifen ............................... 123
Zhao, Xin ...................................... 564
Zhiyan, Wu ................................... 614
Zlatevsvka, Natalina ........................... 487