



THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



NOVEMBER 6th-9th, 2024

Tampa, FL

Jie Gao Fowler, PROGRAM CHAIR



THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Melanie B. Richards, Editor

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Sample footnote:

Mitchell, J., Sullivan, C., Sabol, M., & Boyd, J. (2024). Plagiarism and artificial intelligence: Has AI changed the rules? In M. Richards (Ed.), Society for Marketing Advances: The Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), 2024, (p. 2).

Dear SMA Members,

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you for making SMA 2024 in Tampa, FL, a tremendous success. With over 420 attendees from 40 states and 13 countries, our gathering was a powerful testament to our collective commitment to advancing marketing knowledge. Your energy, passion, and active participation are the very foundation of SMA's success and made this event both memorable and impactful.

Throughout the conference, the inspiring exchange of ideas was evident in every session, workshop, and informal conversation. Our shared dedication to marketing research and education allowed us to push the boundaries of our discipline, fostering an environment where innovative ideas could flourish and professional relationships could be built. I am especially grateful to the organizers of our annual Doctoral Consortium. My sincere thanks go to Pia Albinsson from Appalachian State University, Sharon Beatty from the University of Alabama, and Chris Hopkins from Auburn University. Their exceptional leadership and tireless efforts in coordinating the consortium provided an invaluable platform for our emerging scholars. By creating an atmosphere that encouraged open dialogue and the exchange of critical insights, they have helped set the stage for the next generation of marketing scholars to thrive.

The pre-conference workshops also played a vital role in enriching our experience. I am deeply thankful to Barry J. Babin of Louisiana Tech University and Nina Krey of Rowan University for co-leading the session on "Issues and Answers in Scale Development and CB-SEM." Their workshop offered a thorough exploration of essential methodological topics and equipped participants with advanced tools and techniques necessary for robust research. Equally inspiring was the workshop on "Finding Novel Research Ideas," led by Merlyn Griffiths of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Merlyn's session challenged traditional approaches and sparked creative thinking, encouraging us to consider fresh perspectives and emerging opportunities in our field.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the editors and journals that support our endeavors. Special recognition is due to Seung Hwan (Mark) Lee, editor of *Marketing Education Review*, and Raj Agnihortri, editor of the *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, for their support and involvement. I am also appreciative of the editors and guest editors from the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, the *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, the *International Journal of Advertising*, and the *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*.

Furthermore, I extend sincere appreciation to our longstanding supporters and partners. Special thanks are due to Sharon Beatty, Michael Hyman, and Matthew Joseph for their continued support. I also wish to acknowledge Auburn University's Harbert College of Business (Department of Marketing), LDM, DSeF (Direct Selling Education Foundation), as well as industry partners such as Stukent, Interpretive Simulations, MBTN Academy, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, and McGraw Hill.

On a personal note, I am truly honored to serve as the Program Chair and President-Elect while working alongside our exceptionally dedicated team of Executive Officers. This role has allowed me to connect with many dedicated professionals and has reaffirmed my belief in the power of collective effort and collaboration.

I look forward to our next gathering in November 2025 in Las Vegas, where we will share ideas, celebrate our achievements, and explore new frontiers in marketing research and education.

Cheers,



Jie G. Fowler
President-Elect & Program Chair, SMA 2024

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Michael R. Solomon, 2017
Sharon E. Beatty, 2014
Alvin J. Williams, 2009
Denise T. Smart, 2007
Greg W. Marshall, 2005
Jean-Charles Chebat, 2003
Barry J. Babin, 2002
William C. Moncrief III, 2002
David J. Ortinau, 2001
Ronald D. Taylor, 2001
Michel Laroche, 2000
William J. Kehoe, 1998

Robert A. Robincheaux, 1997
O. C. Ferrell, 1997
Donald P. Robin, 1995
Linda E. Swayne, 1995
Arch G. Woodside, 1994
Charles S. (Stan) Madden, 1993
Ronald F. Bush, 1993
William M. Pride, 1991
Joseph F. Hair, Jr., 1990
William D. Perreault, Jr., 1989
William R. Darden, 1989
William O. Bearden, 1988
Fred D. Reynolds, 1987
Morris L. Mayer, 1986
J. Barry Mason, 1984
Edward W. Cundiff, 1980

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Barbara Ross Wooldridge 2024

J. Charlene
Davis 2023
William C.
Moncrief 2023
Greg W.
Marshall, 2022
William (Bill)
Kehoe, 2021
Linda Swayne,
2020 Alvin J.
William, 2019

John R. (Rusty) Brooks, Jr., 2018

Special Issues Associated with SMA 2024

**Journal of Macromarketing*
**Journal of Consumer Marketing*
**International Journal of Advertising*
**Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*
**Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*
**Marketing Education Review*
**Journal of Consumer Affairs*

Events and Event Chairs

Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Competition

Christopher Newman - University of Mississippi
Lou E. Pelton-University of North Texas

Steven J. Shaw – Joe Hair Best Paper in Conference
Joe F. Hair, University of South Alabama

36th Annual Doctoral Consortium
Pia A. Albinsson - Appalachian State University
Sharon Beatty - University of Alabama
Christopher Hopkins - Auburn University

Teaching Tracks and Track Chairs

Innovations in Teaching Competition
Larry Neale - Queensland University of Technology

Distinguished Teaching Competition
Cindy Rippé – University of Georgia

SMA Teaching Moments
Michelle Sullivan- East Tennessee State University
Jen Riley- Vanderbilt University

SMA Conference Workshops

Issues and Answers in Scale Development and SEM with Dr. Barry Babin and Dr. Nina Krey. This workshop included an interactive overview of the analytics involved in psychometric scale validation and use of Analysis of Covariance Structures (Structural Equations Modeling) in general. An overview of the statistical principles involved and hands-on demonstrations of how to perform the analyses needed to test confirmatory structures and learn from the results of those tests were performed using both AMOS and lavaan (R).

Finding Novel Research Ideas: Where do those amazing research ideas come from? The answer is - everywhere! You too can find the most interesting and innovative research ideas, if you know where to look and how to find them. In this workshop, Dr. Merlyn Griffiths explored the creativity in "novel research" and how to find your stream that intrigues your audience and makes a transdisciplinary impact. The workshop examined the use of personal experience and current events as the foundation for crafting new research ideas.

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DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH (Only open to doctoral students) TRACK

*Best paper will receive the Mathew Joseph Award

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(Related to Journal of Consumer Marketing SI and SMA Symposium)

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Clayton State University

2024 SMA DISTINGUISHED FELLOW

Lucy M. Matthews



Dr. Lucy M. Matthews, Associate Professor of Marketing at Middle Tennessee State University, has a B.S. in Marketing and Management from Indiana University and an M.B.A. with a concentration in Marketing from Georgia State University. She worked in sales and credit management for over 15 years, predominantly in the Steel Industry, before returning for her doctorate at Kennesaw State University. She joined MTSU in the Fall of 2015. Dr. Matthews has 44 peer-reviewed publications in sales, burnout, engagement, grit, PLS-SEM, and cross-discipline topics like innovation and entrepreneurship earning her over 6,800 citations according to Google Scholar and over 27,000 reads on Research Gate.

Matthews began attending the Society for Marketing Advances in 2012 while in the doctoral program at Kennesaw at the urging of her dissertation chair, Dr. Joe Hair. She immediately felt welcomed and began serving as session chair and later became a track chair. Dr. Matthews has co-led three PLS-SEM preconference workshops with Dr. Joe Hair. In 2017, she joined the Executive Committee as the Membership Director. After two years, she transitioned to Executive Director, then Program Chair for the 2022 conference in Charlotte, NC, and President in 2023. Matthews is a current member of the SMA Board of Governors.

2024 SMA RUSTY BROOKS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Barbara Ross Wooldridge



Dr. Barbara Ross Wooldridge graduated magna cum laude from James Madison University, completed a Masters of Professional Studies degree from the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University, and earned a doctorate in business administration from Louisiana State University. She has published in such journals as the Journal of Business Research, Journal of Marketing Channels, The Journal of Consumer Marketing, Marketing Education Review, and The Cornell Quarterly. She is a past editor of Marketing Education Review. She has been attending SMA since 1996 and has served as a track chair for case writing (2009, 2010), strategy (2011, 2012), and the

distinguished teaching competition (2013 -2023). She judged the Pride/Ferrell Innovations in Teaching competition numerous times and presented and reviewed numerous papers for SMA. She was a doctoral consortium student in 1997 and was doctoral consortium faculty in 2011 .

2024 Reviewers

Graeme	McLean	Feyzan	Karabulut	Jessica	Babin Wee	XiaoWei	Guo	Gary	Futrell	Justin	Boyd
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Yuna	Choe	Xin	Xin	Saubbhagya	Bhalla	Janhavi	Venkatesh	Ken	Graham	Mario	Gonzalez-Fuentes
Melissa	Cinelli	Taewon	Hwang	Suresh	S	Hana	Pan	Laura	Priest	Chris	Croft
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2024 SMA / ROUTLEDGE-TAYLOR & FRANCIS DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR AWARD RECIPIENT

Eli Jones



Dr. Eli Jones, a highly accomplished Professor of Marketing with extensive business experience in sales and sales management, has a proven track record of leadership. He currently serves as the Lowry and Peggy Mays Eminent Scholar at Texas A&M University. Prior to this, he held esteemed leadership roles as Dean of Mays Business School, Dean of the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas, and Dean of the E. J. Ourso College of Business at Louisiana State University. Jones has made significant contributions to the academic community, publishing over 50 peer-reviewed research articles in top academic journals, and co-authoring several professional books on sales, leadership, and personal development. Peers have cited his research approximately 10,000 times. He is also regarded as an educator, receiving numerous awards for teaching excellence. His extensive business experience, having worked in sales and management for three Fortune 500 global companies before becoming a professor, further solidifies his expertise and understanding of the field. Dr. Jones's influence extends beyond academia as he actively engages with the business community. His service on several boards, including the American Marketing Association (AMA), First Financial Bankshares, Inc., Insuperity, and the Invesco Funds Complex, is a testament to his dedication to community involvement. His roles as Chair of the Compensation Committee at Insuperity and his current positions on the Compensation Committee of First Financial Bank and the Audit Committee of the Invesco Funds Complex further underscore his commitment. In 2024, he was recognized by Board Prospects as one of the Top 100 Black Corporate Directors making a difference. In 2021, he was recognized by Savoy magazine as a Most Influential Corporate Board member, and he is a recipient of the Aggie Impact Award for making a global impact in his community and profession. He has received prestigious awards for his contributions to the sales and sales management discipline, marketing education, and his community and profession. These awards include the AMA-Irwin- McGraw-Hill Distinguished Marketing Educator Award and the Academy of Marketing Science Distinguished Educator Award, and he is also an AMA Fellow. Those awards are the top awards given to marketing professors worldwide. In 2016, the AMA Sales Special Interest Group awarded Jones the Lifetime Achievement Award, which honors an individual who has made meaningful contributions to the academic sales discipline over a long period of time. Two of his most cherished awards are from his alma mater, Texas A&M University. In 2009, Jones was recognized as an Outstanding Doctoral Alumnus, and in 2022, he received Mays Business School's Outstanding Alumnus Award. Together, these awards symbolize his commitment to bridging academia and business. Eli Jones holds a Doctorate in Marketing, an MBA, and a Bachelor of Science in Journalism, all from Texas A&M University.

AWARD WINNING PAPERS

Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Competition – Winner

Blurring the Boundaries Between Human and Technology: A Comprehensive Examination of Social Presence in Human-Technology Interaction

Yuri Martirosyan

Innovations in Teaching Competition- Winner

Creative Synthesis with Tech Teach

Priyanka Singh

Lei Huang

Distinguished Teaching Competition – Winner

You Have to Be C.R.A.Z.Y. to Be a Great Marketing Professor

Mark Wolters

The Sharon Beatty Best Service Paper Award

Frontline Employee Competency Goals, Threats, and Protection Behaviors: A Goal Orientation and Situational Inefficiency Perspective

Emily Treen

Todd J. Bacile

Best Paper in Consumer Behavior

Lessons From the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Meta-Analysis of Consumption Patterns During COVID-19

Omar H. Fares

Seung Hwan (Mark) Lee

Best Paper in Marketing Strategy

Marketing Strategies of Small Firms Trading in and Servicing a Regional-Bordering Economy

Arturo Vasquez

Best Paper in Sales Track

How Intuition-Deliberation Ambidexterity Leads To Acquisition-Retention Ambidexterity? Salesperson Dyadic Perspective

Valter Vieira

Colin Gabler

Raj Agnihotri

Best Track Paper in Branding and IMC

Exploring the Interaction of Product Type and Contextual Backgrounds on Advertising Effectiveness

Luke Liska

Matthew Lunde

Zhihao Yu

Maneesh Thakkar

Best Paper in Public Policy and Marketing

Investigating the Impact of Libertarianism on Reckless Driving Controls

Sphurti Sewak

Todd Haderlie Jr.

Peter Dickson

Best Paper in Sharing Economy and Collaborative Consumption

Renting for Joy: How Mode of Acquisition Impacts Consumer Well-Being

Laura Boman

Ganga Urumutta Hewage

Sarah Lefebvre

Best Paper in Retailing Track

Toward a Theory of Bargain Hunting: Conceptual Framework, Implications, and Future Research Directions

Larissa Ybarra

Reto Felix

Xiaoqing Sheng

Mathew Joseph Best Paper in Doctoral Student Research

Technology vs. Humanity: The Future of Customer Service with AI Agents

Reza Pedarpour Vajargah

Best Paper in Tourism, Hospitality, Food, Music & Sports Marketing

Using an AI Personal Fitness Trainer to Become Gymtimidation-Resistant

Tanya Guerin

Junki Lee

Sam Fullerton

Best Paper in Healthcare Marketing and Consumer Well-Being

Initiating Robot Public Policy: A Consumer-Centric Approach

Alec Slepchuk

George Milne

Nadeesha Bandara

Best Paper in AI and Marketing

Roboto AltruMoto or Ashley? Comparing the Efficacy of Human and Anthropomorphized AI Solicitors in Checkout Charities

Irfan Shamim

Tathagata Ghosh

Sreejesh S

Best Paper in Futurology

Regarding Our Search for Truth: How Do We Retain Hope from the Pandora's Box Impact of Generative AI on Declining Academic Research Integrity?

Jared Hansen

O.C. Ferrell

Linda Ferrell

Michael Levin

Paul Wilson

Kellie Cloud

Best Paper in Luxury Consumption

Long Live the King and Luxury Shopping! The Change of Monarch and Consumer Desire for Luxury Products

Sona Klucarova

Steven J. Shaw & Joe Hair Best Paper in Conference

Consumer Motivations to Interact with Anthropomorphized AI Virtual Influencers

Jared Hansen

Todd Drennan

Paul Wilson

Daisy Ortiz-Berger

Suzanne Collins



FROM THE EDITOR

During the Society for Marketing Advances 2024 annual conference, we explored and learned more about how marketing is being radically and quickly transformed by artificial intelligence. Over 340 members registered for the conference and arrived from 6 continents, 13 countries, and 40 U.S. states.

These Proceedings represent the insightful and innovative research shared at the conference. Research showcased in the following pages encompasses topics such as artificial intelligence and marketing, branding and integrated marketing communication, consumer behavior, marketing analytics, marketing education, and digital marketing, among many other significant topic areas.

I want to thank the authors and presenters, reviewers, executive members, and the board of governors who participated in making this conference a success.

I sincerely appreciate your continuing support of SMA and look forward to seeing you November 5–8 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Please join us to explore how innovative ideas, the interplay between digital and physical environments, branding, and product innovation come together with the human touch to create memorable customer experiences.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'MB Richards'.

Melanie B. Richards
SMA Proceedings Editor

Session 2.2 Marketing Education Review Symposium

Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence: Has AI Changed the Rules? 2

Joshua Mitchell, University of South Alabama

C. Michelle Sullivan, University of South Alabama

Misty Sabol, University of South Alabama

Justin Boyd, University of South Alabama

XiQ: A Case Study of Using Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom for Personal Branding and Business Engagement.....3

Lee Allison, Texas A&M University

James Blair, Eastern Kentucky University

Generative AI as an Alternative Source of Intelligence in the Classroom: Enhancing Critical Thinking and Creativity for Marketing Students 4

Christina Kalberg, CA, Point Loma Nazarene University

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SESSION 2.2: MARKETING EDUCATION REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

Moderators:

Melanie B. Richards and Chelsie M. Dubay

Summary Brief

Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence: Has AI Changed the Rules?

Joshua Mitchell, University of South Alabama, USA

C. Michelle Sullivan, University of South Alabama, USA

Misty Sabol, University of South Alabama, USA

Justin Boyd, University of South Alabama, USA

In the contemporary landscape of public access to artificial intelligence (AI), this study investigates the utilization of AI by university students and its implications for plagiarism. Building upon the original antecedents to plagiarism model proposed by Uzun & Kills (2020), this research introduces a mediated-moderation model to examine the relationships between antecedents, the intention to plagiarize, and self-efficacy. This model incorporates moderators such as cultural backgrounds and institutional policies affecting students' self-efficacy. The Study Demand Resource Theory (Lesener et al., 2020), which is derived from the Job Demand Resource Theory (JDR), serves as the theoretical framework, elucidating the university environment and the health and well-being of students. By exploring these relationships and outcomes, this study aims to inform future interactions among university students, faculty, and administration, acknowledging the persistent presence and impact of AI technology.

References available upon request.

Summary Brief

XiQ: A Case Study of Using Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom for Personal Branding and Business Engagement

Lee Allison, Texas A&M University, USA

James Blair, Eastern Kentucky University, USA

While technology usage offers many benefits to society and individuals, it can also pose challenges, and present deleterious effects like fractured attention, inability to focus, anxiety, depression, sleep deprivation, and a variety of physical and social ills. Research shows these issues weigh particularly heavy on the current college student, negatively impacting learning motivation and engagement. This is concerning because it is well established that mental and physical well-being are important for student learning motivation and engagement. This research aims to address that concern and proposes investigating implementation of a novel set of learning engagement activities using an AI chatbot in order to (1) help students prioritize productive screentime over that which is harmful and unproductive; (2) build students' business acumen and expertise in using AI; (3) achieve greater understanding of self and others; and (4) restore better balance between face-to-face and virtually mediated relationships and activities.

References available upon request.

Summary Brief

Generative AI as an Alternative Source of Intelligence in the Classroom: Enhancing Critical Thinking and Creativity for Marketing Students

Christina Kalberg, MBA, Point Loma Nazarene University, USA

Garo Agopian, Ph.D., Northeastern Illinois University, USA

Ann-Michelle Levangie, M.E.T., Stukent, Inc., USA

Students often struggle with a starting point for marketing assignments in higher education. Students can leverage generative artificial intelligence (AI) to overcome this hurdle. The output for creative assignments is completed in just minutes using an AI tool such as ChatGPT. This also gives students the ability to critically think through the output generated in a way that typically has not been done. Imagine spending eight hours writing a 1,000-word blog for a digital marketing assignment. Before AI tools were readily available to aid in producing this type of work, students often spent so much time on the initial generation of ideas that they sacrificed the revision step, submitting work without reading or editing. Spelling and grammar errors were plentiful. Now that ChatGPT and other AI tools can produce content in minutes, students have additional time to evaluate the written or visual output, revise, and apply ethical decision-making. Data gathered in this study shows marketing students in higher education believe using AI in the classroom enhances the learning experience because it offers an alternative source of intelligence to support critical thinking and creativity.

References available upon request.

SESSION 2.3: WHAT ARE SOME THINGS WE DO IN MARKETING

Moderator:

SIDDHARTHA KUSHWAHA

Summary Brief

Influence of Crowdedness on Green Consumption

Siddhartha Kushwaha, University of Memphis, USA

Subhash Jha, University of Memphis, USA

The paper proposes a theoretical framework for the influence of crowdedness on purchase intentions of green products. Crowdedness threatens social identity, arousing consumers' emotional state. Due to this emotional state, consumers are expected to have low-level peripheral processing of green product features, leading to purchase intention. The relationship between crowdedness and green product purchase intention would be mediated through connectedness with the future self. The mediation effect is proposed to be moderated by a perception of self-salience.

Introduction

A survey reports that 65% of consumers would like to have a sustainable product, but the actual adoption is a mere 26%¹. 60% of respondents to a consumer sentiment survey in the US showed intent to pay more for sustainable packaging of products, and 78% of the US consumers acknowledge that a sustainable lifestyle is of importance to them². Although 46% of US consumers reported purchasing green and sustainable products recently, the adoption is restricted to food and grocery categories³. With such a favorable perception of green products, consumers' purchase of these products is restricted and not extended to wider product categories. A primary reason for the low adoption of green products is that the cost of development of sustainable products is up to 80% higher than the non-sustainable ones due to technological reasons and meet the sustainability definition⁴. A product can be defined as sustainable considering the definition of sustainability: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”⁵.

Accessing self and social identities, social desirability, and self-other conflict resulting in favor of green products (White et al., 2019). Tezer and Bodur (2019) found that products made of recycled material are more enjoyable than those made from virgin material. Researchers suggest using sensory cues such as audio, visual, and olfaction to promote sustainable products by consumers (Estesky, 2021; Madzharov et al., 2015). Another stimulus that is present in the shopping environment is social density. When social density is perceived to be obstructive to the movement of consumers, consumers perceive the situation as crowdedness. The crowdedness affects other virtue products, such as healthy food and premium purchase intention.

The study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to marketing literature on using the social cue of crowdedness to encourage the adoption of green products.

The study has only proposed the theoretical framework for influencing consumers' green product purchase behavior. The work needs to be further extended to conduct the studies and validate them with external field studies.

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¹ <https://hbr.org/2019/07/the-elusive-green-consumer>

² <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/consumers-care-about-sustainability-and-back-it-up-with-their-wallets>

³ <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/retail-distribution/consumer-behavior-trends-state-of-the-consumer-tracker/sustainable-products-customer-expectations.html>

⁴ <https://www2.deloitte.com/ca/en/industries/consumer/consumer-sustainability-report.html>

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>

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Summary Brief

Market Reactions to Corporate Litigation: The Role of Prior Corporate Sociopolitical Activism and Industry Competitiveness

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Courtney B. Peters, Samford University, Homewood, AL

George D. Deitz, University of Alabama-Birmingham, Birmingham, AL

This study investigates the stock market's reaction to corporate litigation related to sociopolitical activism and the moderating effects of a firm's prior stance on such issues and industry competitiveness. Findings reveal that while the market generally reacts negatively to litigation announcements, firms that have previously engaged with sociopolitical issues are protected from significant downturns in firm value. This effect is more pronounced in highly competitive industries.

Introduction

Corporate litigation and regulatory investigation are ubiquitous, particularly for U.S. companies (Koku, Qureshi, and Akhigbe 2001). Moreover, litigation is costly and provides a credible signal to investors indicating an impact on future potential net cash flows (Ertekin, Sorescu, and Houston 2018). However, how does the market react to firms that have been implicated in accusations and litigations related to sociopolitical issues, such as diversity, discrimination, climate change, censorship, minimum wage, abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and so on? While it seems intuitive that the market would react negatively to such litigation, does this necessarily translate into a significant downturn in stock value following these announcements? Does a firm's prior engagement or stance on a sociopolitical issue serve to amplify or mitigate these effects? Moreover, how do the competitive dynamics of an industry influence these outcomes?

Conceptual Development

In today's world, there is an increasing demand for firms to speak up, particularly in relation to sociopolitical issues (Bhagwat et al. 2020). This trend is paralleled by the intensifying scrutiny that these firms are subjected to, as their actions are put under a microscope to ensure their conduct aligns with new standards of social and political values. Considering the potential liabilities and negative publicity that can arise from a firm facing litigation, we posit that a firm's financial performance will experience a significant downturn following the announcement of litigation pertaining to sociopolitical matters (H1). Next, we apply signaling theory to provide a framework to understand the impact of prior corporate sociopolitical activism on the market's reaction to litigation regarding sociopolitical issues.

Brand activism has emerged as a method for companies to foster favorable views and build a deeper relationship with their customers by taking a position on potentially contentious or controversial matters, going beyond the usual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Cammarota et al. 2023). We suggest that a firm's previous engagement in support of a sociopolitical issue signals established efforts in these areas of goodwill, providing a degree of protection to a firm alleged of wrongdoing related to a sociopolitical issue (H2). Consumers are skeptical of reactive initiatives soon after irresponsible corporate behavior (Groza, Pronschinske, and Walker 2011; Rim and Ferguson 2020). By proactively advocating for a cause before any legal disputes arise, a company exhibits a genuine commitment to an issue. Moreover, in a highly competitive industry, a prior stance on a sociopolitical issue may serve as a differentiator that is positively received for a firm that is under litigation for a related issue (H3). We state our hypotheses formally below:

H1: The market will react negatively to the announcement of a firm's litigation related to a sociopolitical issue.

H2: The market will have a less adverse reaction to an announcement of a firm's litigation related to a sociopolitical issue if the firm has previously taken a stance on a sociopolitical issue, compared to a firm that has not.

H3: Industry competitiveness positively moderates the impact of a firm's prior sociopolitical stance on market response such that the relationship is stronger when the firm is in a more competitive industry.

Data Collection

We utilized RavenPack News Analytics (RPA) to identify announcements of firms facing litigation or regulatory investigations relating to sociopolitical issues from 2007 until 2020. We cross-referenced each date with other sources to ensure the first event was identified. This process resulted in a sample of 304 events.

Analysis and Results

For the first stage of our analysis, we conducted an event study utilizing Wharton Research Data Services (WRDS) U.S. Daily Event Study Analysis, which uses stock returns obtained from the Center for Research in Security Prices (CRSP). As long event windows increase the number of possible confounds, a recommended short window of (-1, 0) was chosen for analysis (McWilliams and Siegel, 1997).

The first hypothesis examines how the market responds to the announcement of firm litigation involving a sociopolitical issue. There is a negative, significant CAR for the event window of interest in this study (-1, 0), in support of H1. On average, announcements related to corporate litigation related to sociopolitical issues resulted in a loss of -0.30% of shareholder value ($t = -2.02$, $p < .05$).

For the second stage of our analysis, we conducted a cross-sectional regression in Stata. This allowed us to evaluate the conditional effects of a firm taking a stand on a sociopolitical issue prior to the litigation and the competitiveness of the industry on the abnormal returns associated with the announcement of litigation. We included controls relating to firm size, liabilities, net income, and market value which were calculated from Compustat. The results indicate a significant regression model (Wald Chi-Square (7) = 24.06, $p < .01$). Due to differences across data sources, the regression model included 144 events across 55 companies. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Effects of Prior CSA and Industry Competitiveness on Shareholder Wealth

Window (-1, 0)		<i>Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Constant</i>		-0.12*	.004
Prior Stand	H2	.013*	.005
Industry Competitiveness		-.041***	.013
Stand*Competitiveness	H3	.033*	.016
<i>Controls</i>			
<i>Liabilities</i>		<.001**	<.001
<i>Net Income</i>		<-.001*	<.001
<i>Firm Size</i>		<-.001**	<.001
<i>Tobin's Q</i>		<-.001	<.001
		R ² = .15	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, & *** $p \leq .001$, Event window significant, CAR = -.30%

There is a significant and positive relationship between a firm's litigation related to a sociopolitical issue if the firm has previously taken a stance on a sociopolitical issue, in support of H2. Additionally, there is a significant and positive interaction between a firm previously taking a stance on a sociopolitical issue and industry competitiveness, suggesting that taking a stance prior to the litigation is helpful to offset the negative effects of the allegation on market response, especially if the firm is in a very competitive industry, in support of H3.

Discussion

Our findings demonstrate that, on average, the market responds negatively to the announcement of litigation concerning a sociopolitical issue. In other words, shareholders perceive this litigation as a negative signal indicating potential negative outcomes for the firm. However, firms that have previously taken a stance on a sociopolitical issue appear to be shielded from a significant drop in stock price following such announcements. This suggests that a firm's prior engagement with sociopolitical issue can serve as a buffer against potential market backlash. Moreover, this protective effect seems to be more pronounced in highly competitive industries. In these industries, the buffer provided

by a prior stance is stronger and, thus, firms experience a smaller loss in firm value as compared to those operating in less competitive industries.

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Summary Brief

An Examination of the Casual Relationship Between Salesperson Job Satisfaction and Performance

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It is important to find the causality between job satisfaction and job performance because the causal direction can change not only sales management strategy but also firm strategy on resource allocation. The present study conducts an empirical, longitudinal study to find the nature of the causal relationship between salespeople's job satisfaction and job performance. The study applies a three-stage least squared (3SLS) simultaneous equation model with panel data, which consists of 994 salespeople. A conventional single equation has shown that job performance leads to job satisfaction and job satisfaction leads to job performance. However, our estimation using a 3SLS simultaneous equation model indicates a salesperson's job performance significantly affects his job satisfaction ($p < .01$) whereas there is no evidence that job satisfaction leads to performance ($p > .05$). The finding suggests that future research including a relationship between job satisfaction and job performance should control for simultaneous endogeneity between these two constructs.

SESSION 2.4: AI-THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE SCARY

Moderators:

Sphurti Sewak

Summary Brief

Marketing Divisive Products and Services with Data Science and Machine Learning (AI)

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Introduction

Divisive products and services can create disagreement or division among consumers due to cultural, ethical, environmental, or personal beliefs. The term has been associated with many goods and services, such as generative artificial intelligence and some health care services, which can be very difficult to market. The most well-documented health care example is vaccinations, which have persistently created global concerns and division since vaccines were discovered (Liu et al. 2023). One reason given for the recent increase in this division manifests in how people view any social limitations that they must face, such as regulatory orders or mandates. Research (Funk et al. 2023) indicates that opinions on the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine, for example, are still mixed. Tyson et al. (2021) and others strongly suggest that such products and services rely on effective marketing. Data science and machine learning tools, a subset of artificial intelligence, can be used to process huge quantities of data being generated for these divisive products and services with the intent to visually monitor information flows (data visualizations), understand the sentiment of a divisive audience (sentiment analysis), and align with the key underlying topics that are attributable to the divisiveness (topic modelling). The evidence suggests that organizations dealing with marketing divisive products or services can use these tools to contribute to reducing polarization and fostering a more cohesive audience.

A 2021 Pew Research Center survey (Devlin et al. 2021) across 17 advanced world economies found that most people believe their society is now more divided than before the COVID-19 pandemic. While about 34% feel more united, the other two-thirds report that divisions have worsened with nearly every aspect of life. Research indicates that the pandemic has significantly altered one particular aspect, consumer behavior. This leads to changes in how people view products, services, and regulatory organizations. For example, the pandemic forced consumers to live through social distancing mandates and school/office closures (Sashittal et al. 2023). The division was also extended to consumer choice and brand loyalty. People's shopping habits and preferences were influenced by their perceptions of how businesses responded to the pandemic (Medina 2021, Karpunina et al. 2022). For example, a study led by Stanford Medicine found that marketing strategies targeting human behavior, similar to those used to sell new technology, can be adapted to different cultures to sway individuals toward acceptance of a divisive product or service (Flynn 2021). Thus, the term "divisive" has been associated with many products and services needing marketing solutions (Di Crosta et al. 2021, Jilková and Králová 2021, Das et al. 2022, Hu et al. 2022).

Methodology

In the case of the COVID-19 vaccine, the best strategy was a "visual marketing" approach (Hamaguchi et al. 2020, Saraiva and Ferreira 2021). Visual marketing is the strategic use of visual content using technology to enhance messaging and communication (El-Desouky 2020; Sample et al. 2020). It goes beyond text-based communication, allowing visual content to convey complex concepts more effectively. An example would be the use of graphs (data visualizations) instead of metrics (statistics). Through the application of author-generated data visualizations, sentiment analysis, and visual advanced analytical models, this paper demonstrates and validates the effectiveness of a visual marketing approach to products and services that are considered divisive. Such tools can influence patterns and anomalies for humans, or possibly AI, to find, which leads to earlier detection of barriers to acceptance. But, there are ethical and privacy concerns as well. The case used in this study is the mRNA vaccine, which is considered divisive, and for which there is ample data and evidence. The **theory** presented in this paper is that once marketers recognize the attitudes and beliefs of society towards a divisive product or service, there are available advanced visual analytical tools to understand the reasons and barriers causing the division. Then marketers can identify and segment divisive individuals based on their beliefs, and appeal to advocates who can influence the segmented behavior. The **hypothesis** is that a visual approach using data science and machine learning models can be effective for marketing divisive products and services.

Key Findings

This paper will contribute to the existing literature on marketing divisive products and services by:

- Bridging the gap: There is a lack of research specifically addressing the marketing of divisive products and services. This paper could help to bridge this gap in the literature.
- New insight: This paper provides new insights into how visual marketing strategies can be tailored to divisive products and services.
- Methodological advancements: This paper contributes to methodological advancements in data science and machine learning for visual marketing of divisive products and services.

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Summary Brief

When Artificial Intelligence (AI) meets expertise: A methodological approach applied to the Album On Line (AOL) method

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This paper proposes Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a solution to cope with the researcher's subjectivity when interpreting qualitative material. Applied to the Album On Line (AOL) method, we combine the use of generative AI (8 different chatbots) and semantic AI using Natural Language Processing (NLP) to improve the validity of the outcoming mapping. Ultimately, the outcomes generated by artificial intelligence (AI) are compared with those derived from researchers' efforts. This study aims to provide a broader vision of the world of AI and its possible contribution to research. In this regard, AI enhances efficiency, saves time, and improves result quality. This study contributes to the enrichment of the researcher's toolbox by presenting how to exploit AI in favor of research.

Introduction

The Album On Line method (AOL) is a projective qualitative method based on a selection and interpretation of images by respondents (Vernette, 2007). The AOL allows researchers to create mappings structured around the main axis of consumption experiences and to display its key concepts (Vernette, 2007). Ultimately AOL provides meaningful orthogonal space, structured along the main dimensions of the studied experience, displaying this experience components through conceptual clusters. Axes and clusters names are deduced and labeled from the image-concept pairs present on the mapping (Couder and Valette-Florence, 2024; Youness et al., 2023; Lahbib et al. al., 2023; Kessous and Valette-Florence, 2019). Thus, the dimension represented by an axis is assigned according to the distance from each concept image. According to Vernette (2007 p. 39), the AOL method was designed to “*identify the major axes which structure the representations of consumption experiences*”. The identification of the structuring axes and clusters names is thus a cornerstone of the validity of the resulting mapping. Relying entirely on the interpretation of the researchers, this methodological step is considered important and needs to be perfected to objectively represent the semantic link between words. The followed methodology is motivated by the assumption that AI tools can match or surpass human capabilities (Afuah and Tucci, 2023), particularly in tasks involving association between ideas or concepts (Organisciak et al., 2023). Through this study, we tried to cope with this lack of objectivity observed in the application of AOL, using Artificial Intelligence (AI). We have chosen tourist experience as a field of application of the AOL method.

Methodological investigation

The AOL application is carried out in three steps. In the first phase, each participant is exposed to a cognitive or affective scenario, corresponding to both experience dimensions to arouse their tourist experiences. Respondents are then invited to search the internet for 5 images that best represent the best their tourist experience. In addition, they are asked to explain their choice, providing a verbatim corresponding to each selected image. Collectively those 5 pictures represent their individual album.

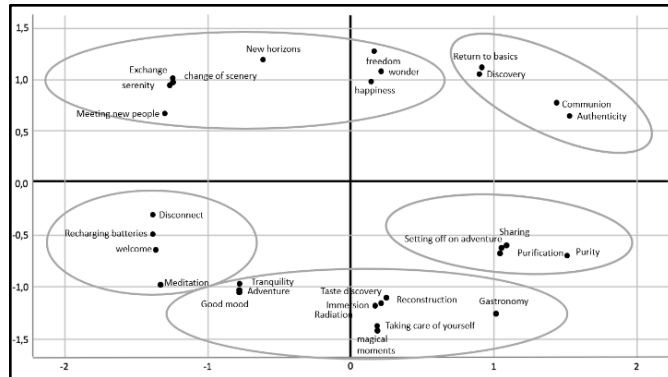
In the second step, the individual albums are grouped to form a single collective album. Each participant has now the opportunity to adjust his individual album, by integrating pictures from the collective album if they consider they are more representative of their tourist experience. If they do so, they are invited to provide another verbatim, explaining this choice. Thus, two researchers analyzed each picture and associated verbatim to extract their main concept.

In the third step, each respondent is asked to rate the fit of each main concept associated with the image on a 6-point scale. The purpose of this step is to evaluate whether the tourist consumption experience felt by each participant is consistent with the extracted photos and the associated main concept.

To conduct the mapping step Kessous et al., (2017) propose to use an individual-difference multidimensional scaling approach (INDSCAL⁶). As implemented actually, the last step consists in the methodological improvement suggested by Kessous et al. (2017). All concepts with their corresponding images are illustrated in an orthogonal space

according to the proximity of each of these associations (image/concept). This mapping is design to encapsulate the main dimensions of the phenomenon studied. Moreover, the proximity between concepts are based on respondent rating, which allows insightful interpretations. In this work, we follow this approach. The figure 1 shows the mapping obtained after the third AOL step and the use of INDSCAL. It shows the dispersion of concepts on the mapping, as well as the different clusters before their nomination. Thus, clusters and axes have to be named according to the concepts they include:

Figure 1: Mapping with clusters obtained after the third AOL step



We try to improve this naming step, reducing the interpretation bias with a brand-new AI based methodology, using chatbots and a natural language processing AI. We first used generative artificial intelligence through chatbots to propose a main idea evoked in each cluster. To do so, the AI is asked to extract the principal idea linking all the concepts identified in this cluster. Once again, to increase the validity of this methodology, this step we carry out 8 times, using 8 different generative AI. This methodology seems pertinent since those AI are unbiased in their semantic treatment. Secondly, a semantic intelligence, through Natural Language Processing (NLP) was implemented in order to extract from the 8 ideas proposed a cluster name.

To assess the impact of our methodological proposal, two different investigations were conducted. A first analysis was conducted following the classic methodology. A second one, using AI, was implemented. A comparative analysis between the proposed structuring axes and cluster names was carried out (researchers vs. AI).

Findings

A comparison between the results proposed by the researchers and those generated by the AI was carried out by three different researchers. They concluded that the results generated by AI guaranteed a better understanding of mapping, the AI generated names seem to be richer, more precise, and extracted from a wider semantic field. Moreover, those AI generated names seem to be more descriptive of the different ideas encompassed in each cluster. Considering the amount of information involved when a researcher has to label the different clusters, it seems reasonable to believe that certain elements may be overlooked. Surprisingly, the richness and variety of names proposed by NLP has allowed the identification of aspects that remain undetected when applying the traditional AOL methodology.

Conclusion

The use of generative AI, firstly by using chatbots to identify links between words, and secondly by using semantic AI through NLP to analyze the corpus and name clusters and axes, represents a real methodological contribution in the application of the AOL technique. AI not only saved a lot of time in choosing the names of the clusters and axes, but also eliminated the problem of subjectivity that the researcher often faces in his choices. By integrating AI into the AOL method, we minimize the risk of falling into subjectivity by suggesting a name for each cluster and axis. Compared to a researcher, AI allows to draw answers from a wider, more diversified semantic field. Despite the expertise and experience of the researcher, AI proved to be more relevant and accurate.

This research has limitations, which represent viable avenues for future research. The final step of comparing the results obtained using the classic AOL method with those obtained using the AI was submitted to the judgment of three researchers. It would have given greater validity to the results if this task had also been assigned

to professionals in the field of tourism and tourists. We used 8 chatbots, but they are all free. The result could have been better with paid chatbots that are more precise in their answers.

We suggest testing AI with AOL in other research areas. It is also recommended to compare different AI sources and to use different techniques to broaden the range of results. The contribution of this work may go beyond improving the AOL method as such, to implications for qualitative coding in general.

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SESSION 2.6: STRATEGY, INNOVATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Moderator:

Fayez Ahmad

SESSION 2.8: SPARK CREATIVITY

Moderator:

Lucy Matthews

Summary Brief

Passport to Learning: Transformative Experiences of Study Abroad Programs

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Lucy M. Matthews, Middle Tennessee State University, USA

Introduction

International travel by U.S. consumers has steadily been on the rise in recent years, now surpassing pre-Covid numbers (NTTO, 2024; Rossman & Gage, 2024). However, 23% of U.S. consumers still have not traveled internationally (Wike, Fetterolf, Fagan, & Gubbala, 2023). Research has shown that individuals who travel internationally tend to have higher education, earn more than the median income, and feel more connected to others around the globe than those who have not traveled internationally (Wike et al., 2023).

The goal of universities should be to prepare students to enter the workforce, both domestically and internationally. One way that this can be accomplished is by incorporating experiential learning activities and programs into the coursework. While these programs are a step in the right direction, especially for domestic employers, research has shown that 40% of executives believe their company has missed international business opportunities due to a lack of internationally competent employees (Daniel, Xie, & Kedia, 2014). Many students lack international exposure of any kind (Delpechitre & Baker, 2017; Herlache et al., 2018), and experiential study abroad opportunities are typically limited due to the cost and timing involved. In fact, in 2021-2022, approximately 1% of U.S. college students participated in a study abroad program (NAFSA, 2024). Because of this, there is a perception that U.S. students are not as globally-minded as students from other countries (IvyPanda, 2024).

Study abroad programs provide many unique benefits to students. For example, research has shown that these experiential-based programs increase student maturity, self-confidence, soft skills, worldview perceptions, and cultural values and enhance employability (IvyPanda, 2024). In fact, research has shown that students who participate in a study abroad tend to get hired faster and earn more than their peers without international experience (IES Abroad, 2024). In addition, with companies pursuing diversity, equity, and inclusion, employers seek employees who are more accepting and willing to interact with people from different cultures. Because of these benefits, it is important that experiential study abroad opportunities are made available to students in a wide range of disciplines throughout their entire college career.

Goals of Study and Methodology

The goal of this study is to investigate student attitudes and behaviors toward study abroad programs. Specifically, this study examined how individual characteristics such as grit, sensation seeking, and personality differ based on prior study experience. In addition, for students who had prior study abroad experience, this study looked at satisfaction, likelihood to recommend, adaptability, and cultural competency. Finally, for students who lacked experience in studying abroad, the barriers to participation were explored.

A Qualtrics survey was administered via email to all students attending a public southeastern U.S. university for the Spring 2024 semester. Of the 18,381 sent emails, 1,079 surveys were completed. After removing participants who were under the age of 18, refused to provide consent or honest answers, or failed the attention checks, 735 valid surveys were obtained. Of the 735 respondents, 12.1% (n = 89) had prior study abroad experience. Analysis of these results will be presented.

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SESSION 3.1: LET'S NAVIGATE THE FUTURE OF MARKETING: AI INTEGRATION, CURRICULUM TRENDS, AND DIGITAL TOOL FEEDBACK

Moderators:

Jessica Dimitrijevic and Michelle Sweeden, McGraw Hill

SESSION 3.2: GEN AI EXPLAINED

Moderators

Joie Hain

Summary Brief

Using Generative AI to Create and Promote an African American Heritage Tour of Georgetown, SC

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African American heritage tourism encompasses a rich tapestry of historical sites, cultural landmarks, and significant events that highlight the enduring legacy of African American contributions to American society. We incorporated Generative AI to create an outline as a guide to examine the evolution of African American heritage tourism, its socio-cultural impact, and its potential for promoting economic development and social awareness. Through a comprehensive review of literature, mass media, and empirical research, this study provides insights into the importance of preserving and promoting specific African American heritage sites, the challenges faced by heritage tourism initiatives, and strategies for growth, development, and community involvement. We apply Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) as theory for this study.

Introduction

Georgetown was founded in 1729 at the junction of five rivers: the Black, Great Pee Dee, Small Pee Dee, Waccamaw and Sampit (discovergeorgetownsc.com). It is the third oldest city in South Carolina, behind Charleston and Beaufort. The earliest residents of the Georgetown area were Native American tribes, which are responsible for many of the names assigned to natural features throughout the Lowcountry region of South Carolina. After Native Americans were removed, indigo became the cash crop for the Georgetown region.

Post revolutionary war, indigo was no longer lucrative since trade with England stopped, and local planters relied on rice as a crop. The many swamps and low-lying areas by tidal rivers and the African labor supply from the slave trade made the cultivation of rice highly profitable. Enslaved African laborers, who brought much of the knowledge about rice cultivation with them, cleared the dense cypress swamps and produced rice by a system of flooding the fields via rivers, canals, ditches, and/or floodgates.

By 1840, the Georgetown District (County) was the wealthiest area within America's 13 original colonies. Georgetown produced half of the total rice crop of the country and exported more rice than any port in the world. "Carolina Gold" was the local variety of rice and in demand around the globe, which provided great wealth for plantation owners. Other exports included cotton and lumber products. More recently, the tourism industry has become vital to Georgetown's economy. Tours by foot, car, and boat, are conducted daily in Georgetown and its surrounding waters.

African American Heritage Tourism

While some destinations have traditionally silenced a black sense of place, other heritage sites are being developed that offer a narration of African American heritage that appeals to minority visitors (Benjamin et. al., 2016). For example, New Orleans instituted the Louisiana Black Culture Commission and the Division of Black Culture promoting African American Heritage (Gotham 2011). South Carolina created a heritage tourism industry promoting Gullah Geechee traditions (Benjamin et. al., 2016).

Arguably, no other region illustrates these complexities and contradictions of racial and ethnic inclusion and expression more than the southeastern United States, where the political economy of tourism and hospitality is particularly racialized (Alderman & Modlin, 2013). African-American heritage tour sites and distances in Georgetown, SC are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Sites and distances

Attractions	Distance Between Each Attractions															Mansfield plantation	Duration of Each
	Georgetown County Museum	Kaminski	Rice	SCMM	SPH	Hobcaw	Hopsewee	Hampton	SFT	Capt. Rod's	CRBT	SIT	Brookgreen	HTS	SC Co Museum		
Georgetown County Museum		.3 mi	.2 mi	500 ft	.3 mi	3.5 mi	13.5 mi	19.2 mi	.2 mi	.1 mi	2.8 mi	17.8 m	20.2 mi	.2 mi		10.3 mi	1 Hour
The Gullah Museum	.3 mi		.4 mi	.3 mi	.1 mi	3.7 mi	13.3 mi	19 mi	430 ft	.3 mi	2.6 mi	18 mi	20.4 mi	.1 mi	.3 mi	10.1 mi	2 Hour Bus Tour
The Kaminski House	500 ft		.3 mi	.2 mi	100 ft	3.9 mi	13.1 mi	18.8 mi	235 ft	.3 mi	2.4 mi	18.1 m	20.6 mi	170 ft	.3 mi	10.1 mi	1 Hour
The Rice Museum	.4 mi	.3 mi		415 ft	.3 mi	3.4 mi	13.4 mi	19.1 mi	.3 mi	145 ft	2.7 mi	17.8 m	20.2 mi	.3 mi	.2 mi	10.4 mi	45 Mins
South Carolina Maritime Museum	.3 mi	.2 mi	415 ft		.3 mi	3.5 mi	13.4 mi	19 mi	.2 mi	265 ft	2.7 mi	17.8 m	20.3 mi	.2 mi	500 ft	10.3 mi	2 Hour 15 Mins
Stewart-Parker House	.1 mi	100 ft	.3 mi	.3 mi		3.9 mi	13.1 mi	18.8 mi	335 ft	.3 mi	2.4 mi	18.2 m	20.6 mi	.3 mi	.3 mi	10.1 mi	
Hobcaw Barony	3.7 mi	3.9 mi	3.4 m	3.5 mi	3.9 mi		16.9 mi	22.6 mi	3.7 mi	3.5 mi	6.2 mi	14.4 m	16.8 mi	3.7 mi	3.5 mi	13.4 mi	2 Hour
Hopsewee Plantation	13.3 mi	13.1 mi	13.4	13.4 m	13.1 m	16.9 mi		6.6 mi	13.2 m	13.4 mi	12.1 mi	31.2 m	33.6 mi	13.2 m	13.5 mi	18.9 mi	1 Hour 45 Mins
Hampton Plantation	19 mi	18.8 mi	19.1	19 mi	18.8 m	22.6 mi	6.6 mi		18.9 m	19.1 mi	17.8 m	36.9 m	39.3 mi	18.9 m	19.2 mi	24.6 mi	45 - 60 Minutes
Swamp Fox Tours	430 ft	235 ft	.3 mi	.2 mi	335 ft	3.7 mi	13.2 mi	18.9 mi		.2 mi	2.5 mi	18 mi	20.5 mi	69 ft	.2 mi	10.1 mi	1 Hour
Capt. Rod's Plantation River Tour	.3 mi	.3 mi	145 ft	265 ft	.3 mi	3.5 mi	13.4 mi	19.1 mi	.2 mi		2.7 mi	17.8 m	20.2 mi	.3 mi	.1 mi	32.8 mi	
Carolina Rover Boat Tours	2.6 mi	2.4 mi	2.7 m	2.7 mi	2.4 mi	6.2 mi	12.1 mi	17.8 mi	2.5 mi	2.7 mi		20.1 m	22.7 mi	2.2 mi	2.8 mi	11.7 mi	4 Hours
Sandy Island Tour	18 mi	18.1 mi	17.8	17.8 m	18.2 m	14.4 mi	31.2 mi	36.9 mi	18 mi	17.8 mi	20.1 mi		3.1 mi	18 mi	17.8 mi	27.7 mi	2 Hours 30 Mins
Brookgreen Gardens	20.4 mi	20.6 mi	20.2	20.3 m	20.6 m	16.8 mi	33.6 mi	39.3 mi	20.5 m	20.2 mi	22.7 mi	3.1 mi		19.4 m	20.2 mi	27.2 mi	2 Hours
Joseph H. Rainey (Harriet Tubman statue)	.1 mi	170 ft	.3 mi	.2 mi	.3 mi	3.7 mi	13.2 mi	18.9 mi	69 ft	.3 mi	2.2 mi	18 mi	19.4 mi		.2 mi	10.1 mi	
Mansfield Plantation Bed & Breakfast & Slave Street	10.1 mi	10.1 mi	10.4	10.3 m	10.1 m	13.4 mi	18.9 mi	24.6 mi	10.1 m	32.8 mi	11.7 mi	27.7 m	27.2 mi	10.1 m	10.3 mi		

While it is educational to understand the nature of heritage tourism management, we are concerned with gauging public support for preservation and remembrance of an African American heritage tour and taking these attitudes into account when planning, designing, and managing a tourist destination to Georgetown African American sites (see site descriptions below).

Site Descriptions

Museums

Georgetown County Museum - Spanning all eras of Georgetown life, from the original Native American residents to the relatively modern Georgetown steel Mill this completely engaging collection of antiques and relics paints an intricate portrait of all aspects of coastal South Carolina life - past, present, and future.

Gullah Museum - Located downtown, it offers presentations on Gullah Geechee history, crop cultivation, animal husbandry, as well as distinctive arts, crafts, foodways, music, style of worship, naming practices, and language.

Kaminski House - On a bluff overlooking the Sampit River, typical of the Low country “single house” style of the mid-18th century. The narrow ends of the home faced the street and the river with the main entry door located midway down one side of the building.

Rice Museum - Located in the Old Market Building behind the iconic Clock Tower, it exhibits a permanent collection of dioramas, maps, paintings, artifacts and other displays that tell the history of rice cultivation in Georgetown County.

SC Maritime Museum - Home to prized Fresnel lens of the old North Island lighthouse, featuring exhibits, programs and events related to SC’s rich and remarkable maritime history.

Stewart-Parker House - Built in 1740 by Robert Stewart. Wealthy merchant Daniel Tucker purchased the estate in 1787 and the house was transformed into a stuccoed residence.

Plantations

Hobcaw Barony - Privately owned research reserve located on the coast near Georgetown. 16,000 acres encompass a rich diversity of every common ecosystem found on the SC coast, making this an unparalleled site for research in the environmental sciences.

Hopsewee Plantation - Home and Grounds set along the banks of the beautiful North Santee River, the structure is typical of Lowcountry rice plantations of the early 18th century with details like a full brick cellar, attic rooms, hand-carved molding and random-width heart-pine floors.

Hampton Plantation - Once a sprawling rice plantation along the Santee River. Built by generations of the Horry and Rutledge families with the labor of enslaved Africans, Hampton stands as a testament to the development of a distinct Lowcountry rice culture.

Brookgreen Gardens - Floral jewel of SC's coast, on the Hammock Coast. The 9,127-acre property preserves this historic site's natural and cultivated landscape.

Mansfield Plantation Bed & Breakfast and Slave Street - This rice-producing plantation was established in the 18th century. Records show that by 1860 there were over 100 slaves that planted 235 acres of rice at Mansfield. Six slave houses and a slave chapel remain. In 2004, descendants of owner, F. S. Parker, opened a bed & breakfast inn on the site.

Tours

Sandy Island Tour - Tours de Sandy Island offer 2.5-hour tours, include an in-depth history of the Gullah people of Sandy Island. Tours visit the old Mt. Rena cemetery, Sandy Island's schoolhouse, volunteer fire department, villages, as well as a stop at Pyatt's General store.

Swamp Fox Tours - Tours embark on an adventure aboard the blue-and-white tram and hear authentic history spanning almost 300 years.

Capt. Rod's Plantation River Tour - View several former plantation homes while learning the history of the wealthy rice planters and their families. Around each bend of the river, you'll see where local Indians once lived and traded with early settlers.

Carolina Rover Boat Tours - 4-hour Eco-tourism cruise that is guaranteed to be unlike any other. Shaded 40 ft. pontoon boat cruises on smooth inland waters to a remote barrier island where the Winyah Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean.

Parks

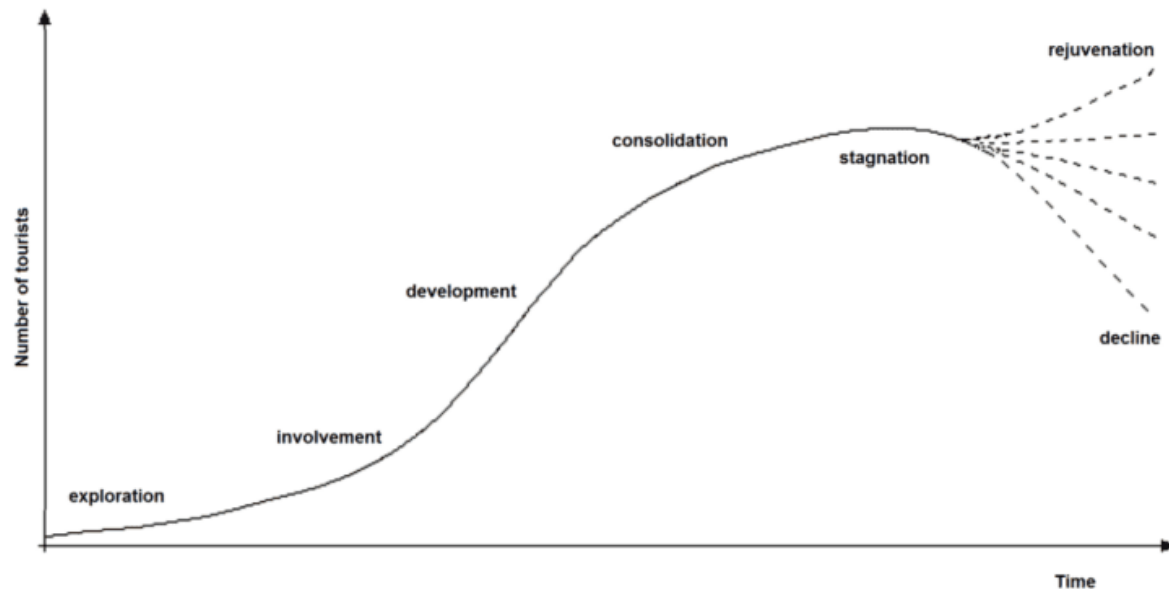
Joseph H. Rainey Park (Harriet Tubman statue) "The Journey to Freedom." shows Harriet Tubman, a former slave known for helping many others escape slavery, saving a child.

Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model

The TALC theory (Butler, 1980), is a widely accepted theory regarding the evolution of tourist destinations. The TALC model can be applied to understand the lifecycle of tourist destinations and to inform strategic planning and management (McKercher and Prideaux, 2020). By identifying the stage of development, stakeholders can make informed decisions to address challenges and opportunities, ensuring sustainable tourism development. The model underscores the importance of proactive management to avoid the negative impacts of tourism growth and to foster long-term benefits for both the destination and its stakeholders (Albaladejo et. al., 2020). The model is analogous to the product life cycle in marketing and consists of six distinct stages (Butler, 1980): Exploration, Involvement, Development, Consolidation, Stagnation, and Post-Stagnation (which includes Decline and Rejuvenation). Illustrated in Figure 1.

For the Exploration stage: 1) A small number of adventurous tourists discover the destination. 2) Minimal tourist facilities/infrastructure. 3) Natural and cultural attractions are the primary draw. 4) Little to no impact on the local environment and community. The Exploration Dynamics are: 1) Tourism is largely unorganized and individualistic. 2) Local residents may be unaware of tourism's potential.

Figure 1. TALC curve



This research identifies with the Exploration stage of the TALC model for the Georgetown African American heritage tour. This stage indicates the opportunity for growth in the tourism evolution process. To assess the potential for growth of the tours and/or bundling of visits to various sites, we propose validating, via a mixed methods approach, the insights created by Generative AI by interviewing and surveying actual/potential visitors'/tourists' attitudes, appetite and behavioral intentions for African American heritage tourism.

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Summary Brief

Unveiling the Influence of Epistemic Curiosity in AI and its Ripple Effect on Consumer Behavior

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The digital age has significantly transformed consumer behavior, mainly driven by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). As AI technologies evolve, their integration into consumer-facing applications has reshaped how individuals interact with information, products, and services. A critical factor influencing this transformation is epistemic curiosity. The desire for knowledge and understanding drives epistemic curiosity. This paper explores the interplay between epistemic curiosity and AI and how this relationship impacts consumer behavior. The relationship between epistemic curiosity and artificial intelligence (AI) is intricate and presents challenges and ethical considerations.

Introduction

Epistemic curiosity is a fundamental human trait characterized by the pursuit of knowledge and the need to reduce informational gaps. It drives individuals to seek new experiences, engage in learning activities, and acquire information. This form of curiosity is distinct from other types, such as perceptual curiosity, which is triggered by novel or complex stimuli. Epistemic curiosity is particularly relevant in the context of AI, as it influences how consumers interact with and respond to AI-driven technologies.

AI has become an integral part of modern consumer experiences, influencing various aspects of decision-making processes. From personalized recommendations on e-commerce platforms to intelligent virtual assistants, AI systems are designed to enhance user engagement, satisfaction, and convenience. These technologies leverage vast amounts of data and sophisticated algorithms to predict consumer preferences and behaviors, creating tailored experiences catering to individual needs and desires.

The interaction between epistemic curiosity and AI is multifaceted. On one hand, AI technologies can stimulate epistemic curiosity by presenting consumers with novel and relevant information. For instance, recommendation algorithms on platforms like Netflix or Amazon can introduce users to new content based on their interests, sparking curiosity and encouraging further exploration. On the other hand, epistemic curiosity drives consumers to engage more deeply with AI systems, seeking out information and learning opportunities that these technologies provide.

Impact on Consumer Behavior

Epistemic curiosity leads consumers to spend more time interacting with AI-driven platforms. The desire to discover new information and experiences prompts users to explore recommendations, engage with content, and utilize interactive features. The consequent heightened engagement enhances user satisfaction and provides valuable data that AI systems can use to refine their algorithms and improve personalization.

AI technologies facilitate knowledge acquisition by providing access to a vast array of information. Consumers driven by epistemic curiosity are more likely to utilize these resources, leading to increased learning and informed decision-making. For example, AI-powered educational tools and platforms can cater to curious learners by offering personalized learning paths and adaptive content.

Epistemic curiosity fuels the demand for personalized experiences. AI systems effectively leverage data to anticipate and meet individual preferences, which can significantly enhance consumer satisfaction. Personalized recommendations, tailored content, and customized interactions create a sense of relevance and value, fostering positive consumer experiences and loyalty.

Pursuing knowledge driven by epistemic curiosity leads to more informed consumer decisions. AI technologies that provide comprehensive information, comparisons, and insights empower consumers to make choices based on a deeper understanding of available options. This informed decision-making process reduces uncertainty and increases confidence in purchase decisions.

Here are some of the key points:

Governance of AI Consumer Data

AI systems are trained on data that may contain inherent biases. AI can perpetuate and even exacerbate existing inequalities if these biases are not addressed. The algorithms themselves can introduce biases if not designed and tested correctly, leading to unfair outcomes. Of course, one of the overarching challenges involves consumer data governance. AI systems often require vast amounts of data, raising concerns about the privacy of individuals whose data is being collected. Using AI in surveillance can lead to invasive monitoring and tracking, infringing on personal freedoms and privacy. To exacerbate these issues, many AI systems, especially those using deep learning, operate in ways that are not easily interpretable, making it difficult to understand how decisions are made. Determining who is responsible when an AI system makes a mistake or causes harm is a complex issue, especially when multiple parties are involved in the development and deployment of the AI.

Questions arise about who owns the data used to train AI models and the models themselves, particularly when they are based on publicly available information or user-generated content. Companies that control large datasets and powerful AI models can dominate knowledge production, potentially stifling competition and innovation.

Transparency and Consent

Consumers should be informed about how their data is used and the purposes of AI systems with which they interact. Obtaining genuine consent can be challenging, particularly when users may not fully understand the implications of their data being used for AI training. Ensuring equitable access to AI technologies and the benefits they bring is crucial. There is a risk that AI could exacerbate existing disparities if access is limited to specific groups.

The intentions behind AI applications should be scrutinized. AI should be used for beneficial purposes and not for harm or exploitation. Considering the long-term societal impacts of AI is essential, including potential changes to employment, education, and social structures. We might hope that AI will augment human decision-making rather than replace it, preserving human autonomy and judgment. It will take conscientious care and governance to avoid using AI to manipulate or coerce individuals, such as through persuasive technologies or behavioral nudging. Navigating these challenges and ethical considerations requires buy-in from multiple stakeholders, including marketing firms, ethicists, policymakers, and the public.

Summary Brief

Artificial Intelligence - Are Small to Medium Size Businesses Using It?

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is a major topic for many businesses. Some firms are aggressively pursuing AI while others are only exploring AI (Matzelle, 2024). Research has focused largely on how large organizations are pursuing and utilizing AI (Babina et al., 2024). The purpose of this research study is to explore the acceptance, application, and implementation of AI in small to medium firms. The theoretical framework for this study is technology acceptance model. A survey of both qualitative and quantitative questions was administered to small and medium size businesses across a variety of industries. Topics on survey include: (1) adoption of AI, (2) implementation process of AI, (3) applications of AI, (4) benefits of AI, (5) challenges and concerns of AI, (6) prospects and strategy of AI, and (7) feedback and reflections on AI. Overall, this study seeks to explore if and how small to medium size businesses are using AI.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence is a major topic for business, yet according to the “CompTIA IT Industry Outlook 2024” (Matzelle, 2024) report states that 22% of firms are pursuing AI integration aggressively, while 33% of firms are pursuing AI in a limited manner and 45% of firms are still exploring AI. In their survey of 513 Tech Industry Professionals respondents, provide perspectives that AI Hype may fade, yet the work flows will evolve. AI will be used to better their businesses. Edge Delta (2024) reports that investment in AI is growing rapidly. Goldman Sachs forecasts that globally the investments in AI will approach \$200 billion (Goldman Sachs 2023). With this massive investment by larger firms, what is the ability of the small and medium size firms to perform competitively?

Background

Utilizing the technology acceptance model, that explores the ease of use and predicts the usage of applications (Lederer et al., 2000), the study will pursue understanding the application of artificial intelligence in small to medium firms representing a variety of industries. A series of both qualitative and quantitative questions will be asked to capture the firms current use and future plans for artificial intelligence. Representative topics are listed below and will be gathered through the use of Qualtrics.

- **Adoption of AI**
 - Questions cover length of time using AI, why was it adopted, what technology used and how was it chosen?
- **Implementation Process**
 - Questions cover the integration of AI process, resources needed, training needed and implementation challenges?
- **Applications of AI**
 - Questions cover areas of business utilizing AI with examples. Additional questions will ask how AI has impacted their interactions with their customers and whether any new products or services have evolved from this use.
- **Benefits of AI**
 - Questions cover the benefits from the use of AI and has it impacted the firms competitive market position.
- **Challenges and Concerns**
 - Questions cover the ongoing challenges that AI has created starting at the beginning, data privacy and security concerns and/ employee resistance.
- **Future Prospects and Strategy**
 - Questions cover potential increase in use of AI.
- **Feedback and Reflections**
 - Questions cover reflections on implementation, ROI and continued support needed.

- **General Information**

- Questions covers demographic and general corporation information.

Key Findings

Initial results will be collected, analyzed and presented at the conference.

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AI Notation: Support for the question development was provided by ChatGPT 4o by stating the following prompt “questions to interview small and medium businesses on their usage of ai in their business”

SESSION 3.3: BRAND AI

Moderator:

Hsin-Yi Liao

Summary Brief

The Impact of Perceptions of Carrier Billing on the Intention to Use and Continue Purchasing Digital Comics: An Empirical Study of Japanese Consumers

Youngkyung Kwon, Ph.D., Hokkaido University, Japan
Jie Yang, Ph.D., Hokkaido University, Japan

The book publishing industry is interested in technological developments such as AI and is exploring potential applications of AI in digital content-based areas. In particular, small payments for publishing content, such as digital comics, have recently been made using carrier billing combined with AI technology such as facial recognition. This study conducts an empirical analysis of the effects of individual perceptions of carrier billing on the intention to use it and the intention to continue purchasing digital comics, targeting Japanese users who have purchased digital comics using carrier billing, a type of cashless payment. As a result, this study will provide new insights into consumer perceptions of carrier billing and new implications for consumer content purchases using cashless payment.

Introduction

Recently, the growth of the digital book market has expanded globally due to the popularization of electronic devices such as smartphones and tablet computers, and consumers can easily access digital books through applications such as Kindle (Dal, 2023). With the development of digital technology, people's media usage behavior is also changing. In addition, newly created media content can not only replace old media but also change social trends and the way people consume content (Sung & Kim, 2023).

Manga is a popular aspect of Japanese culture and represents a large market worth more than 693 billion Japanese yen in 2023 (Statista Research Department, 2024). Historically, the Japanese manga market has grown primarily through print comics. However, the digital publishing market has been on a strong growth path since 2014 (AJPEA, 2023), while sales of existing print comics have been declining due to the development of digital technology. Digital comics overtook the sales value of print comics and magazines for the first time in 2019 (Statista Research Department, 2024). As a result, consumers are increasingly using mobile payment methods specified by applications and web platforms when purchasing digital comics.

According to SOMPO Insight Plus (2023), Japan is promoting the expansion of cashless payments to address a shrinking workforce due to a declining population and to explore global financialization. As a result, the introduction of cashless payments has reduced the response time of cash registers by 35%, and the introduction of self-registration has reduced the degree of substitution by 67%. In other words, the reduction of working hours due to cashless payment is an important factor in promoting efficient work in the service and retail sectors (SOMPO Insight Plus, 2023). Japan promoted the expansion of cashless payments nationwide in time for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and the percentage of cashless payments has nearly doubled from about 20% in 2016 to 39.9% as of 2024 (METI, 2024). This indicates that cashless payment methods, which were initially introduced only in limited locations such as large shopping malls and fast-food restaurants, are now spreading to the retail industry, expanding the environments in which consumers can make cashless payments in their daily lives. In particular, carrier billing ranks the second place after credit card payments due to its easy accessibility for e-commerce, with 19.0% of men and 14.5% of women using this method (Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting, 2022). With the development of mobile payment, consumers are already using carrier billing in other areas of media content areas such as mobile games (Lorena, 2020). Therefore, based on the UTAUT model, this study provides an empirical examination of how consumers' perceptions of carrier billing affect their continued purchase of digital comics.

Literature Review

UTAUT (The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology). The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is a well-established framework that identifies the factors that influence individuals' intentions to adopt new technologies (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The UTAUT includes four primary factors: Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), and Facilitating Conditions (FC), which influence behavioral intention and usage behavior in organization contexts. According to the UTAUT, the intention to use

information technology is influenced by three key factors: performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Thus, this study has composed using 3 factors of the UTAUT referring to the prior research (Ricardo et al., 2016). The results of the study by Ricardo et al. (2016) show that the three key factors of UTAUT have a positive effect on the intention to adopt of mobile payments. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Performance expectation has a positive impact on intention to use carrier billing.

H2: Effort expectation has a positive impact on intention to use carrier billing.

H3: Social influence has a positive impact on intention to use carrier billing.

Mobile Payment Subjection Dimension. According to Kim et al. (2010), consumers' perceived security and perceived trust in e-payment have a significant impact on payment system use. Most users of e-payment system are relatively unfamiliar with technical details, they tend to evaluate the security and trust level of e-payment system based on their experience with user interfaces (Kim et al., 2010). Thus, consumers' perceived security and perceived trust in the same type of e-payment, carrier billing, may influence actual payment system use.

Intention to Use Carrier Billing. Carrier billing is a type of online payment that allows consumers to charge the cost of a purchase to their phone bill. Therefore, consumer can allow direct payment to the suppliers of the contents and service through using mobile phone (Lorena., 2020). Carrier billing payment method offer to customer for their convenience, speed and security through the way do not have to provide the account or card number to use when they use service (Torsten et al., 2016; Vaquez, 2017). Ramos de Luna I et al. (2019) found that the ease of interaction, convenience, and technology of a payment method positively influenced users' acceptance of mobile payments. Therefore, users' perceptions may influence their intention to use carrier billing. Furthermore, Eun and Kim (2018) indicate that users who have experience using mobile simple payment services are likely to continue using these services due to the status quo. This means that, consumer perceptions of carrier billing, the mobile payment services, play an important role in the determining adoption. Based on this previous study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Perceived security in carrier billing has a positive impact on perceived trust in carrier billing.

H5: Perceived security in carrier billing has a positive impact on intention to use carrier billing.

H6: perceived trust in carrier billing has a positive impact on intention to use carrier billing.

Intention to Purchase of Digital Comics. The results of the study by Lorena (2020) evaluates the determinants related to the purchase and use of mobile services using direct carrier billing payments. As a result, it shows that the mobile payment experience has a positive effect on the intention to use and the purchase of mobile services. This suggests that consumers who have experienced with carrier billing may continue to purchase other digital content. Based on this previous study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Intention to use carrier billing has a positive impact on intention to purchase of digital comics.

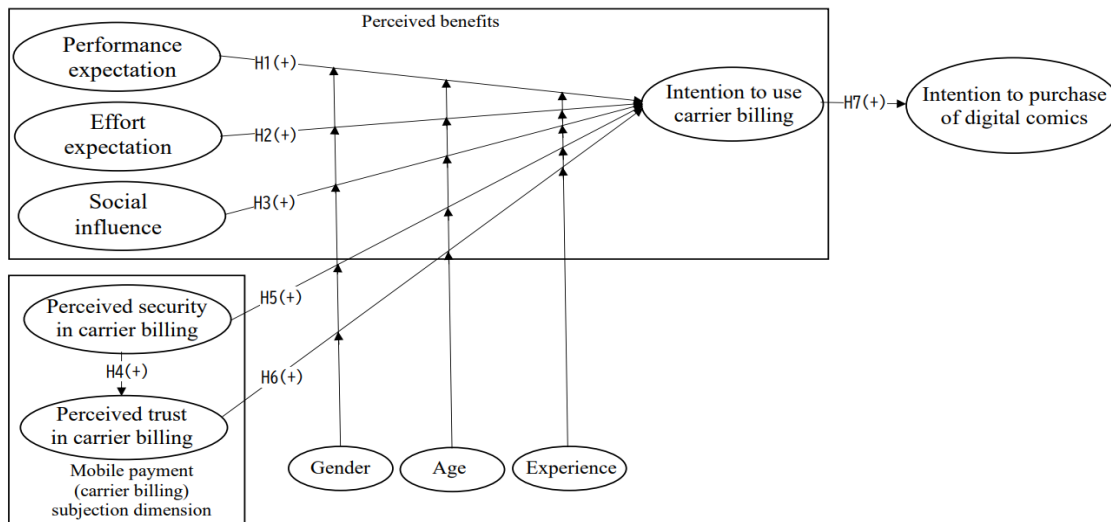


Figure 1. Research Model

Based on the previous literature, the conceptual model proposed in this study can be seen in Figure 1. This research model examines the impact of the use of carrier billing on the continuous purchase of digital comics is verified.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the perceived benefits of carrier billing payment and the intention to purchase of digital comics using carrier billing by Japanese consumers through seven factors using a questionnaire survey. The main target of this study is approximately 300 Japanese users who have intention to use carrier billing and purchasing digital comics using carrier billing. An online survey will be conducted by Freeasy, a Japanese research company, in August 2024 to ensure an even distribution of age and gender. Measurement items for the survey were formulated using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The collected data will then be analyzed using structural equation modeling based on the research model.

Implications & Future Study

Newly created media content not only replaces old media but also has the potential to change social trends and the way people consume content. This study examines the impact of people's perceived benefits of carrier billing, a digital technology that has developed along with the AI era, on the sustainable purchase of digital comic services. Since the level of cashless payment in Japan, the primary residence of the study subjects, is low compared to other countries, it is valuable to investigate the personally perceived use of carrier billing and the intention to continue purchasing digital comic content via carrier billing.

Based on the results of the study, this research has academic significance as it analyzes the correlation between the actual intention to use carrier billing based on the personal perception of payment and the continuous intention to purchase digital comics based on the intention to use carrier billing, thus expanding new perspectives in the media field. It can also provide practical suggestions as basic data on the important role of the perception and substantial use of carrier billing services in expanding consumers' content purchases when buying digital comics.

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Summary Brief

Global-Local Identity and Consumer Preference for Framed versus Unframed Brand Logos

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We proposed that consumers with a salient local identity have a greater preference for unframed logos than framed logos, whereas those with a salient global identity have similar preferences for both kinds of logos

In 2021, Burger King decided to break their iconic, blue-bordered logo, and reverted back to their classic logo from the 1970s-1990s (Ravenscroft 2021). In the same year, Pfizer, the famous pharmaceutical company, decided to ditch the oval frame surrounding their brand logo, which they had kept since the 1940s (Wong 2021). On the other hand, General Motors (GM) chose to introduce an updated logo, framed in a newly added blue gradient square (Huetter 2021). These contrasting approaches—removing frames versus adding them—illustrate the strategic decisions brands make regarding their logo designs. Understanding whether a framed or unframed logo better resonates with consumers is essential for effective branding strategy. However, how does these framed and unframed brand logos may or may not affect consumers' attitudes and behaviors?

Existing research has shown that framed brand logos are more attractive to those high in need for security (Fajardo, Zhang, and Tsiros 2016) and structure (Kwon, Manikas, and Barone 2022), whereas unframed brand logos are perceived as more open to innovation (Park, Chen, and Han 2024) and have higher potential of brand extensions (Chen and Bei 2020). However, with the globalization trend in the marketplace, existing research lacks the ability to understand consumer preferences for framed vs. unframed logos across diverse cultures and maintain success in the international markets. Therefore, our current study focuses on how consumers with a salient global ("globals") or local ("locals") identity (Arnett 2002; Tu, Khare, and Zhang, 2012) affects their preferences for framed or unframed brand logos.

Researchers have theorized the concept of global-local identity to understand how consumers react to marketing strategies influenced by globalization (Arnett 2002; Tu, Khare, and Zhang, 2012). Globals support the idea of globalization, see the world as a "global village", view distances as less significant, and feel a sense of connection with individuals across different countries and cultures. On the contrary, locals value local tradition, especially to their cultural area, and feel a sense of connection to people in their communities. We propose that locals have a greater preference for unframed logos than framed logos, whereas globals have similar preferences for both kinds of logos. This is because a frame is usually perceived as a boundary and barrier (Cutright 2012), which may make locals (but not globals) feel the brand as more distant, unfamiliar, and not close. Locals focus on closer ties to their small communities, which is usually the identity people use when interacting with their close family, friends, and community members (Arnett 2002; Zhang and Khare, 2009). Hence, locals might perceive framed logos as creating a symbolic boundary between the brand and the community, which conflicts with their desire for close community ties. Unframed logos, on the contrary, represent a more seamless integration with its environment, making the locals feel more familiar and closer to the brand. However, since globals are used to crossing cultural and national boundaries, being inclusive, and viewing the whole world as a "global village", they might not be as sensitive to these symbolic borders. Hence, they have similar preferences for both framed and unframed brand logos.

Study 1 (N=225) employed a 2 (identity: global vs. local) $\times$ 2 (logo: framed vs. unframed) between-subjects design. First, following Gao, Zhang, and Mittal (2017), those assigned to global [local] identity condition were asked to support a "Think Global Movement" ["Think Local Movement"] campaign. Next, adopting Fajardo, Zhang, and Tsiros (2016), those assigned to framed [unframed] logo condition were shown a fictitious candle and its brand logo with [without] a frame surrounding it. Participants' purchase intention for the candle was measured. As predicted, a 2 (identity: global vs. local) $\times$ 2 (logo: framed vs. unframed) ANOVA revealed a significant two-way interaction ($F(1, 221)=5.34, p=.02$) effect on consumers purchase intention. For locals, purchase intention was higher when the logo was unframed than when the logo was framed ($M_{\text{unframed}}=4.24$ vs. $M_{\text{framed}}=3.54; t(109)=2.32, p=.02$). For globals, on the contrary, there was no significant difference in their purchase intention between the unframed and framed logo conditions ($M_{\text{unframed}}=3.93$ vs. $M_{\text{framed}}=4.20; t(112)=-.92, p=.36$). Hence, our hypothesis was supported.

Study 2 adopted a different global-local identity manipulation with a different product category and brand logo to enhance the generalizability of our findings. Study 2 (N=222) employed a 2 (identity: global vs. local) $\times$ 2

(logo: framed vs. unframed) between-subjects design. First, following Ng and Batra's (2017) study, those in the global [local] identity condition were asked to identify three things representing their global [local] citizenship. Next, adopting Kwon, Manikas, and Barone's (2022) study, those assigned to framed [unframed] logo condition were shown the toothpaste with its framed [unframed] brand logo. Participants' purchase intention for the toothpaste was measured as in Study 1. As predicted, a 2 (identity: global vs. local) $\times$ 2 (logo: framed vs. unframed) ANOVA revealed a significant two-way interaction ($F(1, 218)=5.42, p=.02$) effect on consumers purchase intention. For locals, purchase intention was higher when the logo was unframed than when the logo was framed ($M_{\text{unframed}}=4.47$ vs. $M_{\text{framed}}=3.84$; $t(104)=2.34, p=.02$). For globals, on the contrary, there was no significant difference in their purchase intention between the unframed and framed logo conditions ($M_{\text{unframed}}=4.07$ vs. $M_{\text{framed}}=4.33$; $t(114)=-.98, p=.33$). Hence, our hypothesis was supported.

Our studies show consistent results that locals have a greater preference for unframed logos than framed logos, whereas globals have similar preferences for both kinds of logos. This research contributes to both the literature on consumer globalization and branding strategy, and provides relevant managerial implications.

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SESSION 3.4: STRATEGY ISN'T WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S WHAT YOU DO

Moderator:

Diane Edmondson

Summary Brief

Why Do Today What I Can Put Off Until Tomorrow: The Role of Productive Procrastination on Organizational Outcomes

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Procrastination chronically impacts approximately 20% of adults (Ferrari & Tibbett, 2020). The average employee procrastinates over 2 hours daily at work (Flynn, 2023), costing businesses \$650 billion each year (Hashmi, 2022). This cost is regardless of whether employees believe this procrastination is productive in nature. Limited research has focused on the concept of productive procrastination with only one study conducted that looks at the antecedents of this construct (Edmondson et al., 2024). No research to date has focused on the outcomes of productive procrastination for a business. Because of this, this research examines the impact of productive procrastination on three key organizational outcomes (job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and performance) for business-to-business salespeople.

Drawing on self-determination theory, optimism bias theory, and cognitive dissonance theory, hypotheses are generated. These hypotheses were tested using a Qualtrics panel of 298 business-to-business salespeople from various industries. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used as the analytical tool. Results indicate that productive procrastination leads to lower job satisfaction, higher turnover intentions, and lower performance. Relevant managerial recommendations are provided.

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Summary Brief

AI vs. Human in Service Recovery: The Impact of Co-Created and Firm Service Recovery on Customer Satisfaction

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In the context of service delivery, companies have increasingly adopted artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots to enhance efficiency and improve service quality. Despite the growing prevalence of these technologies, service failures still occur, necessitating effective recovery strategies. There is a notable gap in research regarding the appropriate agents for service recovery and the methods that can effectively restore customer satisfaction. This study investigates the factors influencing customer attribution of blame following a service failure and examines customer preferences for service recovery delivered by humans versus AI. Additionally, it explores the moderating role of service type—co-created versus firm-provided—on the effectiveness of human versus AI-led recovery efforts. Two empirical studies will be conducted, employing ANOVA and regression analyses to test the proposed hypotheses.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Service Recovery, Service Failure, Co-created Service Recovery, Firm Service Recovery

Introduction

Service failures are an inevitable occurrence, even for the most exemplary service providers (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020). When these failures happen, it is crucial for companies to implement effective service recovery strategies to restore customer satisfaction (Wallin Andreassen, 2000). Service recovery is defined as the efforts made by a firm to compensate for and rectify customer losses (Hess et al., 2003).

In the service context, firms are increasingly utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) as a powerful digital tool to enhance customer experiences (Ramesh & Chawla, 2021). One notable application of AI is chatbots, described as “interactive, virtual agents that engage in verbal interactions with humans” (Przegalinska et al., 2019, p. 786). Companies are incorporating AI into their marketing activities and customer interactions, leveraging this technology to improve operational efficiency and reduce costs (Castillo et al., 2021). However, failure can happen by both humans and chatbots. Customers might behave differently and have different reactions toward this failure. In addition, they might have different approaches on who offers the service recoveries and the service recovery type itself.

This study aims to address the gap in research on service failure and recovery by examining customer attribution of blame following a service failure and their preferences for recovery agents, whether human or AI. Additionally, it explores the moderating effect of service type—co-created versus firm-provided—on the effectiveness of service recovery efforts.

Research Questions:

1. What is the effect of human service failure vs. AI service failure on customer dissatisfaction?
2. What is the effect of human service recovery vs. AI service recovery on customers satisfaction with the recovery?
3. What is the impact of co-created vs. firm recovery on customer satisfaction when it is offered by human vs. AI?

Hypotheses Development

AI vs. Human Service Failure

Traditionally, companies have relied on their employees to deliver services. However, in recent years, there has been a shift towards the use of AI and chatbots in service delivery (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2024). Research has highlighted several benefits of using chatbots, including increased customer engagement and loyalty (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2022), as well as higher purchase intentions (Konya-Baumbach et al., 2023). Despite efforts to provide exceptional service, failures can occur whether services are delivered by humans or chatbots.

When service failures occur, they elicit negative emotions in customers, as explained by appraisal theory (Pavone et al., 2023). According to attribution theory, customers assign responsibility for the failure to either employees or chatbots. Studies have indicated that customers tend to blame chatbots less than employees for service failures (Jörling et al., 2019). This is because customers perceive chatbot failures as unintentional, whereas they attribute more responsibility for failures to employees (Pavone et al., 2023). Consequently, it is predicted that customer dissatisfaction will be higher when a service failure is caused by employees compared to chatbots.

H1: Customers are more dissatisfied when a failure happens by humans than chatbots.

AI vs. Human Service Recovery

When a service failure occurs, companies must provide excellent service recovery to restore what customers have lost (Wallin Andreassen, 2000). The literature has shown that effective service recovery positively impacts customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations, and repurchase intentions (e.g., Chen et al., 2018; Wirtz and Mattila, 2004). Similar to service delivery, companies can offer service recovery through either their employees or chatbots (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2024).

Despite the positive outcomes associated with using chatbots, customers may prefer interacting with employees during the service recovery process for several reasons. Firstly, humans exhibit more empathy, which is crucial in service recovery (Nguyen et al., 2022). Secondly, customers often have privacy concerns when interacting with chatbots (Kopalle et al., 2022). Additionally, customers perceive that employees have a better understanding of the failure and are thus more capable of effectively resolving the issue. Given these factors, we predict that customers will be more satisfied with service recovery when it is provided by employees rather than chatbots.

H2: Customers are more satisfied with the service recovery offered by humans than chatbots.

Co-created vs. Firm Service Recovery

Service recovery can be categorized into two types: firm recovery and co-created recovery. Firm recovery occurs when companies independently offer a solution to rectify the service failure without customer involvement (Dong et al., 2008). In this scenario, the company takes action and provides a final resolution to the customer (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020). Conversely, co-created recovery involves a collaborative process where the company and the customer work together to find a suitable solution (Dong et al., 2008). According to service-dominant logic, firms and customers co-create value by sharing resources and collaborating (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

In co-created service recovery, customers have more control over the process and the outcome (Guo et al., 2016), which often aligns more closely with their expectations and effectively restores their losses (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020). However, concerns about sharing personal information with chatbots may deter customers from engaging in co-created recovery with AI. Consequently, they may prefer collaborating with employees for a more personalized and empathetic recovery experience. Conversely, when service recovery is offered by AI, customers may be less inclined to participate actively in the recovery process due to privacy concerns and perceived lack of empathy (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2024). Therefore, they may prefer to receive a firm recovery from AI, where the solution is provided without their direct involvement.

Based on this discussion, we hypothesize that customer satisfaction with co-created service recovery will be higher when it is facilitated by employees compared to AI. Conversely, customer satisfaction with firm recovery will be higher when it is provided by AI and chatbots rather than employees.

H3: The type of service recovery moderates the relationship between human vs. AI recovery and customer satisfaction. Specifically, in co-created (firm) service recovery, the level of customer satisfaction is higher (lower) when the recovery is facilitated by employees compared to AI.

Methodology

Design and Procedure

Two studies will be conducted to test the hypotheses.

Study 1:

This experiment will examine Hypothesis 1 (H1). The study will manipulate two conditions: service failure delivered by employees versus service failure delivered by AI. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of these two conditions. After experiencing the service failure, participants' level of dissatisfaction will be measured using a validated scale.

Study 2:

This study will test Hypotheses 2 (H2) and 3 (H3) using a 2x2 factorial design. The two factors will be the type of service recovery agent (employees vs. AI) and the type of recovery process (co-created vs. firm). Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the four conditions:

1. Employee-co-created recovery
2. Employee-firm recovery
3. AI-co-created recovery
4. AI-firm recovery

Participants will be presented with a service failure scenario followed by a recovery process according to their assigned condition. After the recovery process, participants' satisfaction with the service recovery will be measured using a validated satisfaction scale.

The collected data will be analyzed using ANOVA to test for the main and interaction effects of the independent variables on customer satisfaction. Regression analyses will also be conducted to further examine the relationships and test the hypotheses.

Expected Results

Based on our hypotheses and the theoretical framework, first, We predict that customers will be more dissatisfied with a service failure when it is caused by employees compared to AI. This is because customers are likely to blame employees more for the failure and attribute greater responsibility to them than to AI. Secondly, After a service failure, we expect that customers will prefer service recovery provided by employees rather than AI. This preference is anticipated due to the perceived empathy from employees and the comfort customers feel in sharing their information with human agents. Finally, We predict that the type of service recovery (co-created vs. firm) will moderate the relationship between the service recovery agent (human vs. AI) and customer satisfaction. Specifically, customers will be more satisfied with the recovery process when it is managed by employees compared to AI. On the other hand, customers' satisfaction will be higher when the recovery is provided by AI compared to employees.

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Summary Brief

Investigating Promotion of Sustainable Feminine Hygiene Products. Period.

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Given the major landfill issues associated with single-use feminine hygiene products and their widespread use by women all over the world, this research aimed to investigate how could sustainable feminine hygiene products be made more prominent in the marketplace. We first delve deeper to investigate why females refrain from purchasing sustainable feminine hygiene products through a qualitative study. Next, we test advertising appeals that could persuade females to switch from conventional single-use products to sustainable options. Lastly, we examine various factors influencing consumer switching intentions to sustainable menstrual products. Our research offers theoretical insights within the domain of stigma and promotion of taboo products as well as implications to practicing managers and managers within non-profit organizations.

Introduction

According to UNICEF, nearly half of the global female population, representing over 25% of the world's population, menstruates monthly (UNICEF, n.d.). Consequently, it is unsurprising that the global feminine hygiene product market is valued at over USD 40 billion (Statista, n.d.). Within this market single-use menstrual products remain the preferred choice for most females, in place of reusable menstrual products (Babbar and Garikipati, 2023; Medina-Perucha et al., 2022). These products, however, come with significant financial and environmental costs, amounting to thousands of dollars over each woman's lifetime (Park, 2022). Moreover, single-use menstrual products are a major contributor to plastic pollution, containing large amounts of plastic that contribute to significant CO2 emissions—over 200,000 tons annually—the equivalent of 125,000 New York to London round-trip flights, and taking around 500 years to decompose (Chakravorty and Sneekvik, 2023).

Despite its universality, menstruation remains a stigmatized topic in many parts of the world (UNICEF, n.d.). Feminine hygiene products are often considered taboo (Februadi et al., 2022) and stigmatized (Coleman and Sredl, 2022), making discussions about them difficult and leaving consumers feeling vulnerable (Ndichu and Upadhyaya, 2023). Therefore, the objectives of this research are three-fold: first, to investigate why females refrain from purchasing sustainable feminine hygiene products, we investigate this through a qualitative study. Second, to test advertising appeals that could persuade females to switch from conventional single-use products to sustainable options. Third, to examine various factors influencing consumer switching intentions to sustainable menstrual products. Moreover, sustainable feminine hygiene products fall into two main categories: biodegradable and reusable (Siddiqe, 2019). This research focuses on the latter, specifically reusable menstrual products such as menstrual cups, based on the findings of our pilot qualitative study.

Background

The stigmatization of menstruation has hindered theoretical development in this area (Owen, 2022). Innovative communication strategies can help in the effective marketing of menstrual products that might have taboo associated with them (Jyväsjarvi, 2024). Moreover, previous research has called for research on societal communications that address stigmatized products, specifically in the domain of public health (Dimitrov et al., 2022). In this research, we conducted three studies to address the calls from previous literature outlined above. In our pilot qualitative study, we try to gauge perceptions around sustainable menstrual products. In the following two studies, based on the inputs from our pilot study, we make ads testing specific appeals for the most popular sustainable feminine hygiene product, menstrual cups, and try to investigate how individual differences such as environmental consciousness impact switching behavior for menstrual cups. In particular, the last study controls for environmental consciousness and other relevant demographics to understand how attitude towards menstrual cups and perceived risks associated with them impact the switching intentions of consumers.

Key Findings

In our Pilot Qualitative study, we analyzed the sustainable feminine hygiene product most females had used and were familiar with, reasons for not using sustainable menstrual products, and the reasons that would nudge them to use such products more often. On testing of promotional appeals for menstrual cups, we found that participants in the money-saving promotional appeal (vs. earth-saving promotional appeal) expressed less likelihood of switching to the menstrual cup. The effect is moderated by environmental concerns such that the effect is stronger for those with low environmental concerns. In our last study, our moderated mediation results suggest that at lower levels of attitude towards the menstrual cup, there were no significant differences in perceived risk. However, at higher levels of attitude towards the menstrual cup, there were significant changes such that the money-saving appeal is perceived lower in risk.

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SESSION 3.5: BALANCING THE NEW POWERS AND INTERESTS OF CONSUMERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Moderator:

Lubna Nafees

Full Paper

The Relationship Between College Majors and Financial Well-Being: A Study on Business-Related Fields

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The purpose of this study is to investigate if pursuing higher education in a business-related field at Northern Michigan University is related to achieving a higher level of financial well-being. This research focuses on the financial well-being of current students and has the potential to be extended to assess alumni and their financial well-being post-graduation. The findings underscore the importance of financial education to all students, regardless of their field of study.

Introduction

Understanding how various courses of study affect financial outcomes is essential when choosing a degree plan. A student's selected course of study significantly impacts career prospects and financial well-being. According to Business Wire, 51% of college students are not confident in their chosen career path, reflecting widespread uncertainty about future employment opportunities (Robinson, 2019). Additionally, almost two-thirds of students feel overwhelmed when selecting a major, indicating the complexity and pressure associated with making educational decisions. This highlights the need for comprehensive career guidance and a deeper understanding of how academic choices translate into financial outcomes.

Moreover, the rising cost of education necessitates a strategic approach to selecting a degree. Tuition rates at public 4-year institutions have increased by 9.24% from 2010 to 2022, accompanied by rising associated expenses, according to Education Data (Hanson, 2023). These financial pressures compel students to balance their academic interests with economic considerations, including earning potential, industry stability, and the ability to manage post-graduation financial commitments (Morgenstern, 2023). As educational costs escalate, financial well-being becomes a critical factor in academic decision-making. Money is now a strong motivator, compelling students to consider the financial viability of their chosen programs more than ever before.

Financial well-being, which encompasses both objective and subjective measures such as living standards and financial freedom, is strongly linked to overall well-being (Brüggen, E. C. et al., 2017). Healthy spending and savings habits are crucial for sustaining long-term well-being and reducing depressive symptoms often associated with debt. Unhealthy spending patterns and inadequate financial reserves exacerbate challenges during financial emergencies, potentially leading to significant hardship. Thus, understanding the relationship between courses of study and financial well-being is paramount, particularly given the increasing cost of education. This understanding can guide students to make informed decisions that align their educational paths with their financial goals, ultimately enhancing their long-term financial stability and overall life satisfaction.

Theory

In this study, the Expectancy Theory of Motivation served as the guiding theoretical framework. Expectancy Theory describes how individuals are driven towards behaviors they believe will yield the most reward (Kurt, 2022). We focused on how this theory applied to the educational choices of students, particularly regarding the pursuit of business majors, and its influence on financial well-being.

Expectancy Theory emphasizes the importance of belief in one's ability to attain desired outcomes. The three components of Expectancy Theory are expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Ibid.). Expectancy is related to one's perceived ability to produce certain efforts to accomplish certain goals. The next component, instrumentality, relates to the individual's desired outcome if the performance expectation is met (Ibid.). Finally, valence describes how the reward makes that individual feel.

In the context of higher education, students may have opted for business majors due to the expectation of greater financial rewards and stability. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics states business and financial professionals earned a median annual salary of \$79,050 as of May 2023 (Business and Financial Occupations: Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2024). An important consideration is that this data incorporates information about finance professionals who typically have higher earning potential. Nonetheless, increased popularity has made the business job market highly competitive, and many jobs are now requiring higher education as a prerequisite (Lattea, 2023).

Students who chose business as a degree program may have been motivated by the anticipation of achieving financial success in their future careers. The idea of pursuing a degree for the love of learning must now coincide with a realistic expectation of the financial consequences of different majors. According to The Lowell, of 270 students, 69% of respondents listed earnings potential as a motivation for pursuing their chosen field of study.

Business programs often offer practical training, internships, and networking opportunities, which can boost students' confidence in their ability to secure well-paying jobs and excel financially. This perceived self-efficacy could have further reinforced students' motivation to pursue business majors as a means of attaining their financial goals. By drawing upon Expectancy Theory, our study sought to explore how students' beliefs and expectations about the financial benefits of business education influenced their educational choices and subsequent financial well-being. Although we did not directly ask students whether they had a positive or negative outlook on their earning potential, we aimed to uncover the underlying motivations driving students to select business as a major.

Literature Review

Financial Topics Explored in Business

Because financial knowledge is viewed as an asset, taking educational courses to increase one's financial knowledge can help pave a path for a brighter future. Students in Northern Michigan University's College of Business are more exposed to financial topics than other degree programs within the university. While pursuing a business-related field, students typically learn management strategies relating to internal operations, marketing, accounting, and human resources, among other key business topics (Bouchrika, 2024). Students are also given numerous opportunities to collaborate with their peers to gain deeper insight related to ethical business practices. Since a business requires various functions to run effectively, students receive a well-rounded education (Ibid).

Most business degree courses help students hone technical abilities and soft skills. Specifically, a student entering college as a financial management major may gain a broad understanding of banking and economics, which are important topics in understanding financial planning (Friedberg, 2023). Moreover, a concentration in finance can provide insight into how to value a business, stock, or other financial product. Exposure to these topics may give finance students an advantage in managing personal finances.

In a meta-analysis of 126 studies, financial education was found to directly impact one's financial behavior (Kaiser, 2017). Not only does education affect behavior, but financial knowledge is typically valued throughout the world. The financial education of citizens in countries such as China or India is greatly valued, and they go as far as implementing specific policies to enhance the financial education of their populations (Kaiser, 2022). Many studies have shown the more financially educated people are, the more likely they will have a positive financial well-being.

Earnings Disparities Across Majors

The job market and economic landscape play a crucial role in deciding the financial outcome of graduates. Certain fields align more closely with industries experiencing growth and high demand for professionals. An important note is that some students feel they must major in something that has an obvious financial upside upon graduating (Morgenstren, & Muscat, 2023). Obtaining a college degree is associated with securing a good job position, but research suggests that degree choice can have a major influence on one's annual earnings and job security.

An article by BestColleges claims engineering majors earn the highest early-career salaries immediately after graduation, making between \$65,000-\$70,000 (Nam, 2023). On the other hand, CBS News reports that performing arts majors are typically underemployed, and this may make securing a position in their chosen field more challenging (Picchi, 2023).

Business majors typically have favorable financial prospects. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, business graduates from the Class of 2024 have an average salary projection that is 3% higher than previous years, lifting it to \$63,907 (Gray, 2024). At a bachelor's degree level, business majors account for six of the top 10 degrees most in demand among employers. Rounding out the list are computer science and engineering majors. Over half of the employers in a survey indicated that they plan to hire in finance, accounting, and computer sciences (Ibid). These figures highlight the potential for business graduates to achieve financial stability relatively quickly.

One's chosen career path may have a direct impact on their earning potential. There is a growing need for students to think about what the job market looks like in their chosen field. No matter what the reported salary for one's chosen degree is, money is not made until a job position is secured. That is why it is important to consider a degree with a high-demand job field because the career one picks may have a large impact on financial well-being. This research aimed to analyze the relationship between selected fields of study and a student's financial well-being. By examining these factors, we hoped to create a comprehensive understanding of how academic choices impact financial well-being. Overall, this research aims to investigate how one's degree path affects his or her financial well-being.

Hypothesis Development

The effect of selecting a major affects a student's financial well-being. Due to the tendency of business-related majors to be exposed to financial topics more regularly, we hypothesize that business students may have a higher overall financial well-being as compared to other students before they even begin to earn a salary in their careers. According to the business blog Hult Blogs, choosing a business degree gives one a good understanding of economics, how markets are impacted by global events, and knowledge in assessing the financial health of firms (Overtaker, 2022). This knowledge can help individuals make more informed investment decisions and potentially achieve a higher return on investment for their degree (Ibid).

H1: If students pursue a business-related program, then they will have higher financial well-being compared to other majors.

Research suggests that business students may be more apt to participate in early retirement initiatives and personal investing decisions. An article published by Science Direct states that there is a positive correlation between business education and stock market participation (Dong T et al., 2022). This is mainly driven by students interested in accounting or finance subjects and is more profound in females than male students (Dong T et al., 2022). The business student stock market participation rate in the first two years of their education was 4.2% higher than before entering college. The results also indicated that student stock ownership was influenced by personal motivation as well.

H2: Business majors are more likely to possess personal investment accounts compared to other majors.

Survey Plan

In this research, a survey of 20 questions was developed using Qualtrics, a professional survey platform, through Northern Michigan University's student license. Questions within the survey aimed to analyze participants' financial well-being, identify their degree program, and determine whether they possess personal investment accounts. This research included two dependent variables and one independent variable. The dependent variables were financial well-being and possession of investment accounts. The independent variable in this study was the participant's selected course of study. Our research aimed to describe the methods for collecting these variables, as well as descriptions of why these variables are relevant.

Dependent variables

The first hypothesis indicated that one of the dependent variables in the study is current financial well-being. Given that this research aimed to explore how college major choices impact students' overall financial well-being, our survey employed questions from a financial well-being scoring worksheet developed by the Melbourne Institute (Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Re, 2020). A total of ten questions were utilized to determine the participant's financial well-being, and it was hypothesized that participants would easily be able to complete this section within a few minutes.

The dependent variable of the second hypothesis was whether the participants had personal investment accounts. To measure this, a yes or no style survey question assessed whether the participant owned any form of investment vehicle. To aid students unfamiliar with investment accounts, examples such as personal stocks, CDs, and cryptocurrency, among others, were provided (see **Appendix A**).

Independent variable

The independent variable in this study was degree choice. This was measured by a close-ended multiple-choice question where the students marked what degree program they were currently enrolled in. The options included agriculture, arts, business, communications, community services, computers and math, engineering and technology,

education, health sciences and services, language and humanities, natural sciences, repair and construction, social sciences, and “other”. Offering a wide variety of programs in this question helped minimize the number of manual responses.

Survey Layout

The survey began with an introduction screen to eliminate ineligible participants. To follow, the introduction explained the study and prompted the participants to consent to the survey by continuing to the next page. The introduction also provided contact information for assistance with survey-related issues. To decline participation, students were notified that they could exit the survey at any time. Unsubmitted or incomplete surveys were not included in the data collection for this research. Following the introduction, the questions related to financial well-being were presented. Next, the participant was asked a closed-ended question relating to major choice. Finally, the participants selected whether they had any personal investment accounts. Demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey.

Sample Plan

Conducting comprehensive market research requires a well-defined sample plan that aims at gathering a diverse array of perspectives from a broad range of individuals. Our approach ensured a thorough exploration of the correlations between college major choice and financial well-being. The sample for this research comprised past and present full-time and part-time Northern Michigan University students of any gender or ethnicity aged over 17 but under 27 years of age. The population of this survey aimed to encompass young adult consumers who are attending Northern Michigan University.

Recruiting included reaching out to professors for assistance in distributing the survey, posting links to the survey on social media, and approaching random students in the hallway. To incentivize students to participate in this survey, participants who completed the survey were entered into a random drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to input their email if they were interested in being entered into the drawing. The details and terms of completing the survey in a chance to win the gift card were communicated, including the eligibility criteria and how the winner will be selected. After the survey period, a random number generator selected the lucky winner who was notified via email.

By collecting data from a diverse group of college majors, we gained valuable insights into the factors influencing their choices and how they impact their financial well-being. Ultimately, this thorough and strategic approach to market research helped provide us with valuable data. By understanding the connection between academic choices and financial outcomes, we aimed to help young adults navigate their educational and career paths confidently and clearly.

Demographics

The majority of participants in our survey were not business majors, as other majors represented 56.9% of our total. A total of 211 responses were collected, while only 157 were deemed “complete” and eligible. One participant was not a current student, so we removed them from the analysis. Calculations were based only on the 158 complete responses. An important factor to consider is that our pool of participants lacks racial diversity as 93% of our participants identify as White or Caucasian. The remaining 7% include participants from various racial backgrounds. The majority of our respondents indicated that they received a high school diploma or GED. Furthermore, 58.9% of participants stated they have a total annual income of less than 25,000 dollars. The demographics of our survey display a need to conduct further research to address the lack of racial diversity.

Data Analysis

Calculations were based only on the 158 complete responses. To calculate the individual financial well-being scores, each participant’s response was examined using Excel. The scoring system, based on a 50-point scale, corresponded to the ten questions with choices ranging from one to five. Specifically, the responses to questions 3a, 3b, 3c, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 6a, 7a, and 7b were summed (see **Appendix A**). Subsequently, this sum was subtracted from 60. A perfect score would entail selecting “one” for every question, resulting in a perfect score of 50. The calculated scores were appended in an additional column for further analysis. The lowest score possible, according to our financial scoring technique, was 10.

Participants’ majors were categorized as either business or other and assigned a corresponding value of “1” for business and “2” for other. This information was recorded in another column. An additional column was created to indicate whether participants possessed investment accounts. A value of “1” was assigned to participants with investment accounts, while a value of “2” was assigned to participants who were unsure or did not have investment

accounts. With these new columns of meticulously organized data, two statistical tests were conducted to test our hypothesis.

T-Test

The T-test for the difference in means is a hypothesis test that tests the null hypothesis versus the alternative hypothesis (Example SPSS Output for T-Test for Difference in Means, n.d.). In this test, our hypothesis requires a one-tailed test because our hypotheses suggested that business majors would have both a higher financial well-being score, along with a higher chance of owning personal investment accounts.

According to the Omni Calculator, the critical value for equal variances assumed is 1.6547. Our test statistic, $t(155) = 3.078$, with a p-value of 0.001, exceeds this critical value. This indicates a statistically significant difference in financial well-being scores between business majors and non-business majors at the 0.05 significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Furthermore, the 95% confidence interval for the difference in scores does not include zero, reinforcing that this difference is unlikely due to random chance and suggesting a real, positive effect. Additionally, the p-value for our one-sided test is below 0.005. Therefore, we can confidently conclude that business majors have significantly different financial well-being scores compared to non-business majors. **Table 1** displays our independent samples' T-Test results relating to significance.

Table 1: Independent Samples Test (T-test for Equality of Means)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
	F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided P	Two-Sided P	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.832	.363	3.078	155	.001	.002	3.738	1.214	1.339	6.136
Equal variances not assumed			2.999	114.698	.002	.003	3.738	1.246	1.269	6.206

According to our results, business majors had a mean financial well-being score of 35.15 with a standard error of 1.09. There was a standard deviation of 7.893 which shows how spread out the responses are compared to the mean (How to Interpret Standard Deviation and Standard Error in Survey Research — Greenbook, n.d.). **Table 2** displays the specific results of our group statistics. On the other hand, non-business majors had an average financial well-being score of 31.59. Other majors displayed a slightly smaller standard deviation of 7.068. Overall, our results support our hypothesis that business majors have higher financial well-being compared to other majors.

Table 2: Group Statistics Results

Major	N	Mean	Standard Dev.	Std Error Mean
Business	60	35.15	7.893	1.019

Other	97	31.41	7.068	.718

Chi-Square Test

To analyze whether business majors were more likely to possess personal investment accounts compared to other majors, a Chi-Square test was conducted. In this case, we consolidated the responses labeled as “unsure” and “no” to simplify our calculations. The chi-square test revealed a higher percentage of business majors possessed investment accounts when compared to other majors. A total of 41.7% of business majors possessed at least one form of personal investment account, while only 33.0% of other majors possessed at least one form of investment. An important note is that the sample size of other majors was larger, so it can be argued that this information is more representative of other majors than of business majors. **Table 3** displays the specifics of our Chi-Square analysis.

Table 3: Major Number Investment Yes/No (Unsure) Crosstabulation

		Investments Yes	Investments No (Unsure)	Total
Business	Count	25	35	60
	% within Major	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%
Other	Count	33	65	98
	% within Major	36.3%	63.7%	100.0%

Discussion

Upon thorough examination, the findings of this study support the hypothesis that business-related majors tend to yield higher financial well-being scores than other majors in the aggregate. Specifically, business students at Northern Michigan University may possess a higher level of financial well-being compared to other majors. Our results also indicate that business majors may possess a higher comparative percentage of investment accounts when compared to other majors. This observation underscores the potential advantage business students at Northern may have, attributable to their exposure to comprehensive financial education, concepts within their academic pursuits, and employment opportunities immediately upon graduation.

In future studies, an important aspect to consider is comparing the financial well-being of each major instead of aggregating non-business majors. A plausible explanation for the statistical significance in our results was that some of the less technical majors pulled down the average for the rest of the majors. Because of this, very limited conclusions can be drawn from these results based on how we structured the t-test.

An important aspect to address before conducting further research is the verbiage used in one of our demographics questions, "What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?" We observed potential confusion among respondents regarding the wording of this question. While household income typically encompasses earnings from all household members, we intended to capture individual income among college students specifically. Therefore, the phrasing should be revised to capture this distinction in any future research accurately.

Another important aspect to consider is restructuring our survey to ensure easy data analysis. When creating our survey, we made errors when ordering our Likert scale. For example, our more positive financial behaviors were correlated with lower response values. Understandably, a simpler method would have been to reverse our Likert scale to allow more positive responses to correlate to positive scores without having to conduct additional analysis.

Our results pave a path for future research aimed at deepening our understanding of the intricate relationship between student majors and financial well-being. Further exploration may include expanding the scope of our current

investigation to include a larger sample. Additionally, we could compare business majors to other majors directly, rather than the aggregate of “other majors”. Because our participant pool was limited to Northern Michigan University, further research must be conducted to extrapolate our results. This could entail conducting similar studies across several universities to compare financial literacy levels across institutions. By acknowledging the financial implications of different majors and promoting financial literacy, academic institutions can motivate students to make informed decisions that align with their financial goals.

Implications

Based on this research paper, several key implications emerge regarding the relationship between college majors and financial well-being. One critical finding is that business majors tend to have higher financial well-being, attributed to their exposure to financial topics and practical financial education. This suggests the necessity for integrating financial literacy education into all academic programs, not just business-related fields. By doing so, universities can better prepare students of all majors for the financial realities they will face, ultimately improving their long-term financial well-being. Mandatory financial literacy courses or workshops could be introduced as part of the general education curriculum to equip students with essential skills in budgeting, investment, and financial planning.

Furthermore, the alignment between academic choices and financial outcomes highlights the importance of comprehensive career counseling and curriculum development. Career counseling services should not only focus on personal interests and aptitudes but also provide detailed financial outlooks for different fields of study. This approach helps students make informed decisions that align with their financial goals. In addition, curricula in non-business fields could benefit from incorporating relevant financial and economic content to enhance students' understanding of personal finance, investment, and economic principles. Early financial education can also foster better financial habits and decision-making, potentially mitigating the financial anxiety that many students experience due to rising educational costs.

Lastly, the research underscores the need for strategic educational decision-making and improved financial aid advising. Universities should support students in balancing their academic interests with financial commitments by offering robust financial aid counseling and resources. This includes providing clear guidance on managing education costs, accessing financial resources, and making informed financial decisions. Longitudinal studies with alumni can further refine these support services by tracking financial well-being and career progression over time. Such data can help universities tailor their programs and services to better meet the needs of their students, ensuring that they are well-prepared for financial challenges both during and after their academic careers.

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Appendix A

This appendix displays the survey questions beginning with the introduction screen. Following the introduction question is the eligibility section comprising of eligibility questions.

Q1) Is your age greater than 17 but below 27 years?

(If not, you may exit the survey. You are not eligible to participate.)

- Yes
- No

Q2) Are you currently enrolled as a full-time or part-time student in college?

(If not, you may exit the survey. You are not eligible to participate.)

- Yes
- No

Q3) How well do the following statements describe you or your situation?

	Completely	Very Well	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All

*I can enjoy life
because of the
way I'm
managing my
money*

*I could handle a
major
unexpected
expense*

*I am securing my
financial future*

Q4) When it comes to how you think and feel about your finances, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	<i>Agree Strongly</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree Strongly</i>
<i>I feel on top of my day to day finances</i>					
<i>I am comfortable with my current levels of spending relative to the funds I have coming in</i>					
<i>I am on track to have enough money to provide for my financial needs in the future</i>					

Q5) In the last 12 months, how difficult was it for you to

	<i>Very Easy</i>	<i>Easy</i>	<i>Neither Difficult nor Easy</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Very Difficult</i>

meet your
necessary cost of
living expenses
like housing,
electricity,
water, health
care, food,
clothing or
transport.

Q6) How often do the following statements apply to you?

	<i>Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Very Difficult</i>
<i>I have money left over at the end of the month</i>					

Q7) How well do the following statements describe you or your situation?

	<i>Completely</i>	<i>Very Well</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Not At All</i>
<i>I can enjoy life because of the way I'm managing my money</i>					
<i>I could handle a major unexpected expense</i>					

Q8) Which of these options is closest to the degree program you are currently enrolled in?

- *Agriculture*
- *Arts*
- *Business*
- *Communications*
- *Community Services*
- *Computers & Math*
- *Engineering & Technology*
- *Education*
- *Health Sciences & Services*

- *Language & Humanities*
- *Natural Sciences*
- *Repair & Construction*
- *Social Sciences*
- *Not Listed*

Q9) Do you own any personal investment accounts?

Examples:

Bonds, Stocks, Mutual Funds, Money Market Funds, Certificates of Deposit, Real Estate, Retirement Plans, Roth IRA, 401Ks, Special Debt Funds, Equity Funds, ETFs, Balanced Funds

- *Yes*
- *No*
- *Unsure*

Q10) Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be

- *White or Caucasian*
- *Black or African American*
- *American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native*
- *Asian*
- *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*
- *Prefer not to say*

Q11) What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- *Some high school or less*
- *High school diploma or GED*
- *Some college, but no degree*
- *Associates or technical degree*
- *Bachelor's degree*
- *Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS, etc.)*
- *Prefer not to say*

Q12) What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

- *Less than \$25,000*
- *\$25,000-\$49,999*
- *\$50,000-\$74,999*
- *\$75,000-\$99,999*
- *\$100,000-\$149,999*
- *\$150,000 or more*
- *Prefer not to say*

Q13) If you would like to enter into our drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card, please provide your email address in the space below. The winner will be contacted via email.

SESSION 3.6: ALL ABOUT LIFE

Moderator:

C. Michelle Sullivan

Summary Brief

Exploring Parental Food Socialization on Children's Relationship with Food

Ashley Deutsch, Marquette University

Introduction

As noted by Grønhoj and Gram (2020), socialization occurs in a variety of contexts including “shopping, cooking, visiting friends, between mealtime interactions” and the like (p. 78). Because of this, it is important, as marketing scholars, to understand the role parents play in socialization across these contexts and how they empower their children's relationship with food. To do so, I adopt the UK's Food Standard Agency phrase ‘food choice’ as defined in a review article by Buttriss et al. (2004) as “the selection of foods for consumption, which results from the competing, reinforcing and interacting influences of a variety of factors” (p. 334). This definition lends itself to the widely acknowledged complexity of social determinants of health and bridges research in social science, business, education, and public health disciplines. Food choice, as an action, happens within the food well-being domain which is composed of food availability, food marketing, food policy, food socialization, and food literacy (Scott & Vallen, 2019). Here, I focus specifically on food socialization and its effect on food choice in and around the home, or how “people learn any number of food-related behaviors including those surrounding eating occasions, food preparation, consumption etiquette, and food safety” (Scott & Vallen, 2019, p. 128). Food literacy, defined as “knowledge and skills needed to access, choose, prepare, and consume meals,” is one of the ways children can be empowered in their food choice, both in the home and wider physical environment (Scott & Vallen, 2019, p. 129).

In exploring food choice, I look at the role parents play in food socialization and choice. Families and the home are the most important factors in early childhood (Fitzgerald et al., 2010; John, 1999). As peers and the school gain influence in middle childhood and adolescence, the home continues to be a pillar in social determinants. Additionally, because of the individualistic tendencies of the United States, we see responsibility shifted from community and societal influences to parents and the home. This is well illustrated in Moore et al.'s (2017) observation that “in our own discussions with child advocates, public policymakers, and concerned marketers, the question of marketing's culpability in the crisis is central, but is almost always quickly countered by the challenge: ‘Isn't this really the responsibility of parents, though?’” (p. 846).

Method

Data was collected through an online survey in June 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of social distancing guidelines, parents' roles in shaping children's relationship with food was heightened as the effect of many social determinants was minimized. Survey respondents were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A preliminary screening question, “How many children under the age of 18 do you have in your household?” resulted in 296 potential participants. Further quality checks resulted in 142 participants. Quality checks included relevant responses to qualitative questions and not selecting all answers on questions prompting “please select all that apply” when such an answer has negligible external validity.

Results

Influences and Factors Affecting Feeding the Family

Individuals are exposed to a variety of influences that shape the way their family. A large number of participants identify both child and parent preferences as influences affecting their decisions (63 or 44.4% and 54 or 38.0% respectively). The home, however, is larger than just parent and child. Immediate family (45 or 31.7%), friends (33 or 23.2%), and extended family (27 or 19.0%) also influenced parents' decisions. Further influences include marketing channels such as traditional media (29 or 20.4%) and social media (26 or 18.3%). Parents participants also identified barriers to providing meals such as cost (26 or 18.3%) and access (24 or 16.9%) as influential. To probe how parents consider product attributes, barriers, and preferences when feeding their family, participants identified specific factors that affect feeding the family. Key factors include nutrition (81 or 57.0%), taste (62 or 43.7%), freshness (56 or 39.4%), and child preferences (47 or 33.1%), which were identified as important by at least one third of participants. When asked which factor is most important, there was a significant difference in answers ($\chi^2 = 179.51, p < .001$). Specifically, 35.9% of participants (51) stated nutrition was the most important factor when feeding their family, followed by organic (17, 12.0%), cost (12, 8.5%), taste (11, 7.7%), and

freshness (11, 7.7%). While nutrition was the primary driving factor, it seems product attributes, preferences, and cost are secondary drivers of behavior.

The most common reasons given for why participants chose factors were health and nutrition. Qualitative answers suggested nutrition is a higher-level construct than some of the other secondary factors on the list, such as organic, non-GMO, no artificial flavors and ingredients, etc. Consumers are presuming these attributes or labels signify a certain level of nutrition or quality (as shown in Berry, Burton & Howlett, 2017) and thus foods with these labels are “healthy” and “nutritious.” In a presentation to the Food and Drug Law Institute, Colas, a senior associate with Hogan Lovells (2018) notes ambiguity surrounding many claims including “no artificial ingredients,” “non-GMO,” “made with _____,” and “real” or “pure.” Many of these have no regulatory definition and the FDA continues to work on regulatory guidances and rules to catch up to marketing claims. Another reason participants chose given factors was to display affection for family members. This affection could take the form of nourishing their family; wanting to make family members, especially children, happy; and to foster and maintain strong relationships between family members. Schuster et al. (2019) similarly identified the psychosocial-oriented goals of “having family meals to enhance family relationships” and “helping children feel secure” as important considerations for low-income parents (p. 118).

Children’s Involvement in Food Choices

One way parents can empower children is by allowing them to make independent decisions about their food choices. While intuitively most parents share decision-making power with their children, there was some variability between activities. Further exploration of the means reveal children have the most control over snack choices ($M=2.94$, $SD=1.11$) and least control surrounding meal and food choices ($M=3.65$, $SD=0.97$), meal time ($M=3.67$, $SD=0.94$), and food-purchase decisions ($M=3.62$, $SD=1.09$). A measure of children’s participation and help throughout the decision-making process yielded similar results across all stages (initiation stage: $M=3.36$, $SD=0.79$; choice stage: $M=3.15$, $SD=0.95$; purchase stage: $M=3.26$, $SD=0.78$). Means of composite measures ranged from 3.06 to 3.43. While this could be another example for the even or odd number scales debate, the repetition of shared responsibility across scales suggests children’s ownership throughout the decision-making process is truly neutral, or as was quantified in the survey, 41-60% of the time. Self-reported children’s ages were coded based on Piaget’s stages. If participants reported children across multiple stages, they were excluded from the post-hoc analysis. A MANOVA was conducted to measure the differences between Piagetian stages (Wilks’ $\Lambda=.92$, $F(9,216.75)=0.82$, ns). Piagetian stages did not have a significant impact on reported children’s involvement across all stages (initiation: $F(3,91)=0.19$; choice: $F(3,91)=0.55$; purchase: $F(3,91)=.75$). This suggests while parenting practices may differ, parenting styles and parents’ subsequent sharing in decision-making do not change over a child’s lifetime.

Children Outside the Home

Children are exposed to a variety of influences outside of the home. These influences can both reinforce and contradict what children are learning from other sources, including the home. One space children are exposed to food messaging is in the grocery store. McNeal (1969) articulated that children’s interactions with the “store man” is one of their first exercises of consumer independence. Pre-pandemic, participants reported going to the grocery store one to three times per week ($M=2.73$, $SD=0.98$ coded 2=about once a week, 3=2-3 times per week). Parents brought their children with them to the store about half the time ($M=2.68$, $SD=1.07$ coded 2=61-80%, 3=41-60%). Again, there was no difference between Piagetian stages (Wilks’ $\Lambda=.94$, $F(6,180)=1.02$, ns) as well as no difference across grocery shopping frequency ($F(3,91)=0.82$, ns) or children grocery shopping with their parents ($F(3,91)=1.02$, ns).

Another influence outside of the home is the school. Children represented in the sample primarily attended public (65 or 45.8%) or private (64 or 45.1%) schools. Other school scenarios included charter (11 or 7.7%), boarding (16 or 11.3%), Montessori or similar school (6 or 4.2%), home school (11 or 7.7%), daycare facility (4 or 2.8%), family or other babysitter (8 or 5.6%) or stay-at-home parent (9 or 6.3%). Most children attend a conventional daytime school setting that would provide a meal and/or snack. Thus, just as various factors affect families eating in the home, these factors can also influence children’s eating in schools. When asked what factors affected if children participated in school meals, results were similar to feeding in the home. Nutrition (71 or 50.0%) and taste (44 or 31.0%) were the most noted factors affecting children’s participation. Of note, while all meals at public charter schools are subsidized through the National School Lunch Program and further subsidies exist for children’s families that fall below certain socioeconomic thresholds, cost was only identified by 19 (13.4%) participants.

Parental Goals for Food Socialization

When participants were asked about their goals for their children's eating habits, common answers focused on "health" or "healthy" food (63), "nutrition" (21), "good" food (14), and eating "fruits" (13) and "vegetables" (20). Parents identified nutrition and health as their main goal for food socialization derived from public health information on "healthy" eating and nutrition (similar to Grønhøj & Gram, 2020). The contextual cues in answers surrounding these keywords pointed to parents doing this through food assimilation and self-regulation and autonomy, other food socialization goals articulated by Grønhøj and Gram (2020). Assimilation in goal-setting emphasizes the importance of balance in meals and aligning children's eating habits with parents and emerges in the data in comments like, "Everything in moderation. If they're eating something bad for them they need to balance it with some good for them." Self-regulation and autonomy reflect children's growing independence and parents' acknowledgment that children will soon be fully independent consumers. This goal emerged in the data in statements like "I want them to be able to make very healthy food decisions when they grow older," "I want her to select healthy things to eat even when I am not present," and wanting their child to "learn how to cook for herself." While all these goals emphasize nutrition and health, the goals identified by participants portray underlying secondary goals, or a "why" for the goal.

When probed why these goals are important, participants indicated healthy and healthy eating (71) and investment in growth and the future (38). Healthy eating was rooted in fear and what children would lose from not eating healthy, demonstrated by mentions of malnutrition, lack of nutrients, and health issues such as diabetes. Inversely, a focus on growth, development and forming habits represented what could be gained through nutrition, demonstrated by comments like "I need them to eat healthy now so they can carry it over to adulthood," "for them to carry them on to when they are making their own food decisions when older and continue to promote a healthy living style." When parents focus on growth-oriented goals, they view parental food socialization as an investment instead of an intervention to prevent poor nutritional outcomes in the future, as with goals rooted in health.

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Summary Brief

Unveiling the Effects of Self-Congruity on Brand Evangelism: A Context of Michelin Guide in Vietnam

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The game-changing arrival of the Michelin Guide 2022 in Vietnam has boosted Vietnamese cuisine restaurants and changed customer behavior. This study examines customer-brand interactions and uncover the impact of self-congruity on boosting brand evangelizing in Michelin- honored restaurants.

A comprehensive dataset of 587 profiles from Vietnamese customers of various ages and genders was collected. The results from Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) provided valuable insights into Michelin- honored fine-dining restaurants in Vietnam

This study emphasizes how self-congruity affects brand evangelism, particularly brand usage imagery congruity. Notably, trust in the Michelin Guide and interdependent self-construal also improve this relationship. Additionally, enhanced brand credibility is linked to improved brand evangelism, encompassing brand defense and advocacy.

This study contributes the newly evolving application of Michelin Guide in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Michelin Guide, Self-Congruity, Brand User Imagery Congruity, Brand Usage Imagery Congruity, Independent Self-Construal, and Interdependent Self-Construal, Brand Credibility, Brand Evangelism*

Introduction

In the contemporary discourse of branding and consumer engagement, the concepts of self-congruity and brand evangelism have received considerable attention. This highlights the importance of aligning consumer identity with brand values (Aaker, 1999; Keller, 2008). However, the exploration of the relationship of self-congruity with brand credibility and its influence on brand evangelism remains unexplored. With the recent introduction of the Michelin Guide in Vietnam, an emerging market for fine dining experiences, understanding the impact of self-congruity on brand credibility and subsequent brand evangelism becomes increasingly crucial (Michelin Guide, 2022)

This study examines the relationship between self-congruity, brand credibility, and brand evangelism, seeking to bridge gaps in the current literature. To this end, the Michelin Guide and self-construal are chosen as moderating variables due to their significant impacts on the self-congruity and brand credibility relationship. This study contributes to literature and management in different ways. Firstly, this study underlines the mechanism that consumers perceive self-congruity with brand credibility in motivating customers to advocate and defense that preferred brand in the context of Michelin Guide based restaurants. Second, the Michelin Guide plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and behavior within the culinary realm (Shankar, 2009). Third, self-construal is important factor in further shaping consumers' brand identification and perceived credibility. Fourth, the implications of this research extend beyond academic contributions, offering practical insights that can inform branding strategies and contribute to a deeper understanding of customer behavior in the context of the burgeoning fine dining market in the context of Michelin Guide.

Theoretical Background

Self-congruity

Self-congruity is the degree to which a consumer perceives a brand as similar to their self-concept (Malär et al., 2011). Consumer self-identity is often communicated through motives like self-verification and self-enhancement (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Research has shown that individuals who strongly identify with a brand are more likely to have positive attitudes and behaviors towards that brand (Kressmann et al., 2006; Malär et al., 2011). Consumers with a high level of brand self-congruence are more inclined to vigorously defend their brands against negative news and engage in extreme behaviors (Kwon & Mattila, 2015). Self-congruity encompasses aspects like self-motive, brand personality, product, and brand-based congruity. Brand-based self-congruity is

considered a more straightforward way to evaluate the impact of self-congruity compared to product-based self-congruity. Brand-based self-congruity focuses on the alignment between the brand image and the consumer's self-image, while product-based self-congruity requires a deeper understanding of the consumer's knowledge of the product (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al. (2012).

Brand User Imagery Congruity

User imagery represents a simplified perception of the typical user of a specific brand, characterized by human traits linked to that brand's consumer base (Sirgy, 1982). Brand User Imagery Congruity pertains to the correlation between a consumer's self-image and the perceived image of the brand's user (Sirgy et al., 1997). A high level of self-congruity suggests that a consumer sees the brand's user as closely resembling their self-image. According to Liu et al. (2008), customers are more likely to acquire a brand if they believe it aligns with their self-image.

Brand Usage Imagery Congruity

Biel (1992) characterizes brand usage imagery as the perceived stereotype of the circumstances in which a brand or product is commonly employed. Brand Usage Imagery Congruity concerns the alignment between a consumer's anticipated usage scenarios for a brand and the general perceptions of the brand's typical usage situations. Usage imagery refers to the specific context in which a product is intended for use (Keller, 1993).

Self-Construct

Singelis (1994) describes self-construct as a set of ideas, feelings, and actions about one's relationship with others, including a sense of distinction or connection. Situational priming can activate one's self-construct (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005). The independent self-construct is that of an individual whose behaviors are determined mainly by internal ideas, feelings, and actions rather than external influences (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). An independent self-construct can lead to people revising their ideas depending on their experiences. Individuals with interdependent self-construct, on the other hand, prefer to base their attitudes and behaviors on the ideas, feelings, and actions of others in their social network (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Trust in Michelin Guide

The Michelin Guide, initially published in France in 1900 by the Michelin Tyre Company, has become Europe's most prestigious culinary ranking system, known as the Guide Rouge (Johnson et al., 2005). The book methodically curates a selection of the greatest hotels and restaurants across various comfort and price categories, relying on anonymous inspections and an independent rating procedure. Michelin stars are awarded based on five major criteria, including "the quality of the ingredients used; the mastery of cooking and culinary techniques; the harmony of flavours; the personality of the cuisine as expressed through the dishes; and consistency, both across the entire menu and between visits". Each star represents a distinct level of culinary excellence: one star signifies a "High-quality cooking - Worth a stop" two stars indicate "Excellent cooking - Worth a detour." and three stars denote "Exceptional cuisine - Worth a special journey" (Michelin, 2023). When it comes to fine-dining restaurants, this influential guide has a big influence on customer decisions. The acquisition or loss of a Michelin star frequently results in significant changes in the company and earnings.

Brand Credibility

Credibility refers to how much an object which could be a real person (Frieden, 1984), a cartoon character (Stafford, Stafford, & Day, 2002), a corporation (Keller, 2000), or a brand (Erdem & Swait, 2004), that is perceived as a reliable and truthful source of information (Tirole 1988). Source credibility encompasses trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness/likeability (Keller & Aaker, 1998;). Brands can function as credible indicators, shaping consumers' perceptions and behaviors through past marketing communication tactics (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998).

Brand Evangelism

Evangelism comprises customer-to-customer communication along with other brand-related behaviors (Marticotte et al., 2016). Scarpi (2010) defines brand evangelism as favorable word of mouth (WOM) toward a brand and its online communities resulting from a psychological and emotional commitment to a brand or community. Recent studies have identified brand evangelism as a type of brand-directed supporting behavior alongside brand advocacy and adoption (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013). Therefore, brand evangelists are willing to re-purchase and promote that brand to others actively.

This study aims to test hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Brand user imagery congruity has a positive effect on brand credibility

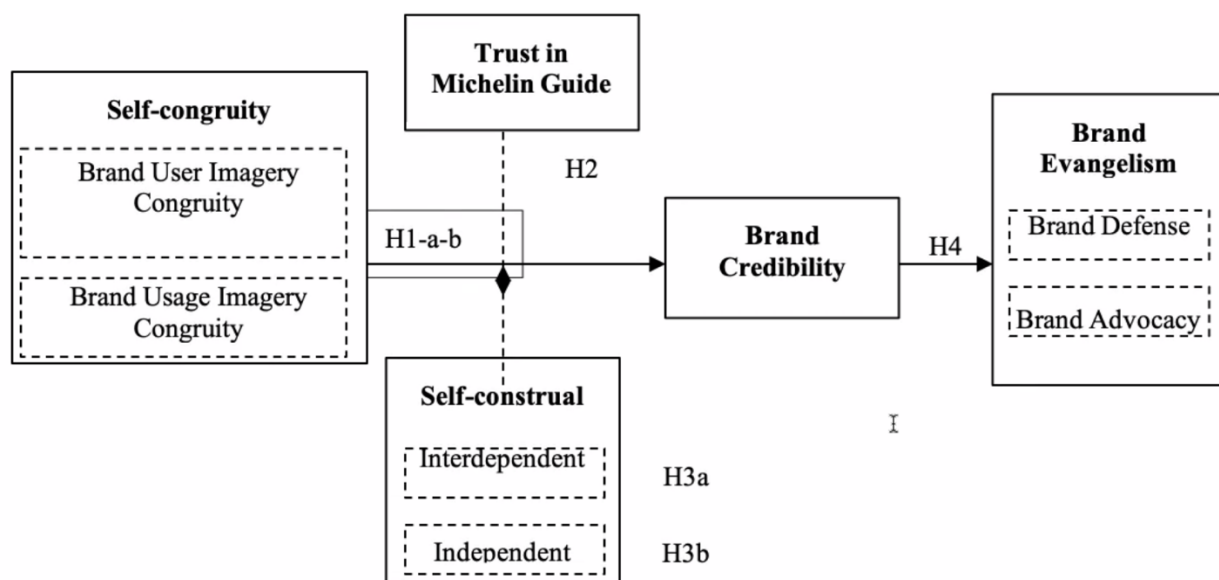
Hypothesis 1b: Brand usage imagery congruity has a positive effect on brand credibility

Hypothesis 2: The Trust Michelin Guide has a moderating effect on the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility

Hypothesis 3a: In the context of Michelin-honored restaurants, interdependent self-construal has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility.

Hypothesis 3b: In the context of Michelin-honored restaurants, independent self-construal has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility.

Hypothesis 4: Brand credibility has a positive effect on brand evangelism.



Method

The research conducted an online survey with 587 valid respondents who have experienced or known Michelin-honored restaurants. The survey ensured a well-balanced gender distribution, with 44% males and 47% females. Age-wise, the majority fell within the 18-24 age range (30%), followed by those in the 25-34 age group (36%), and the 35-44 age group (34%). Previous construct measurements were applied to the current research situation. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed for data analysis.

Findings

The research achieved its objectives with all supported hypotheses, with all beta value ranged from 0.235 to 0.377 at the significant level of $p\text{-value} < 0.05$. The findings confirmed the impact of self-congruity, including brand usage imagery congruity and brand user imagery congruity on brand credibility. The positive influence of perceived trust in the Michelin Guide on the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility was evident. Additionally, a stronger effect was observed for interdependence in the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility compared to independence. The findings confirm that brand credibility leads to Brand Evangelism.

Implications

This study underscores the pivotal role of self-congruity in shaping brand credibility that turns out to brand support and brand defense, drawing inspiration from the theoretical foundation laid by Aaker (1999) and Sirgy (1982).

In the extensive and expanding literature concerning the hospitality industry, the moderating role of trust in the Michelin Guide and self-construal in enhancing brand credibility as a determinant of self-congruity outcomes has not been explicitly considered. The Michelin Guide's prestige becomes a pertinent consideration, particularly with its recent introduction to Vietnam in 2022, organizing events in two major cities, Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh (Michelin Guide, 2022).

Instead of solely focusing on the brands themselves, this paper delves into how an individual perceives, comprehends, and interprets the self. Self-construal, as one of the most critical cultural traits influencing human behavior, has been utilized to explain cultural differences in behavior, cognition, and emotion (Han & Northoff, 2008; Kitayama & Uskul, 2011; Han et al., 2013).

In examining external endorsements, we delved into the moderating influence of perceived trust in the Michelin Guide on the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility. The results revealed that trust in the Michelin Guide significantly amplifies the impact of self-congruity on brand credibility, underscoring the crucial role of external validation.

Notably, Kiatkawsin & Sutherland (2020) have demonstrated the effect of Brand Credibility on Trust in the Michelin Guide, establishing a positive correlation that extends to brand love. This insight highlights a gap addressed by our study, revealing that trust in the Michelin Guide can positively influence brand credibility and support brand evangelism, including brand defense and brand advocacy.

Regarding moderating effect, examining interdependence, we found a consistently stronger effect in the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility. In essence, the result suggests that cultural factors related to interdependence and self-construal significantly influence how women, more than men, form perceptions about brand credibility based on their congruence with the brand. In considering gender differences, our study revealed that the influence of the Michelin Guide and self-construal on the relationship between self-congruity and brand credibility varies between genders. Notably, the Michelin Guide had a significant impact on males but not females, highlighting a need for gender-specific marketing strategies (Kanwal et al., 2022).

Lastly, our study addressed factors influencing Brand Evangelism, emphasizing the significant positive effect of Brand Credibility. Future research may explore the mechanisms of translating brand credibility into actionable advocacy, offering practical insights for marketers and brand managers.

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Summary Brief

The Political Consumer? An Investigation of Relationships Between Brand Activism and Political Consumerism

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Brand activism appears to be influencing consumers' purchase decisions in the divisive US marketplace. When customers perceive this activism to be authentic to the brand, they generally choose to accept and support it as legitimate activism. However, as firms continue to publicize their positions on sociopolitical hot topics of the day, many are seen as inauthentic, or "woke", and customers are voicing their disagreement with inauthenticity in the marketplace. Traditionally, the conventional wisdom was corporations and brands should avoid public controversy, but increasingly they openly court it in public forums. Indeed, participation in brand activism is now being implemented as a marketing strategy, but this risky behavior may backfire by alienating target demographic segments. In this research, relationships between brand activism and consumer participation in political consumerism are explored, i.e., boycotting and buycotting are examined, plus brand authenticity as a potential moderator influencing consumers' choice to participate in political consumerism as a response to brand activism.

Introduction

The growing scholarly and public interest in the demand for companies to take a stand publicly on sociopolitical issues across the political spectrum has seen a significant rise in recent years, a trend vividly captured in the scholarly discourse surrounding brand activism. A Google Scholar search highlighting the increase in reputable journal publications over the past 4 years shows a notable increase: from six articles each in 2021 and 2022 to thirteen in 2023. This growing body of literature underscores the expanding interest and relevance of Corporate Sociopolitical Activism (CSA) in contemporary marketing dynamics (Bhagwat, et al., 2020; Hambrick & Wowack, 2021; Nalick, 2016; Villagra, et al., 2022), and brand activism's role in CSA. The strategy of CSA describes brands that purposefully take a stand on controversial or divisive social issues as part of their marketing strategy (Bhagwat, et al., 2020). However, this strategy would also suggest that brands might be purposefully alienating a substantial portion of potential customers according to a 2018 survey where 49% of respondents agreed brands should not take a public stand on politics (Strong, 2018). For example, many celebrity brands, such as Taylor Swift, are currently experiencing a call from consumers to publicly take a stand for Palestine amid the current Israeli/Palestine war using the hashtag #swiftiesforPalestine during the global Era's Tour (Yang, 2024). As a popular celebrity with fans on both sides of the issue, would it be wise to speak on issues outside of music world? The present research investigates if CSA is a sustainable long-term business strategy for some companies, as they may drive away some customers while attracting others.

Against this backdrop, this study delves into the intricacies of CSA, examining its influence on consumer behavior through the dual prisms of rewarding (buycotting) and punishing (boycotting) brands, also known as political consumerism. With brands increasingly adopting activism to engage or challenge public sentiments, this research focuses on the critical role of perceived authenticity in brand activism and its subsequent impact on political consumerism. CSA continues to grow as a business strategy, which is driving a shift in consumer response to brands and activism efforts (Strong, 2018). Recent investigations into brand activism highlight its profound influence on consumer-brand relationships, suggesting that alignment with consumer beliefs can enhance brand loyalty and satisfaction. However, these positive outcomes are not guaranteed. Perceptions of inauthenticity or misalignment with consumer values can provoke a significant backlash, potentially damaging brand reputation. Researchers have defined CSA as a firm's public demonstration of support or opposition to one side of a partisan sociopolitical or controversial issue (Bhagwat, et al, 2020). Nalick (2016) describes sociopolitical issues as salient, unresolved social matters on which societal and institutional opinions are divided, thus engendering acrimonious debate across groups. In a study titled, "Should Your Brand Pick a Side", researchers found support for CSA at an individual level, but a negative relationship at the market level. This "confirms managers' fears that the risk outweighs the reward (Hydock, et al., 2020)." A study on Millennial behavior regarding CSA found that Millennials prefer to buy from a brand if it is active in a cause or purpose, and they will stop buying if the brand behaves unethically (Shetty et al., 2019). This divisive practice of forming opposing value coalitions surrounding personal

beliefs resembles one of redistributive politics, though it appears the groups are seeking to redistribute values between consumer segments and not income. By stamping approval by a firm, brand, or authoritarian institution, on a particular view of a societal or political issue, these practices or communications now elicit emotional responses such as anger and betrayal, or excitement and support from the receivers of the message (Nalick et al., 2016).

Despite the rich discourse on CSA, there remains a conspicuous gap in understanding how consumers' perception of brand authenticity influences their responses to such activism. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring how authenticity- or the lack thereof- affects consumers' decisions to either reward (buycott) or punish (boycott) through political consumerism actions. This research blends findings on political consumerism and brand activism from multiple fields of inquiry with classic insights from political science, marketing, and management studies. By addressing this underexplored area, the research seeks to offer a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which brand activism shapes consumer behavior, contributing to both academic literature and practical marketing strategies. These constructs naturally lead to the research question: *To what extent does brand activism predict consumers' participation in political consumerism in the form of buycotting and boycotting, and how does brand authenticity moderate that behavior?*

Hypotheses and Model

H1: Brand activism has a direct relationship with consumers' intent to participate in political consumerism in the form of buycotting.

H2: Brand activism has a direct relationship with consumers' decisions to participate in political consumerism in the form of boycotting.

H3: If a consumer's values/beliefs are positively related, or congruent, with the activism message/practice, the consumer will be likely to buycott the brand or product.

H4: A consumer's values/beliefs are negatively related, or incongruent, with the activism message/practice, the consumer will be likely to boycott the brand or product. T

H5: Those individuals who do not view brand activism as being authentic, will find their values misaligned with that of the brand and, in turn, be motivated to boycott the product or brand. This relationship will then be confirmed as negative.

H6: Consumers that view the brand activism as authentic will be more likely to support a buycott, or reward a brand, for its messaging and practices.

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Summary Brief

A Netnographic Study on Dietary Supplement Consumption

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Extensive studies have been carried out through surveys and experiments or focus on advertisers/influencers. There has been a scarcity of investigations about customer responses to other consumers' options pertaining to supplements on social media. Our primary focus is on the consumer's response to consumer posts, as they tend to prioritize authenticity and engage in anti-influencing activism. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to examine consumer-to-consumer views on dietary supplements on social media among Gen Z in China, one of the most populated countries.

Introduction

The global dietary supplement market reached over USD 101.38 billion in 2018 and is projected to reach around USD 220.3 billion in 2020, with additional growth anticipated (Hys 2020). Yet, supplements are classified as a separate category of products, and the regulations governing their ads are not as stringent as those for prescription pharmaceutical (Boyne et al. 2016). As a result, scholars (e.g. Hys 2020) express concerns of insufficient consumer knowledge of dietary supplements. Social media marketing further complicates consumer's perception of dietary supplements. For instance, recent research conducted in Malaysia indicates that supplement products are often promoted and delivered via personal social media profiles by individuals who also act as online agents. Proficient agents who excel in utilizing persuasive strategies, these agents can influence consumers with captivating communications, hence creating the trustworthiness of the products. Research further uncovers that the trustworthiness and knowledge of social media fitness influencers were important attributes that had a substantial influence on purchasing choices on supplements (Kumar, Nawaz, and Samerguy 2023).

In China, as per a survey by GNC (2024), the health product market is witnessing a shift in its driving force toward young consumers, particularly to Generation Z. The younger demographic actively engages in discussions and endorsements of health goods, such as probiotics and vitamin C, as well as beauty and weight reduction supplements, through social media platforms. In June 2023, sales of supplements from overseas had a robust rebound, surpassing 1.8 billion yuan, marking the highest point since December of the previous year. This represents a year-on-year gain of 14.69% and a month-on-month growth of 15.12% (TMOGroup 2024). Dietary supplements from Australia and the United States are most popular among Chinese consumers (TMOGroup 2024).

The study of health marketing has been based on various theoretical frameworks, such as the protection motivation theory, the health belief model, and the philosophy of reasoned action. The majority of models in this field suggest that engaging in health-protective behavior, such as stopping a risky behavior or adopting a protective behavior, is influenced by factors such as the likelihood and seriousness of health outcomes, the perceived effectiveness of the protective behavior, and the perceived obstacles and expenses associated with acting (Weinstein 1993). According to Jacobson et al. (2020), the majority of private firms utilize the data they gather from social media for specific purposes such as attracting clients to their merchandise using opinion mining and promoting their items to buyers by utilizing customized advertising. That said, firms often promote the products on social media to facilitate communication with customers.

Extensive studies have been carried out through surveys and experiments or focus on advertisers/influencers. There has been a scarcity of investigations about customer responses to other consumers' options pertaining to supplements on social media. Our primary focus is on the consumer's response to consumer posts, as they tend to prioritize authenticity and engage in anti-influencing activism. According to Suss (2022), Gen Z develops the consumption pattern of seeking brand authenticity and collectively driven. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to examine consumer-to-consumer views on dietary supplements on social media among Gen Z in China, one of the most populated countries.

Theory and Method

Institutional theory on consumers' logics of market exchanges serves as a foundation for this research. The institutional view defines "logics" as socially built mental models that are collectively held by groups of persons as shared cognitions of socialized procedures for action. Individuals often find it challenging to independently comprehend the intricacies of most markets, including the processes required for effective market transactions (Mantzavinos, North, and Shariq 2004). Engaging in social contacts and participating in socialization processes enable individuals to effectively acquire knowledge from the combined expertise of institutional logics. This knowledge is then internalized as a shared mental model, which serves as a guiding framework for their activities in the market. In addition, various digital platforms such as online communities, consumer blogs, and forums, texting, e-mail that mirror and shape consumers' market experiences and expectations. Such shared experiences and learning promote and explain the mental models that consumers collectively develop and share (Singh, Lentz, and Nijssen 2011).

The study employs the use of netnographic methodology to gather the data, which is subsequently analyzed using MAXQDA software. The ultimate goal is to provide insights into public policies in China. Data were collected in Xiaohongshu. Xiaohongshu, a social media networks often referred to as China's equivalent of Instagram, is among the most widely used "Content + E-commerce" social media platforms in China (Liu and Wang 2023). In July 2020, the number of monthly active users globally hit 100 million (Xiaohongshu 2021)

Findings

According to our preliminary findings, Generation Z consumers exhibit an inclination to place trust in recommendations provided by their peers. They are looking for genuine user experiences on social platforms, typically provided by bloggers who may not necessarily include links to sales or mention specific businesses. Further, the majority of these bloggers are individuals lacking medical expertise. For instance, one individual (average consumer) inquired about the specific comments about Swiss vitamins and fish oil. Followers responded by discussing various brands, including NOW, GNC, and Swiss. One post also included detailed information about the varying levels of Omega, EPA (Eicosapentaenoic Acid), and DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid) found in these products.

Additionally, in some postings, rather than promoting and endorsing brands or products, they shared "brands and products to steer clear of." For instance, a widely shared post enumerated 18 varieties of lutein supplements that are not recommended for purchase, including well-known brands like Blackmores and Greenlife. One individual exemplified this by stating, "The decision to use dietary supplements should be based on one's own health, regardless of their usefulness." Our preliminary finding also revealed that consumers often conflate "drugs" with 'dietary supplements,' occasionally succumbing to fads and overstating the effectiveness of dietary supplements. As an illustration, a blogger stated that cranberry supplements have the potential to bolster the immune system and mitigate the risk of gynecological ailments. In 2020, another blogger boasted assertions that specific foreign health goods possessed the ability to treat tumors effectively.

In order to legally sell imported supplements in China, registration is mandatory. However, firms circumvent this requirement by marketing them as regular food products through cross-border e-commerce (NZTE 2022). Nevertheless, the rigorous restrictions outlined in the 'People's Republic of China Pharmaceutical Administration Law' have not been enforced for dietary supplements, especially on social platforms. According to our preliminary analysis, there is a lack of a well-defined framework for online healthcare norms. Hence, it is imperative for China to enhance the safeguarding of consumer well-being through regulating social media posts. Potential risks associated with the product should be mandated to be revealed. Ultimately, we expect that this research will make contributions to the field of micromarketing literature by extending literature related to consumer well-being and public policy.

References can be provided upon request.

SESSION 3.7: SOCIAL MEDIA, SCI-FI, AND MORE

Moderator:

Jordan Burkes

Summary Brief

Pride, Prejudice and Paperbacks: Exploring the Consumption of Romance Novels

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This research examines the emotional and psychological needs, social and relational aspects, cognitive engagement and imagination, and the sensory and physical interaction of reading romance novels. The study reveals that romance novels meet the emotional and psychological needs of readers through romantic fulfillment, escapism, and post-narrative bereavement. The social and relational aspects of romance novels are parasocial relationships, narrative empathy, and psychological richness. Readers cognitively interact with romance novels through narrative personalization, narrative familiarity, and perspective immersion. The sensory and physical interactions of romance novels are multisensory engagement and tangible attachment. This research has implications for marketing academics as well as authors in their book promotion by providing insights into the immersive and emotionally rich experiences of romance readers.

Introduction

Romance novels, with a history spanning hundreds of years, have consistently increased in popularity. The earliest recognized romance novel, “Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded” by Samuel Richardson, was published in 1740. Jane Austen, albeit anonymously, propelled the genre with “Pride and Prejudice” and “Sense and Sensibility.” The Victorian era diversified the genre with “Jane Eyre” and “Wuthering Heights” exploring darker themes. In the mid-20th century, Harlequin raised romance novels to mass-market appeal. A notable milestone was “The Flame and The Flower” by Kathleen E. Woodiwiss in 1972, the first modern “bodice ripper.” The digital age has further transformed the genre with ebooks and self-publishing platforms. Romance novels now encompass subgenres like paranormal, historical, fantasy, erotic, and contemporary romances and feature diverse characters of different races, cultures, and sexual orientations.

Despite their enduring popularity and evolution, the genre has seen a notable resurgence in recent years. According to sales trends and industry experts, this upward trend shows no signs of stopping. A study completed in 2018 revealed that romance novels generate \$1.3 billion annually in the United States, accounting for 25% of all book sales and 50% of all mass-market paperback sales (Teo, 2018). This makes romance the most popular genre, and sales have only increased with occurrences like BookTok, online self-publishing platforms, and romance-specific bookstores. Romance novels experienced a sales increase of 52% for print copies in 2022 (Summers, 2023).

Understanding the phenomenon of reading romance novels is crucial. This research aims to answer four questions. How do romance novels meet specific emotional and psychological needs? How do romance novels facilitate social connections and relationships? How do readers mentally interact with romance novels? What are the sensory and physical aspects of reading romance novels? By investigating these research questions, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the romance genre’s impact on consumer behavior and marketing.

Literature Review

Romance Consumption. Mende et al. (2019) defined romantic consumption as using products or services that evoke feelings of romance, such as watching romantic movies, playing romantic video games, using dating apps, and reading romance novels. Research shows that romantic motives influence consumer behavior, such as luxury consumption. Men use luxury goods to signal status and wealth, while women use them to indicate mating standards (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2023). Romantic exposure can increase sweet food consumption (Yang et al. 2019) and preference for romance movies in low temperatures (Hong & Sun, 2012).

Narrative and Storytelling Consumption in Marketing. Storytelling, an essential element in both novels and marketing, has been extensively studied. Gerrig (1993) conceptualized narrative transportation as a state where readers enter the world of a story. Green and Brock (2000) built on this, showing how stories transport and persuade consumers. Storytelling impacts brand significance and deepens consumer connections (Brown et al., 2003; Edson Escalas, 2004). It enhances brand awareness, comprehension, empathy, and recall (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Additionally, storytelling boosts brand preference, trust, and purchase intentions and outperforms straight-selling video ads in metrics like brand attitude and positive word-of-mouth (Coker et al., 2017; Feng et al., 2021).

Romance Novel Consumption. While romance and storytelling are well-explored in marketing, the combination in romance novels is not. Romance novels have attracted scholarly attention in literary, gender, and cultural studies, but not through the marketing lens. The subjective experience, emotional engagement, and psychological impact of reading romance novels need exploration to understand their enduring popularity. In 1984, Janice Radway published “Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature,” using ethnographic methods and textual analysis to explore why women read romance novels and their emotional needs (Radway, 1991). While foundational, Radway’s work is dated. Over nearly 50 years, motives and outcomes of romance novel consumption have shifted and diversified. Reexamining and expanding on Radway’s research will honor her work and construct a holistic story of how people, regardless of gender, experience reading romance novels.

Methodology

Sample. A purposive sampling approach selected eighteen avid romance novel readers. Participants, recruited via online posts and email announcements, completed a presurvey. Those displaying enthusiasm and knowledge were interviewed, comprising two males and sixteen females, aged 18 to 64, with diverse reading experiences. Additionally, five avid readers avoiding romance novels were included to differentiate the genre.

Data Collection. Data were collected through 23 extensive semi-structured interviews conducted in person or via video conferencing. Each session lasted 45 to 75 minutes. An interpretivist approach was used to uncover recurring themes and dimensions of the romance reading experience. Questions explored various motivators, reading experiences, and impacts of romance novels.

Data Analysis. Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), the research developed theory from the data. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim using Descript, and slightly modified for clarity while preserving participants' meanings. Open and axial coding techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) were employed. In open coding, each transcript line was examined to identify key themes and categories. Axial coding organized and categorized these codes into abstract and conceptual themes, identifying relationships through constant comparison and iterative analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of romance novel reading dimensions.

Data and Results

Emotional and Psychological Needs:

- **Romantic Fulfillment:** Romance novels offer emotional and physical fulfillment, addressing unmet desires and romantic voids. Through narrative transportation, readers experience idealized scenarios and fantasy relationships. They provide emotional intimacy and serve as surrogates for unfulfilled romantic desires.
- **Escapism:** Evans (2001) describes escapism as shifting from a challenging reality to a more desirable “non-reality” through leisure and media consumption, offering temporary relief and pleasure. Reading romance novels, a form of passive escapism, provides relief from stress by redirecting attention away from stressors (Folkman & Lazarus, 2013; Duhachek, 2005). Romance novels offer an idealized escape from real-world stress and unsatisfying relationships.
- **Post-Narrative Bereavement:** Our interviews found that readers often experienced a sense of loss upon finishing romance novels. This loss stems from the deeply personal and immersive nature of these narratives. Readers feel they lose relationships and experiences. They form intimate connections with characters and mourn these relationships when a book ends. Additionally, readers miss the unique experience of reading the book for the first time. This sense of loss can lead readers to either take breaks to process their emotions or immediately seek new novels to fill the void.

Social and Relational Aspects:

- **Parasocial Relationships:** Parasocial relationships are one-sided, imagined connections with media figures, including fictional characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In romance novels, these relationships often have a romantic aspect, with readers developing crushes or forming friendships with characters. These bonds evoke intense emotional attachments, similar to real-life interactions, fostering a deep sense of companionship and loyalty (Tukachinsky, 2010).
- **Narrative Empathy:** Narrative empathy refers to the capacity to understand and share the feelings of characters within a story, fostering a deep emotional connection between the reader and the narrative (Coplan, 2004). Romance novels, emphasizing human emotions and intimate relationships, are particularly effective in fostering empathic responses (Keen, 2007), enhancing readers' engagement and emotional connection to characters' experiences and emotions (Munteanu, 2017).
- **Psychological Richness:** Reading romance novels is a personal experience, almost as if events happen directly to the reader, broadening their life experiences. Psychological richness, characterized by depth,

variety of experiences, and perspective changes (Oishi & Westgate, 2022), is enhanced through reading romance novels. They provide insights into relationships, empathy, and emotional management.

Cognitive Engagement and Imagination:

- **Narrative Personalization:** Consumers can engage in romantic consumption through novels, movies, video games, and more. Romance novels offer creative freedom and personalization. Reading involves mental engagement and allows readers to visualize and shape the story according to their preferences (Mailloux, 1982; Bleich, 1975). This imaginative freedom makes romance novels uniquely appealing, setting them apart from other romantic media where content is fixed and unchangeable.
- **Narrative Familiarity:** Romance novels are characterized by a predictable narrative structure with familiar tropes, providing comfort and emotional satisfaction. Readers engage with the story, knowing there will be a happy ending, allowing them to explore complex emotions safely (Radway, 1991). This predictability reduces anxiety and makes romance novels appealing as "easy reads."
- **Perspective Immersion:** Readers focus on the protagonist when comprehending a narrative (Albrecht et al., 1995; Creer et al., 2019), but they don't always adopt the protagonist's perspective. They may also transport themselves into the social circle of the characters. This perspective diversifies their connection to the story.

Sensory and Physical Interaction:

- **Multisensory Engagement:** When consumers read print novels, they experience tactile and olfactory sensations, enhancing their connection to the book. The feel, sound, and smell of pages contribute to enjoyment. In the romance genre, these multisensory elements amplify emotional reactions, making the reading experience more personal and resonant (Spence, 2020).
- **Tangible Attachment:** Most romance readers feel a compelling need to own physical copies of romance novels due to the personal experiences they encapsulate. Physical books enhance emotional connections and intimacy that digital books lack (Ozuem et al., 2019). Due to the personal nature of romance novels, physical copies serve as treasured keepsakes, offering reassurance, comfort, and a sense of security, allowing readers to relive memories whenever they choose.

Discussion

The consumption of romance novels transcends the mere act of reading; it is a deeply personal and immersive experience. These novels are not just consumed; they are lived and felt deeply. By understanding these facets, marketers and authors can create strategies that resonate more profoundly with romance readers' emotional landscapes, enhancing their engagement and connection with the genre.

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Summary Brief

Consumer Behavior Based on Social Media Influencer's Authenticity

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Generation Z often falls into trends that social media influencers put out into the market. This study proposes the question: Will consumers buy a product from a brand if authentic influencers give them a positive review? Additionally, does authenticity in influencers affect a brand's reputation? How big of a role do influencers play in consumers' buying decisions? This research dives deeper into these questions. This research looks at influencers' authenticity effects on consumer behavior through past literature and research with a focus group. This paper looks at ways in which Generation Z detects authenticity by having them break down influencers through the six factors of authenticity. Nunes et al. (2021) define authenticity by separating it into six components: originality, legitimacy, connectedness, proficiency, integrity, and accuracy. While Nunes proposes that influencers need all six factors to be perceived as authentic. This research has participants in Generation Z judge social media influencers based on each of the six components of authenticity.

Research Background

Brands often use influencers as a marketing tactic to get consumers interested in their products. In fact, as of 2022, 49% of consumers depend on influencers for recommendations on products (Digital Marketing Institute, 2022). The influencer marketing industry was up to \$9.7 billion as of 2020 (Kim & Kim, 2021). There are a plethora of factors that influencers possess that affect a consumer's behavior in purchasing the product and their perception of the brand.

A focus group with five participants in Generation Z shows that authentic influencers persuade consumers to buy products that they endorse. The focus group questioned participants about their buying patterns when reviewing influencer sponsorships. They were from different grade levels of college, majors, ethnicities, and gender. A student volunteer took notes during the focus group. A fellow peer who had been trained to do so moderated the group. The participants were read an introduction and given the option to leave at any point. All of the questions had a clarification paragraph in case participants were unfamiliar with any of the words being used. The focus group took 27 minutes to complete.

Conclusion

This research helps practitioners in marketing select influencers to sell products. The findings show that authenticity in SMI matters when trying to get consumers in Generation Z to follow through with purchases. This study attempts to combine the past research done to truly understand the role that authenticity plays, more specifically, how influencer authenticity affects consumers' behavior and perceptions of a brand. This research has participants in Generation Z judge social media influencers based on each of the six components of authenticity.

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SESSION 4.2: AI-POWERED MARKETING

Moderator:

Jamie Grigsby

Summary Brief

Balancing the Human Touch: Towards a Future Research Agenda in Enhancing the Cognitive and Emotional Dimensions of AI Anthropomorphism in Customer Satisfaction

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In the evolving scene of customer service, AI-powered service agents such as chatbots are increasingly replacing human agents for efficiency and cost-reduction reasons. However, these agents often fail to meet customer expectations, thereby negatively impacting satisfaction. This study aims to explore the optimal blend of cognitive and emotional anthropomorphic characteristics in AI agents that can enhance customer satisfaction. The study assesses their potential effects on customer satisfaction and calls for future research into the mechanisms that enhance this relationship. Addressing a significant gap in existing literature, this study also evaluates the methodological approaches in anthropomorphism research, advocating for a balanced use of experimental and survey methods. The findings aim to provide actionable insights for designing AI agents that harmonize human-like thinking and feeling traits, thereby enhancing customer interactions and satisfaction across various industries.

Introduction

In recent times, conversational software agents which communicate with human users using natural language and AI, are often used to replace human chat service agents for cost and time-saving benefits. However, these agents frequently fail to meet customer expectations and this affects customer satisfaction. The importance of enhancing customer satisfaction in relation to technological developments in organizations has therefore become a critical subject in the customer service domain.

Recent studies by Shumanov and Johnson (2021) have attributed some of the failure of chatbots in customer service to the difficulty in replicating personal human interaction. Earlier research has shown that designing overly humanized AI agents leads to uncanny feelings and unrealistic expectations (Ciechanowski et al., 2018; Gnewuch et al., 2017). According to a study by Chaves and Gerosa (2019), many users of chatbots are unsatisfied if the chatbot's features don't match up with their expectations. It therefore appears that there is the need to explore the right level or mix of social characteristics that AI agents should engage within the customer service context in order to reach satisfaction.

While many chatbots have failed in customer service delivery, others have also made some successes. The success of some service chatbots have been attributed to the incorporation of social characteristics such as emotional intelligence (Wallis and Norling; 2005), and cognitive abilities (Chaves and Gerosa; 2019). In their research, Chaves and Gerosa, (2019) have highlighted a Chatbot's ability to think proactively as having the potential of contributing to the customer's overall satisfaction experience. In all, there is evidence that an AI agent's ability to think and feel like humans make it more relatable and make the customer service experience more pleasurable.

Anthropomorphism has been a technique used by marketers to incorporate such social characteristics that elicit positive responses from customers. Such responses include enhanced product likeability, happy feelings, and more favorable brand personality assessments (Delbaere et al; 2011). In the chatbot domain, it has been demonstrated that anthropomorphic characteristics of AI play a significant impact in how users interact with chatbots (Lu et al., 2019; Pelau et al., 2021; Wan & Aggarwal, 2015). This has been validated by the computer as social actors theory, which contends that customers behave toward AI devices in a manner akin to human interactions when they see them as social actors (Heerink et al., 2010; Reeves & Nass, 1996; Nass et al., 1995).

Even though there is evidence that an AI agent's ability to think and feel like humans make it more relatable and can elicit more favorable evaluations from the customer, research on customer satisfaction in relation to AI anthropomorphism seem to be more focused on how a chatbot's ability to process feelings impact customer satisfaction (Gelbrich et al. 2021; Xu et al. 2022; Klein and Martinez, 2022) and less on how its ability to think does same.

Despite the fact that researchers like Jain et al. (2018) and Avula et al. (2018) have argued that anthropomorphized chatbot agents that exhibit cognitive experience (think) related characteristics like proactivity, communicability, and conscientiousness are capable of making autonomous decisions in the interest of users that can impact customer satisfaction, research on how anthropomorphism's cognitive experience factor affects satisfaction appears to be lacking.

Generally, both the feel and think dimensions of anthropomorphism have received little attention in the extant literature in relation to their impact on customer satisfaction. This is one reason why Huang et al (2020) has called for more studies to examine customer evaluation of anthropomorphized brands along the think and feel dimensions of brand anthropomorphism since those dimensions present potential for brand evaluation. Based on this background, this study aims to explore the optimal blend of cognitive and emotional anthropomorphic characteristics in AI agents that can enhance customer satisfaction and make recommendations for future studies.

Research Gap

Blut et al (2021) has observed that even though satisfaction is a key construct in the discussion of consumers' behavioral responses in marketing, customer satisfaction has barely been examined in Human-Robot Interaction (HRI) literature in relation to anthropomorphism. Previous studies have been more concentrated on how anthropomorphism affects consumer attitudes towards products or brands, such as changes in consumer attitude (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007), message persuasiveness (Touré-Tillery and McGill, 2015), brand evaluation following product misconduct (Puzakova et al., 2013), risk perception (Kim and McGill, 2011), comparative judgment strategy (Huang et al., 2020), donation behavior (Zhou et al., 2018), and brand love (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2020).

Even though the literature on AI anthropomorphism's impact on customer satisfaction is relatively scarce, the few existing studies suggest that AI anthropomorphism's impact on customer satisfaction has been focused mainly on the anthropomorphized agent's warmth and its ability to share an emotional state with the customer (Xu et al. 2022; Gelbrich et al. 2021; Klein and Martinez, 2022). In the chatbot literature, inasmuch as there is evidence that a chatbot's ability to think and feel like humans make it more relatable and can elicit more evaluations from the customer (Huang et al; 2020), research on customer satisfaction in relation to AI anthropomorphism seem to be more focused on how a chatbot's ability to process feelings impact customer satisfaction (Gelbrich et al. 2021; Xu et al. 2022; Klein and Martinez, 2022) and less on how its ability to think does same. Also, while empathy and social presence are closely connected concepts to warmth perception and sharing an emotional state with a customer, it appears none of the research on how the feel dimensions of anthropomorphism impacts customer satisfaction have looked at this pathway of influence through the mediated roles of Social Presence and Empathy.

Researchers like Jain et al. (2018) and Avula et al. (2018) have argued that anthropomorphized chatbot agents that exhibit cognitive experience (think) related characteristics like proactivity, communicability, and conscientiousness are capable of making autonomous decisions in the interest of users which has potential to impact customer satisfaction. However, research on how the anthropomorphism's cognitive experience factor affects satisfaction appears to be lacking.

Additionally, earlier research has shown that designing overly humanized AI agents leads to unrealistic expectations and uncanny feelings (Ciechanowski et al., 2018; Gnewuch et al., 2017). According to a study by Chaves and Gerosa (2019), many users of chatbots are unsatisfied if the chatbot's features don't match up with their expectations. Managing expectations is therefore crucial for attaining customer satisfaction. Current research therefore needs to explore the right level or mix of social characteristics that anthropomorphized AI agents should demonstrate within the customer service context in order to reach satisfaction. This is in line with Huang et al (2020)'s call for more studies to examine customer evaluation of anthropomorphized brands along the think and feel dimensions of brand anthropomorphism since those dimensions present potential for brand evaluation.

Finally, there also seem to be an existing methodological gap in the literature. Previous studies have adopted mostly experimental research designs that used manipulation checks to measure anthropomorphism (Gelbrich et al 2021; Xu et al, 2022; Klein and Martinez, 2022). Research by De Keyser and Kunz (2022) show that while experiments account for over 60% of current studies on anthropomorphism, only about 10% adopted a survey method. Also, Studies that have measured anthropomorphism as a multidimensional construct are still lacking in the literature.

Suggested Agenda for Future Research

Exploring Optimal Levels of Anthropomorphism in AI Agents

1. Future research should aim at investigating the right mix of social characteristics of cognitive and emotional dimensions that AI agents should demonstrate to achieve customer satisfaction.
2. Determine the threshold beyond which human-like characteristics in AI agents lead to uncanny feelings and unrealistic expectations.

Explore the Mechanisms of Influence of AI on Customer Satisfaction

1. Future studies could explore the mediated roles of constructs such as empathy, social presence, and interaction quality in the relationship between AI anthropomorphism and customer satisfaction.
2. Develop models to understand how these mediating factors contribute to overall customer satisfaction in different contexts.

Comparative Impact of Cognitive and Emotional Dimensions

1. Conduct studies that differentiate the impacts of cognitive and emotional dimensions of anthropomorphism on customer satisfaction.
2. Assess how attributes like proactivity, communicability, and conscientiousness compare to empathy and emotional sharing in influencing customer satisfaction.

Balancing Methodologies

1. Current research on AI anthropomorphism overemphasizes experimental designs, with limited use of surveys. Future research could explore more longitudinal survey approaches to track evolving customer satisfaction with AI over time, especially in real-world settings.
2. Surveying Key Constructs: Surveys can better assess complex constructs like empathy and social presence, which may be harder to measure in experimental setups.
3. Surveys, alongside experiments, provide a comprehensive understanding of AI-customer interactions and allow for capturing diverse, real-world perspectives

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Summary Brief

Consumer Motivations to Interact with Anthropomorphized AI Virtual Influencers

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Many companies have recently begun to use AI virtual influencers (nonhuman, digitally-created characters) as social media influencers. But companies, as well as scholarship, would benefit from a greater understanding of why consumers choose to follow, interact with, and even purchase the product recommendations of these virtual influencers on social media. This research paper outlines and empirically examines a theoretical model that presents theorized connections between consumer parasocial attitude toward anthropomorphized AI virtual influencer characters and the perceived authenticity of the virtual influencer, and, in turn, theorized impacts on consumer temporary escapism, consumer well-being, the potential introduction of new relational problems, and the behavioral intention to follow the recommendations of the AI virtual influencer.

Introduction

Interactive marketing has been defined as “the bi-directional value creation and mutual-influence marketing process through active customer connection, engagement, participation, and interaction” (Wang, 2021, pp. 1). One area of opportunity in research on interactive marketing is the topic of virtual influencers (VIs) as social media influencers on social media; see, e.g., Qu and Baek (2023) and Xin, Hao, and Xie (2024). Virtual influencers have been defined as “as non-human digitally created characters sharing social media content and engaging in interactive communications with an aim to obtain influential status among consumers” (Mouritzen, Penttinen, & Pedersen, 2023, p. 5).

Background

The focus of this research is on improving understanding of different contributory factors to consumers’ willingness regarding their behavioral intention to follow virtual influencers, interact with them, and make product choices based on the recommendations of the virtual influencers on social media. In deciding which potential explanatory factors to focus on, we note that a very large body of research has confirmed repeatedly over the last three decades that improvements in ‘perceived usefulness’ result in increased ‘behavioral intention’ toward the adoption of a wide variety of technologies. Thus, focusing on general ‘perceived usefulness’ going forward is limiting in insight beyond extant research. What would be more insightful for researchers and practitioners is examining potential sources of perceived usefulness. Our focus here is on examining potential, specific gratifications behind the usefulness of following virtual influencers. In particular, we focus on the parasocial relationship with the VI, the perceived VI authenticity, consumer temporary escapism, consumer well-being, and new relational problems associated with temporary escapism.

Key Findings

We find support for all of the hypotheses between the parasocial relationship with the VI, the perceived VI authenticity, consumer temporary escapism, consumer well-being, new relational problems associated with temporary escapism, and behavioral intention to interact with the virtual influencer and act on their product recommendations.

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Summary Brief

Factors affecting Trust and Patients' Intention to Use AI medical Providers

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Interests in artificial intelligence (AI) adoption has increased in many organizations. Medical providers are seeking collaborations with technology companies to provide a reliable mental health care services for patients. While the interest in adopting an AI powered health care solution is high, it is still unclear on patients' attitude towards adopting AI for their mental health care. Two studies were conducted. Based on Study 1 results, patients are more accepting towards an AI health care provider. The facial expression coding (AFFDEX) showed that patients are generally stunned to see what an AI can do but are accepting toward using AI for their mental health care needs. Study 2 extends Study 1 results which show that this acceptance is higher or lower in a situation where there is a shortage of human providers.

Introduction

Marketing mental health care services is critically important. Mental disorders and psychosocial disabilities have been acknowledged by the World Economic Forum (2011) as the outcome of a growing burden of diseases and their impact on the extensive social and economic global agenda. This growth is attributed to low priority development status given to mental health care issues (Votruba et al. 2014, p.283). Mental issues and psychosocial disabilities are among the most pressing challenge in these times, and have further been affected by the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of mental disorders is significant on individuals' lives, and thus needs to be addressed with a sense of urgency. Mental health conditions are contributory toward long-lasting disability, and also on mortality. To address this issue, many healthcare providers are turning toward technologies (Agarwal et al., 2020) such as eHealth services, specifically AI-powered agents, to complement the medical services provided by human physicians (Milliard 2020). However, the question of how patients respond to these efforts remains unclear. To improve current understanding, this paper takes a multidisciplinary perspective by combining psychology marketing and information systems literature in the mental health care context. This study reflects the medically diagnosed patients' perspective, because without their insights, such service will not become part of the future health-care delivery. Accordingly, this paper first applies psychology marketing literature to strengthen the knowledge of AI powered intervention type. Second, a more consistent understanding of the factors affecting trust will be established by examining factors identified in the mental health care literature through information system lenses. Lastly, these perspectives will be extended through empirical understanding and combined to understand how AI powered self-services can be incorporated to contribute to integrated mental health care.

Background

Emerging digital health technologies (DHT) have provided a means to potentially overcome some of the challenges and improve care (Batra et al. 2017). Many people with serious psychiatric conditions who could benefit from available treatments are not seeking care, and the barriers are generally due to limited knowledge, inadequacies of insurance coverage, and stigma. Thus, it was suggested that "sophisticated approaches are needed to realistically eliminate these and other barriers" (Mechanic 2002, p. 137). The discrepancies between the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity in the U.S. population and the provision of appropriate care are increasingly viewed as a major public health issue (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1999). Data have shown that individuals, especially youth, are among people who used online content to seek help on mental health issues. This suggests that mental health interventions through digital means are positively affecting people in very important dimensions of their lives. Digital interventions are asserted to be significantly less costly than face-to-face interventions such as cognitive behavioral therapy (McCrone et al. 2004). Furthermore, studies have proposed using chatbots for short-term mental healthcare (Kretzschmar et al. 2019). Chatbots arguably are able to mitigate the psychological harm of isolation even though they may not be able to maintain human-level conversations (Miner et al. 2020).

A recent study found that adults were more willing to disclose their personal information when they thought they were talking to a nonhuman virtual therapist, rather than a real human operating the platform (Lucas et al. 2014). Miner, Laranjo and Kocaballi (2020) asserted that when a chatbot is effectively designed and deployed, it may lessen the long-term harm of mental health issues which include trauma, depression, and fear. Recent studies found

preliminary evidence that chatbots may reduce mental health symptoms, but this positive outcome has not been tested in long-term outcomes (Laranjo et al. 2018; Vaidyam et al. 2019). Mental healthcare that integrates technology may serve as a possible bridge between access to care (e.g. cost) and seeking professional help.

Method

Study 1. To explore patients' perception and attitude towards an AI-powered mental healthcare provider, an experiment was conducted. This experiment captures respondents' facial expressions as they watch a video illustrating the AI-powered medical provider. This study uses biometric measures because patients' medical diagnoses are psychological and are often observed through affective feedback (e.g. emotional state and mood) (Clark, Chamberlain and Sahakian 2009). To measure respondents' facial expressions, a software platform for biometric measurement is iMotions. The iMotions software records several raw indicators per frame based on biometric measurements or action units as the participant watches on the computer screen. Based on the software, there are 34 core facial landmarks (e.g. jaw, brows furrow), interocular distance, and head position (e.g. yawn). There are three involvement indicators which include attention, engagement, and valence. We recruited 118 participants (76 females) remotely from a crowdsourcing platform. The average age was 31.78 ($\sigma = 1.14$). All participants had to use a desktop or laptop in order to participate due to the compatibility of the remote data collection software designed by iMotions. The participants viewed the video on their own. It was a requirement that each respondent have a webcam that was able to record their facial expression. The video that was selected was of an upcoming AI development lead by Samsung's NEON lab. The video was two minutes long. The ad was chosen because it presented a range of AI avatars of different occupations.

Study 2. To test a theoretical framework (antecedent: anthropomorphism, perceived risk and effort expectation, trust as mediator, and intention to use as dependent variable), two hundred questionnaires were gathered through an online crowdsourcing platform, Prolific.ac. This crowdsourcing platform is widely used among the scientific community (Palan and Schitter 2018), thus the reliability of the data quality is high. All respondents surveyed were medically diagnosed to have a mental disorder (depression and anxiety).

Key Findings

Study 1. Among all the expressions, attention is kept across the individuals. High mean values (>30) for this indicator show involvement and therefore emotional effectiveness. The engagement value was below the threshold. The first quartile is just 2.9 and the average was 13.09. Among the other emotions, contempt showed the highest value ($M=1.61$), followed by fear ($M=.92$), disgust ($M=.90$), anger ($M=.86$), surprise ($M=.69$), sadness ($M=.66$) and joy ($M=.31$). The overall descriptive analysis implies that negative emotions were present more than positive emotions. The result of this study is to primarily determine the sentiment of patients, triggered by the sequence of the images. Next, inferential analysis by scene and experience with embodied conversation agent/AI was conducted to quantify emotional effectiveness.

Study 2. Between a shortage versus non-shortage situation of medical providers. Anthropomorphism has no effect on trust in the shortage situation, whereas anthropomorphism does have a positive impact on trust in a non-shortage situation. Effort expectation and perceived risk were positively affecting trust regardless of the situation (shortage vs. non-shortage). However, in a medical provider shortage situation, trust does not mediate between the antecedents and intention to use, but it does mediate in a provider non-shortage situation. This suggests that patients overlook trust as factor that changes their intention to use an AI provider due to urgency of the situation.

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SESSION 4.3: HOW AI IS REVOLUTIONIZING MARKETING

Moderator:

Meichen Dong

SESSION 4.4: JOURNAL OF CONSUMER MARKETING SYMPOSIUM I

Moderator:

Pia Albinsson

Summary Brief

Why Car Sharing Doesn't Take Off. An Overview of Benefits, Costs, Impediments and the Role of Sharing in the Mobility System of the Future

Anders Parment, Ph. D., Stockholm Business School

The importance of shared solutions such as carsharing in the area of transportation, which is responsible for approximately one quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, is beyond any doubt. Carsharing has numerous advantages for consumers, place attractiveness, the climate, and society overall since it could give consumers access to more mobility at less greenhouse emission. However, despite numerous attempts to find sustainable solutions for carsharing, it hasn't taken off as expected. This paper gives an overview of research and practice, and presents insights and a model for how carsharing could be an integrated part of the mobility system of the future.

The paper attempts to synthesize the growing literature on carsharing to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research and to understand the impediments and the problems that explain why carsharing still has a limited role in the mobility system.

For policy makers and shared mobility providers, the study illuminates important insights on how effective and efficient carsharing could be integrated in the mobility system while at the same time being appreciated by users.

SESSION 4.5: STRATEGIC MARKETING

Moderator:

Lei Huang

Summary Brief

Influence of Alumni Affinity Groups on Alumni Engagement and Alumni Giving

Gary R. Johnson, University of Montevallo, USA

A student's college experience lasts only a finite amount of time, but their role as alumni lasts for a lifetime. Alumni play an important role in higher education. The future financial success of a college or university is largely based on involvement and financial support by the school's alumni. The purpose of this research was to learn about the role alumni affinity groups play in engaging alumni with the school and if they have the ability to impact alumni giving.

Introduction

The pursuit of a college degree is more than just obtaining the actual degree. The student experiences that happen both on and off campus are an important part of the overall college experience. This is a formative period when students develop their values and priorities as they move into adulthood. The overall college experience is seen for many to be a transformational experience that helps develop the student into the adult they become (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001).

A student's college experience might only have relevancy during their time on campus, but their role as an alumnus after graduating is something they retain for a lifetime. Alumni play an important role in the success of a college or university, especially over the past 30 years as funding sources have changed (Tom & Elmler, 1994). Most institutions in higher education have an alumni affairs office dedicated to engaging and connecting alumni back to campus with events, volunteer opportunities, and board leadership roles. Alumni affairs professionals dedicate personnel and operational resources to engage alumni using memberships, programs, special events, and other engagement tactics (McAlexander et al., 2016). It can be a large public university or a small private liberal arts college, but the common outcome of all alumni affairs objectives is to develop ways to involve as many alumni in events and programs as possible to create an engaged and loyal alumni population (Sun et al., 2007).

Background

The study of alumni giving can be traced back to a study by O'Connor (1961) who conducted research with Alfred University alumni. Since this first study, other research has continued to explore demographic variables to assist a university identify a future alumni donor using factors such as age, income, graduation year, major, and other key demographic factors a university maintains in their alumni database (Taylor & Martin, 1995).

Schools are increasingly securing larger donations from corporations and foundations, but continue to see a downward trend among individual alumni donors, especially since the financial crisis of 2008 (Allenby, 2014). The administration and alumni affairs professionals at colleges and universities are exploring ways to address the decrease in alumni participation rates (McDearmon & Shirley, 2009). The decline in individual alumni giving is a financial concern to fund scholarships and operations, but it also is a marketing concern since alumni participation rates directly impact a school's national ranking (Levine, 2008).

Every alumni gift is counted towards the percentage of alumni participating in a particular year. The pressure to maintain alumni participation rates is enhanced with the increase in college student enrollments. The growth in student enrollment, especially at large, public universities, increases the overall alumni base and creates a direct impact on maintaining participation rates (Allenby, 2014).

Alumni affairs and advancement offices in higher education are exploring new fundraising methods and solicitations to reach alumni to address the declining trend in alumni giving (McDearmon & Shirley, 2009). The offices responsible for alumni giving have limited resources and time and must be strategic in their gift solicitation strategies (Weerts & Ronca, 2009).

A recent segmentation strategy used by alumni relations offices is the grouping of alumni together into alumni affinity groups. The alumni affinity concept is an engagement tactic used to make the alumni experience more personal to alumni (Gallo, 2012). The affinity group strategy segments the alumni database by the student experience the alumni had while in school (Rau & Erwin, 2015). The goal is to engage groups of alumni based on their shared college experiences (Gallo, 2012). The use of alumni affinity groups is connecting alumni on more concentric and individualized efforts. After alumni are engaged in an affinity group, the next step is to build a

relationship to solicit future gifts from this engaged group of alumni (Gallo, 2013).

Key Findings

The data was collected using a qualitative methods research approach. Alumni data was gathered from two public universities from a series of interviews. The construct for the research sought to learn if the four controls had any influence on alumni engagement. The four controls were: college experience, alumni satisfaction, relationship building, and communications. The interviews for the qualitative method were built around the same controls for comparison.

Alumni affinity was found to be important as it relates to the social identity of the alumnus with their alma mater. The data showed the primary affinity relationship with both schools was Greek life. One of the school's has a unique homecoming tradition that also has created a strong affinity with several of the alumni who were interviewed. It was also evident from the data that the relationship with other alumni plays an important influence on alumni engagement. Alumni and not administrators are important motivators to engage alumni in volunteer roles on campus and even alumni giving. The data also revealed alumni engagement activities can have a positive impact on future alumni giving since there is a clearer understanding of the need and impact of the gift. The application of the social identity theory and philanthropic mirroring theory can be used as a basis for alumni affinity programs to engage alumni across multiple generations.

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Summary Brief

B Corp Certification: Is it Worth the Headache?

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Amber Stovall, Georgia Southwestern State University, USA
John Stovall, Georgia Southwestern State University, USA

This study explores the motivations and outcomes for small companies, particularly in the coffee roastery industry, that pursue certifications that are intended to signal that a company is committed to social and environmental responsibility. Specifically, this research investigates how marketing strategies of small corporations may shift due to policy changes that negatively impact small organizations bearing those certifications. This concern highlights that these type of policy changes may also negatively impact small companies across different industries.

Introduction

A certified B Corporation is a business that has gone through a series of steps to provide documentation exemplifying the company is sensitive to the needs and success of all stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, community, and employees, in addition to a corporation's focus solely on shareholders. The company promises to generate positive impacts to all members of the value chain, its reference communities, and the environment (Alam, Boamah, MacMullen, Kochhar, & Barrington, 2022). Once a corporation has completed the certification process to be deemed a B Corp, they have validated that their company demonstrates high social and environmental performance, that they've made legal commitments to change organizational structure to account for all stakeholders and have exhibited transparency by allowing their performance measures to be distributed online (B Lab, 2024). Similarly, Fair Trade USA offers a certification process for corporations desiring to become Fair Trade Certified, defining fair trade "as a global movement made up of a diverse network of producers, companies, consumers, advocates, and organizations putting people and planet first" (Fair Trade USA, 2024). This certification is designed to recognize corporations who desire to align themselves with responsible stakeholder practices. One motivation for completing these arduous certification processes is to allow companies to market their social responsibility. This research examines how participation and alignment with some social responsibility certifications and organizations can motivate corporations to seek credentials elsewhere, or change their marketing strategy altogether, when policy changes negatively impact participating corporations.

Background

In the latter part of the 20th century, there was a push for organizations to participate in and increase conscious practices. This movement created much buzz and academic inquest on the topic which continues to this day. Research findings have since supported this notion that consumers value conscious practices, thus leading to many organizations participating in this movement and seeking certifications of evidence (Stryker & Stryker, 2020). According to The New York Times, the complexity to obtain the B Corp status was valued by wine producers who wanted to demonstrate to consumers their commitment to social stability (Asimov, 2024). Wineries around the world have since used B Corp status to market their stakeholder commitment.

Corporations demonstrating to consumers a commitment to social responsibility has proven to be a successful marketing tool. This spurred academic research in the early 2000's on the "fair trade" phenomenon that occurred and was practiced within the coffee industry. Almost all small roasters who participated in the fair trade coffee movement featured it prominently in their marketing efforts, leading to success. To maintain Fair Trade USA certification, the importers bought exclusively from cooperatives of small farmers, and because of this, didn't encounter direct competition from large competitors like Starbucks. In 2011, the fair trade certification organization in the United States, Fair Trade USA, changed the certification process to include large plantations in addition to the traditional small farmers. This change meant that large coffee companies who did not participate in the fair trade certification process due to low quantities of consistent product could now claim their own products were fair trade and compete with the small roasters. In response, most of the small roasters dropped their Fair Trade USA certifications.

Many of these former Fair Trade USA roasters felt they needed some type of independent designation to prove their company's social responsibility and began the process to become a B Corporation to show consumers that their company was one that valued sustainability. In an interview with BeanScene Magazine, the specialty coffee roaster Pablo & Rusty's extolled the virtues of being known as a B Corp as part of their new business plan (Bean Scene Magazine, 2024). In a private interview with another specialty coffee roaster, who had also qualified as a B

Corp, the executive felt that the time of proving his company's social responsibility and using that as a marketing strategy has ended. Although his company still bears several social responsibility certifications, he said, "We've found much more success when we convince our customers that our coffee tastes better than our competitors – both large and small" (Harris, 2024). This executive saw no increase in revenue or brand loyalty because of their B Corp status and decided to pursue other marketing strategies.

Discussion

Looking at one group of former Fair Trade USA independent roasters who had banded together to import coffee, about half of the members went through the process of getting recognized as B Corps and the other half did not, even though they most likely would have qualified. Recognizing that different industries may have similar issues worthy of investigation; a case study was developed. Furthermore, this led to the ongoing development of a questionnaire that will be distributed to all independent coffee roasters who formerly participated in the Fair Trade USA certifications to determine if the B Corp status was a viable certification substitution to use for marketing purposes or if they've abandoned that marketing strategy altogether.

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Summary Brief

Social Media Activism, Moral Awareness, and Luxury Brand Counterfeit: A Conditional Mediation (CoMe) Model

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Brand counterfeiting—unlawful duplications of genuine brands—has long been relevant for marketers, consumers, and society. While counterfeit purchasing behavior has been the subject of extensive research, social media's role in this context remains unexplored. This study investigates how social media activism may influence the purchase intent of counterfeit luxury brands. Drawing on insights from social-psychological models (i.e., the theory of planned behavior and moral reasoning theory), the authors propose and validate a novel prediction that moral awareness mediates this effect. Furthermore, the model accounts for a conditional mediation (CoMe) effect of income; that is, the mediation or indirect effect varies at different income levels. Using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) on survey data, the authors will explore support for the main effects, mediation, and CoMe relationships.

Introduction

Counterfeiting of luxury brands poses a significant threat to their sustainable development, adversely impacting economic growth and exacerbating environmental pollution. These counterfeit products often contain inferior and hazardous ingredients, which can be harmful to consumers. Despite these issues, counterfeit goods continue to flood online marketplaces, with sales of counterfeit luxury brands on the rise. Researchers have investigated why consumers engage in such ethically and morally questionable behavior (Sharma and Chan 2017).

In this study, we examine how social media activism—using social media platforms to influence others—can impact the purchase intent of counterfeit brands. Social media offers consumers various touchpoints for voicing their opinions: they can create and share content and consume content developed by others. According to the CMO Survey (2023), firms allocate 10% of their marketing budget to social media activities. While researchers have shown interest in understanding how social media influences consumers, its connection to the sales of counterfeit brands has not been extensively studied. This study provides new insights into this phenomenon.

Drawing on the theories of planned behavior (Ajzen 1991) and moral reasoning (Stanley et al. 2018), we develop a conceptual model hypothesizing that moral awareness—the recognition that one's actions can affect the interests and welfare of others (Butterfield, Treviño, and Weaver 2000)—mediates the effect of social media activism on the purchase intention of counterfeit brands. Additionally, we explore the moderating effect of income, demonstrating a conditional mediation (CoMe) effect.

We aim to use Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test our hypotheses. PLS-SEM was chosen for this study because it is suitable for analyzing non-normal data, as it applies the central limit theorem to transform such data, and it can be effectively used with smaller sample sizes compared to other approaches (Hair et al. 2012).

Beyond theoretical contributions, this research is substantively relevant as counterfeiting imposes various setbacks on luxury brands, including loss of revenue, diminished brand exclusivity, and erosion of their distinct identity (Hieke 2010).

Hypotheses Development

Our framework explores the impact of social media activism on the purchase intention of counterfeit brands, considering the mediating role of moral awareness. Specifically, we posit that social media activism is likely to enhance moral awareness, which in turn is expected to decrease the purchase intention of counterfeit luxury brands. Thus, we propose that moral awareness serves as a crucial mechanism through which social media activism affects the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury brands. Formally,

H1: The effect of social media activism on purchase intention of counterfeit luxury brand is mediated by moral awareness such that social media activism is positively associated with moral awareness and moral awareness is negatively associated with purchase intention of counterfeit luxury brand.

Income equality among the consumers is associated with various social, psychological, and economic consequences, including the sensitivity to status signals (Walasek, Bhatia, and Brown 2018). Following this kind of reasoning, we expect the influence of moral consciousness to be stronger for consumers with high levels of income. Thus,

H2: Income moderates the mediation effect described in H1 such that the mediation will be stronger at a higher income level.

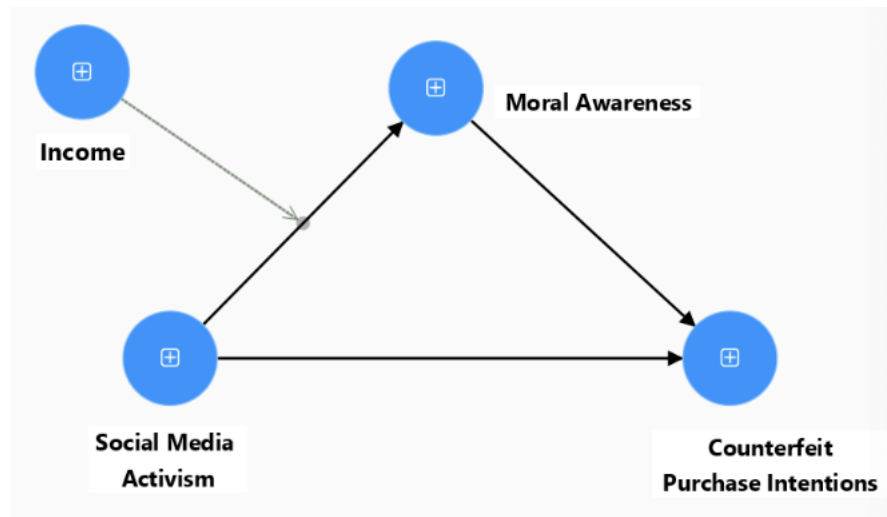


Figure 1. The Conceptual Model

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Summary Brief

Quick Service Cafes: A Masstige Brands-dyadic analysis with Fusion of Neural Network And PLS-SEM Approach

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The burgeoning trend of premium quick-service cafes (QSC) in India, accompanied by rising incomes and shifting lifestyles, presents a compelling opportunity for marketers to tap into the growing markets. To effectively leverage these opportunities, it is essential to gain a thorough understanding of the underlying. Therefore, this research delves into uncovering the behavioral drivers shaping consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. We have employed the robust approach of PLS-SEM and ANN. A total of 450 respondents were involved in data gathering. Notably, all the examined predictors have a positive and direct influence on attitudes and behavioral intention towards masstige QSC brands. Whereas the sensitivity analysis conducted via neural network underscores consumer involvement as the foremost determinant for behavioral intention followed by attitude. Among the significant determinants of attitude, subject norms emerge as the most influential factor, succeeded by brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand happiness.

Keywords: Masstige, Quick service cafes, Attitude, Behavioural intention, Subjective norm, PLS-SEM, Neural network, Theory of reasoned action.

Introduction

In today's dynamic Indian market, a significant shift is underway among middle-market consumers toward embracing higher levels of quality and sophistication. By 2025, the population of this class in India is projected to reach nine million, with their collective spending power expected to reach fourteen trillion rupees, constituting twenty percent of the overall Indian consumption as reported by McKinsey & Company, "Next big spenders: India's middle class". These consumers are more globally aware and well-traveled than ever before, leading to heightened expectations regarding product quality and design. They are increasingly drawn toward goods that offer superior craftsmanship, innovative design, and artisanal touches reminiscent of traditional luxury items (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). This trend reflects a desire for products that not only fulfill basic needs but also resonate emotionally and align with aspirations for a more fulfilling lifestyle. Beyond the prominent growth headlines, a more substantial narrative unfolds that consumer behaviors and spending patterns undergo profound transformations amidst rising incomes and evolving Indian society. McKinsey & Company's report, "The New Indian: The Many Facets of a Changing Consumer," highlights these shifts, emphasizing the rising affluence as the primary driver of increasing consumption. The report categorizes India's households into five income categories, with the highest earning brackets. This trend is particularly noticeable within the elite and affluent segments, which are experiencing the fastest growth. Over the period from 2016 and 2025, projections indicate that the share of elite and affluent households will double from 8% to 16% of the total. (BCG, 2017).

However, this metamorphosis isn't merely a reflection of evolving consumer preferences but is deeply intertwined with broader socio-economic shifts shaping the nation's dining landscape. Indian market resonates the premium quick-service cafes (QSCs) at its forefront. According to Mordor Intelligence, the India Quick Service Restaurant market is anticipated to achieve a size of roughly 25.46 billion USD by 2024. Subsequently, it is forecasted to witness further expansion to about 38.71 billion USD by 2029, reflecting a CAGR of 8.74% during the forecast period spanning from 2024 to 2029. Within this vibrant market, luxury QSC brands, like Starbucks, Costa coffee, and Keventers have emerged as formidable competitors, seamlessly blending accessibility with elements of exclusivity to captivate the discerning tastes of contemporary consumers (Bloomberg report, "Starbucks to Double Stores in India as Coffee Consumption Booms" and World coffee report, "Starbucks and Costa Coffee gain ground in India").

Additionally, in emerging economies such as India, consumers often aspire for branded goods typically beyond the middle-class affordability range. However, negligible attention has been given in the literature to how consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions are influenced by various marketing strategies employed by luxury

quick-service café brands targeting the mass market; This gap in research serves as the motivation for the current study, which seeks to investigate the dynamics of the middle class's pursuit of branded products at affordable prices. In pursuit of this objective, the study aims to address the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: Are Starbucks, Costa Coffee, and Keventers considered as a masstige brand? Then which one is considered as the highest masstige value in Indian mid-class consumers?

RQ2: Can brand happiness, perceived quality, brand awareness, and subjective norm positively influence the attitude towards quick-service cafe brands?

RQ3: Do consumer involvement and attitude lead consumers to behavioral intentions?

The remaining paper is structured as follows. In the following **section 2**, the researcher extensively examines the relevant literature and hypothesis development. In addition, **section 3** will allow the researchers to learn about the methodology used. **Section 4** will present a detailed discussion of the research findings. Furthermore, **section 5** aims to provide insights into potential future research directions that advance knowledge in this field. In **section 6**, the paper provides a comprehensive summary of the main arguments presented, achieving a cohesive and impactful closure to this work.

Review of Literature and Formulation of Hypotheses

The understanding of "luxury" and its interpretation by consumers has undergone notable shifts. The democratization of luxury, as outlined by Roper et al. (2013), and facilitated by the masstige marketing impact (Kumar et al., 2020), has reshaped consumers' perceptions of luxury. Whereas, Silverstein and Fiske (2003) developed a significant study that initially put light on a novel and outlandish marketing strategy, and it was their notion of "masstige" that became the basis for subsequent research. The idea of "masstige" is a joint of "mass" and "prestige," the two words seemingly incompatible terms. It refers to goods that are both positioned as luxury goods and accessible to middle-class buyers (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). They also define pricing, quality, and availability of the products as consumer goods, while their style, aesthetics, and communication reflect the characteristics associated with luxury goods. Whereas, Silverstein and Fiske's 2003 analysis challenges the notion that luxury goods are exclusively reserved for the affluent. Their findings reveal that consumers from mass-market segments aspire to higher product tiers and demonstrate a willingness to invest more in masstige brands over mass-market alternatives. Even though this phenomenon dates back almost two decades, academics and practitioners have begun to comprehend its underlying mechanisms (Kumar et al., 2020; Dhaliwal et al., 2020).

Reasoned Action Theory:

This study's frame is constructed upon the "theory of reasoned action" (Ajzen, 1980), which recognizes that an individual's behavioral intention is shaped by their attitudes and subjective norms. Whereas TRA was pioneered by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), and they have garnered the extensive application of theory in social and behavioral research. Well, TRA is defined as an individual's behavior which is guided by their intention to engage in that behavior. Consequently, this intention is influenced by the individual's behavior towards attitude and subjective norms. (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein, 1979).

At the core of the TRA is the concept of attitude (ATT) lies which significantly influences the BI toward product purchases. However, an individual's attitude refers to the overall evaluation of the desirability of performing the behavior—in this case, purchasing a product of quick service cafes. On the other hand, favorable attitudes towards a behavior are linked with a higher probability of intending to participate in that behavior. Thus, empirical research has consistently demonstrated that individuals are more inclined to act when they hold favorable attitudes toward a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Bashir & Madhavaiah, 2015; Rosendo-Rios et al., 2023).

Moreover, the literature emphasizes the role of attitude in driving consumers' willingness to buy a product. Studies have shown that individuals with positive attitudes toward a product are more likely to exhibit a willingness to allocate resources toward its acquisition (Jain, 2020; Saavedra and Bautista, 2020; Mishra, Jain and Jham, 2021). Hence, BI and attitude are integral components of the decision-making process underlying product purchases.

Hypothesis 1: Attitude has a positive significant relation with behavioral intention towards masstige QSC brands.

Whereas, involvement is a variable at the individual level that shows how different consumers make decisions and talk to each other (Chaudhuri, 2000; Karpi'nska-Krakowiak, 2014). It means how much a consumer thinks about knowledge and how important luxury brands are to them (Bapat & Thanigan, 2016). Various recent

studies in the field of consumer involvement (Cheng & Huang, 2013; Wang et al., 2019; Karpi'nska-Krakowiak, 2014; Sharma & Klein, 2020; Klein et al., 2016) have changed our views to focus more on the consumer.

Hypothesis 2: *Consumer involvement is positively and significantly related to behavioral intention towards masstige QSC brands.*

Moreover, happiness serves as a significant motivator for customers when purchasing affluent brands (Loureiro et al., 2018), reflecting the satisfaction derived from indulging in such types of consumption (Bettingen & Luedicke, 2009). Besides purchasing experiential luxury brands, including those within the domain of tourism services (Phillips et al., 2021), has been shown to enhance consumers' happiness to a greater extent compared to materialistic purchases (Nicolao et al., 2009; Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014). Whereas Kumar et al. (2021) suggest that mass prestige serves as a sign of brand happiness, a notion supported by many scholars linking the consumption of prestige brands to consumer happiness are Hwang & Han, 2014, Mansoor & Paul, 2022, and Kruger, 2018. Hence, we posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *Brand happiness exhibits a significant positive correlation with attitude towards masstige QSC brands.*

Quality, in the words of Zeithaml (1988, p. 5), is defined as "a consumer's judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority." Whereas a study on digital payment by Inan et al. (2021) defines that perceived usefulness is influenced by the quality, and satisfaction later influences an individual's purchase intention (Cavallari & Moro Visconti, 2016; Mouakket, 2020; Konuk, 2018). Moreover, Paul (2018), in his study on foreign automobile brands emphasized the correlation between quality and masstige, indicating that any brand perceived as masstige conveys an overall quality of a brand. Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 4: *There is a significant positive relationship between perceived quality and attitude towards masstige QSC brands.*

As the saying implies, enhanced brand awareness heightens the probability of stored knowledge associated with it, encompassing benefits, attributes, and the sensory pleasure derived from the consumption experience (Bilro, Loureiro and dos Santos, 2022; Singh, 2022, 2024). Percy and Rossiter (1992) explored the association between affective attitudes, purchase intentions, and brand awareness. Consumers are more likely to form stronger emotional connections with a brand when they are highly familiar with it and hold favorable, robust, and distinctive brand knowledge in memory. Consequently, in the context of luxury brands, consumers' positive attitudes, such as feelings of pleasure and happiness, are expected to be positively associated with their level of brand knowledge, which includes both brand associations and awareness. (Washburn and Plank, 2002).

Hypothesis 5: *Brand awareness has a positive correlation with attitude towards masstige QSC brands.*

Subjective norm, as defined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1977), refers to "an individual's perception that most people who are significant to him or her think he or she should or should not perform the behavior in question." It encompasses an individual's perception of the societal pressure imposed on them regarding a specific behavior (Paul et al., 2016). Similarly, Kim & Jang, 2014, and Martin & Turley, 2004 researched that Gen Y individuals tend to exhibit a preference for group conformism. At last, subjective norms were identified as a key predictor of attitude and purchase intention among Indian consumers Mishra et al. (2023) and Jain and Khan (2017), leading us to hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 6: *Subjective norms have a positive significant relation with attitude towards masstige QSC brands.*

Research Methodology

Survey Instrumentation

The constructs selected for this study were drawn from previously validated scales (Mansoor & Paul, 2022; Boisvert et al., 2023; Fishbein, 1979) to ensure their reliability and validity. To adequately represent various regions in India and facilitate PLS-SEM, sizable sample size was essential (Dash & Paul, 2021; Hair et al., 2012, 2021, 2020). A survey questionnaire was crafted following the guidelines outlined by Groves et al. (2011), Vomberg & Klarmann, 2021, and Saunders et al. (2009) to gather data from participants. Participation was voluntary, and individuals had the freedom to withdraw at any point.

Participants and Procedure

To ensure the research's contextual relevance, we focused on masstige consumption within the top three most prominent beverage brands in India. This selection was guided by research articles and industry reports, including those by Riley et al. (2013), Geereddy (2015), and Granot et al. (2013). By narrowing our focus to these brands, we could precisely identify participants, particularly affluent consumers who have purchased masstige items from these specific brands (Park et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2021; Purohit & Radia, 2022). We targeted tier 1 and 2 cities with the highest population in India, namely Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Pune, and Lucknow as reported by Statista (2023). This strategic approach allowed us to reach diverse consumer demographics (Jain, 2019; Park et al., 2006; Schade et al., 2016).

Sampling, Data Collection, and Map for Analysis

A study was undertaken using a convenience sample of 450 participants in order to validate the questionnaire items (Harrison, 2013; Lages & Fernandes, 2005; Farah & Newman, 2010). The data for the existing research was gathered from Tier 1 and 2 cities in India between October 2023 to April 2024 using mixed methods, i.e., Google Forms and person-to-person. This involved completely approaching “masstige shoppers” in exclusive outlets and shopping malls, namely Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Pune, and Lucknow.

Additionally, Paul et al. (2016) have proposed an alternative criterion, the recommended minimum sample size should meet the criterion $N \geq V2 + 50$, where N represents the minimum sample size and V denotes the number of constructs. To determine the appropriate sample size for our study, we followed the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1992) and conducted power analysis using G*Power software. We considered an effect size (f^2) of 0.15, a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a power (β) of 0.95. The analysis revealed a minimum sample size of $N= 160$. Therefore, our decision to include 450 participants in the study ensures that all necessary criteria for sample adequacy are fulfilled.

Table 1: Survey Demographics

<i>Gender</i>		
Male	274	60.9%
Female	176	39.1%
<i>Age</i>		
Below 25	217	48.2%
25 to <35	140	31.1%
35 to <45	73	16.2%
Above 45	20	4.4%
<i>Annual household income</i>		
Rs. 2.5 -3.00 lakhs	64	14.2%
Rs. 3.00 - 5.00 lakhs	67	14.9%
Rs. 5.00 - 7.5 lakhs	112	24.9%
Above Rs. 7.5 lakhs	205	45.6%

Source: Author's own analysis on SPSS Statistics.v.26

Masstige Mean Score of a Brand

We initiated our analysis by computing the value of various mass-prestige brands through the MMS method. To be classified as a masstige brand, a mean score exceeding 60 is required (Paul, 2015; 2018). Our computation revealed that all examined brands met this criterion. Specifically, in the QSC sector, Starbucks scored 62.27, Costa coffee scored 61.35, and Kevensters scored 60.73. Consequently, all 450 responses were included in the analysis of the proposed model. Starbucks scored the highest masstige value as compared to other QSC brands.

Table 2: Masstige mean score of QSC brands

Brands	MP B1	MPB2	MPB3	MPB4	MPB5	BP1	BP2	BP3	PPP1	PPP2	Total (Mean)
Starbucks	6.38	6.20	6.10	6.21	6.22	6.30	6.24	6.15	6.15	6.23	62.28
Costa coffee	6.01	6.17	6.18	6.17	6.33	5.93	6.24	6.16	5.97	6.16	61.35
Keventers	5.82	6.36	5.99	6.01	6.23	6.27	6.35	6.06	5.93	5.68	60.73

Source: Author's own analysis on Microsoft-Excel

Data Analysis and Result

Measurement Model for Reliability and Validity Test

In our initial phase, we utilized the PLS algorithm and found that the factor loading of all indicators met the 0.5 requirements except for two particular indicators, i.e., ATT3_KA and ATT9_AA, which exhibited a lower loading, thereby impacting the overall construct loading. To address this issue, we excluded the ATT3_KA and ATT9_AA indicators from further analysis. Subsequently, for reliability measures (i.e., Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), the suggested threshold limit is 0.70 for each construct, and all the constructs exceeded the required limit. This reaffirmed the reliability of the constructs and their internal consistency, suggesting that our indicators accurately measure the underlying constructs (**Refer to Table 3**).

Table 3: Reliability and Validity

Constructs	CA	CR	AVE
ATT	0.899	0.920	0.622
BAW	0.799	0.882	0.713
BH	0.900	0.926	0.715
BI	0.892	0.925	0.756
CI	0.875	0.914	0.727
PQ	0.894	0.922	0.702
SN	0.772	0.868	0.687

Source: Author's own analysis on Smart-PLS

Furthermore, to assess convergent validity, we utilized average variance extracted (AVE) scores, with all constructs surpassing the value of 0.50, thus confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017; **please refer to Table 4**). In addition, we examined discriminant validity, ensuring that the items of each construct are not correlated with the items of other constructs, as per Fornell–Larcker's criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). We also employed the HTMT ratio criterion to evaluate discriminant validity (**please refer to Table 4**), revealing that the HTMT ratio among all constructs was below the threshold of 0.90. Therefore, all constructs fulfill the requirements of reliability and validity analysis.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	Fornell–Larcker criterion						
	ATT	BAW	BH	BI	CI	PQ	SN
ATT	0.789						
BAW	0.687	0.845					
BH	0.655	0.592	0.846				
BI	0.62	0.583	0.76	0.869			
CI	0.691	0.612	0.754	0.731	0.853		

PQ	0.588	0.611	0.457	0.475	0.457	0.838	
SN	0.69	0.53	0.649	0.595	0.583	0.449	0.829
HTMT Ratio							
	ATT	BAW	BH	BI	CI	PQ	SN
ATT							
BAW	0.807						
BH	0.725	0.695					
BI	0.688	0.688	0.846				
CI	0.777	0.729	0.848	0.825			
PQ	0.653	0.723	0.508	0.531	0.516		
SN	0.827	0.675	0.78	0.718	0.712	0.539	

Source: Author's own analysis on Smart-PLS

Hypothesis Testing: A Path Analysis

In our study, we employed “Bias-Corrected and Accelerated (BCa) bootstrapping” with five thousand subsamples to analyze our path model (*Figure 1*). The BCa method is advantageous as it adjusts for bias and skewness, providing more accurate results. We utilized p-values, upper and lower boundaries of 95% and 90% confidence intervals, and t-statistics, to determine the positive correlation between the constructs, as detailed in *Table 5*. Our hypothesis testing revealed that all the structural paths were confirmed. A thorough discussion of the results is outlined in the later sections.

Table 5: Path Analysis (Hypothesis)

Path	β -value	SD	T-Statistics	95% BCA-Cis [LB; UB]	P Values	Results
ATT~BI	0.124	0.059	3.757	[0.115; 0.342]	0.00	Supported
CI~BI	0.729	0.06	9.701	[0.457; 0.683]	0.00	Supported
BH~ATT	0.023	0.05	3.625	[0.085; 0.280]	0.00	Supported
PQ~ATT	0.097	0.044	3.879	[0.088; 0.260]	0.00	Supported
BAW~ATT	0.388	0.05	5.898	[0.200; 0.393]	0.00	Supported
SN~ATT	0.492	0.045	7.467	[0.249; 0.424]	0.00	Supported

Source: Author's own analysis on Smart-PLS

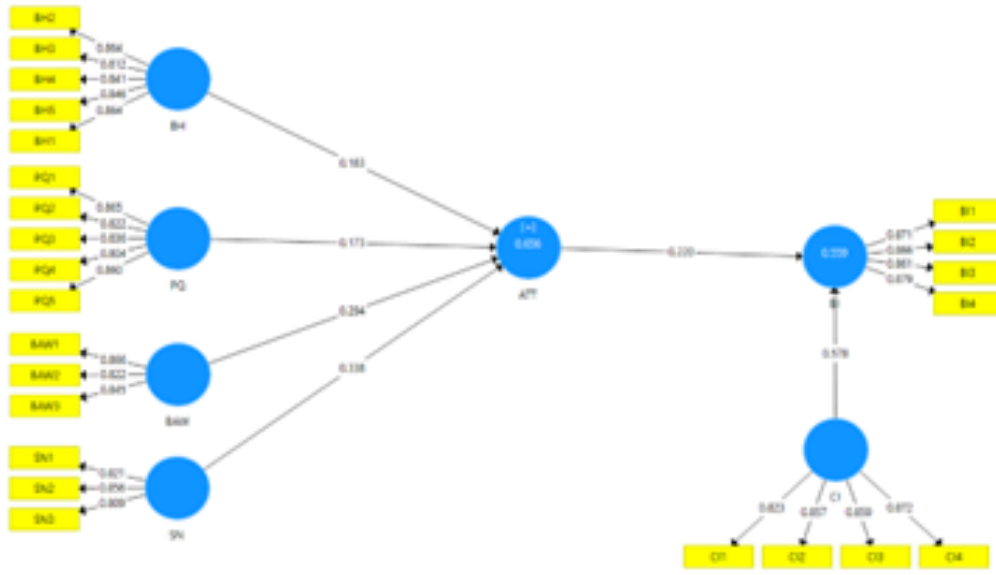


Figure 1: Model Framework

Source: Author's own analysis on Smart-PLS

Neural Network Analysis (ANN)

ANN was conducted using SPSS 26.0 employing a multi-layer perceptron feed-forward backward propagation mechanism with a sigmoid activation function. To prevent overfitting, the 10-fold cross-validation method was applied, allocating 90% of the data for training and the remaining 10% for testing. **Table 6** indicates that the mean RMSE values were 0.424 and 0.422 for the training and testing models of attitude, whereas for behavioral intention, mean RMSE values were 0.481 and 0.461, indicating robust explanatory power (Sharma et al., 2021). Following validation of the ANN model's predictive strength, sensitivity analysis was conducted. This involved computing the normalized importance of predictors of attitude and behavioral intention based on the mean value of relative importance obtained through a 10-fold

Table 6: Neural Network Analysis

NEURAL NETWORK												
DV~ ATT							DV~BI					
ANN case	TRAINING			TESTING			ANN case	TRAINING			TESTING	
	N	SSE	RMSE	N	SSE	RMSE		N	SSE	RMSE	N	RMSE
1	405	68.47	0.411	45	6.826	0.389	1	417	94.997	0.477	33	0.459
2	401	78.08	0.441	49	14.099	0.536	2	412	96.993	0.485	38	0.400
3	400	72.52	0.426	50	5.379	0.328	3	404	86.541	0.463	46	0.430
4	403	76.31	0.435	47	10.461	0.472	4	408	104.315	0.506	42	0.378
5	404	70.62	0.418	46	5.19	0.336	5	395	91.699	0.482	55	0.487
6	414	69.83	0.411	36	5.909	0.405	6	402	90.855	0.475	48	0.515
7	411	79.43	0.44	39	6.857	0.419	7	402	92.88	0.481	48	0.458
8	395	70.59	0.423	55	13.175	0.489	8	412	96.731	0.485	38	0.478

9	415	70.00	0.411	35	7.024	0.448	9	396	92.582	0.484	54	14.64	0.521
10	404	71.67	0.421	46	7.057	0.392	10	408	91.755	0.474	42	9.87	0.485
Mean			0.424			0.422	Mean			0.481			0.461
SD			0.012			0.06	SD			0.011			0.042

Source: Author's own analysis on SPSS

Table 7: Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity Analysis (1)			Sensitivity Analysis (2)				
ANN case	DV: - Behavioural Intention		ANN case	DV: - Attitude			
	ATT	CI		BH	PQ	BA	SN
						W	
1	0.27	1.00	1	0.57	0.59	0.79	1.00
2	0.03	1.00	2	0.07	0.80	0.68	1.00
3	0.29	1.00	3	0.59	0.63	0.91	1.00
4	0.19	1.00	4	0.79	0.83	0.81	1.00
5	0.12	1.00	5	0.44	0.65	0.91	1.00
6	0.54	1.00	6	0.53	0.76	1.00	0.97
7	0.29	1.00	7	0.50	0.07	0.56	1.00
8	0.20	1.00	8	0.33	0.85	1.00	0.88
9	0.36	1.00	9	0.65	0.70	0.83	1.00
10	0.25	1.00	10	0.43	0.79	0.91	1.00
Avg. Importance	0.25	1.00	Avg. Importance	0.53	0.76	0.79	0.78
Normalized Importance (%)	25	100	Normalized Importance (%)	50	68	85	100

Source: Author's own analysis on SPSS

ANN iteration (*refer to Table 7*). It was noted that consumer involvement was the foremost determinant of behavioral intention, followed by attitude. Among the significant determinants of attitude, subjective norms emerge as the most influential factor, succeeded by brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand happiness. These findings suggest that consumer involvement and subjective norms play pivotal roles as predictors of attitude and intention toward QSC. Moreover, the study advocates for enhancing brand happiness and developing an inclined attitude among customers through various feasible measures.

Discussion and Implications

The present study aims to develop a robust framework that elucidates the ideal factors that influence QSC-consumer behavior, considering the consumers toward embracing higher levels of quality and sophistication. The results from hypothesis testing, as presented in **Table 5**, indicate that attitude and consumer involvement towards behavior positively correlate with QSC-consumer intention, thus supporting H1 ($\beta = 0.124$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) and H2 ($\beta = 0.729$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$). These findings are in line with previous research (Walley et al., 2013; Bilro et al., 2022; Katyal et al., 2022; Chand and Fei, 2021; Pizzetti et al., 2023; Husain et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of cultivating positive consumer attitudes to drive intention towards QSC consumption and suggests that actively involved consumers are more inclined to seek out and prefer QSC products or services, emphasizing the need to foster consumer involvement for successful QSC consumption. However, H3 ($\beta = 0.023$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$), regarding the relationship between brand happiness and attitude towards QSC brands, and thus consistent with prior seminal (Mansoor & Paul, 2022; Purohit et al., 2023; Boisvert et al., 2023; Purohit & Radia, 2022; Kumar et al., 2021; Nobre et al., 2022). This suggests that consumers perceive brand happiness as an integral aspect of QSC brands, influencing their overall attitudes towards these brands. Understanding the impact of brand happiness on consumer attitudes is vital for enhancing perceptions of QSC brands in the market. Moving further, H4 ($\beta = 0.097$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) indicates a significant impact of perceived quality on the attitudinal behavior of the consumer for QSC brands. The argument supported by the previous study was Alić et al., 2022, Lloyd and Luk, 2010, Paul, 2019, and Singh, 2022b. It implies that perceived quality has a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences for QSC products or services. Improving perceived quality can enhance consumer attitudes toward QSC brands, fostering greater acceptance and adoption in the market. Moreover, the findings for H5 ($\beta = 0.388$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) depict that brand awareness has a positive relation with attitude towards QSC brands. Whereas there are studies that show a positive relationship between the constructs, such as Vogel and Watchravesringkan, 2017, Islam and Singh, 2020; and Paul, 2019. Indicating that consumers with higher brand awareness exhibit more favorable attitudes towards QSC brands. Enhancing brand awareness through effective marketing strategies can positively influence consumer perceptions and attitudes toward QSC brands, facilitating their acceptance and adoption. Lastly, for the significant positive relation between the subjective norms and attitude, our study findings for H6 result into ($\beta = 0.492$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) a consistent result and thus supported the argument. In relation to previous research, the link between subjective norms and attitude was also positive (Mishra et al., 2023; Paul et al., 2016; Jain et al., 2017). This emphasizes the importance of societal perceptions and norms in influencing individual attitudes towards quality and sophistication, highlighting the need to consider social factors in QSC marketing.

Theoretical Implications

Our study significantly contributes to understanding masstige consumption by addressing gaps in existing literature. Firstly, given the limited research on masstige service brands, this study provides valuable insights by highlighting the importance of understanding consumer behavior and attitudes in the context of emerging markets such as premium quick-service cafes (QSC) in India. This underscores the need for marketers to adapt their strategies to effectively target demographic segments in these evolving markets. Secondly, by uncovering the behavioral drivers like consumer involvement and consumers' attitudes shaping behavioral intentions toward masstige QSC brands. Thirdly, the exploration of novel factors in the context of quick-service cafes, along with the emphasis on the increasing middle-class consumer landscape, provides valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of consumer preferences and perceptions. Additionally, the incorporation of the Theory of Reasoned Action variable further enriches the theoretical framework, offering a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes driving consumer decision-making. Lastly, the use of robust methodologies such as PLS-SEM and Neural Networks for model validation enhances the rigor and reliability of the findings, contributing to methodological advancements in the field of marketing research. Overall, the theoretical implications of this research extend our understanding of consumer behavior in emerging markets and provide valuable insights for marketers aiming to capitalize on growing opportunities in the food and beverage industry.

Practical Implications

This study offers actionable insights for businesses aiming to thrive in the burgeoning premium quick-service cafe (QSC) sector in India. For instance, the study reveals that Starbucks holds the lion's share of the market,

with 51.8% of respondents preferring this brand. This data provides a clear signal to businesses regarding the dominance of Starbucks and underscores the importance of understanding its success factors. By analyzing Starbucks' strategies, such as product offerings, pricing, and customer engagement initiatives, businesses can glean valuable insights to inform their own brand positioning and marketing strategies. Moreover, the frequency of purchasing QSC brands indicates that a significant portion of consumers make occasional purchases (42.4%). This finding suggests an opportunity for businesses to implement targeted promotional campaigns aimed at increasing purchase frequency and fostering brand loyalty. By offering incentives such as loyalty programs, discounts, and special promotions, businesses can encourage repeat purchases and drive revenue growth. Furthermore, the demographic breakdown by gender, age, and residence location provides businesses with a nuanced understanding of their target audience. For instance, the data shows that the majority of consumers are below the age of 35 (79.3%) and reside in urban areas (66.8%). Armed with this information, businesses can tailor their product offerings and marketing messages to resonate with the preferences and lifestyles of young, urban consumers. Lastly, by understanding consumer preferences, behaviors, and brand perceptions, businesses can develop targeted marketing campaigns, optimize product offerings, and enhance the overall customer experience in the dynamic and rapidly evolving QSC landscape in India.

Limitations and Future Research Agendas

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, focusing solely on the Indian context restricts the generalizability of the findings to other cultural settings. Future research could explore diverse cultural contexts to enrich the understanding of consumer behavior in quick-service cafes. Additionally, while the theory of reasoned action (TRA) is employed in this study, other theoretical frameworks, such as the theory of planned behavior (TPB), social identity theory (SIT), self-determined theory, or Hofstede's cultural dimensions could offer complementary insights in diverse cultural settings. Moreover, the absence of mediation and moderation analyses limits the depth of understanding regarding the underlying mechanisms driving consumer attitudes and intentions.

Furthermore, the study could benefit from the inclusion of a broader range of variables to explore the brand-dyadic relationship more comprehensively. While the MMSS scale is utilized to measure brands as *masstige*, incorporating additional dimensions or measures could provide a more nuanced assessment of brand perception and consumer behavior.

Moreover, the study's focus on only three quick-service cafes, namely Starbucks, Costa Coffee, and Keventers, may also limit the generalizability of the findings to other brands in the industry. Including a more diverse range of cafes could provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the quick-service cafe sector. Overall, while the study makes valuable contributions to the understanding of consumer behavior in quick-service cafes, these limitations should be considered in the interpretation and application of the findings.

Conclusion

This research provides a detailed exploration of consumer behavior within India's expanding quick-service cafe (QSC) sector. By analyzing the factors influencing consumer attitudes and intentions towards *masstige* QSC brands, the study offers valuable guidance for marketers targeting the burgeoning middle-market segment. Through rigorous analysis and robust methodologies, the research illuminates evolving consumer preferences and aspirations, particularly in their pursuit of accessible yet exclusive products. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between attitude, consumer involvement, and behavioral intention, emphasizing the crucial role of subjective norms, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand happiness in shaping consumer perceptions. Notably, the sensitivity analysis highlights consumer involvement as the primary driver of behavioral intention, underscoring its critical importance in consumer decision-making processes.

In essence, this study equips marketers with actionable insights and strategic recommendations to navigate the evolving landscape of the Indian QSC industry and leverage the transformative potential of *masstige* marketing to resonate with the aspirations of the discerning middle-market consumer segment.

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SESSION 4.6: SALESPEOPLE ARE MADE, NOT BORN

Moderator:

Laura Munoz

Summary Brief

The Impact of Monetary Incentives on Employee Loyalty, Dishonest Behavior, and Goal Attainment: An Exploratory Study in Sales Management.

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Firms often deploy monetary incentives to motivate and encourage employees to achieve organizational goals. Meeting these goals can increase revenues, profits, market share, and other valuable outcomes for the firm. This research explores the potential influence monetary incentives have on dishonest behavior, employee loyalty, and goal attainment. By evaluating these variables, the study advances the knowledge of goal attainment within the sales context.

Introduction

Previous research has suggested monetary incentives (MI) to motivate and improve people's performance (Bonner & Sprinkle, 2002). MI may also encourage people to invest effort in acquiring the skills needed to perform a task so that future performance and rewards will be higher than otherwise (Bonner & Sprinkle, 2002). Individual incentives promote effort directed toward strategic development when more standard and predetermined conditions are insufficient to attain desired performance and reward levels (Locke & Latham, 1990). However, employers question whether they overpay with incentives, resulting in wasteful spending while meeting company objectives, or if the bonus levels are so high that they incentivize dishonest behavior. From the employees' standpoint, thus, a dilemma arises because dishonesty often serves their self-interest at the expense of their morality and may even cause material loss to others (Mawritz et al., 2017).

Background

From the employers' standpoint, goal setting is vital in the work environment (Locke, 2004). Compared to vague or easy goals, specific challenging goals boost performance so long as the person is committed to the goal, has the requisite ability to attain it, and does not have conflicting goals. Locke (2004) researched goals using bonuses to incentivize effort. While incentives increased goal attainment, evidence displayed temptation for the participants to consider the short term only and, therefore, create shortcuts, cheat, and fake results to attain the incentive fraudulently.

Employees are considered the core of an organization, and the success or failure of the organization is attributed to the performance of the employees (Murali et al., 2017) and employee loyalty (EL) of prime importance. Loyalty, as a general term, can be defined as a person's devotion or sentiment of attachment to a particular object, which may be another person or a group of persons, an idea, a duty, or a cause (Murali et al., 2017). EL "is a deliberate commitment to further the best interests of one's employer, even when doing so might demand sacrificing some aspect of one's self-interest beyond what would be required by one's legal and other moral duties" (Elegido, 2013, p. 496).

Evidence shows that for loyal employees, there is a positive relationship between EL and job performance (Bonner & Sprinkle, 2002). Organizationally committed employees perform their duties better than disloyal ones (Khan et al., 2020). Loyalty to one's employer makes the employee more trustworthy and, therefore, more valuable as an employee (Elegido, 2013). Successful sales firms will invest resources or maintain long-term relationships in the programs to increase job satisfaction and employee performance (Nnubia, 2020).

Employee deviance, unethical behavior, or dishonesty (DB) refers to voluntary actions that violate significant organizational norms and threaten the well-being of the organization, its members, or both (Robinson & Bennett, 2000). Increased effort improves performance, making goal attainment (GA) more likely and earning the bonus. This research examines the influence of EL on the relationship between MI and GA and the effects of MI and EL on goal realization. Additionally, it investigates how MI impacts GA when mediated by EL. Understanding these dynamics will help managers determine whether to primarily emphasize EL within the organization or offer MIs.

This research provides insights for setting goals and attaching MI to achieve those goals. It explores the impact of EL on GA and the MI to GA relationship, determining if organizations can increase EL while decreasing MI. When MI and goals are involved, DB could become an influential factor. This study will present evidence of the effect of DB upon GA when MIs are involved.

Data Collection

The study uses a Qualtrics survey distributed through Prolific to a prequalified online pool of currently employed salespeople. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was deployed to analyze the data.

Key Findings

This PLS-SEM exploratory research reports evidence that monetary incentives do positively influence employee loyalty and goal attainment. We supported our hypothesis that EL would mediate the relationship between MI and GA (fully). Though the hypothesis of dishonest behavior (DB) as a mediator was not supported, this lack of mediation between MI and GA should be welcome news to firms. However, DB's direct influence on GA, especially within the subset of highly dishonest employees, should be concerning regarding both the hiring and training of salespeople and the corporate red tape that might exist and thus contribute to this reported dishonest behavior.

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Summary Brief

Jesus or Kennedy: Does Salesperson Religiosity Impact Sales Outcomes?

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Depicting from the role of religiosity in marketing, this paper uses an experimental methodology approach to explore what are customer perceptions of salespeople in religious situations. The results reveal that modest insertion of religious messages while selling can send a positive signal regarding salespeople. This finding aligns with the view that authentic use of religious views can boost trust. With that said, the excessive use of religious views in the sales process could be seen as misleading, needing a sense of balance.

Introduction

Religious beliefs deeply structure consumer behavior, exerting a strong influence especially on ethical decision-making (Cooper & Pullig, 2013; Singhapakdi et al., 2013), services (Iyer, Velo, & Mumit, 2014), and promotion (Taylor, Halstead, & Haynes: 2010) among others. The varied research on this area highlights the value of religiosity in all aspects of marketing.

While the research has examined the impact of religious values on consumer behavior, no research has looked at the impact on the buyer-seller dyad, especially from the perspective of how salesperson religiosity influences buyer decision-making. Until today, scholars have not formally investigated religiosity as articulated by salespeople, and how such signals could influence consumers (Swimberghe, Sharma, & Flurry, 2011). Moreover, marketing and sales research have not tackled the effect of Christian signs. Consideration to the sellers' religiosity signs merit consideration as they can affect the attitudes towards a business (Patwardhan, Keith, & Vitell, 2012).

Background

The research investigates in an exploratory manner the effect of salesperson religiosity on consumer perceptions in business-to-consumer (B2C) dealings. Drawing from literature on religiosity's role in marketing, the research analyzes consumer perceptions in various religious settings.

Key Findings

A key finding was that consumer's religiosity impacts sales outcomes, such as purchase intentions, satisfaction with the salesperson, and perceptions of salesperson honesty, warning for a subtle tactic in aligning salesperson's beliefs with those of the consumer.

The research also demonstrates that fatigue can become present if an excessive amount of religious messaging is involved, which leads to communication becoming less convincing across a certain level. The exploratory study also exposes the boundary restrictions that salespersons should be concerned with ahead of applying such an approach given the moderating influences of the customer's religiosity levels.

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SESSION 4.7: DECODING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Moderator:

Prachi Gala

Summary Brief

Brand Lexicons, Purpose Statements, and the UN SDGs: How “Helpful” Are the Fortune 100?

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The urgent call to achieve the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), consumers’ increasing demands that brands uphold social responsibility, and the recent backlash that Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) activities by businesses has received are three factors that define the complex social and political environments in which companies operate. Guided by alignment theory and the tenets of brand lexicons, we conduct a text analysis of the Fortune 100’s purpose statements, annual reports, and ESG reports to assess how well-aligned their purpose statements are with their disclosures regarding the 17 SDGs, with a focus on a word found in close to a fourth of the purpose statements: “help.” The work uncovers opportunities for companies to do more in achieving the SDGs while remaining true to their corporate purpose.

Background

The United Nations created the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a call to action to countries to work toward prosperity, sustainability, and peace. Companies have been ambivalent in heeding the U.N.’s call to lead the charge of accomplishing the SDGs, as they operate within complex societal and political contexts. On one hand, the European Union has passed legislation demanding thorough Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) disclosure by companies (Hummel & Jobst, 2024). In the U.S., business leaders such as the prominent CEOs of the Business Roundtable and BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, made powerful statements that the purpose of business must go beyond profit-making (Sorkin, 2021). Additionally, consumers want brands to act in a socially responsible manner, and are making their purchase decisions accordingly (Gray et al., 2024). On the other hand, in an ensuing “ESG backlash” in the past two years, many U.S. states have passed anti-ESG regulation, prompting companies to shy away from fully disclosing their ESG efforts (Maso, 2024).

Companies must navigate this complex environment in communicating with stakeholders. Two vehicles for such communication are the purpose statement and the annual report (often supplemented by a sustainability report). Indeed, the purpose statement is an integral part of a brand in that it defines corporate identity for stakeholders (Pearce & David, 1987). The word choice in a purpose statement is critical because lexical association research has shown that consumers attach important meanings to individual words (Aggarwal et al., 2009). Moreover, alignment theory suggests that companies will be most successful when their strategy, culture, leadership style, and competitive situation are all aligned (Chorn, 1991). Congruency between a company’s purpose statement and its actions regarding the SDGs (described in its annual report) would be an example of such alignment.

Method

A textual analysis of the Fortune 100 companies’ annual reports and ESG/Sustainability reports was conducted. This sample comprises the 100 highest-revenue companies in the U.S. in 2023. The sample represents 19 industries, of which the financial, health care, technology, energy, and retail sectors make up 65% of the sample. Berger and colleagues (2020) note that such text analysis may uncover deeply-rooted cultural and structural factors that are not as readily obtainable via surveys. They state that “[t]ext analysis offers an objective and systematic solution to assess constructs in naturally occurring data...that may be more valid” (Berger et al., 2020, p. 7). In line with textual analyses of Fortune 100 websites conducted in previous research (e.g., Smith & Huang, 2023), we started by compiling the annual report for year-end 2023 from each company’s website. We searched each annual report for: 1) the purpose statement from Part 1, Item 1 of the annual report (description of the business), turning directly to the company website if a purpose statement was absent from the annual report, 2) any mention of ESG, and 3) any mention of the U.N. SDGs and a list of specific SDGs (1-17). Next, we conducted a text analysis of each company’s ESG/Sustainability report, again obtained from the company’s website. We searched each ESG report for the following: 1) any mention of ESG, and 2) any mention of the U.N. SDGs and a list of specific SDGs (1-17).

After completing the text analysis on the Fortune 100 purpose statements, we discovered that the word “help” was used frequently. Knowing that there is a deep debate about companies showing altruistic principles, this

sparked the researchers' interest. In light of the first text analysis, we set out to explore whether companies who use the word "help" in corporate purpose statements—thus signaling that they value social responsibility—are also the ones who report the largest number of SDGs in their annual or sustainability reports. Due to the opposing forces with which companies contend when it comes to ESG disclosure, we propose two competing hypotheses:

H1a: Companies using the word "help" in the purpose statement report working toward a higher number of UN SDGs in its sustainability report than those companies who do not use the word "help."

H1b: There is no difference in the number of UN SDGs reported between companies who include the word "help" in the purpose statement and companies who does not use the word "help."

Findings

Within the Fortune 100, there were two companies that did not have a purpose statement that followed our criteria (i.e., located in Part 1, Item 1 of the annual report or on the website). One of these was in the energy sector; the other in the financial sector. Out of the 98 companies who did have a purpose statement, 24% (23 companies) use the word "help." Seven of these 23 companies using the word "help" were in the financial sector, followed by five in the healthcare sector and four from the technology sector. In sum, eight different sectors were represented in the sample of companies who use the word "help" in the purpose statement.

Next, we compared the number of SDGs that these 23 companies mentioned in their Sustainability/ESG reports with the number of SDGs that the remaining 75 companies mentioned. The number of SDGs mentioned ranged from 0 to 17. Between the two competing hypotheses, H1b was confirmed ($r = .17, p > .05$).

Discussion

The purpose of a business, and how far a business can or should go in helping society is quite controversial in the United States. ESG has become a polarizing and complicated investment term. The main contribution of this research is that it shows that companies are embedding goals beyond profit maximization into their purpose statements. Fortune 100 companies using the word "help" in their purpose statement sends a message about what the business is truly attempting to accomplish for its stakeholders. While it might seem that those companies using the word "help" would align better with the UN SDGs and therefore mention working toward more of these goals, it is not the case. Marketers desiring to set strategic goals that go beyond profit maximization to include societal goals can use the company's purpose statement to support their decision to pursue specific UN SDGs.

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Summary Brief

CEO Integrity's Influence on Firm Digital Orientation: How CMOs and Ad Intensity Drive Digital Orientation

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Adaptation of digital technology in the firm increases firm value (Chen & Srinivasan, 2023; Kindermann et al., 2021; Salvi, 2021) because digital transformation can help organizations maintain competitiveness and adaptability in an ever-evolving market environment (Westerman et al., 2011). According to international data corporation, the global digital transformation investments may reach up to 3.4 trillion dollars in 2026. Digital transformation includes a broad range of technologies like cloud computing, data analytics and business intelligence, adoption of artificial intelligence and machine learning and digital marketing. Surprisingly, only about 50% of companies plan to incorporate AI technologies in their day-to-day transactions despite the growing importance of AI and data science (McKinsey and Company, 2022) demonstrating the agile characteristic of digital orientation. One important dynamic in the firm that sways this orientation is the CEO and their strategic orientation.

Our findings lead us to conclude that organizations with CEOs who have high integrity tend to have lower levels of digital orientation dimensions in the firm. This negative effect of CEO integrity on firms' strategic orientation in general and the dimension of digital orientation in particular is strengthened when the firm invests more in R&D intensity. At the same time, the negative effect of CEO integrity on digital orientation diminishes if the firm has high advertising intensity. The negative effect of CEO integrity on digital orientation also diminishes if the firm has presence of CMO in the firm.

We contribute to upper echelon theory literature by adding to the discussion of how business executives' psychological traits map onto firm behavior. Past research that has investigated the effect of CEO integrity (e.g., Arjoon, 2005; Irianto et al., 2009) has considered only positive outcomes (such as greater employee loyalty and lower likelihood of employee fraud) of this 'bright' trait. Thus, we add to the limited work on managers' personality traits in general, and CEO integrity in specific, several important outcomes that have remained virtually unexplored by researchers in UET. Our findings suggest that future UET researchers need to pay attention to managers' integrity in order to understand and explain differences in firms' digital decisions. We also encourage future researchers to explore negative effects of other 'positive' traits in order to get a more nuanced understanding of the impact of such traits.

Our research also reveals that corporate boards may benefit by considering the impact of a prospective CEO's integrity in their hiring decisions. Specifically, executives' integrity, measured using textual analysis of executives' words, may assist board members in predicting the executives' future decisions before hiring them. While we do not suggest that corporate boards should be cautious about hiring CEOs with high integrity, we do suggest that they should try to inculcate a risk-taking mindset among CEOs with high integrity through training and the use of corporate governance mechanisms. Given that digital orientation does tend to have a positive impact on shareholder value (Covin and Slevin 1991; Wiklund and Shepherd 2003), investors may also consider CEOs' integrity, as manifested by CEOs' word choices in their investment decisions. When a firm recruits a new CEO, there is substantial uncertainty about the kind of strategic actions the CEO will be taking in the future. Investors can use the CEO's integrity as an effective signal to predict the CEOs' choices, specifically the CEOs' emphasis on creating a digital mindset in their firms.

Our investigation also provides a number of noteworthy practical implications for CEOs. We reveal that it is advantageous for CEOs to understand that integrity is a double-edged sword. This understanding promises to help CEOs leverage the strengths of their integrity, while simultaneously using tools such as training to diminish its negative aspects. More specifically, CEOs — particularly those who identify themselves as having high degrees of integrity — may benefit by surrounding themselves with CMO and creative TMT members in order to minimize the digital orientation-related deficiencies that may come with their personal traits.

Summary Brief

Time to Cue Up the Next Sequel: How Franchise Characteristics Affect the Impact of Movie Sequel Cues on Box Office Performance

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Sequels abound in the entertainment industry. New sequels to movies, video games, and books are launched every year attracting consumers to experience these products. The success of sequels is driven by a cues related to both the sequel and that franchise. Using a sample of 493 movie sequels, this research empirically examines how the interactions between product related and franchise related cues impact sequel performance. The results showcase how product related cues including previous product performance, brand consistency, and budget have varying effects based on the franchise related cues of franchise history and franchise origins.

Introduction

Sequels have become ubiquitous in entertainment industries. Movies, video games, books, and products in other entertainment industries have leveraged sequels as a means to build on preexisting brands in industries where even successful products typically have short life cycles (Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2019). Due to the rise of sequels, movie franchises have become prominent brand names including *The Fast and The Furious*, *Avatar*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Avengers*. With the growing global entertainment and movie industry encompassing \$2.32 trillion in 2022 and being poised for growth (PwC, 2023), it is imperative to understand how and why sequels succeed. The current research builds upon entertainment marketing literature by examining how product and franchise related cues jointly influence the performance of sequels in entertainment industries.

The Relevance of Cues in Movie Sequel Performance

Consumers rely on different cues to aid in their consumption decisions to assess their potential enjoyment of a movie. According to the accessibility-diagnostics framework, consumers utilize cues that are accessible to them, but also diagnostic for the given decision (Menon et al., 1995). In the movie industry, consumers often rely on product-related cues to assess the potential quality and preference for the movie sequel. However, the effects of product cues on sequel performance may differ based on franchise characteristics because consumers attach different diagnostic and accessibility assessments for movie franchises from different sources and with different histories (Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2019).

The success of the previous product is salient cue of the quality of a new movie sequel (Belvaux & Mencaralli, 2021) and driver of sequel performance. For a sequel in original franchise, the preceding product success is the key brand equity driver and diagnostic cue of quality of the movie sequel. In comparison, for movie sequels based on a pre-existing source, consumers can rely on cues associated with the pre-existing brand elements in another category (Knapp et al., 2014), reducing the relevancy, or diagnosticity, of the performance of the previous movie. Additionally, new movie sequels that are launched when there is a longer franchise history have more cues for consumers to rely upon. As franchise history gets longer, previous movie cues become less accessible in memory (Knapp et al., 2014), making retrieval of information about past films more difficult, and thus, these cues are less likely to be used in a consumer's decision. Thus, we posit:

H1: The influence of previous movie performance on movie sequel box office revenue is strengthened for movie sequels from original franchises (H1a) and attenuated as franchise history increases (H1b).

Brand consistency means that the brand's image has been standardized and preserved over time, and this image is typically associated with specific brand elements (Beverland et al., 2015). Thus, when sequels are from original franchises, brand consistency serves as a salient cue that triggers the associations of the previous film stored in the memory of customers. In comparison, when a new movie sequel is from a franchise based on a pre-existing

source, there are many cues to use for judgement. However, as franchise history grows, consumers have more cues to rely upon in memory. Too many of the same experiences with the same brand elements can cause consumers to become bored and satiated (Preece et al., 2019). Thus, brand consistency may become associated with a connotation of repetition, resulting in more negative judgements toward the film. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2: The influence of brand consistency on movie sequel box office revenue is more positive for movie sequels from original franchises (H2a) and more negative as franchise history increases (H2b).

The budget of a movie is a salient driver of box office success (Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2019). For sequels from original franchises, there is often less awareness of the brand compared to sequels from franchises based on an existing brand, resulting in the cues of the budget being accessed by fewer people for original franchises. Thus, the impact of budget is reduced due to lack of awareness. In comparison, brand awareness of a sequel is greater when there is a long franchise history further amplifying promotional efforts from budgets, since consumers will have more opportunities to access the brand in memory. The cue of budget then becomes more diagnostic for sequels with a long brand history. Thus, we hypothesize:

H3: The influence of budget on movie sequel box office revenue is attenuated for movie sequels from original franchises (H3a) and strengthened as franchise history increases (H3b).

Data and Results

For this study, we employ data from the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). Our sample consists of 493 sequels within 266 franchises. To test our hypotheses, we utilized regression models. Additionally, we use a Heckman two-step method to alleviate potential selection bias problems from unobserved factors and use an instrumental variable approach to control for endogeneity of budgets and number of theaters. We found that the interaction between previous film box office performance and franchise origin ($\beta = .236, p < .05$) was positive and significant and the interaction between previous movie performance and franchise history ($\beta = -.143, p < .01$) was negative and significant, supporting H1a and H1b. The interaction between brand consistency and franchise origin ($\beta = -.013, p > .01$) was not statistically significant, but the interaction between brand consistency and franchise history ($\beta = -.074, p < .05$) was significant, thus H2a was not supported, but H2b was supported. Lastly, the interactions between budget and franchise origin ($\beta = -.169, p < .05$) and budget and franchise history ($\beta = .149, p < .01$) were significant, supporting H3a and H3b.

Discussion

In this paper, we investigated the impact of interactions between product related and franchise related cues on sequel success in entertainment industries. Our findings indicate that franchise cues must be considered as part of the equation. Franchise origins and franchise history must be considered. Managers also must not only consider the elements of the focal product, but also acknowledge that these product related cues may differ based upon the context of the franchise to which the sequel belongs.

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SESSION 4.8: SCROLL, STOP, SHOP

Moderator:

Cheryl-lyn Ngoh

Summary Brief

Toward a Theory of Bargain Hunting: Conceptual Framework, Implications, and Future Research Directions

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Bargain hunting, defined as the practice of actively seeking out discounts, deals, and sales to purchase products or services at lower prices than their regular retail value, is highly relevant for marketers, consumers, and policy makers. However, prior research on bargain hunting remains fragmented and lacks consolidation and a coherent theoretical foundation. The current research offers a theoretical framework of bargain hunting by integrating bargain hunting strategies (cash discounts, coupons, deal-of-the-day, cashback programs, and auctions) with insights from consumer motivations (utilitarian, hedonic, and impulsive/compulsive) and reference price theory. Our framework posits that, compared to other shopping practices, such as treasure hunting, thrift shopping, and second-hand shopping, reference prices play a fundamental role for understanding the underlying mechanisms of bargain hunting. In addition, we incorporate the topic of reference price manipulations into our bargain hunting framework and show how firms employ three major techniques (artificially inflate the regular price, draw additional attention to the regular price, and increase the sale price in combination with adding a regular price) to artificially inflate discounts, that way reinforcing consumers' bargain hunting tendencies. We validate our bargain hunting framework with insights from in-depth interviews with younger consumers for which bargain hunting is relevant. In addition, we present implications and pertinent avenues for future research that can leverage our bargain hunting framework.

Introduction

A substantial portion of consumers actively search for discounts or lower-than-market prices when buying everyday goods, such as groceries, clothing, or consumer electronics. For example, in 2020, 88% of participants in a large-scale survey affirmed that they had used coupons for shopping (Statista, 2022), indicating that a vast majority of consumers are seeking a good deal. Hence, bargain hunting, defined as the practice of actively seeking out discounts, deals, and sales to purchase products or services at lower prices than their regular retail value (Darke & Freedman, 1995; Mortimer et al., 2022; Schindler, 2009; Wagner & Rudolph, 2010), is a phenomenon that is highly relevant for marketers, but it has also important implications for policy makers and consumer well-being.

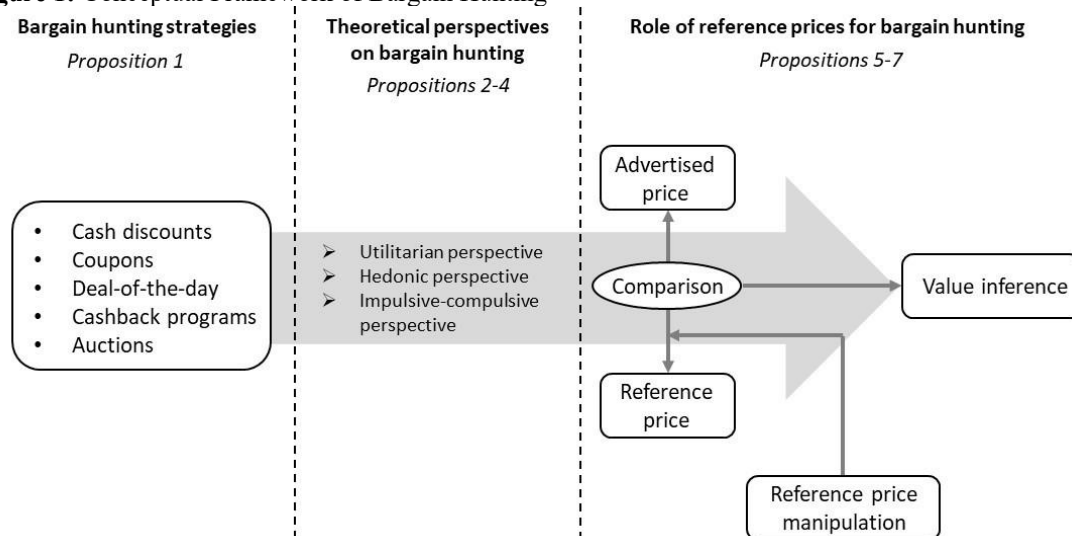
Despite its importance, prior research on bargain hunting remains fragmented, lacks consolidation, and is missing a coherent theoretical foundation. For example, prior research has conceptualized bargain hunting either through the lens of rational consumer behavior driven by utilitarian benefits (e.g., Farrag et al., 2010; Kwon et al., 2010; Saarijärvi et al., 2018; Turunen & Pöyry, 2019) or based on the perspective of hedonic motives relating to gamification, enjoyment, and a sense of achievement (e.g., Ieva et al., 2018; Kim & Kim, 2008; Pechtl, 2004; Schindler, 2009). However, both perspectives remain incomplete and reductive. Moreover, prior research largely neglects the impulsive/compulsive aspects of bargain hunting, which has important implications for consumer wellbeing and policy making. In addition, previous studies focus on consumer motivations but abstain from delving into the inner core mechanism of bargain hunting.

The current paper addresses this research gap by developing a coherent theoretical framework of bargain hunting, which views bargain hunting strategies through the angle of three consumer motivations (utilitarian, hedonic, and impulsive/compulsive), and then delves into the inner mechanisms of bargain hunting by elaborating on how consumers' comparison between reference prices and the advertised sales price generates perceptions of value. Integrating reference price theory with the mechanism of bargain hunting allows us to discuss the critical and often problematic issue of reference price manipulations (Darke & Chung, 2005; Park et al., 2023) from a novel theoretical angle, with important ramifications for consumers, marketers, and policy makers.

Conceptual Framework of Bargain Hunting

To develop a theoretical framework of bargain hunting, we first draw conceptual distinction between bargain hunting and two related yet fundamentally different consumer shopping practices, i.e., treasure hunting and thrift and second-hand shopping. While treasure hunting indicates the search for valuable or rare items with historical, cultural, or personal significance (Belk et al., 1988; Cervellon et al., 2012; Silva et al., 2022; Silverstein, 2006; Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015), thrift and second-hand shopping refers to the purchase of second-hand items from thrift stores or specialized shops for personal use at lower prices than new retail items, usually regardless of rarity or exceptional value (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Padmavathy et al., 2019; Steward, 2020; Turunen & Pöyry, 2019; Xu et al., 2014). We argue that bargain hunting can be delineated from treasure hunting and thrift and second-hand shopping through a) its main triggers and motivations, b) types of items purchased, and c) reference prices as a necessary condition. With the conceptual clarity of what bargain hunting is and is not, we now turn to our theoretical framework of bargain hunting, which is informed by different streams of literature in the fields of marketing, consumer research, and psychology. As depicted in Figure 1, bargain hunting strategies consist of different practices, such as using cash discounts, coupons, deal-of-the-day, timing strategies, email and social media subscriptions, cashback programs, and auctions. These strategies can be understood through the perspective of utilitarian, hedonic, and impulsive-compulsive motives. Our model posits that any specific value inference is driven by a comparison of the advertised price with a reference price. This comparison, which constitutes the implicit and fundamental mechanism of any bargain hunting activity, can then be exploited by marketers through reference price manipulation.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Bargain Hunting



Bargain Hunting Strategies

Our theoretical framework identifies five major bargain hunting strategies, which include cash discounts, couponing, deal-of-the-day, cashback programs, and auctions. These strategies differ from one another in terms of effort required, savings potential, time until discount is received, time sensitivity, and learning curve. Overall, cash discounts and deal-of-the-day require less effort than couponing, cashback programs, and auctions. The savings potential is highest for deal-of-the-day promotions and lowest for cashback programs. Consumers receive the discount immediately for cash discounts, couponing, and deal-of-the-day, but it takes typically 3-10 days until an auction is finished, and it takes usually between 30 and 120 days to receive the money from a cashback program. Time sensitivity is high for deal-of-the-day (i.e., consumers must act quickly to get the discount because the deal typically lasts only 24 hours) and low for cashback programs (which often run continuously without any specific deadline). Finally, auctions often imply a high learning curve because consumers must learn how to compete against other bidders, whereas the effective use of cash discounts and deal-of-the-day is easy to learn.

P1: Different bargain hunting strategies can be differentiated based on a) effort required, b) savings potential, c) time until discount is received, d) time sensitivity, and e) learning curve.

Theoretical Perspectives on Bargain Hunting

Our conceptual framework for bargain hunting draws upon the distinction between utilitarian and hedonic consumption motives, which had been introduced to the marketing literature by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). Prior research finds that both utilitarian and hedonic motivations are at work simultaneously in most retail shopping contexts (Childers et al., 2001), and that hedonic motives are important even in utilitarian shopping context (such as in a grocery store), and vice versa (Yim et al., 2014). We argue that these two perspectives represent particularly relevant theoretical lenses for understanding bargain hunting. In addition, we propose that impulsive/compulsive buying behavior (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989; Rook & Fisher, 1995) plays a crucial role in explaining bargain hunting, representing a third theoretical lens in our framework.

P2-4: Utilitarian benefits, hedonic benefits, and impulsive/compulsive tendencies each provide a theoretical lens to understand and interpret bargain hunting.

The Role of Reference Prices in Bargain Hunting

Reference prices are prices against which a consumer compares the current, advertised price of a product (Mazumdar et al., 2005), and they can be internal or external (Darke et al., 1995; Liu & Popkowski Leszczyc, 2023; Mayhew & Winer, 1992). Bargain hunting is not possible without reference prices because in order to determine that something is a bargain, consumers need a reference price that allows them to compare the advertised price against a standard. This is not necessarily true for other forms of price-conscious consumer practices. For example, consumers may hunt for treasures or buy second-hand clothing in a thrift store based on a value calculation (i.e., the relationship between benefits of the product as compared to the price paid) rather than a comparison between the price paid and a reference price. Importantly, when the paid price is below the reference price, consumers perceive such a purchase psychologically as a gain (Elshiewy & Peschel, 2022), which in turn triggers pleasure and positive feelings (Mellers et al., 2021). Hence, we posit the following:

P5: The psychological mechanism of bargain hunting consists of a comparison of sales prices with internal and/or external reference prices, which in turn determines consumers' inference of value.

The importance of reference prices for bargain hunting enables consumers to objectively calculate the value of a deal or discount, but it makes them also vulnerable to manipulations of reference prices. We distinguish two cases of reference price manipulation. First, consumers can shift *internal* reference prices to psychologically elevate the internal reference price, thereby framing the discount as more attractive. Such a case can be classified as an example of mental accounting (Ha et al., 2006; Gupta & Kim, 2010) and highlights humans' ability for self-deception by shifting internal reference prices to obtain desired outcomes (Thaler, 1999). Second, firms can manipulate *external* reference prices to make a discount appear more attractive to consumers. We identify three mechanisms that firms use to execute such reference price manipulations, including artificially inflating reference prices, drawing more of consumers' attention to the advertised reference price, and increasing the sales price and adding a reference price at the same time.

P6: Consumers can mentally shift internal reference prices to make a discount appear more attractive, which can lead to self-deception and foster unhealthy levels of impulsive/compulsive bargain hunting.

P7: Firms can manipulate external reference prices by a) artificially inflating the reference price, b) drawing additional attention to the reference price, and c) increasing the sales price while simultaneously introducing a reference price. These tactics may deceive consumers into believing they are successfully bargain hunting.

Data and Results: Empirical Validation of Bargain Hunting Strategies and Perspectives

Because the role of reference prices for bargain hunting (right side of Figure 1) has strong support from the literature, we focus on bargain hunting strategies and perspectives to seek support for propositions 1-5 in our theoretical framework. Given that research on bargain hunting remains fragmented and lacks consolidation, we opted for an interpretative, discovery-oriented approach to gain additional insights from consumers (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Goulding, 1999). We followed a theoretical sampling strategy (Fischer & Guzel, 2023) and focused on younger consumers who were proficient with offline and online price comparison and product search tools. We argue that younger consumers are an important target for firms because they tend to be more responsive to discounts and promotions (Ieva et al., 2018).

Interviews were conducted in English through Zoom with 20 younger consumers ($M_{\text{age}} = 22$ years, 75% female) residing in the Southern part of the United States and lasted on average 45 minutes, with a range from 22 to 82 minutes. Transcripts were generated automatically through Zoom's machine learning and natural language

processing module, and errors in the transcripts were corrected manually by the authors. Data analysis followed established procedures recommended in the literature (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Homburg et al., 2017) by conducting open, axial, and selective coding. We used QDAMiner Lite v2.0.9 from Provalis Research (<https://provalisresearch.com/>) to label and organize codes. In addition, we continually oscillated back and forth between the literature, the insights from the interviews, and the conceptual model (Fischer & Guzel, 2023; Spiggle, 1994).

Overall, most of our informants focused on cash discounts and coupons, while making substantially less use of deal-of-the-day promotions, cashback programs, and auctions. Some informants mentioned that they avoid deal-of-the-day promotions because they induce consumers to buy more than they had originally planned. Hence, as compared to regular cash discounts and coupons, deal-of-the-day promotions seemed to encounter more psychological reactance from our informants. Interestingly, none of our informants reported using cashback programs like Ebates, Rakuten, or TopCashback. Most interviewees expressed a preference for larger discounts, such as at least 20% savings or “buy one get one free” (BOGO) promotions. This preference may explain their lack of interest in cashback programs, which typically offer smaller rewards, often in the range of 1-10% of the product's price. Four interviewees reported using auctions as part of their bargain hunting strategies.

Furthermore, most interviewees perceive themselves as rational consumers who use bargain hunting as a strategy to save money and increase the value of their purchases by obtaining more or better products for less money. While nearly all informants indicated that they enjoy bargain hunting, their enjoyment appears to be driven by the outcome—securing a good deal and sometimes sharing these success stories with friends and family—rather than the act of searching for bargains. Additionally, none of our informants mentioned that consumers engaging in bargain hunting might be perceived as stingy or cheap. Interestingly, auctions, although actively used by only four of our informants, were the type of bargain hunting able to produce the most thrill and excitement for the hunt. For example, one informant indicates that he enjoys the thrill and excitement of winning auctions. Another informant explains that auctions are super-fun because they are like playing a game against other people, where he likes to try to see who actually gets the item. The uniqueness of online auctions also manifests in the consumption behavior of a third informant, who typically does not care for discounts, coupons, deal-of-the-day promotions, or cashback programs, but is quite excited about bidding on unique items on eBay auctions. However, auctions can also induce dissatisfaction, disappointment, and stress when one does not win the auction, as expressed by a fourth informant.

Several informants acknowledged that their hunt for bargains also occasionally led to impulsive purchases, which in turn led to regret and buyer's remorse. Most informants seem to agree that expiration dates on discounts, coupons, or deals in general generate a sense of urgency, which may pressure consumers to buy the product. At the same time, these interviewees state that they actively try to curb their impulses, and one informant explained that she uses curbside pickup as a strategy to avoid impulsive purchases in the store. However, no cases in our sample of consumers show signs of compulsive bargain hunting, where the act of the hunt becomes dominant over the outcome.

Finally, our interviews revealed that social influence plays a significant role in encouraging younger consumers to engage in bargain hunting. For most of our interviewees, this influence came from family and friends. However, social influence can also stem from traditional or social media such as TikTok and the TV reality show “Extreme Couponing” (<https://go.tlc.com/show/extreme-couponing-tlc>).

Theoretical Contributions

The contribution of this paper is fourfold: First, based on MacInnis' (2011) taxonomy of conceptual contributions in marketing, we provide a delineation contribution by distinguishing bargain hunting from related, but conceptually different consumer practices such as treasure hunting and thrift/second-hand shopping. Second, we contribute to the literature by delineating various bargain hunting strategies, including cash discounts, coupons, deal-of-the-day promotions, cashback programs, and auctions. Our detailed analysis of these strategies, along with their associated consumer motivations and behavioral outcomes, provides a nuanced understanding of how different bargain hunting practices are employed and perceived by consumers. Third, we offer a comprehensive theoretical framework with testable propositions that integrates utilitarian, hedonic, and impulsive/compulsive motivations within the context of bargain hunting. This multidimensional approach extends prior research that primarily focused on either the utilitarian (Kwon et al., 2010; Mortimer et al., 2022; Saarijärvi et al., 2018) or hedonic aspects (O'Donnell et al., 2016; Schindler, 2009; Steward, 2020) of consumer behavior, providing a more holistic understanding of the complex motivations driving bargain hunting activities. Fourth, our framework unpacks the critical role of internal and external reference prices (Darke et al., 1995; Elshiewy & Peschel, 2022; Liu & Popkowski Leszczyc, 2023; Mellers et al., 2021) for bargain hunting practices.

Practical Implications and Future Research

For consumers, our bargain hunting framework outlines the characteristics and savings potentials of different bargain hunting strategies. Furthermore, our work can help consumers detect strategies firms use to artificially inflate external reference prices to lure them into purchasing products, even when real savings are insignificant or nonexistent. For marketers, our framework suggests that they select those bargain hunting strategies that resonate best with their target segment. For example, our in-depth interviews revealed that consumers made intensive use of cash discounts and coupons and were significantly less attracted by deal-of-the-day, cashback programs, and auctions. Marketers may also strive to implement more elements of gamification into their promotions because some consumer segments seem to be attracted by the game-like aspects of bargain hunting.

Moreover, our work emphasizes that the extent to which consumers perceive a deal as attractive depends largely on the corresponding reference price of the deal, which can be internal, external, or both. The issue of external reference prices is quite relevant for policy makers. As elaborated in our conceptual framework, firms use different strategies, including artificially inflating the reference price, drawing more visual attention to the reference price, and increasing the sales price in combination with adding a reference price, to actively manipulate external reference prices. These practices may be particularly questionable in those cases where the advertised “regular” price is a price that has no practical relevance and meaning whatsoever because no product is ever being sold at this regular price, and as such the regular price remains meaningless and can even be considered deceptive. Although our work does not call for more regulation when it comes to advertised “regular” prices, we believe that policy makers should support additional consumer education in this area, for example as part of financial literacy initiatives.

As for future research, one potential avenue is to investigate the mechanism and underlying processes regarding how traditional and social media (including influencers) can shape consumers’ perceptions of bargain hunting because our in-depth interviews suggest that both traditional and social media can form the practice of bargain hunting. Another potential direction for future research is to examine how friends and family influence consumers’ bargain hunting practices, and to which extent friends and families may serve as socialization agents for bargain hunting. Future research may also investigate possible tensions or synergies between brand and store-driven loyalty programs on the one hand, and third-party cashback programs on the other hand because although our interviewees made very little use of cashback systems such as Ebates, Rakuten, or TopCashback, most of them subscribed to loyalty programs from brands (e.g., Starbucks) or stores (e.g., Target).

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Summary Brief

The Role of Department Stores in Shaping Consumer Perception and Purchase Intention of Secondhand Luxury Fashion Products

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The secondhand luxury market has witnessed a remarkable surge in recent years, presenting both challenges and opportunities for retailers. Department stores, as key players in the retail landscape, have begun to capitalize on this trend by offering secondhand luxury apparel and accessories. This article examines the role of department stores in shaping consumer perception and purchase intention for these products. Drawing on a comprehensive literature review, we explore the factors influencing consumer attitudes toward these items offered by department stores. We conduct interviews and analyze our data through thematic content analysis and cognitive mapping. Our preliminary findings highlight the benefits held by the department stores. Hence, they combine the advantages of luxury stores, which provide excellent customer service, a luxurious atmosphere and shopping experience, the opportunity to assess quality and authenticity, with those associated with online resale platforms such as a large assortment of brands and products, sustainability, and affordability.

Introduction

The retail landscape has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven by evolving consumer preferences, technological advancements, and sustainability concerns. One notable trend is the emergence of the secondhand luxury market. Once associated with stigma and exclusivity, the luxury market has diversified its purview to offer secondhand items, thereby resonating increasingly with consumers seeking unique, high-end products at affordable prices. In response to this shift in consumer preferences, department stores have begun integrating secondhand luxury apparel and accessories into their assortments, aiming to appeal to this new segment of shoppers. Although there is a growing literature on the development of secondhand luxury fashion items, the influence on consumers' perception of department stores that now offer these products has yet to be thoroughly examined. Given the evolution of luxury fashion retail, our research aims to investigate the role of these stores in shaping consumer perception and purchase intention for secondhand luxury items. Why do consumers choose to buy these products in a department store rather than on an online resale platform? How do department stores influence consumer perception and incite them to purchase these items? To address these questions, we first examine the evolution of the luxury fashion market integrating secondhand products and analyze the development of department stores as key players. After describing our methodology, we outline and discuss our preliminary research results and potential academic and managerial implications.

Background

The fashion market is evolving, with a notable surge in secondhand items. In 2023, the global market value of secondhand apparel was estimated at USD 197 billion and is projected to rise rapidly, reaching an estimated USD 350 billion by 2028 (Smith, 2024). The acquisition of secondhand items allows consumers to contribute to the circular economy. In contrast to the traditional linear economy following a "take-make-dispose" pattern (Otekenari, 2020), the circular economy aims to create a closed-loop system where products and materials are reused, recycled, or repaired to extend their lifespan and reduce the need for new resources. As consumers become more environmentally conscious, they seek ways to minimize their ecological footprint and reduce waste. Purchasing secondhand items can be seen as a form of sustainable consumption, as it promotes the reuse and recycling of goods, thereby contributing to the reduction of waste and environmental impact (Ki et al., 2024). This emerging trend is gaining traction among conscious consumers and extends across various product categories, including the luxury market.

Luxury encompasses brands across nine distinct industries: personal luxury goods, automotive, hospitality, fine arts, premium furniture and homeware design, gourmet cuisine and dining, fine wines and spirits, luxury cruises, yachts, and private aircraft (Fionda & Moore, 2009). For this research, our focus will be on personal luxury items, particularly fashion apparel and accessories. The global luxury fashion market size reached USD 245.5 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach USD 327.1 billion by 2032 (Market Research Report, 2024). This market is

currently experiencing notable changes, driven by evolving consumer preferences and a growing emphasis on sustainability (Chen & Chang, 2020). Concurrently, there has been a remarkable surge in the market for secondhand luxury apparel and accessories, indicating a rising demand for products that are both unique, high-end and environmentally friendly (Baumann, Baumgarth & Meier, 2019). Hence, according to the Market Research report (2024), the global luxury resale market was valued at USD 32.61 billion in 2021 and is likely to reach USD 51.77 billion by 2026. According to Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015), secondhand luxury items are defined as previously owned or used high-end and premium products that retain their quality, desirability, and prestige despite being sold again.

Similar to luxury fashion products associated with exclusivity, status symbolism, and conspicuous consumption, secondhand luxury fashion items serve as a means for consumers to fulfill various symbolic needs (Dubois, Jung & Ordabayeva, 2021; Siepmann, [Holthoff & Kowalczyk](#), 2022; Wang, 2022). The acquisition of such products affords their owners the opportunity to signify their status and affluence to others (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004), to develop happiness (Diener, et al., 2010), and to enhance their self-esteem (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). These items also emerge as a solution for those seeking to add values to their luxury purchases.

Hence, the attraction of purchasing secondhand luxury fashion items stems from the advantageous pricing they offer. The affordability factor serves as a compelling reason for many consumers to opt for secondhand luxury pieces. Acquiring these items enables consumers to enjoy the prestige, uniqueness, and quality associated with luxury goods at a more affordable cost (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015; Mukherjee, Datta & Paul, 2020). Secondhand luxury fashion items also offer consumers an opportunity to participate in luxury consumption while aligning with their values of sustainability and responsible consumption (Carrigan, Moraes & McEachern, 2013). The authenticity of both brand and product emerges as another salient determinant influencing the purchase of secondhand luxury fashion items. Several research emphasize the role of trust in the seller and confidence in the reliability of the product as having a significant impact on consumer perception (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015; Ki et al., 2024). Consequently, consumers expect reassurance of the authenticity of such items when contemplating their purchase.

The secondhand luxury fashion market is experiencing changes that force brands to reflect not only on what and why consumers buy but also on where they buy it from. Today, luxury brands are looking for new opportunities in their distribution strategies to convey prestige and quality, with a focus on attracting new luxury shoppers who increasingly value sustainability and seek more affordable luxury items.

Despite the dominance of online retail across various product categories, physical stores retain their significance for many luxury shoppers. In a time when fashion brands and retailers are amplifying their digital presence and embracing technologies such as artificial intelligence and the metaverse, the importance of physical stores for these products cannot be overlooked. The 2023 Business of Fashion report (BOF) confirms the critical importance of physical stores in the customer journey seeking to buy luxury items, revealing that 77% of frequent luxury shoppers express their intent to visit a brick-and-mortar store for their next luxury purchase. Additionally, the report unveils that 68% of consumers interested in acquiring secondhand luxury fashion items are concerned about the potential risks associated with buying counterfeit or fraudulent goods online. Therefore, featuring secondhand luxury fashion items in stores can contribute to the trust the brand instills in consumers. According to Wei and Xue (2019), trust is vital for successful transactions and a deficiency in trust is a crucial factor deterring consumers from online shopping. Many resale platforms such as The RealReal or Vestiaire Collective seek to alleviate consumer apprehensions by providing authentication services and certificates. However, they also impose fees on buyers for these services and do not always offer a return option, thereby increasing the risk for consumers unable to inspect the product prior to its purchase (Gorra, 2017).

Department stores are also seeking to benefit from the new consumer desire for secondhand luxury fashion items, but their strategies differ. Hence, U.S. department stores chose to develop their secondhand luxury fashion offer through partnerships with resale platforms: Nordstrom with The RealReal, Neiman Marcus with Fashionphile, and Saks Fifth Avenue with Rebag. In contrast, French department stores have embraced a different retail strategy focusing on their in-store experiences. Galeries Lafayette opened the (Re)store in 2021, featuring an extensive selection of secondhand luxury fashion brands across 500 square meters on the third floor of its flagship store. This strategic initiative underscores Galeries Lafayette's commitment to evolving consumer preferences and sustainability. With this venture, Galeries Lafayette aims to democratize access to luxury secondhand fashion, catering to a broader audience. Galeries Lafayette's main competitor, Le Printemps also unveiled in 2021 a new floor devoted to sustainable fashion. This development emphasizes the escalating competition among French department stores to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers (Diderich, 2021). By incorporating secondhand luxury items into their assortments, department stores have now emerged as major actors that cater to the evolving consumer demand (Ferne & Sparks, 2014). According to [Sabanoglu](#) (2023), department stores have started to

become a central destination for finding secondhand luxury fashion items. Hence, in the United States between 38 to 50% of department stores shoppers declare that they will choose these types of stores to purchase secondhand luxury fashion items (Conroy, 2024). Today, these stores are stepping forward as alternatives to online resale platforms, providing secondhand luxury fashion items. This emergence can serve as a solution to consumer concerns surrounding trust, authenticity, and the ability to personally inspect products.

A growing body of literature studies the motivations behind purchasing luxury fashion items and secondhand luxury fashion items. However, these studies predominantly focus on luxury stores or online platforms, rather than specifically addressing the novel strategy adopted by French department stores. This research aims to construct a theoretical framework that captures the relationship between secondhand luxury fashion and department store strategy, investigating whether consumers perceive this offering and distribution choice as their preferred destination for purchasing secondhand luxury fashion products. Why do consumers opt for department stores to purchase these items? What is their perception of department stores offering these items in their retail space? This study centers on analyzing the influence of department stores' secondhand luxury fashion assortments on consumer perception and purchase intention. Therefore, we formulate two propositions based on: the positive impact department stores' secondhand luxury fashion assortment has on consumers' perception and the positive impact this offer has on consumers' intention to purchase these items.

We use qualitative exploratory interviews to investigate this influence and to uncover potential connections. Specifically, we conducted 12 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a sample of seven women and five men, selected for their interest in luxury fashion and their experiences with French department stores. The average age is 39 years for the women and 37 years for the men. They all possessed some college education. The interviews spanned approximately one hour and employed open-ended queries such as what factors influence your decision to purchase secondhand luxury fashion items? How important is sustainability when considering purchasing these items? How do you perceive the department stores' offer of these products? To what extent does the department store influence your decision to purchase secondhand luxury items from them? Our data analysis was conducted through thematic content analysis and cognitive mapping using NVivo software.

Findings and discussion

Our qualitative exploratory study underlines the influence of French department stores' secondhand luxury fashion offerings on our respondents. They express their preference for purchasing these products in department stores for several reasons. First, our respondents confirm the trend highlighted by recent research: a rising inclination among consumers towards sustainable consumption, even within the domain of luxury products (Ki et al., 2024). Hence, they cite the smaller environmental impact, the support of circular fashion practices, and the lower prices as major benefits. Some note "I look for sustainable items in department stores, it is the way I purchase", and "by purchasing secondhand luxury fashion goods I am being more sustainable and spending less."

By offering secondhand luxury fashion products, department stores give them additional benefits. These stores appear as showrooms, facilitating direct customer interactions with goods which proves to be pivotal for items where craftsmanship, style, and price hold significance. Respondents indicate that contrary to resales platforms, these stores let them inspect products, assess their condition and quality, and even try them on. One says "I like that I can see the quality of the product, in the department store compared to the online site which only has pictures", "I can inspect and make sure it is the right size and it has no default."

Our respondents express a higher level of trust in department stores regarding secondhand luxury fashion product authentication. They value the opportunity to physically examine items and verify their authenticity, which contributes to a sense of security. Hence, one says "I trust more these stores because I can see the bag or cloth and make sure that is the real brand and have an authentication certificate." Another adds "in the department store, I can ask about authenticity and for brand certification. I feel I have more warranties in these stores compared to online."

Ryu (2020) observes that luxury stores provide high-end services and experience. However, our research reveals that department stores are also perceived as capable of providing similar services, atmosphere, and experience. Respondents value personalized assistance, knowledgeable staff, and a luxurious atmosphere in department stores that enhance their shopping experience. One respondent notes "in this department store, I have the sales experience that matches the one of buying the item in a luxury boutique and I want that since I still buy relatively expensive products."

The well-established brand recognition of French department stores contributes to the trust and authenticity our respondents attributed to these products. The overall shopping experience plays a crucial role in influencing their perception of these stores and assortments. These offerings may favor the democratization of luxury by appealing to consumers who may be hesitant to step into a luxury store yet still crave a luxurious and exclusive experience unavailable on resale platforms.

Our study underscores the preference for purchasing secondhand luxury fashion items in department stores, driven by sustainability, affordability, customer services, luxurious atmosphere and experience, possibility of assessing quality and authenticity though it does acknowledge certain limitations. First, we study the case of French department stores by sampling individuals who have prior experiences with these stores. However, we will need to broaden our approach and evaluate if our findings can be generalizable to different geographical areas. Secondly, we conducted this research using a qualitative methodology which provides us with some interesting insights that need to be confirmed by a quantitative approach. This will help us validate our propositions and get a more comprehensive understanding of this research phenomenon. This research will also provide valuable academic and managerial contributions stressing the crucial role of department stores in the secondhand luxury fashion market. It may deepen our understanding of consumer behavior and retail strategy in the context of secondhand luxury fashion consumption. Furthermore, retailers may leverage these findings to craft targeted marketing strategies that highlight benefits akin to those offered by online resale platforms, such as a curated selection of pre-owned branded items and competitive pricing, while also emphasizing even more unique aspects such as authenticity, value proposition, and the luxurious in-store atmosphere. Hence, department stores start to appear as the viable and crucial card to play for luxury brands eager to attract a larger audience seeking to purchase secondhand luxury fashion items and to build meaningful connections with these consumers in the competitive luxury retail landscape.

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Summary Brief

K–Drama Influence: Turning Viewers into Shopper and Travelers

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Korean Drama and popular culture continue to spread across the globe, leading to more exposure to consumers. This study explores consumers' attitudes and perceptions toward Korean popular culture (Hallyu). In addition, this study seeks to assess hallyu's impact on consumers' Korean product purchase and travel intentions. This study is designed as a semi-structured qualitative study. Study findings may both expand theoretical understandings of the study model and progress marketers' conceptualization of consumer behavior.

Study Background

Approximately 66% of respondents for a Statista (2023) survey indicated Korean Dramas (K-Drama) as being popular (61%) in their nations in 2022. These numbers illustrate K-Drama's global presence while also demonstrating a need for greater understanding of how this presence converses with consumer behavior. However, current gaps in the literature regarding studies of Korean culture's impact on these behaviors exist for diverse regions (Shin et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2013). Consequently, the purpose of this study consists of 1) exploring individual attitudes and perceptions towards K-Dramas and 2) assessing the impact of K-Drama on consumers' product purchase and travel behaviors. Conceptually, study findings may be used to increase study model comprehension; managerially, study data may be utilized by marketers in their efforts to optimize understandings of purchase and travel intentions as related to K-Drama and Korean products.

Brief Literature Review

Korean popular culture (Hallyu) has become relevant in the global sphere with the release of mega-hits like *Squid Game* (Netflix.com), and the need to update these studies increases. Previous studies have been conducted regarding the rise of hallyu and how it has impacted consumers' intentions to purchase Korean products (Han et al., 2022; Lee & Robb, 2019). The respondents discovered hallyu through the Internet, TV, and mobile means (Shin et al., 2014). Movies and music shaped the destination image of Korea positively, Kpop (music) affected the intention to purchase Korean products, and Korean Dramas, movies, and Kpop (music) affected how respondents purchased Korean food (Han et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2014). In the context of certain regions, the attitudes towards Korea's country image shape consumers' intentions to visit Korea (Kamilia et al., 2023; Phillips et al., 2013). Consumers' subjective knowledge and cognitive image, as well as the respondents' involvement in hallyu, positively influenced their intentions to travel to Korea (Phillips et al., 2013; Putong et al., 2022).

Methodology

This study involves an inductive, semi-structured, qualitative interview protocol (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). The criteria for participants is to be 18 years of age or older, be familiar with hallyu, and have seen the first three episodes of Netflix's *Squid Game*'s first season. This is to ensure the respondent is familiar with the game, Dalgona, featured in episode three. The target sample will include diverse regions, with around 20 to 30 participants (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). Convenience and snowball sampling techniques will be used to gather participants (Parker et al., 2019). The instrument for this portion of the study contains 12 semi-structured interview questions to gauge participants' experiences, attitudes, emotions, and their intentions.

The questions in this interview were designed using tourism literature (Kim et al., 2008). The final questions in the instrument revolve around specific questions related to *Squid Game* and how the depiction of Korea in the drama compares to their own culture. *Squid Game* was chosen to compare culture for respondents due to its popularity and accessibility across cultures. The drama is Netflix's most popular Korean series and is the most viewed series on their platform as of 2023 (Netflix.com). Collection will be through individual interviews with respondents that are recorded and transcribed via online meeting platforms. Three researchers will analyze the data to employ triangulation to ensure credibility and accuracy (Carter et al., 2014). Content analysis will be conducted

of the interviews using grounded-theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Coding will be completed by three researchers with percentage agreement method used to enhance intercoder reliability (Lombard et al., 2002).

Potential Implications

Content and thematic analyses from the study will provide global insight and new literary themes based on our respondents' different cultural groups. From a managerial perspective, consumers may not only become more aware of Korean culture but also create expectations for potential Korean product purchase or visitation to Korea. Korean business owners in hospitality and retail may gain better-segmented information of their customers based on cultural differences highlighted in interviews from the study. Destination Marketing Organizations may use this study's results to improve Korea's marketability and make the nation more appealing to different culture groups as indicated by study interviews.

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Summary Brief

Exploring the Impact of Different Retailer Omnichannel Strategies on Consumers' Shopping Behavior

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During the last few years, many retailers were forced to undergo drastic changes to their distribution channels, such that many closed their physical store locations and moved online at rapid paces. However, some retailers considered innovative ways to transform their physical stores rather than eliminate them. Retailers may enhance their product and service offerings in-store, which includes adjusting their omnichannel strategy. We distinguish between two types of omnichannel strategy: collaborative vs. in-house and propose that the different omnichannel strategies have varying effects on consumers' shopping behavior through perceptions of convenience and inclusivity.

Introduction

In recent years, disruptions in the U.S. economy led by COVID-19, reduced in-store foot traffic, and the economic recession have caused many omnichannel retailers to undergo drastic changes to their distribution channels. Amid changes in the retail environment, consumers showed willingness to shop in-store during the pandemic (Eger et al., 2021) and have a strong desire to continue purchasing products in-stores post-pandemic (Meyersohn, 2022). Being an omnichannel retailer is idealized by retailers for survival, and many retailers strive to achieve a seamless and synergistic integration across its channels (Hajdas et al., 2022), it is unfortunately common that most struggle to achieve it due to poor channel integration and a lack of cohesion between inter-channel communications (Tin et al., 2023). Therefore, our research aims to provide meaningful insights for managers to have a better understanding of how consumers may respond to different omnichannel strategies and develop omnichannel strategies that effectively and efficiently utilize a retailer's different channels.

Background

Halan and Singh (2023) proposed that a collaborative strategy through leveraging the strengths of physical store and online retailers can have complementary effects on both retailers in retaining customers and managing evolving customer shopping behaviors post-COVID-19. Consumers tend to find greater value in shopping at retailers that collaborate with competing retailers (i.e., collaborative omnichannel approach) compared to retailers that utilize their own resources and capabilities (i.e., in-house omnichannel approach) (Felzensztein et al., 2018). We expect that when a retailer restructures its physical store channels by engaging in a collaborative (vs. in-house) omnichannel approach, customers are more likely to shop at the retailer. We suggest that consumers' perceived inclusivity and convenience of the retailer may mediate the aforementioned relationship. We propose that increased (decreased) convenience is positively related to a collaborative (vs. in-house) omnichannel strategy on consumers intentions to shop at the retailer. Consumers may perceive a collaborative omnichannel strategy as having greater inclusivity (i.e., the retailer reaching to a wider audience) compared to an in-house omnichannel strategy. Thus, we propose that increased (decreased) inclusivity is positively related to a collaborative (vs. in-house) omnichannel strategy on consumers intentions to shop at the retailer. In sum, we address the following research questions:

1. Do different omnichannel retailing strategies impact consumers intentions to shop at the retailer?
2. Does convenience mediate the relationship between different omnichannel retailing strategies and consumers intentions to shop at the retailer?
3. Does inclusivity mediate the relationship between different omnichannel retailing strategies and consumers intentions to shop at the retailer?

Key Findings

The results of the pilot study show that there are no significant differences between in-house vs. collaborative omnichannel strategy on consumers intentions to shop at a retailer. We find that convenience does not

mediate the relationship between omnichannel strategy and consumers intentions to shop at a retailer. However, we find that customers perceived a collaborative omnichannel strategy as more inclusive and would have a positive impact on their intentions to shop at a retailer compared to an in-house omnichannel strategy. Participants in the collaborative omnichannel strategy condition reported a greater sense of inclusivity, particularly not feeling excluded by the retailer, which significantly influenced their intentions to shop there. Our results show an indirect-only mediation, indicating that a collaborative strategy affects behavioral intentions indirectly through enhancing perceptions of inclusivity, particularly reducing perceptions of feeling excluded.

Conclusion

This research aims to contribute to the omnichannel retailing literature by distinguishing between two types of omnichannel strategies: in-house and collaborative. This distinction has not been clearly made in existing literature, and we argue that these strategies may impact consumer channel shopping behavior differently. Our research shows initial evidence that a collaborative omnichannel strategy positively influences consumers intentions to shop at a retailer indirectly through perceptions of inclusivity, specifically the absence of exclusion. This research also bridges the gap between the inclusivity and retailing literature by exploring how different omnichannel strategies may be connected to consumers' perceptions of inclusivity. Previous literature on social exclusion showed that feeling socially excluded by other individuals or social groups negatively impacts customer well-being, which subsequently affects their shopping behavior (Su et al., 2017, 2019). We extend that stream of literature by showing that inclusivity should not be a single construct, rather it should have a broader conceptualization that explores consumers perceptions of feeling included and not feeling excluded.

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Summary Brief

CSR and Purchase Intention: Happiness as Moderator in a Joint US/Canada Sample.

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Research on the impact of consumer happiness (CH) on the relationship between corporate sustainability efforts and consumer behavior remains sparse. This study examines the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on purchase intention (PI) in both the US and Canadian fashion sectors, using CH as a moderator of the relationship. Results show that CSR and CH positively influence PI. These findings have practical implications for companies, highlighting the need for innovative strategies to boost performance. Additionally, CSR positively affects CH, moderating the relationship between CSR and PI. This research focuses on the fashion industry in two different markets, emphasizing the need for innovative strategies to boost company performance. Highlighting consumer happiness as a crucial factor in understanding consumer behavior, particularly among sustainability-minded consumers, is a significant contribution of this study. The moderating role of CH underscores its importance in comprehending consumer behavior.

Introduction

Bowen (1953) conceptualized corporate social responsibility (CSR) as an ethical framework and an organization's obligation towards society. Mu et al. (2023) describe CSR by the strategies organizations use to achieve economic benefits while promoting environmental and social development. These strategies include corporate philanthropy, adherence to legal regulations, market ethics, and economic actions (Chen & Huang, 2018). Although researchers have primarily focused on CSR's effects on loyalty and satisfaction (Shiri & Jafari-Sadeghi, 2023), they have not extensively studied the effectiveness of specific CSR dimensions.

This study examines the relationship between multiple dimensions of CSR, consumer happiness (CH) and purchase intention (PI) in the US and Canadian fashion industries. Specifically, this study aims to test for the moderating effect of CH on the relationship between CSR and PI. Understanding these relationships can help to determine if consumer behavior is influenced by a company's social commitments and ethical conduct toward stakeholders (Suki & Suki, 2019), and in particular if CH moderates this relationship. Modern consumers prefer sustainable products and can detect inauthentic CSR strategies, making it crucial for companies to align their CSR actions with their values (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2023a, 2023b). PI is a critical factor in consumer decision-making and brand choice and is influenced by one's perceptions and attitudes (e.g., Spognardi et al., 2021). Happiness, a complex attribute valued across numerous fields, is integrated into consumer behavior research as CH, reflecting subjective well-being through eudaimonism and hedonism (e.g., Theodorakis et al., 2015). The study aims to explore the direct relationship between CSR and consumer PI, examine the relationship between CSR and CH, and assess CH's moderating role in the CSR-PI relationship. This study examines the relationships between CSR, purchase intention (PI), and consumer happiness (CH) in the US and Canadian fashion industries. Understanding these relationships helps determine if consumer behavior is influenced by a company's social commitments and ethical conduct toward stakeholders (Suki & Suki, 2019). Modern consumers prefer sustainable products and can detect inauthentic CSR strategies, making it crucial for companies to align their CSR actions with their values (Cuesta et al., 2023). The study also explores PI, a critical factor in consumer decision-making and brand choice, influenced by perceptions and attitudes (e.g., Spognardi et al., 2021). Additionally, happiness, a complex attribute valued across various fields, is integrated into consumer behavior research as CH, reflecting subjective well-being through eudaimonism and hedonism (e.g., Theodorakis et al., 2015). The study aims to explore the direct relationship between CSR and consumer PI, examine the relationship between CSR and CH, and assess CH's moderating role in the CSR-PI relationship.

Background

The literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) underscores its multifaceted nature, with studies advocating for a multidimensional approach that includes social aspects like environmental conservation and community investment, as well as economic benefits and ethical conduct. Consumer Happiness (CH) is crucial in

marketing research, linking satisfaction and revenue generation, and includes both affective evaluations and cognitive judgments. Recent studies highlight the dual nature of happiness, combining pleasure-related and meaning-related aspects, suggesting that CSR practices enhancing both can positively influence purchase intention and brand loyalty.

Consumer happiness (CH) has become central in marketing research due to its driving satisfaction and revenue (e.g., Barbosa, 2017). The beginning of the study on happiness, scientifically debated in marketing, is mentioned in consumer research as an emotional state (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg, 2003). These early studies have widely demonstrated that emotions are essential to consumer responses (Richins, 1997), affecting their judgments, evaluations, and decisions (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Williams, 2014). Mogliner et al. (2012) proposed consumer happiness as the well-being of consumers (of a subjective nature). This widely accepted perspective of happiness considers the existence of two components. The first is related to emotion (hedonic), and the second (eudaimonic) is related to feelings of calm and tranquility (Dhiman and Kumar, 2023).

Methodology

An online questionnaire was administered to representative samples of US and Canadian citizens. Respondents comprised consumers of fashion products in both physical and e-commerce stores in the US and Canada. Participants accessed the questionnaire using their internet-connected device of choice. Separate surveys were conducted in different waves (Podsakoff et al., 2012) to minimize potential common method bias. The Canadian and US sample sizes were 493 and 429, respectively. About 50% of the Canadian and US samples were between 18 and 48, with about 60% female and about 60% of the Canadian and 40% of the US samples earning a bachelor's degree or higher. Mplus (Muthen & Muthen., 2024) was used to conduct all analyses.

First, Bayesian exploratory factor analyses were carried out to evaluate the psychometric properties of each measurement model of each construct (see Table 1). Next, Bayesian SEM was carried out using Mplus version 8.9. In the model, CH was specified as a moderator of the effects of CSR and BE on PI. Bayesian structural equation modeling (Bayes SEM) provides a complete and consistent method for incorporating uncertainty in parameter estimates using probability distributions to express this uncertainty. Benefits of this approach include estimation of complex models, incorporation of prior information in a model, an intuitive understanding of uncertainty, flexibility in modeling assumptions and the types of models that can be fit, and an estimation process that can be robust to violations of model assumptions.

Key Findings

Results from the statistical analysis indicated positive effects of CSR, CH and the interaction between them on PI. Specifically, the estimated effect of CSR on PI was 0.22 (95% CI: 0.12, 0.33), indicating that when CH was at its sample mean, a one-unit increase in CSR corresponded to an increase in PI of 0.22 units. CH had an estimated effect on PI of 0.25 (95% CI: 0.16, 0.34), indicating that when CSR was at its sample mean, a one-unit increase in CH corresponded to an increase in PI of 0.25 units. The estimated moderating effect of CH on the relationship between CSR and PI was 0.13 (95% CI: 0.06, 0.19), indicating a positive impact of CH on the relationship between CSR and PI. Thus, an increase in CH corresponded to an increase in the strength of the relationship between CSR and PI.

Table 1: Bayesian Exploratory Factor Analyses

CSR			Consumer Happiness			Purchase Intention		
Item	λ	α	Item	λ	α	Item	λ	α
ECO 1	0.83	0.89	HED 1	0.8 2	0.9	PI1	0.90	0.95
ECO 2	0.90		HED 2	0.8 7		PI2	0.93	
ECO 3	0.87		HED 3	0.8 6		PI3	0.90	
LGL 1	0.86		HED 4	0.8 6		PI4	0.93	

LGL 2	0.95		EUD 1	0.8 2	0.9 8	
LGL 3	0.84		EUD 1	0.8 0		
ETH 1	0.77	0.96	EUD 1	0.8 4		
ETH 2	0.85					
ETH 3	0.83					
ETH 4	0.87					
ETH 5	0.90					
PHL 1	0.61	0.92				
PHL 2	0.60					
PHL 3	0.55					
PHL 4	0.54					
PHL 5	0.90					
PHL 6	0.91					

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SESSION 4.9 PANEL: NAVIGATING ACADEMIA IN NORTH AMERICA FOR EARLY CAREER SCHOLAR

Moderators:

**Md Rokonzaman, Pramod Iyer, Nik Nikolov,
Md Al-Emran, Raj Srivastava, and Muhammad Mollah**

SESSION 5.1: SUCCESS JOURNEY

Moderators:

R Wixel Barnwell and Kevin Flynn

Summary Brief

Factors Impacting New Marketing Graduates Performance in Remote Work Environments

Dr. Kevin Flynn, Clemson University

Dr. Mary Anne Raymond, Clemson University

Dr. Kimberly Neuendorf, Cleveland State University

The prevalence of remote work, including work-from-home (WFH) and hybrid arrangements, has significantly increased, driven by benefits such as reduced infrastructure costs for firms and enhanced job satisfaction for employees. However, challenges remain, particularly for less experienced workers who may face reduced opportunities for knowledge transfer and networking. This study explores the factors that impact the success and failure of remote work, focusing specifically on preparing new marketing graduates for these work environments. Through a comprehensive literature review and in-depth interviews with business practitioners, we identified key factors affecting remote work performance, including work parameters, personality, relationships, and technology/communication use. We then developed and administered a survey to seventy marketing professionals with remote work experience. Our findings highlight the importance of personality traits, job attitudes, and spontaneous face-to-face communication in predicting job performance differences between office and home settings. This research offers valuable insights for educators, students, and organizations, providing recommendations for curriculum development and practical strategies to enhance the career readiness and success of new marketing graduates in remote and hybrid work environments. Future research directions include longitudinal studies and the exploration of additional factors such as the impact of artificial intelligence on remote work dynamics.

Keywords: Remote Work, Graduate Readiness, Performance, Marketing

Introduction

Remote work, either working from home exclusively (WFH) or hybrid (working part of the week remotely and part in a traditional office setting) is becoming ubiquitous (Yang et al., 2020; Bloom et al., 2023; Hackney et al., 2022). This prevalence is driven by numerous benefits the arrangement accrues to both firms and individual workers. For example, firms lower their infrastructure expenses and improve employee retention. Individuals in a remote work arrangement report enhanced satisfaction and willingness to work (Angelici & Profeta, 2023). Studies show that employees value the flexibility of remote work, equating it to a significant salary increase (He et al., 2021; New York Times, 2023). Despite the benefits, WFH presents challenges, particularly for less experienced workers who face reduced knowledge transfer and networking opportunities (Gibbs et al., 2023; Bosisani et al., 2020). Career mobility and managerial perceptions also differ, with managers expressing concerns over productivity and higher attrition (Bloom et al., 2021; Wall Street Journal, 2024). Our study aims to understand the factors that impact success and failure of those working remotely, and to zero in on how to prepare new marketing graduates to thrive in these work arrangements.

Literature Review

Literature on remote work began nearly five decades ago with telework and has since expanded to include work-from-home (WFH) arrangements, especially due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which established WFH and hybrid work as new norms (Hackney et al., 2022; Statista, 2023). Our focus is on preparing new marketing majors for these remote work environments. Thus, our literature review examines factors impacting the performance of college graduates in professional fields requiring creativity, collaboration, and coordination.

It is important to define the terms relevant to our study. Hybrid work is when employees work some days in the office and others at home during the workweek (Bloom et al., 2023). Work from home (WFH) is defined as the shift to working from home for the entire week (Yang et al., 2020). Most of the literature on remote work has studied productivity as the dependent variable, while performance is also measured to a lesser degree (Hackney et al., 2022). Productivity of a worker has been measured in many ways depending on the nature of the job, company,

and industry (Yang et al., 2020; Choudhury et al., 2020; Gibbs et al., 2023; Bloom et al., 2023). For example, remote productivity was measured by Choudhury et al. (2020) as the number of patents examined by individuals, while Gibbs et al. (2023) measured how much code a programmer completed. Performance has also been a key dependent variable in studies, but less frequently than productivity, with a 60% to 40% split (Hackney et al., 2022).

The scope of WFH literature is vast, covering both professional and blue-collar work (Cambon, 2023). Often, studies focus on call center employment (Bloom et al., 2015). Our focus is on undergraduate marketing majors, so we selected studies that looked at remote work in professional roles in marketing. However, the amount of research was sparse. We expanded our literature review to include roles requiring degrees that involved innovation and collaboration to deliver products or services as many entry level professional marketing job do (Schlee and Karns, 2017).

Our study is focused on marketing jobs that require creativity, collaboration, and coordination. Four studies were relevant to our initial examination because they dealt with samples made up of professional employees in roles that fit these criteria. The first study of HCL Technologies looked at 10,000 high-tech employees working in India during the pandemic restrictions. Gibbs et al. (2023) found that hours increased while output slightly declined, resulting in an overall productivity decrease. Experience made a difference—those professionals with extensive experience did not have productivity declines, while new employees did. The authors felt the more experienced workers understood company culture better, as well as work processes that lead to better productivity results. This knowledge was missing from new employees, who also had fewer chances to learn it because they spent less time meeting with their managers. The new employees also narrowed the scope of their networks within and outside of the company compared to those with more experience. This study points out it is harder to communicate and coordinate when working remotely. Gibbs et al. also found that those working at home with children in the house had larger productivity declines compared to those without. Finally, gender impacted productivity during remote work, with women being less productive than men in this study.

Another study of professional-level remote work involved the United States Patent Office (Choudhury et al., 2020). The patent examiner position was an ideal type of job for remote work because it involved a high degree of independence and clear productivity measures. The authors found an increase in productivity among remote workers. Interestingly, there was a requirement that employees had to work two years in the office before they were eligible for remote work, avoiding some issues that HCL Technologies faced with new employees immediately thrust into this arrangement. The two-year in-office period may have vetted employees and also infused the organizational culture and knowledge necessary for remote work success.

In a study of Microsoft workers, Yang et al. (2020) found having remote working experience was important. Workers with more remote collaboration experience did not have a statistically significant change in meeting or collaboration hours. For those with less experience, there was a statistically significant decrease in collaboration and meeting hours. Behavior was also different for those at Microsoft with and without a lot of experience. Experienced workers used instant messaging a great deal more while working remotely compared to inexperienced peers.

The final study involved an experiment at Trip.com among professionals that included both managers and non-managers. Level of seniority appeared to matter. Bloom et al. (2023) found managers and non-managers perceived and behaved differently with regard to remote work. The sample included a mix of managers and non-managers who worked in teams responsible for creating new products and services, including marketing and advertising campaigns. Managers perceived there would be less productivity in remote settings, while non-managers believed there would be more. The experiment occurred because managers were concerned about hybrid work; they wanted to test it before a company-wide roll-out. In addition to perception, the actual reaction to remote work was split by rank. Non-manager attrition declined, but manager attrition increased. Among all employees, time spent on work per day shifted. Employees spent more time working longer hours on days they were in the office and worked shorter hours when remote. Finally, the use of electronic messaging increased both remotely and carried over into the office. Productivity did not change, resulting in a null result. Trip.com ended up rolling out the initiative company-wide.

These four studies highlight the promise and perils of remote work, especially for new graduates. A common theme is that experience matters, the more of it, the better the outcome for the remote worker. For example, remote work has led to shifts in work habits, such as longer hours and increased electronic communication among experienced workers, less so for newer employees (Gibbs et al., 2023; Bloom et al., 2023). The nature of work also shifts, with remote settings being more conducive to creative tasks while in office work environments are better for meetings and collaborative work (Dutcher, 2012). This may seem obvious to seasoned employees but not necessarily so to someone newly graduated from college.

The studies also touch on how an individual's personality may impact remote work performance. In regular office settings, the literature is clear that personality traits significantly influence work performance. For example, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness predict better job performance, while neuroticism has a negative impact (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Michinov et al., 2022). Extraversion and agreeableness are associated with better performance in collaborative and social settings typical of office environments, whereas neuroticism is linked to higher stress and lower performance. Grit, defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, is another important factor linked to performance. Duckworth et al. (2007) found that grit predicts success in various settings, including college performance. In the context of remote work, individuals with higher levels of grit are likely to maintain higher productivity and performance despite the challenges posed by working from home. An undergraduate may not understand how their personality coupled with a remote environment can have an impact on their performance.

In the four studies another key factor is communications. The absence of these interactions in remote settings can lead to feelings of isolation and reduced team cohesion, negatively impacting performance (Gibbs et al., 2023). This is important because research indicates that spontaneous interactions facilitate immediate feedback, idea generation, and quicker resolution of issues, which are less frequent in remote work environments (Allen & Henn, 2007; Fayard & Weeks, 2011).

Understanding key success factors and avoiding pitfalls like reduced mobility and poor communication are critical. Future research should focus on identifying essential skills and best practices for new graduates in remote work settings. There is a gap in the literature regarding the preparation of new marketing graduates for remote and hybrid work environments. Our research aims to address this by conducting pilot interviews with managers and developing a survey for a larger sample. We seek to identify the most crucial factors for inexperienced workers and develop training programs for marketing educators to meet this challenge.

Method

We began our investigation with in-depth interviews of ten business practitioners to see if our model based on our literature review covered all aspects of remote work success and failure factors. Then we completed a study using a survey of marketing hiring managers and practitioners with experience hiring and managing remote teams. The study consisted of seventy respondents with experience managing and working in remote marketing roles. We asked about the factors that led to strong performance and productivity. We included a thematic analysis of the seventy respondents open ended question responses.

The authors completed ten interviews with business practitioners to sharpen understanding of the key challenges new undergraduates face when they begin their professional careers in remote settings. Interviews began in May of 2023 and concluded in September 2023. Interviews included five men and five women. They represented a broad cross section of companies both public and private, for profit and non-profit. Industries included banking, IT, entertainment, energy, insurance, cloud services, higher education, social media and artificial intelligence.

An interview guide included questions based on the literature review broken out by four main factors. Broadly these included work parameters / structure, personality, relationships, and technology / communication factors. Below is the model we used in our discussions with the interviewees.

In addition, we asked questions about both remote performance and productivity in order to broaden our understanding. Finally the interviewees were asked open ended questions about other factors or measures of performance or productivity that the authors did not mention. Interview times ranged from 34 minutes to 81 minutes, with an average time of approximately 45 minutes each. Interviews were conducted using Zoom. Transcripts and video were recorded for further review.

The in depth interviews confirmed the importance of the four factors we asked about, while adding three additional factors to the model's structure. The additions included attitudes towards one's job, attitudes toward remote work, and the perceived impact remote work has on a company. Most of the interviewees agreed there were individual benefits to remote work but offered more nuance on some liabilities. They offered several important additions to exam. Several interviewees mentioned that company culture made a difference in the implementation of remote work. Another major theme was that there are important ad hoc 'water cooler' type conversations between managers and new employees that get lost in remote work environments. These type of conversations often are how important tacit knowledge is transferred. There is less coaching in remote work so there is less skill building at the early stage of a career. Other interviewees spoke about higher energy levels in the office. Finally respondents pointed out long term career progression was often hurt by working exclusively remotely. The in depth interviews confirmed the basic structure of our model. Most agreed there were individual benefits to remote work but offered more nuance on some liabilities. They offered several important additions to exam. Several interviewees mentioned that company culture made a difference in the implementation of remote work. Another major theme was that there

are important ad hoc ‘water cooler’ type conversations between managers and new employees that get lost in remote work environments. These type of conversations often are how important tacit knowledge is transferred. There is less coaching in remote work so there is less skill building at the early stage of a career. Other interviewees spoke about higher energy levels in the office. Finally respondents pointed out long term career progression was often hurt by working exclusively remotely.

Survey Creation

We created a survey based on the in depth interviews and literature review. We partnered with Qualtrics to provide a panel of seventy respondents that consisted of U.S. based marketing professionals. Respondents consented to participate. Respondents were paid an incentive by Qualtrics for completing the survey instrument.

We utilized screening questions to ensure each respondent had professional marketing experience and had experience working remotely. The survey consisted of twenty-eight questions. Questions included blocks on worker personality, work relationships, work parameters, technology and communication use, attitudes towards one’s job, attitudes towards remote work, and perceived effects of remote work on one’s company. We also asked demographic information such as age, gender, family situation, and what types of companies and industries and company sizes (by revenue) the respondents came from.

Our scale measurements are detailed in the following table:

Factor Measured	Scale Source
Grit	Duckworth’s eight questions, five-point scale from 1 (not like me at all) to 5 (very much like me) (Duckworth et al. 2007)
Personality Profiles	Modified Big Five Personality questions, ten questions on a seven-point scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly) (Rammstedt et al. 2007)
Interpersonal Trust	Four questions on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (van Zoonen et al. 2021; Raghuram et al. 2001)
Social Isolation	Four questions on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Marshall et al. 2007)
Work Independence	Four questions on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (ter Hoeven et al. 2020)
Clarity of the Marketing Job	Four questions on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Staples et al. 1999)
Communication Quality	Eight questions, seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Moorman et al. 1997)
Frequency of Technology Use	Five-point scale (van Zoonen et al. 2021)

Impact of WFH on the Firm	Questions on customer loyalty, employee retention, corporate culture, and socializing new employees, seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)
Work and Well-being	Nine questions, seven-point scale from 1 (Never) to 7 (Always every day), adapted JAWS scale (Van Katwyk et al. 2000)
Individual Performance (In-Office and Remote)	Scales developed for research, performance measured on a scale of 10 (best performance) to 1 (worst performance)
Change in Individual Work Value, Volume, and Quality	Seven-point scale from 1 (significantly decreased) to 7 (significantly increased)
Employee and Organizational Development Measures	Questions on employee upward mobility, retention changes, employee morale, corporate culture, socializing new employees
Firm Performance Measures	Questions on customer loyalty, revenue growth, profit growth, and firm valuation (stock price x shares outstanding)
Open-Ended Question on WFH	"Is there was anything else about WFH that we did not ask that you think is important?"

The table above summarizes the measurement scales utilized in this study, providing a comprehensive overview of the variables and their respective metrics.

Building on these foundational elements, we now present the conceptual model employed in our analysis. This model illustrates the relationships between the variables and forms the basis for testing our hypotheses and understanding the underlying dynamics of the study.

Survey Results

Survey results were collected by Qualtrics between October 5th, 2023, and October 10th, 2023. 116 started the survey, seventy-five completed it, the survey completion rate was 64.6%. Five of the surveys were eliminated after quality checks by the authors. The seventy complete responses were exported from the Qualtrics website.

Respondents

The majority of respondents were female (85%) aged between 25 and 34 years old (57%). Approximately 40 percent of our respondents had between four and six years of professional experience. About 25 percent had eleven or more years of experience. The respondents came from a wide variety of industries including, digital marketing, B2B marketing and services, health care and consulting.

Key Findings

Our model explained approximately 59.5% of the variance in job performance difference, with an adjusted R^2 of 39.3%. The model was statistically significant, as indicated by an F-value of 2.941 and a p-value of .001. Key significant predictors included extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, feelings about going to work in the morning, happiness when working intensely, face-to-face unplanned communication, and the perceived increase in company profits since the adoption of remote work. See table 1 below for the results of our hierarchical multiple regression model.

Table 1

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Difference between Job Performance at the Office and at Home (Office – Home)

	PREDICTORS	<i>r</i>	FINAL BETA	BLOCK <i>R</i> ² CHANGE
BLOCK 1	Worker Personality			.184*
	Extraversion	.162 ^a	.131	
	Agreeableness	.304**	.189	
	Conscientiousness	.025	.008	
	Neuroticism	-.327**	-.270 ^a	
	Openness	.129	-.058	
	Grit	.063	-.003	
BLOCK 2	Work Relationships			.005
	Interpersonal trust	.062	.027	
	Social isolation	-.155 ^a	.144	
BLOCK 3	Work Parameters			.017
	Work independence	.073	.030	
	Job clarity	.179 ^a	-.089	
BLOCK 4	Technology/Communication Use			.023
	Social media use w/ colleagues	-.039	-.260 ^a	
	Communication quality	-.128	-.220	
BLOCK 5	Attitudes Toward Own Job			.197*
	Enthusiasm for job	.180 ^a	.042	
	Inspiration from job	.215*	.200	
	Feel like going to work in morning	.315**	.233	
	Happy when working intensely	.340**	.232	
	Pride in work	.104	-.260	
	Immersion in work	.063	-.366*	
	Carried away when working	.187 ^a	.298 ^a	
BLOCK 6	Attitudes Toward Remote Work			.114**
	FTF allows unplanned communication	.416***	.351**	
	Lack of commute is advantage	-.176 ^a	.092	
BLOCK 7	Perceived Effects of WFH on Company			.056 ^a
	Since WFH, profits increased	-.314**	-.277*	
	Since WFH, employee morale increased	-.181 ^a	-.031	

Final *R*² = .595; Adjusted Final *R*² = .393

F = 2.941, *df* = 23, 46, *p* = .001

Note. ^a - .05 < *p* < .10; * - *p* < .05; ** - *p* < .01; *** - *p* < .001.

All tolerances were .20 or above.

Our model explained approximately 59.5% of the variance in job performance difference, with an adjusted R^2 of 39.3%. The model was statistically significant, as indicated by an F-value of 2.941 and a p-value of .001. Key significant predictors included extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, feelings about going to work in the morning, happiness when working intensely, face-to-face unplanned communication, and the perceived increase in company profits since the adoption of remote work.

Interpretation of Significant Predictors

Worker Personality

One's performance in remote or hybrid work situations can be influenced by one's personality. For example we found agreeableness and extraversion were associated with strong in office performance, both traits would help a worker thrive in a social environment. Perhaps being extraverted would help with in-office interactions. Agreeable workers might excel in collaborative and team-based projects, a common aspect of marketing roles. The benefits of these traits may wash out in a much more isolated fully remote or hybrid environment.

Interestingly, Neuroticism was negatively associated with office performance. This personality trait is associated with social media use and controlling communication. Neurotic workers like to be left alone because they gain more control and enjoy the focused environment free of distractions (Walther, Deandrea, and Tong, 2010) indicating that students with higher levels of neuroticism may opt for remote arrangements feeling this would improve their performance. However, professors could highlight the multidimensionality of work, that there are important longer term developmental aspects the go beyond just completing day to day tasks. Students may benefit from understanding sometimes they will have to sometimes trade off an ideal working environment to foster longer term career growth. Professors could use role playing assignments where students take turns as managers with the mandate to both develop employees and have employees complete a project simultaneously would help them develop this awareness

Attitudes Toward Own Job

Feeling like going to work in the morning was a significant positive predictor. Encouraging students to develop a strong intrinsic motivation and positive outlook towards their work can enhance their performance. Happiness when working intensely positively impacts office performance, highlighting the importance of job satisfaction and engagement. Professors can foster this by creating engaging and challenging coursework.

Attitudes Toward Remote Work

Face-to-face unplanned communication was a critical factor for better job performance in the office. Professors should emphasize the importance of spontaneous interactions and teach students how to effectively utilize both in-person and virtual communication tools. Crucially, students may not understand a key component of their job is to develop. Students can have a myopic view of work, that their job is only to complete what is on the agenda for the day. Professors can help them understand the importance of cultivating relationships with managers and why opportunities to do so are inherently unpredictable. Understanding the value of these developmental talks is not always obvious to new employees. In a remote setting we have seen in the literature and in our survey results that these types of spontaneous conversations are less frequent, especially among those with less experience. Professors could emphasize students might need to initiate these conversations themselves and create assignments to learn this important skill.

Perceived Effects of WFH on Company

The perceived increase in company profits since WFH had a negative impact on office performance. Educators should discuss the broader impacts of remote work on organizations to provide students with a well-rounded understanding of hybrid work dynamics.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify the key factors predicting differences in job performance between working at the office and working from home impacting new marketing undergraduate hires. By employing hierarchical multiple regression, we uncovered significant predictors that contribute to these performance differences, with a particular focus on how these findings can be applied to prepare marketing undergraduate students for hybrid work environments.

Comparison with Previous Research

Our findings align with existing literature on personality traits and their impact on job performance. The negative impact of perceived WFH-related profit increases contrasts with some studies that highlight the benefits of remote work. This discrepancy underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of hybrid work environments for newly minted marketing graduates. In previous research a study pointed out there is less networking and less communication that takes place among less experienced staff. Our research expands on this by highlighting the crucial spontaneous communications play in career success and how remote work decreases the frequency of these important interactions.

Implications for Practice

For Educators and Institutions: Curriculum development should incorporate modules that address both technical skills and soft skills necessary for hybrid work, such as time management, self-motivation, and effective communication. Simulation exercises and role-playing can be used to prepare students for real-world hybrid work scenarios. This can help students practice navigating the balance between remote and in-office work. Establishing mentorship programs that connect students with professionals who have experience in hybrid work environments can provide valuable insights and practical advice.

For Students: Developing resilience and adaptability are crucial for thriving in remote and hybrid work settings. Effective communication should be emphasized, maintaining open lines of communication with peers and supervisors, leveraging both face-to-face and virtual tools. Balancing autonomy and collaboration are key, helping students understand the importance of balancing independent work with collaborative efforts, a common component of many marketing roles.

Limitations

The study's moderate sample size ($N = 70$) limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should aim for larger and more diverse samples. Additionally, reliance on self-reported measures and the cross-sectional design pose limitations.

Future Research Directions

Longitudinal studies are needed to assess how job performance predictors evolve over time. Further research should explore additional factors and include larger samples to validate these findings. Investigating the impact of artificial intelligence on remote and hybrid work could be a fruitful research vector as well.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of personality traits, job attitudes, and face-to-face communication in predicting job performance differences between office and home settings. These findings offer valuable insights for professors and educators seeking to prepare marketing undergraduate students for remote or hybrid work environments. By integrating these insights into educational practices, we can better equip students with the skills and attitudes necessary to thrive in diverse work settings, enhancing their career readiness and success.

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Summary Brief

Digital Transformation and Career Readiness - The Story Has Changed – Don't Let Marketing Students Get Left Out

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Digital transformation has changed the way people communicate, shop, work, and live. An evolving digital workplace affects the way organizations conduct business and impacts the critical skills marketing graduates need to succeed. At the same time, the ease of online job applications leads to many more applicants. Marketing educators play a key role in preparing students for entry-level positions and the hiring process so they are not eliminated from consideration. Our research examines the technical, professional, and soft skills job candidates should have to succeed in the digital workplace, how best to market these attributes during the hiring process, and what mistakes could result in students being knocked out of consideration for an interview or job. Professionalism, coachability, communication, critical thinking, teamwork, listening, and some expertise in software such as Excel were identified as the most important skills, with the interview being the most important activity in the hiring process. Poor listening skills and a lack of research (knowledge) about the organization could eliminate a candidate from consideration during the interview process. The results have implications for both marketing students and marketing educators who seek to prepare graduates for the rapidly changing digital workplace.

Keywords

Job readiness, skills for marketing graduates, interviewing process, knock-out factors, digital workplace

Introduction

Digital transformation, an evolving workplace post pandemic, and an increasing number of applicants has changed some of the skills marketing students need for entry level positions. Understanding what makes a recent marketing major graduate a strong candidate for the digital workplace is important to students, professors and the marketing profession. Professors want to ensure their students are well prepared for the business world and the hiring process. Firms need strong entry-level marketing professionals to renew and grow their marketing capabilities (Moorman and Day, 2016). Given these imperatives, it is no surprise that the literature regarding skills that marketing majors need for entry-level readiness is robust. However, with digital transformation, a changing work environment, and an increasing number of applicants, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to how students should signal their skills and job market readiness to potential employers.

Our research contributes to the literature and fills the gap by reassessing the skills a candidate should possess in the evolving digital workplace and how candidates can market themselves while avoiding being “knocked out” or eliminated for consideration during the hiring process. Understanding knockout criteria for entry level marketing jobs would contribute new insights to this literature and would be helpful to new marketing graduates and marketing educators. Specifically, the purpose of this research is three-fold. (1) To understand the technical and professional skills expected by hiring managers for marketing jobs; (2) To determine ways students can better position themselves throughout the hiring process; and (3) To identify red flags so students can avoid being knocked out during the hiring process.

A dearth of research has focused on skills required for entry-level marketing positions with many studies providing lists of attributes either from analysis of job ads (McArthur et al., 2017; Schlee and Harich, 2010; Schlee and Karns, 2017; Wellman 2010), analysis of academic and practitioner sources (Kurtzke and Setkute, 2021), surveys of practitioners (Honea et al., 2017), student marketing majors (Hartley, Routon, and Torres, 2019) and in depth interviews of recruiters and practitioners (Raymond, Carlson, and Hopkins 2006; Yeoh, 2019; Cluley et al., 2020). However, few results showed agreement on every skill and overlap was inconsistent (Wellman 2010). Research is also rich in the different components of the hiring process with advice on resumes (Taylor, 2003; Wechtler, et al., 2022), signaling competence (Honea, Castro, and Peter, 2017; Crowley et al., 2020), interviews and

experience requirements (Wechtler, et al., 2022; Wierenga et al., 2023; Swanson and Tomkovick, 2012; Schlee and Karns, 2017).

As the marketing world changes, the skills required to succeed also evolve (Captain, 2023; Kelly, 2023). Reflecting on the evolution of marketing, early studies showed that having a marketing degree was a good way to land a first job in marketing (Hunt et al., 1986). When marketing majors faced stiff competition from those without marketing degrees (McCorkle et al., 2003), positions required general professional skills rather than detailed knowledge of marketing topics, theories or practices (Wellman, 2010). Both the academic and business literature reflect the continuous evolution, trends, and dynamic changes in marketing practices (Coffee, 2023; Lohr 2021), which necessitate changes in how educators prepare marketing students for the workplace. Technical skill and big data have played roles in this evolution.

Technical (Software) Skills

Improvements in the collection, storage and analysis of big data has had a major impact on marketing practices and workplace policies during the digital transformation. As such, marketing job readiness research has shifted from general business skills (Raymond, Hopkins, and Carlson 2006) to more specific technical skills (DiGregorio et al 2019; Wellman, 2010; McArthur et al., 2017, Cluley et al., 2020; Captain 2023). Some researchers focused on technical skills mentioned in marketing job advertisements (DiGregorio et al 2019; Schlee and Harich, 2010) and compared those technical skills to salary levels (Bacon et al., 2023). For example, Bacon et al. (2023) found higher marketing job salaries linked with Excel skills while Schlee and Karns (2017) found that higher salaries were associated with rarer technical skills (Schlee and Karns, 2017). Other studies focused on how professors could leverage brand-based training on digital marketing platforms such as Hootsuite or HubSpot in the classroom, with a focus on the pedagogy of different options (Spiller and Tuten, 2019). Kurtzke et al (2021) questioned how technical skills could be best incorporated into coursework and curriculum given that many marketing professors did not get training in these newer platforms (Kurtzke et al., 2021). While technical skills grew in importance in the literature, several studies concluded a mix of both professional and technical skills were needed (Wellman, 2010; Kurtzke et al., 2021; Yeoh, 2019; Cluley et al., 2020).

Job Market Best Practices for Graduates

While understanding what technical skills to prioritize for students is important, a critical component of graduate readiness is being able to sell oneself in the job market (McCorkle et al., 2003). This necessitates an understanding of the relative importance of activities throughout the hiring process as well as how students should represent themselves as a strong candidate for an entry-level job. Ironically, while marketing majors may be knowledgeable about selling products and services, they are often no better at self-promotion than their business school peers (McCorkle et al., 2003). Several researchers have examined ways marketing graduates can signal competency during their job hunt. For example, Honea, Castro and Peter (2017) suggests that job seekers hoping to land a marketing position should specify relevant coursework, seek marketing-specific degrees, and demonstrate mastery through certifications (Spiller and Tuten, 2019). Cowley et al., (2020) surveyed practitioners and marketing professors and found certifications were thought to help signal digital marketing acumen during the interview process. Further, numerous studies have found that a key differentiator for entry level jobs is a student's work experience, including internships (Schlee and Karns, 2017; Swanson and Tomkovick, 2012; Wechtler, et al., 2022; Wierenga et al., 2023; Bacon et al., 2023).

Job Search Knockout Factors for Marketing Majors

Attribution Theory (Heider 1958) posits that individuals assign causal ascriptions to why events occur and is a foundational theory in social psychology, used to explain phenomenon such as decision making. Recently, Attribution Theory has been used in the area of human resource management (Hewett, Shantz, and Mundy 2019) to help explain decisions made by recruiters during the hiring process. For example, Carless and Waterworth (2020) find that a candidate's level of ability contributes to attributions about past work outcomes, expectations of their fit with the company and future performance. As found by Wechtler et al. (2022) in the realm of job experience, understanding the potential red flags or 'knockout factors' identified by hiring managers could undoubtedly help marketing majors better position themselves through the hiring process. However, there is a gap in the marketing and job readiness literature around this subject. There is general advice in the popular business press aimed at business students although most studies did not focus on entry-level hires. For example, Ford (2018) suggests using a one-page resume for most recent graduates but cautions against using ready-made resume templates. Johnson (2015) warns against using a generic resume or cover letter or answering the phone unprofessionally during a job search. Beyond Wechtler et al. (2022)'s study, only a few academics have looked at knockout factors for marketing

jobs. Berkelaar and Buzzanell (2015) studied how a marketing job candidate's digital online presence affects their chances of being hired. They found online posts deemed inappropriate could clearly damage a candidate's chances, even though the candidate never intended this material to be observed by those evaluating them. Conversely, not having a professional online profile was deemed by some recruiters as a different type of red flag (Berkelaar and Buzzanell, 2015).

Study 1: In-Depth Interviews

Method

Procedure

In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 marketing professionals across a variety of both public and private companies (i.e., social media, consulting, music and entertainment, business to business, healthcare) ranging in size from an entrepreneurial start-up to a company with \$57 billion in sales. All respondents had at least two years of experience hiring recent marketing graduates. Informants were identified through classroom speakers, the marketing department industry advisory board, and the career center in the business school at a public university in the southeast.

The interviews were conducted at neutral locations or via Zoom and lasted between 30-60 minutes. The interviewers started by asking about the informant's professional marketing background and their experiences with hiring for their organization, then moved specifically to skills sought when evaluating new graduates for entry-level marketing positions. Questions focused on the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) career readiness competencies and their importance for job success in the digital workplace. A semi-structured interview format was followed using a moderator's guide, allowing the a priori themes to be presented while permitting the informants to freely discuss and elaborate on their experiences. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Analysis and Findings

Analysis of the interview text followed procedures outlined by Thompson and Haytko (1997). First, each informant's text was read and interpreted as a single case. Second, overarching themes were sought, resulting in three insights into what companies are looking for in today's marketing graduates: 1) Ability to Build a Puzzle with Storytelling 2) Balance Between Leadership and Coachability, and 3) Cultural Knowledge and Fit. Each theme is discussed as it relates to preparedness for a career in digital marketing. Knockout factors consistently mentioned were identified as well.

Theme 1: Ability to Build a Puzzle with Storytelling

Hirschman (2010) emphasizes the importance of narrative in constructing relatable brands, where commercial brands construct stories about their origins, accomplishments, and communities. Further, she suggests that the job of marketing researchers and brand managers is to conceptualize brands as symbolic markers within a larger story. A literature review of research on storytelling marketing suggests that stories help consumers identify with and emotionally connect with brands (Junior, Limongi, Lim, Eastman, and Kumar (2022). However, De Oliveira Junior et al. (2022) also point to a lack of understanding about effective story narration, and Dykes (2016, 2020) warns that the new data-driven business world necessitates data scientists to be storytellers, able to turn information into insights.

Our informants were adamant that storytelling with data was a critical skill for job success in today's marketing field. Margaret said that her company looks for candidates that "are able to build a puzzle and paint a picture...to steer the story in the right way." Related to storytelling, informants also emphasized the importance of data visualization skills, and being able to distill large datasets down into relevant, visual, and actionable takeaways. David states that new employees should be "willing to dig in and figure things out" and Marshall stresses that adaptability within the narrative is important and that graduates must evaluate who the client is and "what content will work...to meet the client's specific objectives." See Table 1 for additional informant quotes supporting this theme.

Theme 2: Balance Between Leadership and Coachability

Without fail, all informants emphasized the importance of coachability. James says, "We want someone who is coachable, this is very important, someone who is trainable." Further, Margaret adds "You're not expected to know everything, but you are expected to be able to learn what you need to know." Candidates who "have an open mind" and are moldable as they learn the role are usually given preference.

Just as with athletic coachability, job coachability involves the acceptance of feedback and an effort to persist despite difficulties and put in the work to improve skills (Johnson, Kim, Colarelli, and Boyajian 2021).

Usually, willingness to be coached evolves over time and may interact with factors such as office culture and management leadership style (Shannahan and Bush 2013). Weiss (2020) emphasizes the “coaches” impact on the success of an organization. Weiss (2020 p. 5) states that “coaches’ ability to seek, thoughtfully consider, act, and change behavior based on feedback” and employee adaptability are critical for organizational success.

On the other hand, several informants stated that they look for employees who bring their own ideas and contributions to the job. Marshall states that “I want someone who has their own opinions and their own perspective...I don’t want them just to be a follower.” Jeffrey further comments that “ability to build relationships gets the vote over higher GPA.”

Coachability has been looked at in the context of sales (Shannahan et al. 2013; Badrinarayanan, Dixon, West and Zank 2015) and entrepreneurship (Kuratko, Neubert and Marvel 2021) professions, but no known studies have demonstrated that employers look for signals of coachability at the outset of employment. Weiss (2020) suggests that there may be “sociometric badges” such as eye contact, body language, or defensive posture, which could capture individual differences that contribute to coachability, but these characteristics might not surface prior to hiring. He finds that expressed humility during the screening process might signal coachability, but this is counter to our finding that hiring managers seek confident leaders who are also willing to take advice.

Theme 3: Cultural Knowledge and Fit

The interviewees also shared that fitting with the company culture is important. Applicants need to understand the culture and values of the company where they are interviewing and show how they fit. Many companies have very distinct cultures and applicants must recognize the importance of culture and share the corporate values.

Negative Signals May Knock Candidates Out of Job Consideration

While the themes focused on positive signaling of job readiness, numerous informants also mentioned actions or mistakes that would eliminate a candidate from contention for an entry level marketing job. Similar to the red flags mentioned by Wechtler et al (2022) and Berkelaar et al. (2015), our informants identified knockout factors that are specific to the entry-level job process. Informants said that candidates would be no longer considered for a position if they demonstrated a lack of company research before an interview, lack of a professional image, and lack of cultural fit with the industry or company.

Lack of interview prep, specifically lacking knowledge about the company, was repeatedly mentioned as a negative signal. Ned said, “if you lack the basic understanding of the company, this shows a lack of interest, and that you haven’t prepped...if you are just going through the motions we can tell.”

Ann echoed that, “if you don’t know who our customer base is that is a red flag.” Lisa made a similar comment, stating “if you do not do your due diligence, it signals a lack of interest and would knock you out.” Scott made a similar point, “if you don’t do your research, if you don’t ask a really good question about what the role entails, that is a big red flag for me.”

The interviewees also shared that a poor fit with the company culture could be a potential knock out factor. Scott states that, “We’re a progressive bank, we have a female CEO, this is a big deal in our industry, if you don’t know this coming into the interview it shows you don’t care to understand what makes our culture different, this is a red flag.” Ann said that a company would look unfavorably on candidates that “took all the credit for the success of a group project” because it would violate their team culture. Jordan. states “if someone is leaning back too much in their chair during the interview that can signal the wrong attitude, even in a casual industry like social media – they have to match our culture.”

Finally, informants expressed that projecting a nonprofessional image would be cause for disqualification from the job pool. For example, Jordan said “not looking put together, bad grooming – if they come to an interview and are not put together that is a bad sign.” Being able to succinctly and professionally communicate why you want the job is viewed as a critical skill. Lisa said, “If you can’t sell yourself to me during the ‘tell me about yourself’ question, if you answer in a single sentence ” the candidate would no longer be considered. See Table 1 for additional informant quotes supporting these themes.

Table 1 - Quotes from Informants

Ability to Build a Puzzle with Storytelling	Informant Name
<i>[Candidates should know] Excel or Google Sheets and have some knowledge of how to run certain functions. They should learn how to navigate large sets of data and then, know subsequently, what to do with that data.</i>	Ann
<i>[Progressive] is a very data driven company, fact-based decision making when possible. Everyone must be able to communicate what the data is pointing towards.</i>	Ned
<i>Our industry is client based, so we must be able to communicate with external folks, it's important, I want to see young people come in and step up and talk in front of people but they must keep things concise and to the point, to in 15 to 30 seconds give your little bit of the puzzle - this is the situation, this is what I know and this is what I want to do.</i>	Jordan
<i>Candidates should be skilled in spreadsheet applications, experience with the Microsoft suite, have financial acumen and understand statistics.</i>	James
Balance Between Leadership and Coachability	
<i>You [Candidates, new hires] look for people who can be taught platforms like Tableau or SPSS on the job.</i>	Ann
<i>[Candidates] should think about a role with an open mind. You can think of it as working in a cross functional team, being a leader, learning new skills – there are a lot of things you can do regardless of the product or industry that can be engaging.</i>	Laurel
<i>Coachability is very important, they must have the capacity and capability to learn the technical components of digital marketing.</i>	Scott
<i>Coachability is a huge factor; ability to build relationships gets vote over higher GPA.</i>	James
Knockouts	
<i>If someone is leaning back too much in their chair during the interview that can signal the wrong attitude, even in a casual industry like social media – they have to match our culture.</i>	Jordan
<i>[We eliminate candidates with] a lack of interest, lack of engagement during the interview, if you are just going through the motions we can tell.</i>	Ned
<i>If we detect a lack of professionalism, we do not think the candidate will be able to meet the standards at our company, there is a need to train yourself to be a capable, trusted advisor for your clients either internally or externally.</i>	Ann
<i>Just looking for any job is a red flag; we are really looking for people who want to work at our company.</i>	Laurel

Based on the insights from Study 1, it is clear that job seekers can both positively or negatively signal job readiness to prospective employers by the informal messages portrayed throughout the hiring process. Employers are watching for signals about the candidate's coachability, leadership, and the ability to turn data into insights. Therefore, in order to better prepare students for the job market, we conducted a survey to expand on the findings from the interviews and to determine which artifacts from the job search process are best at communicating desired capabilities.

Study 2: Industry Survey

Based on the insights from Study 1, we developed a survey administered via Qualtrics to recruiters and marketing practitioners. Respondents were screened by Qualtrics using our criteria that they had hired candidates into marketing roles and worked in the United States. Confidentiality was assured to respondents, names and other identifying information were not collected. The survey was pre-tested with a representative sample of hiring managers to ensure understanding of questions and that completion of survey took 20 minutes or less. Revisions were made as necessary for clarity and completion. Survey responses were collected for a two-week period. A total

of 181 surveys were started, and 142 of these were completed, a completion rate of 78.5%. The average time to complete the survey was approximately 20 minutes.

The survey questions addressed the importance of specific professional, technical, and soft skills, how to demonstrate competencies throughout the job search process, the most critical aspects of the hiring process, and factors that may eliminate candidates from further consideration. Further, we asked about professional skills and what technical skills candidates should possess, such as knowledge of statistical software for data visualization (i.e. storytelling). Specifically, respondents were first asked to rank the importance of hiring activities including the interview, resume, cover letter, thank you note/email and recommendation. We then asked respondents to rate job candidate skills and abilities on a 5-point scale (1 = not important at all; 5 = very important). We followed with open-ended questions to allow respondents to list other skills, other interview related considerations, and other ways a candidate could signal quality on their resume. The last set of questions included possible knockout factors that would disqualify a candidate during the interview process. We asked respondents to select all that applied from a list of six items and allowed respondents to list additional knockout items not listed. Finally, respondents were asked demographics and job-role related questions such as years of experience, company revenue, years of experience hiring marketing graduates, number of grads hired per year, number of employees at the company, and finally the firm's industry.

Sample

The authors were successful in recruiting a large, experienced sample from a diverse mix of companies by size and industry as called for in the literature (Schlee and Harich, 2010; Schlee et al. 2017). The sample comprises 142 respondents, distributed across a range of roles, professional experience, and experience hiring marketing undergraduates. Our sample included a broad range of functional roles with the majority (86.7%) of respondents having at least 4 years of experience hiring marketing graduates. Digital marketing made up the largest share (23.0%) of the type of position, reflecting the ongoing digital transformation in marketing. Table 2 provides a snapshot of our respondents from the study.

Table 2 - Snapshot of Survey Respondents

Total Respondents	142
Respondent Roles	Human Resources (including recruiters): 55%, Leadership: 19.7%, Marketing: 14.8%
Years of Professional Experience	7-10 years: 34%, 4-6 & 11+ years: 31% each
Years of Hiring Marketing Majors Experience	7-10 years: 33.8%, 4-6 years: 31.7%, >10 years: 21.1%
Number of Undergraduates Marketing Majors Hired per Year	21-30: 31%, 11-20: 23.2%, 6-10: 17.6%
Company Sales	\$10m-\$50m: 33.8%, \$50m-\$100m: 31.7%, \$1m-\$10m: 21.8%
Company Size (Number of Employees)	501-1,000 & 1,001-5,000: 28.2% each, 51-200: 12.7%
Type of Firm	Digital Marketing: 23.2%, Retail: 21.8%, Technology: 19.7%, Other (Healthcare, B2B, Consulting, Services,)

Analysis and Results

The data from the surveys were evaluated using chi-square analyses (Honea et al., 2017) to identify statistically significant differences in our respondents' perceptions of important technical and professional skills, hiring process best practices, and knockout factors. We ran one-sample t-tests comparing the mean importance rating of each professional skill with the rank midpoint.

The respondents rated (from 1 = least important to 5 = most important) each of the skills and abilities significantly higher than the mean score of three (significantly significant at $p < .001$). Respondents ranked professionalism of the candidate as most important, followed by coachability, and then the match between the candidate and company culture (see table 3 for complete results). We then allowed respondents to list any other skills and abilities that we did not include in an open-ended response. The write-in responses included having problem-solving skills, high character, the capacity to learn, and being self-directed.

The results (from 1 = least important to 8 = most important) also showed a strong desire that candidates possess data analysis platform skills with a medium to high level of proficiency as we might expect given the ongoing digital transformation. Respondents ranked Excel skills as the most important (mean 5.72), then Python (mean 5.27) followed by Tableau (4.88). Excel, Python and Tableau skills ranked statistically significantly above the midpoint while R and SQL were ranked below the midpoint. Four additional technical skills were mentioned repeatedly in the write-in responses: marketing automation workflow software skills, proficiency with email marketing (MailChimp, HubSpot, Constant Contact), SEO skills, and familiarity with major platform advertising tools (Google Ads, Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads). See Table 3 for complete results).

Table 3 - Survey Results

Readiness Skills			
	Skill	Ranking	Description
Holistic Candidate Evaluation	Professionalism	4.39***	Professional Traits
	Coachability	4.01***	
	Matches the Company Culture	3.89***	Cultural Alignment
	Cultural Fit	3.84***	
	Ability to tell stories using data	3.73***	Analytical and Communication Skills
Software Skills	Excel	5.72***	Data Analysis, Visualization
	Python	5.27***	Data Analysis, Machine Learning
	Tableau	4.88***	Interactive Data Visualization
	SPSS	4.34	Advanced Statistical Analysis
	Power BI	4.23	Data Analysis, Visualization
	SAS	4.06	Advanced Statistical Analysis
	SQL	3.70	Managing, Querying Databases
	R	3.80	Statistical Analysis, Graphics
Professional Skills	Verbal Communication	5.63***	Conveying information and ideas effectively through speech
	Teamwork	5.25***	Working effectively and cooperatively
	Critical Thinking	5.24***	Analyzing information objectively to make reasoned decisions
	Written Communication	4.77***	Expressing ideas clearly and effectively through writing

Listening Skills	4.40	Actively understanding and responding to others
Leadership	4.05	Guiding, motivating, and inspiring others
Networking & Building Relationships	3.47**	Establishing and maintaining professional associations
Intellectual Curiosity	3.19***	Desire to understand, explore and learn

***Statistically significant at $p < .001$

**Statistically significant at $p < .01$

The results also indicated four professional skills desired among candidates: verbal communication, written communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills, followed by networking and intellectual curiosity. These findings are consistent with previous literature (Raymond, Carlson, and Hopkins 2006) and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2019) where employers continue to rate critical thinking, teamwork, and communication skills as important (Raymond, Siemens, and Thyroff, 2021). The write-in responses also indicated that candidates should have strong market research skills and project management skills, which is supported by competencies mentioned in the literature (Honea et al., 2017).

It is clear from our results that candidates should seek out internships as they are highly valued by hiring authorities with over 78% of respondents recommending internship experience. This result is consistent with the findings of Honea, Castro, and Peter (2017) who mentioned this is an important way to signal marketing competency.

Our finding shed light on better understanding the hiring process, as called for by Honea, Castro, and Peter (2017) The most important activity in the process was the interview, followed a cover letter, the resume, recommendations, and thank you notes/emails. Only interviewing had a statistically significant positive value above the midpoint. Themes stemming from our open-ended question were that preparation is critical because candidates should be knowledgeable about the position and firm, including the culture. Furthermore, many respondents remarked that candidates must provide examples demonstrating their skills and include measurable results of their actions. In addition, respondents noted that candidates needed to dress professionally and demonstrate poise. Respondents recommended that candidates include awards and achievements on their resume in order to signal quality. Candidates' resumes should also match their experience, skills, and education to the job requirements in order to signal a strong match for the role they were interviewing for.

Knockout Factors

To compete in the digital marketplace, marketing job candidates must understand what eliminates a job applicant from contention. Our survey results point to a lack of preparation - not enough research on the job, the firm (overview, culture, values), or the industry. In addition, our respondents mentioned poor listening skills during interviews can drop a potential employee from consideration. Other knockout criteria include unprofessional dress, poor hygiene, poor attitudes, and sloppy resumes. These support findings from the interviews in Study 1, indicating that there are also negative signals that can hurt a candidate during the hiring process if a candidate is unaware of their importance.

Discussion and Implications

Our research addresses two critical gaps in the literature. First, we identified critical skills that marketing students need for entry-level positions and how to effectively market these skills during the hiring process. Second, we discovered factors can knock a candidate out of contention during the interview process.

Over 85% of the marketing practitioners surveyed have four or more years of experience hiring marketing graduates and included representatives from firms across 10 industries. To further validate our findings, we conducted informal post-survey conversations with executives at twelve multinational companies. We showed these

individuals a summary of our research results and asked them whether the results resonated with their experiences with the skills sought, the hiring process, and the knock-out factors.

Our research highlights that graduates still need strong professional skills, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills. These skills are essential for conveying information effectively, working cooperatively, and making reasoned decisions supported by data. During the informal conversations, one executive reinforced this, stating that concise communication skills were critical: "I want to see young people come in and step up and talk in front of people but they must keep things concise and to the point, to summarize in 15 to 30 seconds your little bit of the puzzle/story - this is the situation, this is what I know and this is what I want to do." In a college setting, the use of group projects, presentations, case studies, and reverse mentoring are effective ways to develop these skills (Honea et al., 2017; Raymond, Siemens, and Thyroff 2021). Therefore, marketing curricula should incorporate project and case study work to enhance students' competencies in these areas. Working with business professionals in person and/or via Zoom will help strengthen these skills. Regardless of where a college/university is located, there are business professionals/bureaus (i.e., American Advertising Federation) who are willing to arrange guest speakers.

Our research also demonstrated the importance of sound analytical skills to demonstrate graduates have the tools needed to put the pieces of the data puzzle together and tell stories with the data. While some of these tools are commonly taught in business marketing classes (i.e. Excel), other important tools including Python, Tableau, and SPSS would more likely be taught in a marketing research or metrics course. Moreover, our survey suggests that students need a higher than expected competency with these data skills, with most of the hiring managers from study 2 indicating that medium to high level of proficiency is needed to set a candidate apart on the job market. Thus, repeated exposure to these tools in marketing courses would help students build a skillset that would be highly competitive. It is vital for marketing educators to structure the curriculum so that by graduation, students have a good working knowledge of how to use software to aid them in communicating data insights and tell a story with the data. These findings align with previous research by Kurtzke (2021) and Bacon et al. (2023), indicating that software proficiency can lead to higher salaries and better job prospects. This is also consistent with studies on the importance of technical skills in the era of big data (Schlee and Karns, 2017; Captain, 2023; Cluley et al., 2020). Students should follow Honea et al. (2017) by creating a portfolio of their work which is accessible online to demonstrate their technical skills to potential employers.

Marketing Skills During the Hiring Process

Our research also shows how critical artifacts such as the cover letter and resume are for showcasing a candidate's skills, experience, and fit for the role. While recommendations were not found to be the most important in the survey results, students must consider how many applicants may apply for different positions. With recruiters often reviewing over 1,000 resumes, multiple executives in the post interviews suggested that a personal recommendation or having someone hand your resume directly to the hiring manager can be highly beneficial. Giving the highly competitive workplace, this personal touch can significantly increase the chances of securing an interview and ultimately, a job. This may require students learning to network with alumni in the industry and becoming adept at expanding their professional networks. Providing networking opportunities between students and industry, either in a classroom setting or through a career engagement office, would be time and money well spent.

While our survey results indicate that the interview is the most critical stage of the hiring process, applicants must remember that their resumes play a critical role in getting an interview. In both Study 1 and the follow-up interviews, executives had the opportunity to provide more detailed information. Specifically, they suggested being very "intentional" with the resume by tailoring it to the position. Review the position description and show how experiences can add value to the company. Graduates should tailor their resumes to each job application, matching their skills to the company's needs. Marketing majors need to clearly signal their skills and achievements on their resumes. Make sure the resume tells a story about experiences and that little things like name and contact information are easy to locate. They also suggested not using any photos on the resume and to be careful about setting up boxes and special graphics because they often upload incorrectly. Professors can assist by creating assignments that mimic the interview process, such as mock interviews, resume tailoring, and active listening exercises. Emphasizing attention to detail can help students avoid common pitfalls during interviews.

Finally, our research identified several key "knockout" behaviors that can disqualify candidates during the hiring process. The top knockout item was a lack of knowledge about the job description, followed by a lack of knowledge of the firm or industry. While this finding seems logical and easy to fix, many job applicants are unprepared. Poor listening skills during the interview, inappropriate dress, lack of relevant experience, and resume errors (spelling, grammar, formatting) were also significant factors. Executives confirmed that not knowing about the position, the company, and the culture will eliminate candidates from further consideration. Research prior to

the interview is imperative if a candidate wants to proceed to the next step in the hiring process. Several executives recommended candidates not only read about the company, but also read recent news stories and weave comments about values or questions into their interviews. Business schools and marketing educators can help give students a competitive advantage by providing opportunities for students to learn from various companies about the roles they may hire for, and answer questions about the industry. This may be accomplished by inviting guest speakers to classes, hosting lunch and learns with companies, or hosting business panels for marketing students for questions and answers prior to them entering the job market. Case studies and assignments where students have to conduct and present research and answer questions in front of others will help instill the habit of becoming knowledgeable about different companies and/or situations.

Limitations and Future Research

While our respondents had diverse professional experiences in marketing and representative many companies, the rapid pace of technological change means that our findings represent a snapshot that may require periodic updates. As such, generalization of findings may be a limitation of the current study. Most executives mentioned that all resumes are still reviewed by humans. However, some companies may screen resumes online which often eliminates candidates.

Future research should explore how to prepare undergraduates for remote work environments. Understanding the skills and factors, such as strong communication skills, that contribute to successful remote work could be beneficial. Additionally, investigating the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on required skill levels and incorporating AI tools like ChatGPT 4 into marketing courses could provide valuable insights. Students should gain experience with AI tools, understanding both their potential and limitations, thereby enhancing their traditional technical skills. Marketing educators must also incorporate AI into their curriculum. Future research can explore ways to incorporate AI and what is most beneficial.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Summary Brief

Who is Proctoring My Exam? The Impact of Artificial Intelligence Anxiety and Trust in Technology on Student Satisfaction

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The rapid increase in online class enrollments at higher education institutions has been accompanied by budget constraints and resource limitations, prompting universities to adopt AI-based tools like Online Proctoring Systems (OPS). This study investigates the impact of artificial intelligence anxiety (AIA) and trust in technology on student satisfaction with online courses using OPS. The research explores how computer self-efficacy, privacy concerns, AIA, and trust in technology influence student satisfaction with their course performance and overall course. Using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the study analyzes data from 211 online survey participants. Findings indicate that privacy concerns significantly increase AIA, negatively impacting student satisfaction. Conversely, higher computer self-efficacy reduces AIA, enhancing satisfaction. Trust in technology is found to mediate the relationship between privacy concerns, AIA, and student satisfaction. These insights suggest that addressing privacy concerns and improving computer self-efficacy are crucial for enhancing student satisfaction in AI-proctored online courses.

Introduction

The rise of online classes in higher education has necessitated the use of online proctoring systems (OPS) to maintain exam integrity. This paper examines the impact of Artificial Intelligence Anxiety (AIA) and Trust in Technology on student satisfaction with these systems. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the need for effective online proctoring as institutions rapidly shifted to remote learning.

Background

AI in education encompasses systems performing cognitive tasks such as learning and problem-solving, raising mixed reactions among students (Baker & Smith, 2019). Trust in AI and concerns about privacy are critical factors impacting student satisfaction with OPS (Jacovi et al., 2021). Computer self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to use computers effectively (Howard, 2014), influences the perceived ease of using OPS and the associated anxiety.

Key Constructs

Independent variables such as privacy concerns (Mutimukwe et al., 2022) and computer self-efficacy (Howard, 2014) are hypothesized to have opposite influences on artificial intelligence anxiety (Wang & Wang, 2019). AIA measures the fear or anxiety students feel towards AI, particularly in OPS, and is hypothesized to mediate the relationships between PC and CSE to Trust. Trust in Technology (McKnight et al., 2002) assesses students' willingness to depend on OPS based on its characteristics and is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between AIA and the dependent variables. Student Satisfaction with Performance (Milone et al., 2017) evaluates satisfaction with performance in courses using OPS. Student Satisfaction with Course (Milone et al., 2017) measures overall satisfaction with courses employing OPS.

Research Model

The proposed model investigates the relationships between Privacy Concerns (PC), Computer Self-Efficacy (CSE), AIA, Trust in Technology, and Student Satisfaction with Performance (SAT_PERFORM) and Courses (SAT_COURSE). The model is assessed using Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CCA) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Findings

Privacy Concerns (PC) significantly impact AIA, with higher concerns exacerbating anxiety towards AI in OPS. Higher Computer Self-Efficacy (CSE) reduces AIA, suggesting that students who are more confident in their computer skills experience less anxiety. Trust in Technology mediates the relationship between external factors (PC and CSE) and student satisfaction outcomes (SAT_PERFORM and SAT_COURSE). All indicators for constructs showed satisfactory reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2021), except for the two satisfaction constructs, which showed some overlap, likely due to respondents perceiving the satisfaction items for each construct similarly.

Discussion and Implications

To help reduce AIA, instructors and administration need to first address privacy concerns and universities should include clear data privacy policies and provide alternative assessment options to OPS. Increasing students' computer self-efficacy through training and orientation can help mitigate AIA. Ongoing faculty training is essential to incorporate AI tools and manage student anxiety effectively. Future research should explore the broader impacts of AIA on student outcomes and investigate other AI applications in education.

Conclusion

Addressing AIA and enhancing trust in technology are critical for improving student satisfaction with online proctoring systems. This research provides valuable insights for educators and administrators to develop strategies that alleviate student anxiety and foster a more positive online learning environment.

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Summary Brief

Student Attitudes Toward Social Responsibility: Does Knowledge Play a Role?

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This study examines the relationship between student knowledge and perceptions of social responsibility and if it varies by business major, with a focus on future marketing professionals. Based on attitude formation and change research, knowledge may influence attitudes toward social responsibility, setting the stage for students and future business leaders to make more socially responsible decisions or, at a minimum, to give more consideration to socially responsible actions. As educators we can't directly influence the decisions and business practices decided upon by students and future business leaders; however, by understanding the role of knowledge on perceptions of ethics and social responsibility, we may be able to indirectly influence future business leaders to consider all stakeholders and ethical ramifications when making business decisions.

Introduction

Companies today face increasing pressure to be environmentally responsible, provide safe products, create a positive environment for employees, give back to their community – all while continuing to earn a profit. Yet, examples of companies making poor decisions is a regular occurrence. Given the importance of social responsibility and making decisions benefitting all stakeholders, educational institutions are faced with the arduous task of preparing students to make informed and balanced business decisions, while maintaining a positive bottom line.

In fact, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) advised accredited colleges of business to include business ethics in the business curriculum for well over 20 years (Miles, et.al., 2004) and the 2020 standards added the expectation that AACSB-accredited schools make a positive impact on society. In addition, The United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) stresses the importance of instilling social responsibility values in students through teaching, research, and service (United Nations PRME 2023).

With the growing availability of artificial intelligence (AI) and increasing use, both ethical and potentially unethical, in the business environment and the academic environment, understanding students' perceptions of ethics and social responsibility could not be more timely.

Social Responsibility Background

Numerous studies have examined perceptions of students regarding social responsibility and if they vary by socio-demographic characteristics. For example, prior research found differences by culture (e.g., Wong, 2010; Texiera, et.al., 2018), gender (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2013; Arlow, 1991; Ugwuozor & Otu, 2020), age (Anand & Singh, 2021), work experience (Fitzpatrick, 2013; Anand & Singh, 2021), and academic degree (Arlow, 1991; Teixeira et.al., 2018; Anand & Singh, 2021). However, the findings are often inconclusive, presented by scale item, rather than by scale dimension or an overall evaluation of attitudes toward social responsibility (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2013; Teixeira, et.al. 2018; Anand & Singh 2021). Research on attitudes toward social responsibility by academic degree compares business students to nonbusiness students (Arlow, 1991); undergraduate to graduate students (Teixeira, et.al., 2018), and executive MBA to traditional MBA students (Anand & Singh). However, it does not appear authors in this area have examined differences between marketing majors and other business majors. This study proposes to examine how marketing students' knowledge and attitudes toward ethics and social responsibility compare to undergraduate students in other business disciplines.

Previous research has also examined the impact of ethics and/or corporate social responsibility (CSR) courses and content on attitudes toward social responsibility, with mixed results (Assudani et.al.,2011; Ugwuozor & Otu, 2020; Kleinrichert et.al., 2013). While these studies focused on exposure to ethics and CSR content, they did not specifically measure knowledge of social responsibility concepts. It may be that exposure alone is not enough. Rather, as suggested by attitudinal research, attitudes may be shaped by knowledge, more so than simply exposure.

Proposed Study and Contribution

This study examines the relationship between social responsibility knowledge and attitudes in graduating business students who will be entering the workforce and, in time, become mid and senior business managers making business decisions impacting their companies, employees, customers and society, with the focus being on Marketing majors relative to other business majors. The following three research questions are posed: 1. Do business students with more social responsibility knowledge have more positive attitudes toward social responsibility? 2. Are senior marketing majors, on average, more knowledgeable about social responsibility, than other business majors? 3. Do senior marketing majors have more positive attitudes toward social responsibility than other business majors?

Data was collected in Fall 2023 from 119 undergraduate business majors enrolled in a senior capstone, Applied Strategic Management, class at a public 4-year Midwestern campus (U.S.). The top majors represented are Finance and Marketing, followed by Management and Accounting. Almost all are traditional, full-time students. The study included a 40-question multiple-choice assessment of knowledge related to social responsibility concepts and frameworks and the 16-item “perceived role of ethics and social responsibility” (PRESOR) scale developed by Singhapakdi et al, (1996), frequently used in social responsibility research.

Based on attitude formation and change research, knowledge may influence attitudes toward social responsibility, setting the stage for students and future business leaders to make more socially responsible decisions or, at a minimum, to give more consideration to socially responsible actions.

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SESSION 5.2: BEHIND THE BRAND

Moderator:

Merlyn Griths

Summary Brief

Ethical Branding and Brand Trust

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This study seeks to understand the relationship between ethical branding and brand trust, with the relationship being moderated by brand credibility and mediated by emotional attachment and quality. Findings suggest that brand trust is positively and significantly influenced by ethical branding. However, the influence of brand credibility on the relationship is insignificant. Results further reveal that ethical branding directly influences emotional attachment and perceived quality, consequently, brand trust. This highlights that an ethical branding is effective for increasing trust for the brand among the consumers.

Introduction

Ethical branding is about how consumers perceive a brand's honesty, responsibility, and accountability (Brunk, 2010). Previous studies (e.g., Singh, Iglesias, and Batista-Foguet 2012) suggest that ethical branding fosters a positive influence on consumers' trust in a brand. However, the detailed mechanisms involved in determining consumers' brand related trust and the role ethical practices by a brand play in affecting such perception remain largely unexplained. Understanding this relationship is essential as brands spend billions of dollars on ethical initiatives to influence consumers' behavioral outcomes, and developing trust, in particular, is crucial for a brand.

Brand credibility refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, reliable, and capable of delivering on its promises (Sweeney & Swait, 2008). The perceived credibility of a brand establishes a foundation of reliability upon which consumers base their brand evaluations (Kemp & Bui, 2011). Given that consumers' evaluation of ethical branding depends on brand credibility - does ethical branding by a credible brand further enhance consumers' trust? Specifically, does brand credibility moderate the relationship between ethical branding and brand trust?

Emotional attachment is considered as a deeper bond between a consumer and a brand (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011)- where consumers feel a strong psychological connection to a particular brand, resulting in positive attitudes (Park, *et al.*, 2010). In the context of ethical branding, Garanti (2019) suggests that a brand's ethical initiatives enhance consumers' emotional attachment towards the brand. Given the impact of ethical branding on consumers' emotional response and that emotional attachment enhances consumers' behavioral outcomes - do a brand's ethical initiatives build consumers' emotional attachment and subsequently influence brand trust? Specifically, does emotional attachment mediate the relationship between ethical branding and brand trust?

Perceived quality is how good a brand is, determined by how well it meets the needs and expectations of consumers (Crosby, DeVito, & Pearson, 2003). Perceived quality is also assessed as a psychological and intellectual-oriented concept (Klabi, 2020). Brand's ethical initiatives act as a credential factor that positively influences consumers' perceptions of quality (Sierra *et al.*, 2017). For a brand, the key to success depends, to a large extent, on understanding how marketers' strategies influence consumers' quality perceptions as well as how much quality perceptions influence their behavioral outcomes. Despite growing interest in the outcomes of ethical branding (e.g. Kumar and Kaushal, 2023), the underlying psychological process of how a brand's ethical initiatives influence consumers' perceptions of quality and how such quality perception influences brand trust is still unclear. As various factors may influence consumers' trust towards the brand; understanding the intricate mechanisms involved in developing consumers' trust following the brand's ethical initiatives becomes ever so important.

Hypothesis

- H1: Ethical branding positively affects brand trust, such that higher ethical branding leads to higher brand trust.
- H2. Brand Credibility positively moderates the relationship between ethical branding and brand trust.
- H3. Emotional attachment mediates the relationship between ethical branding and brand trust.
- H4. Perceived quality mediates the relationship between ethical branding and brand trust.

Method

A 2 (brand ethicality: low vs. high) X 2 (brand credibility: low vs. high) between-subjects experimental design was applied with brand trust as a dependent variable. We recruited 208 adults for the main experiment through a large university in Bangladesh. Participants accessed the study via the online survey platform Qualtrics. After answering demographic questions, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions, where they read the press release from a brand (e.g., Revive or Vaseline). The treatment conditions were manipulated in a fictitious press release. Subjects read about a body lotion brand's ethical practice and how different these brands are in terms of their ethical practices. Ethical branding was manipulated by forming a press release with ethical practices of a brand that were either low or high in ethicality. Brand credibility was manipulated by utilizing two separate brands with significantly different credibility scores (low brand credibility: Revive; high brand credibility: Vaseline). Valid and reliable scales from prior research have been adopted/adapted for measuring the important variables in this research. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Key Findings

Ethical brand had a significant effect on brand trust, as predicted in H1 ($b = .195$, $p < 0.01$). The impact of ethical branding on brand trust did not vary by brand credibility, as indicated by the nonsignificant interaction ($b = -0.034$, $p > .05$), thus offering no support for H2. The indirect effects analysis revealed that ethical branding significantly influences brand trust through emotional attachment and perceived quality ($p < 0.01$), supporting the mediating roles of emotional attachment (H3) and perceived quality (H4) in this relationship.

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Summary Brief

Guilt or Ego Inflation? Individual Differences in Using Emotionally Manipulative Advertising Strategies

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Through self-customizable online courses, students can design more satisfying learning experiences that are more compatible with their needs and preferences. By choosing an assignment mix that provides more focused and personally relevant course content, students can balance their diverse interests and learning goals against course/program-specific learning objectives. Anecdotal evidence gleaned from multiple sections of a self-customizable marketing research course suggests several course-design recommendations.

Introduction

Emotional manipulation in organizational marketing communication leads to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that can directly influence economic, political, and societal issues. Emotional persuasiveness research has generally focused on inducing either positive emotions, such as through playfulness or humor, or inducing negative emotions, such as through invoking guilt, or fear. These appeals are in the service of influencing attitudes and behaviors toward their organization to increase recruitment. Thus, emotion is one tactic that can be used to change an individual's behavior, beliefs, and attitudes.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of manipulative personalities on choosing which marketing communication individuals would take when encouraging others to join a prosocial organization. We focus on three manipulative personality traits that have been widely studied in the business and psychological literature, namely the “Dark Triad” of personality (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The Dark Triad consists of Machiavellianism and subclinical narcissism and psychopathy. These three traits each manipulate in different ways, indicating the importance to examine trait types associated with the use of emotional appeal types (Jones & Paulhus, 2017).

Background

Marketing recruitment advertisements have been shown to affect attitudes and behaviors. These outcomes can be driven by different motivations and other individual differences. Two types of appeals, guilt-based and ego-promotion, are of particular interest in promoting pro-social outcomes.

Guilt appeals are commonly used by organizations to promote pro-social behaviors. Guilt has been most commonly used by charities or for health-related products (Huhmann & Brotherton, 1997). The famous ASPCA commercial with Sarah McLachlan's, “Arms of an Angel” music combined with guilt appeals such as, ‘This is your chance to say, I won't sit by while an animal suffers,’ is an example of a guilt-based appeal.

Ego-focused appeals, like guilt-based appeals, are also an influential appeal tactic. Ego-focused appeals can evoke boredom or pride (Faseur & Geuens, 2012). Ego-promotion appeals capture the type of ego-focused appeals that lead to feelings of control, independence, and pride (Faseur & Geuens, 2012; Aaker & Williams, 1998). Although examples of research on ego-promotion appeals are sparse, there are commonplace examples, (such as the government's use of Uncle Sam's, “I want YOU!” campaign for military recruitment), demonstrating the use and importance of understanding ego-promotion appeals.

Guilt appeals have a negative valence but are generally associated with pro-social outcomes. Because guilt taps into morality, there may be a contradiction among those who more highly express Machiavellian features. Specifically, Machiavellians may endorse guilt influence for others, but not be susceptible to guilt influence themselves. Assessing ego-promotion appeals will also provide greater insight into the use of the not well understood, but commonly used, ego-promotion influence. Moreover, research on a cluster of three unique but overlapping personality traits, referred to as the Dark Triad, suggest personality is an important indicator of unethical or anti-social outcomes (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Dark Triad and Manipulation

All Dark Triad traits share common elements such as dishonesty. However, their differences are important as well. In order for Machiavellian individuals to be flexible in their approach to manipulation (Bereczkei, 2015), they

have to be thoughtful in their antisocial approach (Jones & Paulhus, 2017), while finding ways to appeal to the attitudes of the target of their manipulation. In contrast, individuals high in narcissism are driven by ego-based needs (Jones & Paulhus, 2017), and their manipulation approaches derive from self-deception and overconfidence. Thus, they instill confidence in others, which allows them to be more effective in early interactions.

The Present Study: Hypothesis Development

Machiavellian individuals are successful and strategic manipulators (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). This combination of traits may lead Machiavellian individuals to choose to manipulate others using guilt appeals. The type of appeal used may help us understand how to increase prosocial involvement (e.g. protecting the environment) and how to identify and reduce anti-social recruitment (e.g. terrorist organizations). This may be done by implementing effective appeals that promote and demote certain behaviors. Thus, our study will examine Machiavellian appeal tactics for a fictitious organization that has a prosocial cause (against animal abuse).

H₁: *Machiavellianism will be significantly associated with using guilt appeals in recruitment statements for a pro-social organization.*

Some researchers argue that Machiavellian individuals are not able to comprehend emotions such as guilt, shame, and empathy (Davis & Stone, 2003). Therefore, this study will assess not only what appeal strategy Machiavellian individuals would use to persuade others, but also what strategy would be most effective on a Machiavellian individual.

H₂: *Machiavellianism will be significantly less influenced by guilt appeals in recruitment statements for a pro-social organization.*

Specifically, **H₁** and **H₂** will test whether Machiavellian individuals will endorse a guilt-based appeal, while finding the guilt-based appeal to be the least convincing appeal type. Comparatively, if high ethically orientated individuals perceives guilt-based and ego-promotion appeals as manipulative, these individuals would be more likely to endorse a neutral-toned appeal for organizational recruitment.

H₃: *Ethical orientation will be significantly associated with using neutral-toned appeal in recruitment statements for a pro-social organization.*

As narcissists are ego-driven, it is hypothesized that Narcissistic individuals will endorse ego-promotion appeals.

H₄: *Narcissism will be significantly associated with using ego-promotion appeals in recruitment statements for a pro-social organization.*

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Summary Brief

What Drives Brand Extension Success? Effects of Product Category Similarity, Brand Logo Symmetry, and Self-Regulatory Focus on Attitude Toward Brand Extensions

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Research examines the impact of extension similarity, individuals self-regulatory focus, and brand logo symmetry on brand extension evaluation. The results of an experimental study have confirmed prior findings that near extensions are evaluated more positively than distant extensions. In addition, the findings revealed that individuals hold a more favorable attitude toward near brand extensions with asymmetric brand logos than symmetric ones.

Introduction

Firms often use brand extension strategies (launching a new product category with an established brand name) to increase sales volume and broaden their business opportunities. In the CPG market, brand extensions account for almost 70% of new products (NielsenIQ, 2019). However, only 30% of all brand extensions survive the first two years in the U.S. consumer packaged goods market (Peng et al., 2023). As a result of the high failure rate of brand extensions, marketers must gain a deeper understanding of what drives their success.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how brand logo symmetry and individuals' regulatory focus moderate the effect of extension similarity on attitude toward brand extensions. The near vs. distant extensions metaphor was used to indicate whether the extended product is similar to the parent brand. In an experimental study, the results demonstrate that consumers favor near brand extensions over distant brand extensions and have a more favorable attitude toward near brand extensions with asymmetric brand logos.

Extension similarity

Prior brand extension research provides considerable evidence that consumers tend to evaluate new brand extensions based on their similarities to the parent brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Park et al., 1991; Barone, 2005; Boush and Loken, 1991). Specifically, a parent brand and new extension may be assessed based on whether they belong to similar product categories. Research has shown that a similar extension of a brand is perceived more positively than a dissimilar one. It is more likely that consumers prefer extensions whose product categories are similar to those of their parent brands because it is easier to generalize brand images to new extensions that belong to similar product categories (Boush and Loken 1991).

H1: Individuals will hold a more favorable attitude toward near brand extensions.

Moderating role of brand logo symmetry in evaluations of brand extensions

Brand logo symmetry is typically defined as “the level of reflection of an image around its vertical axis” (Bettels and Wiedmann, 2019). Existing research has revealed that symmetric forms create the impression of structure and calm (Creusen et al., 2010), while asymmetry is associated with arousal (Krupinski and Locher, 1988). In terms of brand extensions, the halo or spillover effect of parent brand logo design perception may impact consumers' attitudes toward new extended products. However, consumers may transfer the image of the parent brand to the new product only if there is a high perceived similarity between the parent brand and the new extension (Keller and Aaker, 1992). Due to the perception of asymmetric brand logos as more exciting and innovative and the spillover effect, consumers can positively react to near brand extensions with asymmetric brand logos.

H2: The effect of product category similarity on attitude toward the brand extension is moderated by brand logo symmetry, such that individuals will hold a more favorable attitude toward near brand extensions with asymmetric brand logos than symmetric ones.

Moderating role of regulatory focus in evaluations of brand extensions

A new extension can result in hedonic attainment value as it provides consumers with an additional opportunity to enjoy a favorite brand in a new product category. In this case, a new extension may evoke a positive reaction, including joy and excitement. Thus, the perceived hedonic value of an extension product should be particularly important to promotion-focused consumers given their sensitivity to potential gains. On the contrary, consumers may feel uncertainty when an extension is not similar to the parent brand category because the parent brand quality might not be transferable (Yeo and Park, 2006). Therefore, if an extension is perceived to be dissimilar to its parent brand, consumers might perceive high risks when purchasing it, and evaluate the extension less favorably (Krishna, et al., 2010; Morrin and Ratneshwar, 2003).

H3: The effect of extension similarity on attitude toward the brand extension is moderated by individuals' regulatory focus, such that promotion-focused individuals will hold a more favorable attitude toward distant brand extensions.

Data and Results

To test the H1 and H2, a 2 (near brand extensions vs distant brand extensions) $\times$ 2 (symmetric logo vs. asymmetric logo) between subjects factorial design was implemented. The results demonstrate significant main effect of the extension type ($M_{\text{near}} = 5.30$, $M_{\text{distant}} = 3.76$, $F(1, 179) = 70.42$, $p < 0.001$). The interaction between the extension type and the type of brand logo was significant ($F(1, 179) = 4.65$, $p < 0.05$). The findings show that respondents hold a more favorable attitude for near brand extensions with asymmetric brand logos ($M_{\text{symmetric}} = 5.03$ vs $M_{\text{asymmetric}} = 5.53$, $t(91) = -2.34$, $p = 0.02$). However, there is no significant difference between symmetric and asymmetric logos for distant brand extensions ($M_{\text{symmetric}} = 3.90$ vs $M_{\text{asymmetric}} = 3.61$, $t(88) = 0.97$, $p = 0.33$). Therefore, H1 and H2 are supported.

To test H3 a 2 (regulatory focus: promotion vs prevention) $\times$ 2 (extension type: near vs distant) ANOVA was performed, in which regulatory focus and extension type were between-subject variables. The interaction between the extension type and the regulatory focus was non-significant ($F(1, 179) = 0.002$, $p = 0.968$). H3 is not supported.

Discussion

The results of an experimental study have confirmed prior findings that near extensions are evaluated more positively than distant extensions. In addition, the research provides evidence that logo asymmetry enhances consumer attitude toward near brand extensions, adding to the understanding of how visual elements influence brand equity. The results contribute to the literature on brand management by highlighting the role of visual aesthetics in brand extension strategies.

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SESSION 5.3: #LeisureHydration

Moderator:

James Blair

Summary Brief

Decisions...Decisions: Should Cities Bring in Major Sporting Events and Build New Infrastructure?

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Over the years, we have seen cities and countries bid to bring major sporting events into their region for a variety of reasons. This can include to improve the brand perception of their location or bring positive economic benefit through tourism and hospitality. Some have questioned the benefits of bringing in these events and building new infrastructure. This study finds no significant difference in intention to recommend and revisit intention of participants when a city has newly built infrastructure or renovated infrastructure, which suggests municipalities should opt for the cheaper alternative. We do find that participants have higher intentions to recommend visiting a city and revisit intentions when the city hosts a major sporting event than when the city only offers a variety of entertainment opportunities. Additionally, we find the relationship between event type and revisit intention is mediated by cognitive destination image and intention to recommend.

Introduction

Over the years we have seen a competitive bidding process by country and cities around the world to land some of the largest sporting events. These potential host locations can do this for a variety of reasons such as showcasing their location to the world, bolster their brand through this sports spectacle to be seen positively by the rest of the world, and to yield a positive economic impact. Some have questioned the effectiveness of hosting these major sporting events in reaching some of these goals (Bennet, Matos, Blair, 2022). This is especially true of how new infrastructure can cost host cities significant funds and, in some instances, we see these stadiums underutilized and dilapidated resulting in a significant negative economic impact. We have seen this recently with new stadiums built during the Beijing Olympics and when Brazil hosted the World Cup (Mao, 2015; Mitra, 2015). Rojas-Méndez et al. (2019) found many formed negative attitudes related to Brazil hosting this major sporting event.

Some have recommended host cities place bids with a longer-term tourism focus in mind. This could include leveraging infrastructure currently in place with plans to incorporate temporary changes to the infrastructure or make renovations to current infrastructure meet the needs of the event as well as adapt the facility for future use at the conclusion of the sports spectacle (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). This creates an interesting question as to whether or not locations should seek out to host these major sporting events and if renovating current infrastructure can be a more effective strategy. Specifically, we examine how these strategies impact consumers' intentions to recommend visiting the host location, their revisit intention, and their cognitive destination image of the location. These host locations do not want consumers to just visit during the sports spectacle, but it could be argued that having those consumers visit the city in the future and regularly would be ideal to generate positive economic income from their tourism. Davies (2011) has called for more work to be done researching legacy cities, ones that have hosted major sporting events, to understand how to best drive positive economic and societal changes moving forward.

To answer these questions and address calls for future work in this area, we conduct an experiment finding that having new or renovated infrastructure results in no significant difference in the intention to recommend, revisit intention, and cognitive destination image perceptions for consumers. We do find significant differences across all three dependent variables when manipulating event type. Consumers had significantly higher intentions to recommend and revisit intentions as well as significantly more positive cognitive destination image perceptions for the host location when that location hosted a major sporting event instead of offering a variety of entertainment activities.

Background

Infrastructure

Sports stadiums and arenas can be very expensive costing not only millions, but often times billions of dollars. We see professional sports teams, universities, and municipalities investing significant funds towards new sports infrastructure (Bennett, Matos, & Blair, 2022). Within the United States, we have seen a boom in sports stadiums across the country (Hurt, 2021). Alm et al. (2016) established a stadium utilization index to measure the

usage of stadiums after hosting major events and found that private stadiums in general had higher utilization than public venues. Solberg and Ulvnes (2016) have warned about the costly amount needed to host these major sporting events due to expensive infrastructure that needs built. This supports the concern that newer infrastructure may not be ideal to utilize. Overall, we do see mixed results as to positives and negatives with construction of sports infrastructure related to hosting major sporting events, but the majority of past findings suggest how the costs may outweigh the potential benefits.

Sporting Events

A perception has been created in the current sports landscape that hosting a major sporting event can have positive benefits for that host city and nation moving forward (Preuss & Solberg, 2013), but some have questioned whether these benefits exist or are inflated (Wilson, 2017). Kalmanovich et al. (2021) highlight issues of hosting major sporting events like the Olympics due to the sheer size of the spectacle, the substantial amount of preparation it takes to get ready for the event, and safety concerns. Additionally, Lin and Lu (2018) find that developing countries hosting major sporting events do not result in economic growth, additional outside investment, new employment opportunities, or more international trade partners. We do see mixed results from the literature as to the benefits of hosting major sporting events, but they appear to support some positive outcomes for host cities.

Intention to Recommend

Prior research has found event quality and satisfaction with the event has driven intentions for consumers to recommend the host city to others (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2022). Osti, Disegna, and Brida (2012) also provide support for event satisfaction leading to increased likelihood that attendees will recommend the location to others. Quality of the experience has also been shown to influence visitors of a sporting event to recommend that location to others (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2021). Based on these past findings, it appears the event experience itself is what impacts consumer intentions to recommend. Therefore, hosting the actual major sporting event and not the actual infrastructure itself should lead to increased levels of intention to recommend by consumers.

Revisit Intention

Prior research has found event satisfaction has led to increased revisit intentions to the host location (Osti, Disegna, and Brida, 2012). Event experience has also been found to impact several behavioral intentions of attendees such as their likelihood to revisit the host location in the future (Coetzee, Lee, & Faisal, 2019). Rahayu et al. (2024) found the quality of the event had a positive impact on attendees' intention to revisit the location in the future. Additionally, services offering combinations can make a difference as to whether or not attendees plan to revisit the location in the future as well as their satisfaction levels with the event (Vassiliadis, Mombeuil, & Fotiadis, 2021). Based on these past findings, it appears that aspects with the event itself are what derive revisit intentions and not aspects about the stadium infrastructure.

Cognitive Destination Image

Destination image includes attributes and holistic impressions of a particular location (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). The cognitive destination image consists of a consumer's knowledge and beliefs about the location based on how they perceive the attribute of that location (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Previous research has examined how image of locations can impact intentions to recommend and revisit intentions. Zhang, Kim, and Xing (2021) found when the image between the host city and sporting event were congruent it has a positive effect on consumer intentions to recommend the city to others. Emotional experiences at a particular location can impact their perceive image of that site (Prayag, 2017). Image of the host city has been found to influence consumer revisit intentions to that location (Rahayu et al., 2024).

Results

First, we test for the main effect of infrastructure on intention to recommend. Using a one-way ANOVA, we find participants exposed to the new infrastructure condition ($m = 3.31$, $SD = 1.10$) did not have significantly different intentions to recommend visiting the host location from participants exposed to the renovated infrastructure condition ($m = 3.15$, $SD = 1.09$) ($F(1, 230) = 1.17$, $p = .28$). This provides support for H1. Then we tested the main effect of event type on intention to recommend. Using a one-way ANOVA, we find participants exposed to the major sporting event condition ($m = 3.43$, $SD = 1.02$) had significantly higher intentions to recommend visiting the host location than participants exposed to the renovated infrastructure condition ($m = 3.04$, $SD = 1.14$) ($F(1, 230) = 7.19$, $p < .01$). This provides support for H2. A one-way ANOVA was used to test for the main effect of infrastructure on revisit intention. We find participants exposed to the new infrastructure condition ($m = 3.13$, $SD =$

1.16) did not have significantly different revisit intentions to the host location from participants exposed to the renovated infrastructure condition ($m = 3.20$, $SD = 1.10$) ($F(1, 230) = .18$, $p = .67$). This provides support for H3. A one-way ANOVA was used to test for the main effect of infrastructure on revisit intention. We find participants exposed to the major sporting event condition ($m = 3.32$, $SD = 1.14$) had significantly higher revisit intentions for the host location than participants exposed to the renovated infrastructure condition ($m = 3.02$, $SD = 1.10$) ($F(1, 230) = 4.00$, $p = .046$). This provides support for H4. A one-way ANOVA was used to test for the main effect of infrastructure on cognitive destination image. We find participants exposed to the new infrastructure condition ($m = 3.71$, $SD = .61$) did not have significantly different cognitive destination image perceptions of the host location from participants exposed to the renovated infrastructure condition ($m = 3.67$, $SD = .63$) ($F(1, 230) = .33$, $p = .57$). This provides support for H5. A one-way ANOVA was used to test for the main effect of infrastructure on cognitive destination image. We find participants exposed to the major sporting event condition ($m = 3.78$, $SD = .60$) had significantly more positive cognitive destination image perceptions of the host location than participants exposed to the renovated infrastructure condition ($m = 3.60$, $SD = .63$) ($F(1, 230) = 4.73$, $p = .03$). This provides support for H6. Lastly, we tested for sequential mediation across the three dependent variables. Figure 8 provides support for the sequential mediation across the three dependent variables. Event type significantly impacted cognitive destination image ($b = -.1762$, $t = -2.1747$, $p = .0307$, $LLCI = -.3358$, $ULCI = -.0166$), suggesting participants exposed to the major sporting event condition had more favorable cognitive destination image perceptions than participants in the various entertainment condition. Next, cognitive destination image perceptions increased intentions to recommend the host location ($b = .9329$, $t = 9.3851$, $p < .000a$, $LLCI = .7371$, $ULCI = 1.1288$). There was positive impact of intentions to recommend on revisit intentions for the host city ($b = .5630$, $t = 9.8260$, $p < .0001$, $LLCI = .4501$, $ULCI = .6759$). Together, these results provide support H7. We do have full mediation since the direct effect from event type no longer remains significant to revisit intentions in the full mediation model ($b = -.0008$, $t = -.0078$, $p = .9938$, $LLCI = -.2113$, $ULCI = .2096$). This provides support for H7.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results from our study, we provide helpful insights to sport marketing and management researchers as well as sport administrators as well as tourism professionals looking to bring in more tourists and improve the perceptions of their location. First, we find that new infrastructure does not significantly impact intentions to recommend, revisit intentions, or generate more positive cognitive destination perceptions than renovated facilities. With the cost of infrastructure reaching astronomical levels in many instances (Bennett, Matos, & Blair, 2022), municipalities and tourism professionals should opt for plans in the requests for proposal (RFP) that include renovating current facilities to adapt to the wants and needs of the major sporting event they are hoping to host. This should cost substantially less to construct and will not have negative consequences for these specific outcome variables which are highly desired when hosting these events. Additionally, we find that hosting a major sporting event can obtain these desired outcomes for host cities. So, hosting the actual event can help with intentions to recommend visiting the location, revisit intentions of consumers to the location, and also generate positive cognitive destination image perceptions. Therefore, tourism managers should seek out hosting major events like this in the future while keeping in mind the cost involved with altering the current infrastructure needed to put on the event successfully and safely. Lastly, we provide insights to sport, tourism, and consumer behavior researchers that cognitive destination image and intention to recommend mediate the relationship between event type and revisit intentions. Understanding that these variables drive this highly desired outcome of getting consumers to revisit this location again in the future is beneficial to practitioners too since this generates a more positive future economic impact having consumers who plan on visiting again and spending more of their disposable income.

Future research should examine if hosting these major sporting events on a re-occurring basis, like how Dayton, Ohio hosts the First Four NCAA Basketball Event, can have an additional positive effect or if that the host location only needs to sporadically host major sporting events. In the past, residents within locations hosting recurring events like the Tour de France have supporting having this major sporting event even (Bull & Lovell, 2007). These insights would provide tourism management professionals a better idea of how frequently they need to bid and win the hosting rights for majors sporting events. Previous research has found that sport infrastructure available impacted sport participation rates (Hallmann et al., 2012) and others have speculated that it can have positive consequences for community members (Jorgič, 2023). Future research could examine if adding these sports facilities for fans also impacts recreational participation rates. This could allow for a positive benefit of healthy sport and exercise participation as well as a community building opportunity through sport. Our research found destination image to have a positive impact on intentions to recommend and revisit intentions. Others have found a positive destination image to have additionally benefits perceived service quality, value, and satisfaction (Cham et al., 2022). Future research could examine how establishing a positive city image in the minds of residents as well as

tourists can create long-term benefits for locations hosting these sporting events. Lastly, we have seen sports arenas and stadiums include more premium areas over the years. Blair et al. (2016) found luxury suite holders to care about several aspects about their experience, with parking being the most important. Future research should examine what luxury experiences should be included when building this sporting event infrastructure for major sporting events and how to incorporate that luxury experience after that event to ensure it gets proper utilization from visitors and the community moving forward.

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Summary Brief

Consumer Heuristics and Airport Travel Experience

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This study examines traveler evaluations of airport experiences through the lens of consumer heuristics and service quality theories, providing insights into the multi-stakeholder environment of modern airports. Utilizing quantitative multivariate analysis and conceptual mapping, we analyze consumer reviews based on their travel motivations. The results reveal significant differences in how these passenger segments perceive airport service quality, including queuing times, terminal cleanliness, staff interactions, and overall experience. Business consumers prioritize efficiency and convenience, while family and couple leisure travelers emphasize logistical support and comfort; solo leisure passengers focus on information and connectivity. The study highlights the role of consumer heuristics in shaping perceptions with distinct expectations and priorities across traveler types. This research offers a conceptual framework for understanding airport service quality within a multi-stakeholder context, emphasizing the importance of tailored strategies to enhance traveler satisfaction.

References available upon request.

Summary Brief

Testing the Assumptions of Concert Sponsorship: Does the Performer Impact Purchase Intentions?

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Previous research examines the appropriateness or acceptability of sponsoring organizations with concert themes, as well as the role of celebrity spokespersons in shaping businesses. Few studies have investigated the impact of a 'performing act' (e.g., singer, band) on sponsoring brands. As a result, this study seeks to fill a gap in the existing concert promotion literature by assessing whether the performing act (singer/band) transfers any of their characteristics to the sponsoring brands, resulting in a positive brand image among concert attendees.

Summary Brief

No Need for a Mulligan, This is a Gimme: How to Increase Perceptions of Charitability and Altruism for a Golf Technology Brand

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Organizations within sports try to achieve positive brand characteristics in the marketplace. Some desirable traits brands include charitability and altruism. Across two studies with golfers, we find how brands can achieve these positive perceptions. We find understanding the company's business leads to higher charitability perceptions by consumers which is mediated by uniqueness of object and trust in technological interface. Additionally, we find an aspect of consumer self-confidence (social outcomes) and narcissism moderate the relationship of cause-related marketing (CRM) and perceptions of charitability and altruism. We observe consumers with lower levels of social outcomes and narcissism view brands as significantly more charitable and altruistic when exposed to a CRM advertisement for the brand than a non-CRM advertisement. No significant difference was observed in perceptions of charitability and altruism for the brand across the CRM and non-CRM advertisements for consumers possessing higher levels of social outcomes and narcissism.

Introduction

Organizations regularly desire to position themselves as charitable in the marketplace (Graça & Zwick, 2021). This has become more of a focus with organizations focusing on the triple bottom line, instead of just profit maximization. In recent years, organizations have changed their structures and strategies to meet the differing wants and needs of consumers in the marketplace (Blair, 2016; Davis, 2016). As a result, we see more organizations utilizing cause-related marketing and other strategies to alter how consumers perceive them in the marketplace. Giving back to others in society has been shown to have positive outcomes for organizations that regularly engage in these activities (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). Throughout the sports landscape, we are seeing significant changes and disruption with technology as well as organizations partnering with charities to be seen as a community partner (Bennett, Matos, & Blair, 2022). Within the golf industry we have also see brands engage in cause-related marketing, where they devote resources to charities within the golf community and even causes outside of the sport (Cortsen, 2014). We conduct two experimental studies with golfers. These provide us insights into how uniqueness of object and trust in technological interface mediate the relationship between understanding the company's business and charitability. Additionally, we find social outcomes and narcissism moderate the relationship of cause-related marketing and both outcome variables: charitability and altruism. As a result, we provide insights for how new technology brands entering the sports landscape can be perceived as charitable and altruistic as well as specific segments of consumers to focus marketing efforts to achieve more favorable attitudes by increasing charitability and altruistic perceptions about our brand.

Background

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) “refers to a business approach that takes into account economic, environmental, and social issues in a balanced, holistic, and long-term manner for the benefit of current and future stakeholders (Marco-Lajara et al., 2022, pp. 1).” An organization should look for a balanced approach to how they interact with external factors that impact or are of concern to their target audience. While CSR is vital for a company, there begins to be a level of skepticism because so many organizations are promoting the good works they are doing and same may be more or less genuine and impactful than others.

Cause-Related Marketing (CRM)

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is defined as “a commercial activity by which businesses and charities or good causes form a partnership with each other to market an image, product or service for mutual benefit (Adkins,

2012, pp. 670).” As described, a mutual benefit will come from CRM between a business and charity. The CSR of a company is reflected through CRM, resulting in strengthening of the overall image and reputation of a business if CRM is performed correctly.

Understanding the Company's Business

To reach consumers, the consumer needs to understand the company's business. This relates to customer relationship management, which “refers to utilizing extensive strategies and engineering to find, obtain, and cultivate advantaged customers, and hence maintain long-term partnerships (Sin et. al, 2005).” The consumer should know what the company does, how they do it, why they do it, etc.

Charitability

A key component to a company's reputation is its charitability in the eyes of the consumer. Charity is a type of benevolent goodwill toward or love of humanity. An organization looks to perform an act that will help their community and potentially consumers. Concerning CSR and CRM, charitable actions from a company will affect the company's reputation to the consumers, as seen in attribution theory. “Individuals will try to develop a commonsense explanation of why actions have occurred and make causal inferences (Dean, 2003, p. 94).” It is reasonable for a company to expect the customer to seek to understand the intent of their actions. So, they must ensure that their charitability is genuine and authentic, helping to create a positive reputation.

Uniqueness of Object

“New technology is driven by inventions of new things and new ways of doing things (originating in advances in basic and applied science) that are transformed into usable innovations in markets to satisfy needs, achieve goals, solve problems of adopters that take advantage of important opportunities, or to cope with consequential problems/environmental threat (Coccia, 2021, pp. 1). The reputation of the company can make it stand out amongst its peers in multiple target markets. There is a connection between a company's reputation and their CSR activity. In fact, CSR can have an impact on customer trust, loyalty, and satisfaction. Overall, having a sound and effective CSR strategy as a business can lead to desirable consumer outcomes.

Trust in Technological Interface

Technology is one of the most constant evolving areas in the world today. The advancements in technology and studies behind the concept are rapidly changing which brings various feelings to several consumers. As we know, organizations are consistently looking for innovation in industries and research various topics towards improvement. Kuen and others (2023) completed a study to evaluate the relations of trust in technology and trust in provider for technology acceptance.

Altruism

Kerr, Godfrey-Smith, and Feldman (2004) defined altruism as a “behavior that benefits others at a personal cost to the behaving individual.” Perceptions of altruism have positively impacted CSR outcomes for organizations (Rim, Yang, & Lee, 2016). Organizations engaging in CSR and CRM do not always have altruistic intentions, but instead can be focused on how these initiatives impact the profitability of the organization which can make consumers skeptical (van Rekom, Go, & Calter, 2014). Therefore, organizations would desire to be perceived as altruistic.

Social Outcomes

Social outcomes is a component of consumer self-confidence (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001). This consists of a consumer's ability to meet their purchase objectives that generate positive outcomes in the form of others reactions (Wright, 1975). Social outcomes include a consumer's beliefs regarding their ability to make sound judgments based on prior experiences and learning resulting in overall satisfactory decision making (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001). Since consumers possessing lower levels of this trait will have less confidence about their ability to make decisions based on past experiences that result in positive reactions from others they may rely on the messaging of organizations to determine if they are more or less altruistic and charitable.

Narcissism

Narcissism is considered a negative personality trait and part of the dark triad (Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). In simple terms, Muris et al. (2017) consider narcissism to be an egotistical admiration. Blair, Gala, and Lunde (2022) found consumers possessing higher levels

of the dark triad trait have form positive attitudes, higher intentions to recommend to others and higher purchase intentions than those possessing lower levels of this trait. Consumers possessing higher levels of narcissism has been linked with extreme altruism behaviors (White, Szabo, & Tiliopoulos, 2018). Narcissists have been found to engage in pro-social behavior when it is self-serving (Kauten, & Barry, 2016). As a result, we can see narcissists value positive traits like altruism and charitability when they are of benefit to themselves. We may anticipate consumers with lower levels of narcissism receive CRM messages from organizations they could see how the actions of the organization benefit others and would view the organization as more altruistic and charitable over non-CRM messages.

Results

In study one, we tested for sequential mediation across the three dependent variables. Understanding the company's business significantly impacted uniqueness of object ($b = .5912, t = 6.7613, p < .0001, LLCI = .4188, ULCI = .7636$), suggesting participants with higher levels of understanding the company's business perceived the uniqueness of the object to be greater. Next, uniqueness of object increased trust in technical interface ($b = .1644, t = 3.7471, p = .0002, LLCI = .0779, ULCI = .2509$). There was positive impact of trust in technical interface on perceptions of charitability ($b = .2252, t = 2.8643, p = .0046, LLCI = .0702, ULCI = .3803$). We do have partial mediation since the direct effect from understanding the company's business remains significant to perceptions of charitability ($b = -.1488, t = -2.0551, p = .0412, LLCI = -.2915, ULCI = -.0060$).

In study two, we tested for the main effect of cause-related marketing on perceptions of altruism and charitability. Using a one-way ANOVA, we find participants exposed to a cause-related marketing advertisement ($m = 4.22, SD = .62$) had significantly greater perceptions of altruism for the company brand than when exposed to an advertisement without cause-related marketing ($m = 3.96, SD = .69$) ($F(1, 200) = 7.60, p = .01$). Additionally, we find participants exposed to a cause-related marketing advertisement ($m = 4.21, SD = .58$) had significantly greater perceptions of charitability for the company brand than when exposed to an advertisement without cause-related marketing ($m = 3.84, SD = .70$) ($F(1, 200) = 16.61, p < .01$).

Next, we test the moderation effect of social outcomes on the relationship between CRM and perceptions of altruism as well as charitability. The interaction effect between the CRM and social outcomes was tested using a spotlight analysis (Krishna, 2016). There was a significant interaction effect of the cause-related marketing and social outcomes on perceptions of altruism ($F(1, 198) = 11.02, p < .01$). Participants exposed to a non-CRM message had significantly lower perceptions of altruism for the brand when they possessed lower levels of social outcomes than those with higher levels of social outcomes. Additionally, participants exposed to CRM messages had the same level perceptions of altruism for the brand across all levels of social outcomes they possessed. A Johnson-Neyman analysis was conducted which shows when the interaction effect becomes significant (Johnson & Fay, 1950; Johnson & Neyman, 1936). The Johnson-Neyman analysis suggests the interaction effect becomes significant when social outcomes falls below 3.95. This analysis suggests CRM messaging differences occur with consumers possessing lower levels of the social outcomes trait.

We found there was a significant interaction effect of CRM and social outcomes on perceptions of charitability ($F(1, 198) = 7.33, p = .01$). Participants exposed to a non-CRM message had significantly lower perceptions of charitability for the brand when they possessed lower levels of social outcomes than those with higher levels of social outcomes. Additionally, participants exposed to CRM messages had the same level perceptions of charitability for the brand across all levels of social outcomes they possessed. The Johnson-Neyman analysis suggests the interaction effect becomes significant when social outcomes falls below 4.28. This analysis suggests CRM messaging differences occur with consumers possessing lower levels of the social outcomes trait.

Then we tested the moderation effect of narcissism on the relationship between CRM and perceptions of altruism as well as charitability using a spotlight analysis. There was a significant interaction effect of the cause-related marketing and narcissism on perceptions of altruism ($F(1, 198) = 6.02, p = .02$). Participants exposed to a non-CRM message had significantly lower perceptions of altruism for the brand when they possessed lower levels of narcissism than those with higher levels of narcissism. Additionally, participants exposed to CRM messages had the same level perceptions of altruism for the brand across all levels of narcissism they possessed. The Johnson-Neyman analysis suggests the interaction effect becomes significant when narcissism falls below 2.97. This analysis suggests CRM messaging differences occur with consumers possessing lower levels of the narcissism trait.

Next, we found there was a significant interaction effect of CRM and narcissism on perceptions of charitability ($F(1, 198) = 5.25, p = .02$). Participants exposed to a non-CRM message had significantly lower perceptions of charitability for the brand when they possessed lower levels of narcissism than those with higher levels of narcissism. Additionally, participants exposed to CRM messages had the same level perceptions of charitability for the brand across all levels of narcissism they possessed. The Johnson-Neyman analysis suggests the

interaction effect becomes significant when narcissism falls below 3.49. This analysis suggests CRM messaging differences occur with consumers possessing lower levels of the narcissism trait.

Discussion and Conclusion

These findings from Study 1 and Study 2 provide helpful insights into how consumers perceive new brands within the sport industry as well as how brands can achieve these positive brand characteristics as well as who they should target and how to communicate with them to achieve desired brand perceptions in the marketplace. First, we find that it is imperative for consumers to understand the company's business for the organization to be perceived as charitable. Brands must be able to clearly communicate who they are, what they offer, and the value they provide to consumers in the marketplace. Second, we find the important mediating roles that uniqueness of object and trust in technological interface play in understanding the company's business and perceptions of charity. Since we used a brand offering a new technology in the marketplace, consumers need to know what the organization does so they can see how it is different and unique from other offerings available which can lead to them trusting the technology offered and as a result viewing the organization as more charitable since the organization has clearly stated how they are helping others through their product offerings. Third, we find that CRM advertisements can lead to higher perceptions of charity and altruism for brands than non-CRM advertisements. It is important for organizations to not only communicate who they are and what they do but show how their brand is helping causes. It is common for sports brands to partner with local, national, and international causes to create a better connection with consumers and serve as community partners through CSR initiatives (Bennett, Matos, & Blair, 2022). By clearly doing this, organizations can better position themselves as charitable and altruistic with consumers in the marketplace. Fourth, we find social outcomes and narcissism moderates CRM and perceptions of charity as well as altruism of the brand. These insights are especially important for newer brands like the one tested in the experiments since they are still trying to create a brand personality in the marketplace that consumers can identify and differentiate from others in the marketplace.

Through these findings there are opportunities for further research to be done in this area. We are seeing the rise of fluid consumers in the marketplace. These are individuals with access to mobile smart technology. This allows them to search for information about brands, products, and organizations more easily and on the go. Marketers need to be able to manage perceptions of their brands in the marketplace (Blair, 2019; Correia, 2016). With organizations having the goals as being perceived as altruistic and charitable through CSR and CRM campaigns as well as having consumers form positive attitudes about them, it is important that this is done through proper marketing efforts online and by providing information that can be easily accessed. Future research should examine how marketers can achieve these outcomes online with more fluid consumers in the marketplace. Additionally, we examined how newer sport brands can achieve these highly desired brand personality traits. Future research could look to replicate results outside of the sport context within other industries. Additionally, researchers could examine if the effects hold for brands that are established in the marketplace and attempting to reposition themselves or investigating brands that not technology focused like the one used in our scenarios. Lastly, our research stopped at determining strategies and consumers possessing particular traits in achieving desired brand personality traits. Many practitioners care about how those branding traits can result in additional favorable outcomes (loyalty, increased purchase frequency, etc.). Future research should explore if brands achieving these traits can have additional positive implications for the organization in the marketplace.

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SESSION 5.4: TRUTH IN ADVERTISING

Moderator:

Laura Pricer

Summary Brief

The Impact of Forward-Looking Sustainability Messages in Public Service Announcements

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Advertisers and policymakers have long realized the importance of public service announcements (PSAs) in helping to shape consumer behavior and sentiments. PSAs can also play an important role in transporting a viewer to a future state. To address the various roles of positive emotions and to investigate the effectiveness of future-oriented sustainability PSAs, this study examines the impact of positive emotions, specifically love and excitement, in future-focused message appeals on consumer attitudes and perceptions of radio PSA effectiveness. The study also explores differences across French and US participants by measuring the mediating role of forestalgia and the moderating effect of culture. An experiment with student samples tested these relationships, aiming to provide insights into policy and social communication strategies.

Introduction

As society becomes more concerned about sustainability, policymakers, and social marketers seek effective ways to promote sustainable consumption behaviors (Sarfraz et al., 2023; Sivaraman, 2020). While much research focuses on commercial sustainability advertising, less attention is given to the emotional experiences of consumers and their roles in public service announcements (PSAs) (Rathee and Milfeld, 2023). PSAs, which are seen as credible and effective, show inconsistent results in promoting sustainability, with mixed findings on the impact of positive and negative emotional appeals (Matthes, 2019). Negative emotions like fear and guilt are traditionally used in PSAs, but positive emotions such as love, and contentment also show potential in encouraging prosocial behaviors.

Background

Public service announcements (PSAs), aimed at changing consumer attitudes and behaviors related to societal goals, have been effectively used by government and non-profit organizations for decades (Bator & Cialdini, 2000; O'Keefe & Reid, 2020). They are valued for their wide reach, low cost, and credibility. Research on PSA effectiveness varies, with some studies emphasizing the role of cognitive processing for long-term impact and others advocating emotional cues for immediate influence. Positive emotions such as love and excitement are particularly relevant for PSAs, potentially fostering empathy and prosocial behaviors (Cavanaugh et al., 2015). However, the role of emotions in pro-environmental messages is less clear, often showing mixed results (Bator & Cialdini, 2000).

Key Findings

A One-Way ANOVA examined the direct effect of future-oriented sustainability messages on attitudes toward the ad and ad effectiveness. Results indicated that respondents had a more favorable attitude toward excitement/inspiration-inducing messages compared to love-inducing messages (Excitement/Inspiration = 4.62, Love = 3.78, $p < 0.05$), supporting H1a. Additionally, respondents rated excitement/inspiration messages more favorably in terms of ad effectiveness (Excitement/Inspiration = 4.43, Love = 3.40, $p < 0.05$), supporting H1b. Moreover, those in the excitement/inspiration condition experienced significantly stronger forestalgia compared to the love condition (Excitement/Inspiration = 4.4, Love = 3.5, $p < 0.05$), supporting H2. Thus, excitement-inducing PSAs create greater forestalgia experiences, more favorable attitudes, and greater persuasiveness than love-inducing PSAs.

Using PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval, the mediating relationships were calculated. The excitement/inspiration message significantly affected forestalgia (0.64, SE = 0.16, $t = 3.89$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H2. Forestalgia significantly influenced attitudes toward the ad (0.47, SE = 0.08, $t = 5.90$, $p < 0.01$) and perceived ad effectiveness (0.59, SE = 0.09, $t = 6.76$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H3a and H3b. The

indirect paths from ad type to attitudes and ad effectiveness were significant, indicating full mediation by forestalgia. The direct effects of ad type on attitudes and ad effectiveness were non-significant, further supporting H4a and H4b. These results show that excitement-inducing messages are more effective in generating favorable responses through the creation of forestalgia.

Using PROCESS Model 14 with 5,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval, the role of culture as a moderator was analyzed. The interaction effect for forestalgia*culture on ad attitude (0.42, SE = 0.16, $t = 2.58$, $p < 0.05$) was significant, supporting H5a. The moderated mediation index (0.27, SE = 0.14, CI [0.03, 0.58]) indicates that culture moderates the indirect effect of ad type on attitudes through forestalgia. A spotlight analysis identified Johnson-Neyman points, suggesting that French participants had higher ad attitudes at lower forestalgia levels (< 3.12) and U.S. participants had higher attitudes at higher forestalgia levels (> 5.28). Thus, U.S. participants showed higher overall ad attitudes when forestalgia was high compared to French participants.

Implications and Conclusion

As sustainability gains prominence in public and marketing communications, understanding the drivers of effective sustainability messages becomes crucial. Most research in this area focuses on commercially sponsored advertising, exploring short-term behavioral changes through message, channel, and recipient characteristics. However, less attention is given to the emotional experiences that activate sustainable attitudes in public service announcements (PSAs). This study addresses this gap by investigating the effects of positive emotional appeals—excitement versus love—on creating forestalgia (future-oriented nostalgia) and fostering positive attitudes toward sustainability PSAs. Practitioners can leverage these insights by using futuristic scripts, experimenting with various positive emotions, and considering cultural differences when designing cross-cultural sustainability campaigns. This research contributes to the literature by promoting the study of forestalgia and its role in future-oriented sustainability communications.

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Summary Brief

Exploring the Sociocultural Dynamics of Women's Aging and Beauty in Marketing

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Among the hottest items for Generation Alpha girls during Christmas 2023 was luxury skin care, and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons reports that Generation Z is increasingly undergoing cosmetic procedures. Meanwhile, millennials claim that they are aging better than any cohort—before or since. These trends and others associated with the aging of the first digital generations have raised new issues, opportunities, and questions for marketing practitioners and scholars alike. However, society's emphasis on youth and beauty in relation to women's value is not a new phenomenon. Therefore, this research asks: How does marketing communicate youth-centric beauty standards? And how have these messages and standards evolved over time? To answer these questions, this study analyzes marketing communications through a critical feminist lens. Specifically, by grounding the examination of such promotions within their historical context and assessing the latent sentiment encoded therein, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of marketing in establishing societal norms related to women's aging. The findings highlight the need for more inclusive and empowering representations of aging women in marketing communications.

Introduction

The intersection of aging, beauty, and marketing has profound implications for societal beliefs and individual experiences. For example, alarm has recently been raised over girls' and pre-teens' use of anti-aging skincare (Nguyen & Maloy, 2024; Thomas, 2024; Yaptangco, 2024). Simultaneously, young women undergoing cosmetic procedures has become more common (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2023), and middle-aged women claim to have achieved a better way to age (Gibbs, 2024; Jones, 2023; Wong, 2024). While such trends are undoubtedly related to traditional marketing strategies, critics point out that, as the first digital generations, millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha have also been affected by campaigns using tactics such as influencer marketing and images generated with artificial intelligence. Thus, there is currently a need for a deep exploration of the historical roots and linguistic strategies that perpetuate beauty ideals. In response, this research employs a critical feminist lens to dissect the intricate relationships between marketing practices and the sociocultural dynamics surrounding women's aging and beauty. By examining historical and contemporary marketing messages, the study reveals the linguistic strategies that shape societal beliefs about aging women.

Historical Context and Linguistic Analysis

In contemporary Western societies, the aging population is a growing demographic, with women often experiencing longer lifespans than men (Mather & Kilduff, 2020). Furthermore, despite significant societal shifts towards body positivity, the pressure for women to conform to youth-centric beauty standards remains pervasive (Cohen et al., 2021), as evidenced by the behaviors of young-to-middle-aged consumers (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2023; Gibbs, 2024; Nguyen & Maloy, 2024). As such, there is a need to dissect the historical roots and linguistic strategies perpetuating these beauty ideals. By analyzing marketing messages from the late 19th century to the present, the research seeks to elucidate the evolution of beauty standards related to aging and their impact on women's and societal perceptions and behaviors (Belk & Pollay, 1985; Lin & Yeh, 2009; Richins, 1991).

Marketing messages from the 19th century onward have played a pivotal role in constructing and perpetuating societal norms regarding beauty and aging. Early advertisements often depicted aging as a process to be combated, positioning beauty products as essential tools in this fight. Meanwhile, modern influencers hawk the importance of achieving flawless skin, while artificial intelligence is used to generate images of unattainable beauty (Benamor et al., 2024; Well, 2023). Additionally, the shift from the overtly negative portrayals of the past to today's more nuanced messages is particularly noteworthy. Contemporary marketing often employs subtle language that suggests aging can be gracefully managed with the right products. This evolution reflects broader sociocultural changes and the increasing emphasis on positive aging. However, it also underscores the persistent undercurrent that equates youth with beauty and desirability. This analysis therefore employs a critical feminist lens to scrutinize the language and imagery employed in such messages. By tracing linguistic strategies over time, the research highlights

how marketing has influenced the evolution of societal norms related to aging and the practices in which women engage to adhere to those norms.

Proposed Methodology

This research proposes a mixed-methods approach to explore the relationships between marketing practices and sociocultural dynamics surrounding women's aging and beauty. The study begins with a historical analysis of beauty standards as reflected in marketing messages from the 19th century to the present. This analysis traces the evolution of societal beliefs about aging and beauty, identifying key shifts and trends over time. By examining primary sources like advertisements and influencer videos, as well as secondary literature on the history of beauty standards, the research situates marketing messages within their broader historical and cultural contexts, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how these messages influence and are influenced by sociopolitical factors.

Additionally, linguistic analysis is used to uncover the latent encoding of sociocultural norms and beauty standards in marketing messages. This includes a detailed examination of language, rhetoric, and imagery in a representative corpus of marketing materials from various media.

Expected Implications and Contributions

The findings of this research have significant academic research and practical implications. Primarily, the study advances theoretical understanding of how marketing practices shape and are shaped by sociocultural dynamics, highlighting the need for more nuanced models that consider the multifaceted influences on women's experiences of aging and beauty. Additionally, the insights gained can inform the development of more inclusive and empowering marketing strategies, allowing marketers to create campaigns that challenge harmful beauty standards by understanding the negative impacts of ageist messaging.

Conclusion

The exploration of marketing practices through a critical feminist lens provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between sociocultural norms and women's experiences of aging and beauty. By analyzing historical and contemporary marketing messages, this research enhances the understanding of how linguistic strategies in advertising have shaped societal beliefs and individual experiences. The findings underscore the need for more inclusive and empowering representations of aging in marketing, contributing to a broader cultural shift towards positive aging.

This research not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also serves as a call to action for more responsible and respectful marketing practices. It invites marketers, policymakers, and society at large to reconsider and reshape the narratives around aging and beauty, fostering a more inclusive and positive perception of aging for future generations.

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SESSION 5.5: EMBRACING SUSTAINABILITY

Moderator:

Waros Ngamsiriudom

Full Paper

Socially Informed Sustainability: The Role of Informational Social Influence in Green Purchase Decisions Online

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While studies have shown how social influence, particularly informational social influence, has been a major driver of consumer decisions online, it has seldom been explored in the context of online consumer behavior related to green consumption. To bridge this gap, this study employed a partial least squares structural equation modeling approach to propose a model of the psychological process consumers undergo from exposure to green content online to green purchase decisions, with informational social influence as a key node. Data was collected from social media users in the US, UK and Canada. A total of 346 valid cases were used for further analysis. Findings suggest that informational social influence plays a key mediating role in driving green purchase intentions. Additionally, social media exposure to green content can influence consumer behavior through social comparison and informational social influence. While online green content doesn't immediately evoke the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), the study shows social media exposure to green leads to FOMO when consumers engage in social comparison. The findings reveal that consumers typically engage a cognitive route in processing information online regarding green products, which supports the relevance of informational social influence in driving green decisions online. The theoretical implications highlight the role of conformity theory in online green consumer behavior.

Introduction

Recent statistics show that social media has over 4.8 billion users across the world (Chaffey, 2023) and it is fast becoming a key component affecting customers' purchasing decisions regarding eco-friendly products (Sun & Wang, 2020; Zahid et al., 2018; Pop et al., 2020; Elena, 2016; Chung et al., 2020). According to Lawrence (2023), a recent Unilever survey suggests that consumers who follow social media accounts on sustainability have a 75% higher likelihood of adopting sustainable practices after coming across sustainable content on social media, while 83% of social media users think TikTok and Instagram have increased their knowledge of sustainable living.

While the statistics above hint on the social influences social media could exude on green consumer choices, previous studies on green purchase intentions rather emphasized the consumer's prosocial attitude or self-concept as the key driver of green purchase intentions (Sun & Wang, 2020; Arora et al., 2023; Zahid et al., 2020; Pop et al., 2020). This is seen in how most of the previous studies on green purchase intentions in the online context have focused on the theory of planned behavior and the theory of reasoned action. These theories incorporated constructs such as environmental awareness, drive towards environmental responsibility, supporting environmental protection, etc. as a way to measure the potential customers' prosocial self-concept (Sun and Wang, 2020; Zahid et al., 2020; Pop et al., 2020; Arora et al., 2023). (See table 1).

Even though the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour both address the effect of normative social influence via subjective norms, informational social influence has been proven to be more salient than normative social influence when it comes to online consumer behavior (Kim et al, 2007; Chen, 2008; Chang, 2015); therefore making it an important construct to be considered in online green consumer behaviour studies. This view is further validated by Chang (2015) who in their study observed that, while informational social influence had a positive impact on green purchase intentions, the relationship between normative social influence and green purchase intention was not supported. Additionally, Coppolino Perfumi et al. (2019) observed that the impact of normative influence was weak in digital contexts as compared to informational influence. There have been calls by previous scholars such as Kim et al. (2007) to employ informational social influence as a better alternative to subjective norms in online consumer behavior research, however, recent studies still heavily depend on subjective norms in their evaluation of social influence in online consumer behavior research regarding green.

Also, earlier studies by Chen & Chang (2013) suggest that customers were hesitant to accept green products since the promises made about them were occasionally vague and unreliable. In the era where greenwashing is prevalent, consumers will rely on information from friends and people they trust on social media to make the right green purchase decisions (Chen & Chang, 2013); making informational social influence an important construct to be considered in online green purchase intentions studies. The inclusion of informational social influence in this study is therefore an important research gap that is being bridged, in the sense that previous studies on green purchase intentions in online

contexts, particularly social media, gave little or no attention to the role of informational social influence. And the few that did (e.g Luo et al, 2020; Chang, 2015), were not conducted in the context of social media.

This study employs social comparison and fear of missing out as relevant antecedents to Social Influence; a relationship which appears unexplored by previous studies in the context of antecedents driving online green purchase intentions.

Based on conformity theory and social learning theory, this study proposes that green consumers' conformity behaviors which are expressed through informational social influence are important mediators in the social media exposure-green purchase intention relationship. And social media exposure, social comparison and the fear of missing out are investigated as the relevant antecedents of informational social influence in the social media exposure- green purchase intentions relationship.

Table 1. An Overview of Recent Green Consumer Behavior Studies On In the Context of Social Media

Authors (years)	Research Purpose	Theory	Inclusion of Informational Social influence	Sample	Method	Findings
Nazish et al (2024)	to examine the effect of social media on green purchase intention		No	310	PLS-SEM	Social media, drive for environmental responsibility green consumption values exert a significant influence on green purchase intention.
Yanyan et al (2023)	To investigate consumers' intention for green consumption by integrating social media exposure, environmental concern, and habit within the Theory of Planned Behavior	TPB	No	416, China	PLS-SEM	Social media exposure, environmental concern, attitudes and subjective norms are important influencers of green purchase intentions.
Arora et al (2023)	To examine the influence of social media in shaping and developing attitudes toward green purchasing	SLT and TPB	No	350,	SEM	social media, drive for environmental responsibility, social influence, social media perceived trust are the main antecedents of consumers' green purchasing attitudes, which in turn influence green purchase intentions
Sun & Xing (2022)	To explore the Impact of Social Media Information Sharing on the Green Purchase Intention among Generation Z	SOR	No	274, China	Multiple regression	Sharing information on social media has a positive impact on green purchase intentions among Generation Z's
Gupta & Syed (2022)	To assess the impact of social media (SM) activities on the marketing of green products	U&G and TPAM theory	No	536, India	SEM	word-of-mouth, interaction, entertainment, and customization can play a role in shaping green attitudes
Zafar et al. (2021)	To investigate the connection between sustainable purchasing decisions and personalized advertising	TRA and SOR	No	713, China	SEM	Digitalization positively impacts sustainable purchase decisions
Chi (2021)	To assess the influence of eco-labels, eco-brands, and social media on green purchase intentions	-	No	350, Vietnam	SEM	The impact of social media on GPI was mediated by motivation and moderated by environmental concern

Liang et al (2021)	To examine the impact of social support, social influence, source credibility on solar photovoltaic panels purchase intention	Conformity theory	Yes	-	SEM	Both informational social influence and normative social influence impact purchase intentions
Luo et al. (2020)	To investigate a framework that explains how green advertising influences green purchase intentions (GPI) on social media.	SOR model	No	685, China	SEM	People with a strong interdependent self-construal purchase green products once they can trust that the green commercials offer valid evidence
Pop et al. (2020)	To evaluate the influence of social media on consumers' altruistic and egoistic motivations toward green cosmetics.	TPB	No	180, Romania and Hungary	SEM	Social Media has multiple effects on the formulation of consumers' purchase intentions
Sun & Wang (2020)	To explore consumer attitudes and purchase intentions toward green products on social media	TPB	No	654, China	SEM	Social media marketing poses the most significant favorable influence on perceived consumer effectiveness
Zhao et al. (2019)	To examine the influence of social media on purchase intentions for environmentally sustainable apparel.	TRA	No	236, China	SEM and HRA	Social media use and perception play a significant role In moderating relationship between GPI and attitude.
Bedard & Tolmie (2018)	To investigate the effects of social media and online interpersonal interactions on green purchase intentions (GPI) and assess how culture moderates this relationship among millennials.	Social Impact Theory	No	131, USA	RA	Purchase intentions of millennials are associated with their SM activity
Zahid et al. (2018)	To investigate factors influencing GPI and publicity on Social Media	TPB	No	347, Pakistan	SEM	High-income earners portray more environmentally friendly behavior, and they tend to spread the green message on Social Media
Chang (2015)	To explore the Influence of Green Viral Communications on Green Purchase Intentions and the Mediating Role of Consumers' Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influences	Conformity theory, Diffusion of innovation	Yes	596, Taiwan	SEM	Informational interpersonal influence positively impacts green purchase intention but normative social influence does not.

Note: SM, Social Media; GPI, Green Purchase Intentions; TPB, Theory of Planned Behavior; TRA; Theory of Reasoned Action; U&G, Users and Gratifications Theory; TPAM, Technologies for Proenvironmental Action Model; SLT, Social Learning Theory; SEM, Structural Equation Modeling; RA, Regression Analysis; HRA Hierarchical Regression Analysis **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

The Importance of Informational Social Influence in Online Green Consumer Behaviour

While studies in the extant literature on social media green consumer behaviour hardly consider the role of informational social influence, studies have continually demonstrated evidence that informational social influence could be significant in driving green purchase intentions in social media contexts. For example, studies by Kim (2007), Chen (2008), Liang et al (2021) and Chang (2015) have all demonstrated how informational social influence has been more salient than normative social influence in driving green consumer behaviour.

Additionally, Coppolino Perfumi et al. (2019) observed that informational influence was stronger than normative influences in digital contexts. Ummar et al (2023), further corroborates this when they found that social media campaigns about green products that place more emphasis on informativeness are more likely to be successful at driving green purchase intentions. In a related study, Sun & Xing (2022) concluded that that information sharing on social media positively impacts green purchase intentions among Generation Zs. This is in line with earlier studies by Shrum et al (1995), who postulated that green consumers are typically more careful shoppers who are likely to take time in analysing product information before making a purchase decisions. Earlier scholars revealed that decision-making processes regarding product evaluations (Feick et al., 1986), product selections (Bearden et al, 1989), and purchases (Argo, 2005) may be impacted by informational social influence. Therefore, it is very likely that when making green product purchases, green customers depend on the advice of green opinion leaders or specialists. As some consumers may misunderstand the environmental labels on green products (McGrath, 1992), green consumers would be encouraged to continuously acquire green information and expertise from a variety of sources, especially social media.

Theoretical Foundations

This study integrates conformity theory (Deutsch & Gerard; 1955) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) to explain how and why informational social influence drives green purchase intentions in the context of social media. Conformity theory—specifically the dimension of informational social influence—provides insight into why individuals adopt green behaviors. According to Deutsch & Gerard (1955), informational social influence is the tendency to accept information obtained from others as evidence about reality. Informational social influence occurs when consumers accept others' opinions or behaviors as credible sources of information, particularly in uncertain situations such as making environmentally conscious purchasing decisions. Earlier studies show that informational social influence is crucial in acquiring knowledge necessary to address consumption decisions such as product evaluation (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Park & Lessig, 1997), product selection (Bearden et al., 1989), and purchase decisions (Argo, 2005).

To complement this, social learning theory explains how individuals learn behaviors by observing others (Bandura, 1977), particularly in social media contexts where exposure to green content is frequent. Consumers engage in observational learning, where they see influencers, peers, or brands promoting sustainable products and practices. Through vicarious reinforcement, they may internalize these behaviors when they observe social approval and positive outcomes associated with them. Vicarious reinforcement on social media contributes to the development of FOMO and social comparison by showing individuals what behaviors are rewarded in the online environment. This drives people to either imitate those behaviors or feel inadequate if they don't measure up, leading to the fear of missing out and constant comparison with others. Previous studies have proven that the anxiety and need to belong on social media, intensified by FOMO (Dinh & Lee (2022), and the desire to elevate oneself through social comparison (Burnell et al., 2019) could trigger a search for information, leading to informational social influence. Przybylski et al. (2013) describe FOMO as the anxiety that others might have more rewarding experiences which one is absent from while Gilbert et al., (1995) describe social comparison as the process through which individuals assess their perceptions, encounters, and actions in light of those of others.

Impact of Social Media Exposure to Green on Social Comparison

Recent consumer behavior literature has shown that conspicuous green consumption is becoming a trend (Delgado et al., 2015; Policarpo & Aguiar, 2020; Yarimoglu & Binboga, 2019) and as people conspicuously display their green consumption experiences on social media, they give others a reference point for comparison. Previous studies revealed that seeing other people's social media updates could lead to users making upward social comparisons (Burnell et al., 2019). Additionally, both active and passive engagement encourages individuals to participate more in social comparison (Pang, 2020). People use social media to compare themselves to others both consciously and unconsciously (Jang et al., 2016; Lee, 2014), making social media exposure a precursor to social comparison (Vogel et al., 2015). On the back of this information, we hypothesize that social media exposure to green increases one's susceptibility for social comparison.

H1: Social Media Exposure to green has a positive impact on Social Comparison

Impact of Social Media Exposure to Green on FOMO

As people utilize social media to develop and strengthen relationships, have fruitful social interactions, and openly and effectively express themselves (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kreijns et al., 2014; Valkenburg et al., 2005), they may now learn about the actions of others through social media which gives them an idea of what they are missing

out on. Users who frequently access information on green consumption trends on social media may mistakenly think that others are living better and happier lives than they are. Taylor (2019) demonstrated that even passive social media users may be impacted by FOMO. This corroborates the mere exposure effect by Zajonc (1968), which posits that the mere repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it. Conclusively, regular social media use increases the likelihood of feeling left out (Buglass et al., 2017).

H2: Social Media Exposure to green has a positive impact on FOMO

Impact of Social Comparison on FOMO

Dinh & Lee (2022) have recently observed that social comparison leads to FOMO in the context of online consumer behavior. In the social media environment, where users frequently compare themselves to others, there is an increase in the fear of missing out (Buglass et al., 2017). This is because, on social media, people are frequently exposed to other people's circumstances and experiences, which raises comparison anxiety and, in turn, promotes FOMO (Reer et al., 2019). Social comparison occurs more frequently and intensely as a result of social media. According to Pang's research (2020), university students' exposure to social media platforms like WeChat enhances FOMO by fostering upward social comparison. In the context of green consumer behaviour online, as people compare themselves to others' flattering photographs on social media about their green consumption experiences, they are more likely to feel left out.

H3: Social comparison has a positive impact on FOMO

Impact of FOMO on Informational Social Influence

Previous research has demonstrated that those who have high FOMO desire constant up-to-date information about others' lives (Beyens et al., 2016). This information-seeking behavior is driven by a desire to conform to the actions or choices of others to ensure they are not missing out on something valuable or beneficial (Beyens et al., 2016). And as suggested by Argan & Argan (2020), FOMO is intricately linked with uncertainty, involving feelings of discomfort, emotional deprivation, and an intensified quest for social information. This connection emphasizes FOMO's association with an individual's unease regarding potential missed experiences, which amplifies uncertainty about the value and relevance of those experiences. This phenomenon is salient in the case of online green consumer behavior, as individuals experiencing FOMO may seek social validation and reassurance regarding their environmental choices. Subsequently, the heightened uncertainty stemming from FOMO might significantly impact informational social influence within online green communities.

H4: FOMO has a positive impact on informational social influence

Impact of Social Comparison on Informational Social Influence

Gibbons & Buunk (1999) have observed that, there are two ways that social comparison might happen. By responding to the queries "how am I doing" and "what should I think and do," In the bid to answer the second question and lessen the uncertainty of the self, people search information from those whose opinion they consider better than theirs, as an evidence of reality. To buttress this, Cialdini (1987) concluded that, a significant predictor of informational social influence is uncertainty and the perceived level of the influencer's skill or expertise. This therefore goes to explain that, the more people engage in upward social comparison as a way to reduce the uncertainty of the self, the more susceptible they are to informational social influence from people who they consider experts on a subject. In the context of this study, a typical example would be how people would compare themselves to someone they perceive to have more knowledge about green products; based on how they post about their green consumption on social media. When they find out through their social comparison that the person indeed has more knowledge than they do about green, that person's opinions and recommendations regarding green products are likely to be accepted.

H5: Social comparison has a positive impact on informational social influence

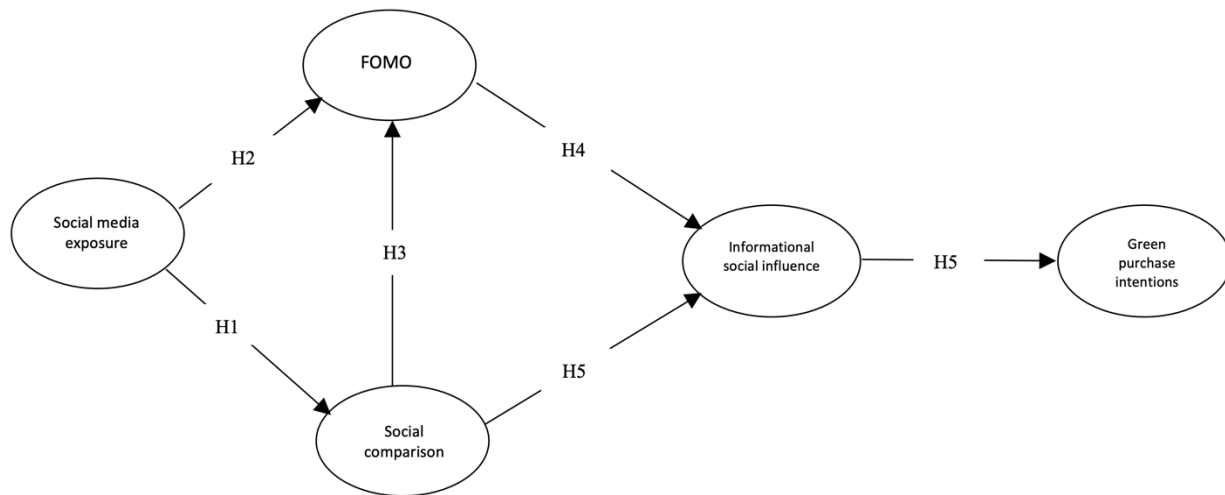
Impact of Informational Social Influence on Green Purchase Intentions

According to the conformity theory, people can gather information through watching the actions of others or by speaking with subject-matter specialists (Park and Lessig, 1997). Research revealed that consumers' decision-making processes with relation to product evaluations (Feick et al., 1986), product selections (Bearden et al, 1989), and purchases (Argo, 2005) may be impacted by informational social influence. Therefore, it is very possible that when making green product purchases, green customers are depending on the advice of green specialists or opinion

leaders. According to research on green marketing, consumers frequently misunderstand the environmental labels on green products (McGrath, 1992) and green items are typically pricey (D'Souza et al., 2007). In order to make the best purchasing decisions, green consumers would be encouraged to continuously acquire green information and expertise from various sources.

H6: Informational social influence has a positive impact on green purchase intentions

Fig 1. Conceptual Framework



Methodology

A survey research design was employed for this study and analyses were conducted with partial least squares structural equation modeling approach. Measurement scales were adapted from previous studies. The Smart PLS software (version 4.1.01) was used.

Measurement items

Social media exposure is conceptualized as the repetitive encounter with a stimulus; which in this case is green content. This conceptualization is founded on the mere exposure effect by Zajonc (1968). This study modifies 3 items from a study by Vale & Fernandes (2017). The original items capture a consumer's mere online encounter with messages but were modified to reflect frequency of encounter. A sample item is "I frequently read content posted by others about green products on social media". To measure social comparison, Gibbons and Buunk (1999)'s social comparison scale was adapted. The items were adapted to reflect comparison between benefits from a respondent's consumer choices and that of others who consume green products. A sample item is "I often compare my consumption choices with others who consume green". FOMO was measured using four items from the FOMO scale created by Przybylski et al. (2013). A sample item is "I fear my friends who consume green products have more rewarding experiences than me". This study adapts three items from a scale by Chang (2015) to measure informational social influence. A sample item is "I'll gather information from friends or family about a green product before I buy". Green purchase intentions were measured by a scale adapted from Chang (2015). A sample item is "I expect to purchase green products/brands in the near future"

Data Collection

Data was collected through questionnaires on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. A total of 350 respondents were engaged and 346 used for further analysis after data cleaning. The population of the study was social media users in USA, Canada and the United Kingdom. The USA, UK and Canada are known to have high awareness regarding environmental issues and sustainability (Chen & Chang, 2013; Joshi and Rahman, 2015) hence their awareness on the subject. Secondly, the widespread of social media use and high internet penetration in these countries make them ideal for the study. Studies have shown that, in the USA, for instance, approximately 90% of adults use the internet and social media is a significant part of people's online activities (Pew Research Center, 2021). In Canada,

internet penetration is as high as 94% with a significant portion of the population being active social media users (DataReportal; 2022). Males dominated the total sample with 254 respondents (73.4%), while females were only 92 (26.6%). The respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 79, with the dominant age group being 30-39 (60.4%).

Data Analysis

Measurement Model

In structural equation modeling, the measurement model defines the nature of the indicators and how they relate to their underlying factors. The purpose of the measurement model is to ensure the constructs under study are valid, reliable and consequently providing a dependable foundation that ensures the theoretical relationships being tested yield credible results.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The validity and reliability of the constructs were assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend that indicator reliability is met when all items have factor loadings above 0.5. All items in this study met this criteria, with the lowest being 0.596. For Internal consistency reliability, we used the Composite Reliability (CR) indicator, which according to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), should be above 0.7. As shown in Table 2, the lowest CR index is 0.797; demonstrating internal consistency reliability for the scales used in the study. We assessed convergent validity using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which, according to Fornell & Larcker (1981), needs to be greater than 0.5. This criterion was also met satisfactorily.

Table 2. Construct Validity and Reliability

Construct	Item	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
FOMO	FOM O1	0.749	0.804	0.803	0.576
	FOM O2	0.797			
	FOM O3	0.729			
Green Purchase Intentions	GPI1	0.821	0.847	0.846	0.647
	GPI2	0.822			
	GPI3	0.769			
Informational Social Influence	ISI1	0.699	0.797	0.798	0.569
	ISI2	0.769			
	ISI3	0.792			
Social Comparison	SC1	0.596	0.797	0.797	0.572
	SC2	0.851			
	SC3	0.797			
Social Media Exposure	SME 1	0.788	0.838	0.838	0.633
	SME 2	0.810			
	SME 3	0.788			

Note: CR, Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; SME, Social Media Exposure; FOMO, Fear of Missing Out; SC, Social Comparison; ISI, Informational Social Influence; GPI, Green Purchase Intentions

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is the measurement of the extent to which a construct is different from other constructs in a study. This study assessed Discriminant Validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The HTMT ratio was introduced by Henseler et al (2015) as a method that assesses discriminant validity by comparing the correlations of indicators across different constructs (heterotrait-heteromethod correlations) with the correlations of indicators

within the same construct (monotrait-heteromethod correlations). For discriminant validity to be met, Henseler et al; (2015) recommend an HTMT value below 0.85. Even though some scholars, typically in the social sciences, use a more tolerant threshold of 0.90, or 1.0 in some extreme cases; this study adopts the threshold of 0.85 as a reliable proof of the presence of discriminant validity. This study adopts the HTMT ratio because it has been shown to have higher sensitivity and specificity compared to traditional methods like Fornell-Larcker criterion. Sensitivity and specificity refer to the method's ability to correctly identify type one and type two errors related to discriminant validity (Henseler et al; 2015). Other scholars such as Voorhees (2016) back this claim by demonstrating that the HTMT ratio is able to overcome the limitations of the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The HTMT matrix for this study, as shown in table 3 shows all the HTMT ratio values below 0.85, demonstrating the presence of discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity – HTMT Ratio

	SME	FOMO	GPI	ISI	SC
SME					
FOMO	0.539				
GPI	0.827	0.333			
ISI	0.808	0.622	0.785		
SC	0.780	0.659	0.649	0.790	

Note: Note: SME, Social Media Exposure; FOMO, Fear of Missing Out; SC, Social Comparison; ISI, Informational Social Influence; GPI, Green Purchase Intentions

Correlations

We tested the correlations between constructs in order to understand the relationships between them. The correlation matrix from Table 4 suggests that all the constructs were satisfactorily correlated among each other in a manner that is conducive for conducting regression analysis. Also, according to Kline (2023) and Schumacker & Lomax (2004), demonstrating some level of correlation between constructs is essential for ensuring the model's validity and fit in structural equation modeling.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

	SME	FOMO	GPI	ISI	SC
SME	1				
FOMO	0.540	1			
GPI	0.828	0.335	1		
ISI	0.807	0.621	0.785	1	
SC	0.784	0.667	0.650	0.796	1

Note: Note: SME, Social Media Exposure; FOMO, Fear of Missing Out; SC, Social Comparison; ISI, Informational Social Influence; GPI, Green Purchase Intentions

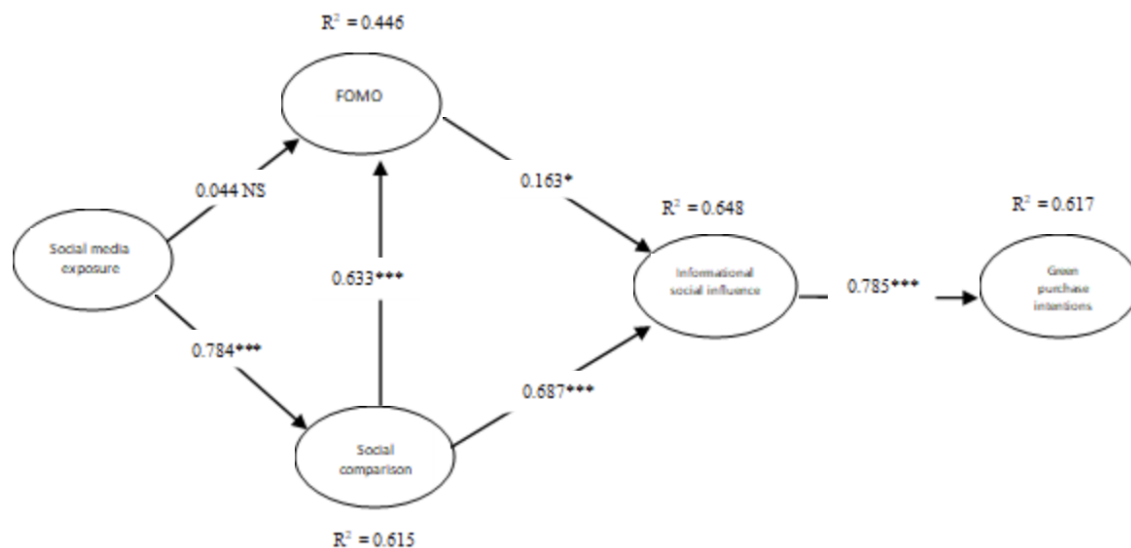
Model Fit

There are several indices to ascertain how well a model fits the data in structural equation modeling. The variance-based Smart PLS typically provides indices for the estimated model as well as the saturated model. The saturated model can be described as the set of all possible relationships between the variables in a study while the estimated model is the one specified by the researcher based on the study's theoretical background. The researcher's aim is to compare the saturated model to the estimated model in order to determine how well the actual outcome matches the expected one. This study adopts the Normed Fit Index (NFI) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) fit indices for this purpose. SRMR is the difference between the model implied correlation matrix and the observed correlation. To determine a good fit, Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend an SRMR value less than 0.08. In this study, both the estimated model (0.0078) and the saturated (0.032) models have an SRMR value less than 0.08; indicating an acceptable fit. For the NFI, Bentler and Bonnet (1980) recommend values above 0.90. However, they argue that values above 0.80 are also acceptable, especially when dealing with complex models. We recorded an NFI of 0.935 for the saturated model and an estimated model of 0.896. Judging from the complex nature of our model and the justification from the extant literature, these values demonstrate an acceptable fit.

Structural Model

Figure 2 shows the overall results of the structural model with path coefficients and squared multiple correlations. The path coefficients represent the strength and direction between the latent constructs while the squared multiple correlations show the explanatory power of the constructs; indicating the amount of variance in the dependent variables explained by the independent variables.

Figure 2. Structural Model



Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Hypotheses Test Results

Social media exposure to green had a strong impact on social comparison ($\beta = 0.784$, $p < 0.001$) thus supporting H1, but failed to impact FOMO ($\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.723$), thus H2 was not supported. H3 was significant at ($\beta = 0.633$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a strong relationship between social comparison and FOMO. The relationship between FOMO and informational social influence was also positive but weakly significant at ($\beta = 0.163$, $p < 0.050$), indicating that the fear of missing out fairly drives consumers to be influenced by information provided by their social groups online. H4 is therefore supported. Further results show that social comparison drives consumers to accept information provided by their social groups to be true regarding green products ($\beta = 0.687$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the acceptance of H5. Finally, the hypotheses on the impact of informational social influence on green purchase intentions suggests a strong impact of informal social influence on green purchase intentions at ($\beta = 0.785$, $p < 0.001$), which confirms the key hypothesis of this study; that informational social influence plays a pivotal role in online purchase decisions regarding eco-friendly products. H6 was therefore accepted.

Table 5. Hypotheses Test Results

Path	Path Coefficients (β)	t	Results
H1 Exposure $\rightarrow$ social comparison	0.784***	17.706	Supported
H2 Exposure $\rightarrow$ FOMO	0.044 NS	0.355	Not Supported
H3 Social comparison $\rightarrow$ FOMO	0.633***	5.248	Supported
H4 FOMO $\rightarrow$ informational Social influence	0.163*	1.963	Supported
H5 Social comparison $\rightarrow$ informational social influence	0.687 ***	9.130	Supported
H6 Informational social influence $\rightarrow$ green purchase intentions	0.785***	15.101	Supported

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; t , t -values NS, Not Significant

Mediating Role of Informational Social Influence

The analysis from table 6 shows that informational social influence significantly mediates several relationships. Specifically, social comparison influences green purchase intentions through informational social influence ($\beta = 0.539$, $p < 0.001$) and through the FOMO $\rightarrow$ informational social influence pathway ($\beta = 0.081$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, social media exposure impacts green purchase intentions through the indirect path of social comparison $\rightarrow$ informational social influence ($\beta = 0.423$, $p < 0.001$), confirming informational social influence's critical mediating role in green consumer behaviour in the context of social media.

Table 6. Specific indirect effects

Path	Path Coefficients (β)	t	Results
FOMO $\rightarrow$ ISI $\rightarrow$ GPI	0.128	1.95	Not significant
SC $\rightarrow$ FOMO $\rightarrow$ ISI $\rightarrow$ GPI	0.081*	2.045	significant
SME $\rightarrow$ SC $\rightarrow$ FOMO	0.496***	4.743	significant
SME $\rightarrow$ FOMO $\rightarrow$ ISI $\rightarrow$ GPI	0.006 NS	0.297	Not significant
SME $\rightarrow$ SC $\rightarrow$ ISI	0.539***	7.327	Significant
SC $\rightarrow$ FOMO $\rightarrow$ ISI	0.103*	2.036	significant
SC $\rightarrow$ ISI $\rightarrow$ GPI	0.539***	7.51	significant
SME $\rightarrow$ FOMO $\rightarrow$ ISI	0.007 NS	0.302	Not significant

SME → SC → FOMO → ISI	0.081*	2.039	significant
SME → SC → ISI → GPI	0.423***	6.076	significant
SME → SC → FOMO → ISI → GPI	0.063*	2.035	significant

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; t , t -values NS, Not Significant; SME, Social Media Exposure; FOMO, Fear of Missing Out; SC, Social Comparison; ISI, Informational Social Influence; GPI, Green Purchase Intentions

Discussions

To begin with, we demonstrated that social media exposure to green content can influence a consumer's tendency to compare their consumption behavior with others who engage in eco-friendly consumption. Festinger (1954) suggests that people typically compare themselves to others when they don't have access to objective and reliable information to make the right self-evaluation. People would therefore use social media to conduct social comparisons (Verduyn et al., 2017) since it offers easily available information on what other people are doing, especially in situations when people are skeptical or undecided about green products.

Though FOMO is typically associated with conspicuous consumption, we explored its potential in prosocial behavior. Findings show that despite the tendency to feel left out while exposed to trending social media content, the effect doesn't apply to green content. However, the effect is significant when mediated by social comparison. This suggests that green content on social media evokes cognitive rather than heuristic responses. This corroborates findings by Chen et al (2020) that consumers are more likely to engage in thoughtful evaluations about environmental impacts rather than a spontaneous desire to purchase due to trends. Their study found that brand affect does not impact consumer behavior towards; suggesting that emotional responses alone do not suffice in driving green consumer behaviour.

Findings from this study are in line with Gibbons & Buunk's (1999) position as they provide insight into how consumers, after comparing themselves with green consumers online, could go a step further to obtain relevant information from them. According to Cialdini (1987) a significant antecedent of informational social influence is uncertainty and the perceived level of the influencer's skill or expertise. This therefore suggests that when consumers learn about their group status through social comparison, and realize how ignorant they are on matters concerning green consumption, they are more susceptible to informational social influence as a means to enhance their status.

Finally, the key objective of this study, which is to establish the importance of informational social influence in the context of online green consumer behavior was established through the confirmation that informational social influence mediates key relationships between social media exposure and green purchase intentions. This finding therefore underscores all the evidence that previously pointed to the idea that informational influence is key in driving green consumption decisions (Liang et al, 2021; Kim, 2007; Chen, 2008; Chang, 2015; Sun & Xing (2022). This finding is also relevant in explaining claims by Chen & Chang (2013) that the era of prevalent greenwashing would mean that consumers will depend on information from friends and people they trust on social media to make the right green purchase decisions. Additionally, it provides support to previous studies that showed consumers typically misunderstand the environmental labels on green products (McGrath, 1992) making them prone to continuously acquire green information and expertise from a variety of sources, including social media.

Theoretical Implications

The research contributes to the body of literature on conformity theory by highlighting the theoretical understanding of informational social influence in the context of green consumer behaviour in social media contexts. This finding supports previous studies (e.g., Cialdini, 1987) and provides evidence that consumers exposed to social media content about green consumption tend to seek further information from others who are perceived to have greater expertise. In the context of greenwashing and the complexity of understanding eco-labels, this underscores the importance of information-seeking behavior in driving green consumption decisions.

The study expands upon Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory by demonstrating that social media can serve as a key platform for consumers to engage in social comparisons in eco-friendly consumption contexts. It highlights how, in the absence of objective information about green products, consumers use social media content to compare their behaviors with others, which can influence their purchasing decisions. This aligns with Verduyn et al.

(2017), who posited that social media provides easily accessible information that facilitates social comparison. The research thereby reinforces and modernizes the social comparison theory in the context of green consumption.

The study reinforces the distinction between cognitive and heuristic responses in consumer behavior, showing that green content on social media encourages thoughtful reflection rather than impulsive action. Additionally, it extends the understanding of FOMO beyond its typical association with conspicuous consumption to prosocial behavior, specifically eco-friendly consumption. This supports the findings by Chen et al. (2020) and other researchers that emotional appeals alone may not suffice to influence green behavior. The study thus adds to the theoretical conversation about how rational evaluations dominate in the green consumer space, especially when social comparison is involved.

Managerial Implications

Marketers can enhance green consumer behavior by strategically utilizing social media platforms to provide not just emotional appeals, but detailed, informative content about eco-friendly products. By positioning green content in a way that facilitates social comparison, marketers can encourage consumers to seek additional information, thereby using informational social influence to guide green purchasing decisions. This is particularly important in the current era of greenwashing, where transparency and trusted information from peers or influencers are key.

Given that informational social influence relies on the perceived expertise of influencers, companies should focus on collaborating with credible individuals, such as sustainability experts, environmental activists, or eco-conscious influencers. These individuals can effectively guide consumers who are seeking reliable information about green products. By aligning green marketing strategies with expert content, brands can build trust and influence consumers who are undecided or skeptical about sustainable products.

Brands can create campaigns that encourage social comparison among consumers. For instance, they could promote eco-friendly challenges or social media campaigns where users showcase their green habits. This can trigger social comparison and motivate individuals to align their behavior with others, as they become aware of how they rank in terms of eco-friendliness. This can be a powerful tool to increase green consumption.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

Firstly, this study does not account for the differences between various social media platforms, which may affect how consumers engage in social comparison and informational social influence. Since each platform has unique user dynamics and content types, future studies should explore platform-specific impacts on green consumer behavior. Second, the cross-sectional design used in this research limits its ability to establish clear causal relationships and also make it prone to common method bias. Longitudinal studies would help track how sustained exposure to green content influences consumer behavior over time. Also, implementing experimental designs can help to address causality more robustly and control for external variables more effectively. For instance, manipulating the type of social media content (emotional vs informational) could provide deeper insights. Lastly, this study focuses on green purchase intentions, which may not always align with actual consumer behavior. Future research should assess actual purchasing behavior to better understand the gap between intent and action in green consumption.

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Summary Brief

Understanding Social Inflation: An Exploratory Review of Consumer Perspectives and the Influence of Consumers Woke Culture

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Social inflation (SI) refers to the rise in insurance claim payments resulting from legislative, judicial, social, economic, and technological advancements (Kelley et al., 2018). This phenomenon affects consumers through higher insurance premiums, reduced access to insurance, and increased overall living costs. While automobile and home insurance are major contributors to social inflation, the influence of woke culture among consumers—promoting social justice and ethical corporate practices—has also become significant. This brief summary explores the recent social inflation phenomenon, focusing on the role of woke culture and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and proposes future research directions on this topic.

Introduction

Since the pandemic, consumers have experienced an inflationary environment, with rising prices on essential goods and services, including insurance. This issue has become a key topic in the 2024 elections, with inflation ranking high among voters' concerns (Phares, 2024). Despite signs of stabilization in car and housing markets, insurance costs continue to rise. Homeowners face steep premiums and limited insurance options, particularly in states like Texas, Florida, and California.

In addition to rising costs in these areas, the influence of woke culture—emphasizing social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability—has pressured companies to adopt CSR practices. While ethically driven, these corporate changes often result in higher operational costs passed on to consumers (Foss & Klein, 2023; Weisman, 2023). This summary explores social inflation's causes, particularly the influence of woke culture and its impact on consumer behavior while suggesting areas for future research.

Background

The National Institute of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) defines Social Inflation (SI) as a term that “describes how insurers’ claims costs are increasing above general economic inflation” (National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC, 2023). This phenomenon is primarily attributed to rising litigation costs brought by plaintiffs seeking large monetary relief for their injuries. The “social” facet of the phenomenon represents changing social and cultural attitudes about who is responsible for absorbing risk—whether it is the insurer or the plaintiff.

Although social inflation has gained more attention since COVID-19, this phenomenon is not new. Social inflation has roots in the 1970s when inflation rates soared. Automatic cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) were introduced for Social Security beneficiaries during that period. The scope of social inflation extends beyond insurance claims and impacts various sectors, including product liability, medical malpractice, and professional liability. Researchers have observed social inflation in the 1980s and 1990s that affected product liability, professional liability, and medical malpractice insurance (Cappelletti, 2021). Insurers must accommodate social inflation; otherwise, their premium rates and cash reserves to pay out verdicts could be inadequate. According to Best’s Special Report, social inflation continues to be a significant challenge for insurers, particularly in auto, professional, and product liability lines of business (Best’s News and Research, 2024).

Recent changes in social and cultural attitudes among consumers, driven by the rise of woke culture, have expanded the scope of societal responsibility beyond the insurer and plaintiff. Woke culture significantly influences social inflation through several mechanisms, including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), environmental sustainability, social justice and equality, cultural inclusivity and representation, and concerns about technology and privacy. To align with the changing social and cultural values of Millennials and Gen Z, companies often adopt woke policies, which mostly result in higher operational costs passed on to consumers through higher prices of products and services (Foss & Klein, 2023; Weisman, 2023).

Causes of Social Inflation

Insurance Industry Perspective: From the industry's perspective, social inflation is driven by cultural changes that have transformed the public's view of legal battles with insurance companies into a David vs. Goliath struggle. The influence of recent woke culture, which emphasizes social justice, has contributed to more sympathetic juries and a heightened willingness to hold corporations and institutions accountable for damages (Kessler, 2021). This shift has led to rising jury awards in cases of accidents and mistakes. Industry stakeholders argue that jury awards in liability cases have increased significantly over the years. Juries award larger sums to plaintiffs, which drives up the cost of settlements and judgments. As these awards have grown exponentially, so has the prevalence of litigation funding. This is when third parties finance lawsuits in exchange for a share of the award. As jury awards have risen, so has the return on investments for the third party funding the case.

Economic Perspective: From an economic standpoint, social inflation can be seen as a consequence of various macroeconomic trends. General economic inflation affects all aspects of the economy, including groceries, gas, services, cars, car parts, and related liability claims. When prices rise, medical care, property damage, and other expenses associated with claims also increase. As wages rise, so do expectations for compensation in personal injury cases. Consumers may seek higher damages to cover medical bills, lost wages, and pain and suffering. The growing income gap between high earners and the rest of the population can influence jury decisions, as jurors may empathize more with struggling plaintiffs.

Woke culture has further influenced economic perspectives by pushing for corporate accountability and ethical practices (Deep, 2023). These demands have increased operational costs for companies as they invest in sustainable practices, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and other socially responsible activities. Despite some companies adopting "woke washing," a practice where businesses appear socially conscious without substantive action (Warren, 2022), these costs are often passed on to consumers through higher prices, contributing to social inflation.

Risk Management Perspective:

Insurers and affected businesses can consider several strategies to mitigate the risks associated with social inflation. The first strategy is to assess the risk for every market segment and adjust pricing policies accordingly. The insurance industry has extensive experience in customer segmentation, with premiums varying based on factors such as age and location. For instance, an 18-year-old's automobile insurance premiums are typically higher than those for a 35-year-old, everything else being equal. Similarly, home insurance premiums are higher in Florida compared to Tennessee or Kentucky for the same property. Companies routinely study their market and risk exposure levels and try to manage them. Sometimes, this might mean exiting the market, as seen with home insurance companies leaving states like Florida and California. However, companies that continue to operate in these markets often re-calibrate their coverage and policy limits to potentially reduce coverage and payouts.

Even with the best predictive models, not every event or catastrophe can be forecasted or evaluated. As is common practice in the finance industry, insurance businesses set aside higher cash reserves to cover unanticipated events. Companies must also develop robust legal defense strategies to counter lawsuits and minimize losses.

Woke culture's emphasis on transparency and accountability has led companies to adopt more robust risk management practices (Foss & Klein, 2023; Sobande et al., 2022). However, these practices often involve additional costs, contributing to the overall social inflation experienced by consumers.

Reasons for Social Inflation – Automotive Market:

The lines of business most affected by social inflation include commercial auto (especially the trucking industry), professional liability, product liability, and directors and officers liability insurance. While social inflation may only affect insurers, its costs can trickle down to consumers and spread throughout the economy.

Spike in the Number of Automobile Accidents: Industry professionals considered 2019 a normal year for auto insurance. However, during the pandemic, reduced driving led to fewer accident claims, with some customers even receiving rebate checks from insurance companies. Unfortunately, by 2021 and 2022, as driving increased, so did accident rates (Rodeck, 2024). According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there was a 10 percent increase in crashes in 2022 compared to 2020.

Higher Car Prices and Expensive Repairs: As the US emerged from the pandemic, consumers began purchasing cars, but supply chain issues affecting various products during the pandemic also impacted cars and car parts. Shortages led to higher automotive prices, with dealers lacking sufficient inventory and selling models at a premium. These issues also affected collision and repair centers, leading to delays and increased repair costs. Repairing newer, more technologically advanced vehicles is particularly costly. For example, replacing a back

bumper on an older Toyota Camry used to cost about \$300, but replacing and recalibrating the bumper with around 40 sensors on newer models can approach \$900. Similarly, replacing a windshield with advanced technology like heads-up displays can exceed \$1,000.

Lawsuits and Nuclear Verdicts: Most auto insurance policies limit coverages and payouts, but high-power lawyers and their “no-fee-unless-you-win” contingency fee programs encourage accident victims to seek settlements beyond what insurance companies provide. Personal injury and accident lawyers heavily advertise their services, making it easy for drivers to remember them when needed. Even though most cases are settled out of court, lawyers and plaintiffs that go to trial often hope for nuclear verdicts—jury awards exceeding \$10 million in punitive and compensatory damages. These verdicts are often driven by sympathetic juries who perceive big businesses as having deep pockets and being responsible for plaintiffs’ injuries. A study in the insurance journal reports that nuclear verdicts reached a 15-year high last year, with 27 “thermonuclear” verdicts of \$100 million or more (Amacher, 2024). Fortunately, most of these verdicts are not in the consumer automotive insurance markets.

Third-Party Litigation Funding (TPLF): The litigation funding system is another factor driving higher insurance costs. Outside parties, such as hedge funds and other financiers, fund litigation as investments, expecting to earn a return. This funding, combined with an increase in lawsuits, significantly affects social inflation. Litigation financing companies bankroll potentially high-value lawsuits, contributing to rising loss ratios in excess liability, commercial auto, medical malpractice, and general liability insurance, leading to increased consumer premiums (Moorecraft, 2020).

The Influence of Woke Culture: Woke culture has influenced the automotive market by pushing for more stringent safety and environmental standards (Foss & Klein, 2023; Warren, 2021). These regulations increase production and operational costs for manufacturers, which are passed on to consumers. Additionally, woke culture’s emphasis on corporate accountability has led to more lawsuits and higher settlement amounts (Fan, 2019), further contributing to social inflation in the automotive sector.

Reasons for Social Inflation – Housing Market:

Social inflation is not limited to the automotive insurance marketplace; it also affects the housing insurance industry for different reasons. Unlike bad or dangerous driving, which are avoidable and mostly driver-related accidents, homeowners’ insurance inflation is often due to external and uncontrollable factors. This section explores some reasons for social inflation in the home insurance market.

Frequency and Intensity of Natural Catastrophic Events: Whether due to climate change or environmental cycles, the US faces natural calamities each year with increasing frequency and intensity during both summer and winter seasons. Hailstorms, tornados, hurricanes, thunderstorms, wildfires, flooding, and other natural disasters cause extensive property damage. While only major events make national news, smaller events also cause significant damage. Some areas or states are more prone to these calamities.

Recently, supply chain issues in the housing market have driven up the cost of new construction and repairs (Rodeck, 2024). This has translated into higher housing costs and increased premiums for homeowner insurance. Additionally, rising costs of construction materials have added to the cost of property repairs. Filing a claim with an insurer after a disaster also increases premiums. Higher insurance premiums affect not only homeowners but also renters. The problem is particularly acute in California and Florida, where homeowners struggle to find insurance companies willing to underwrite their investments. For instance, if a roof is over 15 years old, the chances of getting insurance coverage for replacement are almost nonexistent (PACE, 2022).

State Government Regulations: Since automotive and homeowners insurance is a state-regulated issue, there are significant disparities between states in regulations and coverage. In these cases, state government responses to rising insurance rates are seen as contributing factors to even higher rates (Rodeck, 2024). California’s restrictions on raising insurance rates have led some insurers to leave the state. State Farm, Farmers, and Allstate, for example, have announced they are not renewing thousands of homeowners’ policies (Darmiento, 2024). The reasons cited include wildfires, inflationary construction costs, higher reinsurance prices, and regulatory constraints. In Florida, the insurance crisis has been exacerbated by roofing claims’ insurance fraud, where contractors offer free roof replacements and then sue insurers for refusing payments. Statistics show that while Florida accounted for 8 percent of national homeowners claims in 2019, it represented about 76 percent of the litigation claims (Friedlander, 2022).

Fortunately, California and Florida are moving toward passing reforms, but balancing the interests of property owners and insurers is challenging. Signs of stabilization in the Florida insurance market are emerging,

with eight new insurers approved to enter the market (Cueto, 2024). Similarly, a new insurance reform package is being introduced in California to strengthen the insurance marketplace and maintain consumer protections (California, 2024).

The Influence of Woke Culture: Woke culture's focus on environmental sustainability (Foss & Klein, 2023; Warren, 2021) and social justice (Sobande et al., 2022) has significantly influenced the housing market. Companies are pressured to adopt sustainable building practices, incorporate renewable energy sources, and ensure equitable treatment in housing policies. These initiatives often lead to higher construction and operational costs, which are transferred to consumers through increased insurance premiums. Additionally, woke culture's push for transparency and accountability in corporate practices has led to stricter regulations and more frequent litigation, further driving up costs in the housing sector.

Reasons for Social Inflation – Influence of Woke Culture through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the ethical obligation of businesses to contribute positively to society, encompassing environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic development (Van Marrewijk, 2003). Due to the influence of the recent woke culture, consumers now expect companies to align with these values, compelling many companies to adopt comprehensive CSR initiatives (Deep, 2023; Foss & Klein, 2023). In the past, consumers perceived CSR as a voluntary or philanthropic action by companies (Piacentini et al., 2000). However, the influence of woke culture has transformed CSR into a crucial component of current business practices (Farmaki, 2022). Companies across various industries have incorporated CSR practices into their business strategies in response to consumers' expectations for ethical behaviors. For example, Patagonia has built its business model on sustainable development principles. Other major apparel retailers such as H&M, Zara, and Nike have incorporated sustainable items, including organic cotton, in their assortments (Achabou, 2020). Properly incorporating CSR into long-term business strategies can be costly, often passed on to consumers, contributing to overall social inflation (Hategan, 2018).

The Mechanism through which CSR Influences Social Inflation:

Operational Costs: Implementing CSR initiatives frequently requires substantial financial commitments. For example, the shift towards sustainable energy sources, equitable labor practices, employee training, ethical sourcing, and waste reduction demand significant investments (Achabou, 2020; Hategan, 2018). These increased operational costs are commonly passed on to customers, leading to elevated product and service prices.

Litigation and Compliance Costs: Compliance with CSR standards can also result in heightened legal and regulatory costs. Corporations might encounter legal actions concerning ecological harm, infringements on labor rights, or non-compliance with sustainability pledges (Achabou, 2020; Green & Pelozo, 2011). These legal disputes not only incur immediate monetary expenses but also require increased insurance payments to address potential obligations.

Brand and Reputation Management: Maintaining a favorable corporate reputation through CSR endeavors necessitates substantial financial investment in marketing and public relations. Organizations allocate significant resources towards promotional campaigns highlighting their CSR undertakings, with the objective of appealing to ethically-minded customers (Deep, 2023; Piacentini et al., 2000). Although these endeavors can bolster brand loyalty, they concurrently contribute to the organization's cost structure, impacting social inflation.

Woke Culture-Induced Paradox:

Woke culture has reshaped consumer expectations, leading many to invest more in goods and services from socially conscious companies (Green & Pelozo, 2011; Piacentini et al., 2000). However, this demand for CSR creates a paradox: The call for corporate social responsibility leads to increased expenses, thereby fueling social inflation. Businesses must understand consumer behavior within this framework to balance ethical principles with economic viability.

Future research directions:

The relationship between woke culture, CSR, and social inflation presents numerous avenues for future research. Potential topics include:

- Quantitative studies to measure the economic impact of CSR initiatives on social inflation across different sectors.
- Comparative analyses of consumer willingness to pay for CSR-driven products in various markets.
- Longitudinal studies to assess the long-term financial implications of CSR on business performance and pricing strategies.

Conclusion:

While many types of inflation-related terms such as greedflation, shrinkflation, etc., have recently captured consumers' attention, the notion of social inflation has not been as widely discussed. This brief summary explores the concept of social inflation, a term long recognized in the insurance industry since the 1980s. The discussion covered the various factors contributing to social inflation, highlighting the significant influence of woke culture and CSR. The abstract provided an overview of the issue as it applies to the automotive and homeowner insurance markets. The main body explored the causes of social inflation in these distinct markets, emphasizing the impact of woke culture on consumer behavior and corporate practices. For future research, we propose delving deeper into the concept to develop theoretical and psychological frameworks for the phenomenon in these insurance marketplaces, with a specific focus on the implications of woke culture on economic trends and insurance markets.

References

References are available upon request

SESSION 5.6: IT'S STRATEGIC

Moderator:

Reto Felix

Summary Brief

Employee Satisfaction and Engagement Impact Organization Loyalty

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The present study examined the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement and the relationship between employee engagement and the outcomes of positive word-of-mouth, employee loyalty, and employee net promoter score. Additionally, the study looked at the potential impact of managerial trustworthiness moderating the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement. To determine the validity of these relationships, a diverse sample of 400 full-time employees working in various industries in the United States was used in the theoretical model using partial least squares path modeling. The results found a direct relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement, which was related to employee loyalty, employee net promoter score, and positive word-of-mouth. At the same time, the managerial trustworthiness moderator did not support the hypothesis. Practical implications are discussed based on the research findings.

Introduction

Employee turnover is a significant issue, with nearly 47 million Americans leaving their jobs voluntarily in 2022 (Meschke, 2021), which indicates that the Great Resignation is not over (Herman, 2023). Baker and Zuech (2022) reported a 20% increase in employee annual voluntary turnover in 2022 and projected to continue. Lawson et al. (2022) found that low employee turnover outperforms high turnover. Employee voluntary departures negatively impact corporate performance by disrupting existing jobs and causing a loss of experience (Kurdi & Alshurideh, 2020). Direct expenses like discharge, recruiting, and training contribute to poor performance (Lawson et al., 2022). Also, the researchers found that employee turnover is associated with a decline in profit margins and customer service. Companies should understand why employees leave and how to change trends. Implementing strategies to improve employee retention, such as offering competitive benefits and career development opportunities, can help reduce turnover rates. Companies can ultimately enhance their performance and profitability by addressing the root causes of turnover and creating a positive work environment.

Employee loyalty is a key focus in human resource models, including job satisfaction, employee engagement, employee commitment, and workplace environment (LaGree et al., 2023). Loyal employees are an essential asset in organizations as they promote a sense of security and mutual benefit between employees and the company (Wiklund & Jansson, 2019). They can also act as advocates for the company, attracting top talent and enhancing its reputation (Vecchi et al., 2021). Loyal employees also boost productivity, enhance the company's image, and support revenue (Bagis & Adawiyah, 2022). However, the relationship between employee and employer can be imbalanced, leading to quiet resignations (Klotz & Bolino, 2022). Quiet quitting, a strategic approach where workers limit work activities and fulfill basic job requirements, is becoming more prevalent in today's workforce. Another variable worth considering is the employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), a crucial tool for measuring employee engagement and experience within an organization. It focuses on how likely employees are to recommend the company to family and friends. Rao (2019) stated that eNPS promotes employee loyalty, considers employee feedback, and aids organizations in determining their needs. Studies have linked employee satisfaction and various antecedents with NPS or eNPS metrics, such as person-organization fit and intentions to leave (Legerstee, 2013; Lynch, 2022; Rao, 2019). However, a lack of research specifically examines the relationship between eNPS-measured firm outcomes and employee satisfaction (Legerstee, 2013; Lynch, 2022). An additional metric developed to assist employers in gauging employee loyalty is Positive Word-of-Mouth (PWOM), which is another metric developed to assist employers in gauging employee loyalty (Pollack & Alexandrov, 2013). PWOM captures the extent to which employees speak positively about their organization to others, showing employee loyalty (Mittal et al., 2022). Organizations like Apple, Intuit, and Philips have made eNPS a centerpiece of their management strategies. Increasing employee job satisfaction will foster strong employee loyalty and, in turn, increase PWOM about the company (Barhorst et al., 2020; Sweeney et al., 2020). ENPS and PWOM are essential tools for understanding employee loyalty.

Employee loyalty is the strong bond between an employee and their employer, characterized by trust, dedication, and commitment (Kot-Radojewska & Timenko, 2018). However, recent research has led to reevaluating employee loyalty due to inconsistent findings (Wong et al., 2021). This study investigates whether job satisfaction (JS) directly influences employee engagement (EE) and whether employee engagement directly influences employee loyalty (EL), Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), and Positive Word of Mouth (PWOM). Also, it will examine if managerial trustworthiness (MT) moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement. This research will explore these factors to better understand the complex dynamics influencing employee loyalty and its outcomes, enabling organizations to implement targeted strategies to foster loyalty. It is to understand the likelihood of a loyal employee promoting their company to others if they are satisfied and engaged. Several studies have focused on the role of NPS in customer loyalty and organizational sales growth, but few have focused on eNPS in employee loyalty and job satisfaction. The study contributes knowledge about employee loyalty that directly benefits organizations, managers, and employees. It also helps practitioners drive eNPS by going beyond whether employees have shown loyalty behaviors and considering employees' willingness to recommend the company as a great workplace. Companies can use eNPS data to identify areas for improvement, increase employee retention, and attract top talent.

Theoretical Background

The central theoretical framework guiding this research study was social exchange theory (SET), which analyzes the direct relationships between employees and the organization (Blau, 1964). SET is a widely recognized framework for understanding workplace behavior, focusing on interactions between two parties with reciprocal interdependence (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Loi et al., 2015). According to Gerstner and Day (1997), researchers use SET to investigate the interpersonal interactions between employees and managers, highlighting the importance of trust and inclusion. Employee loyalty is more likely based on the belief that they have gained something positive in return from the organization (Chen et al., 2022). The theory emphasizes that employees who feel valued, supported, and rewarded by their organization are more likely to reciprocate with increased commitment and loyalty (Shore et al., 2009).

Employee loyalty is a crucial aspect of the SET and plays a significant role in understanding organizational interactions and why employees are loyal to their employers (Meschke, 2021). In the latter decades of the 20th century, loyalty was accepted as integral to business, with the 1980s being described as "the decade of greed" (Anderson, 1998, p. 25). Researchers have presented diverse interpretations of employee loyalty (Powers, 2000), including commitment to the organization, personal fulfillment, the work environment, social recognition, and financial incentives. Turkyilmaz et al. (2011) defined employee loyalty as the degree to which individuals seek to remain working for their company. Powers (2000) and Reichheld (2003) defined loyalty as an employee's willingness to voluntarily contribute to or make sacrifices on behalf of the company and the intention to engage with the organization in the long term, which plays a positive role in the retention of employees.

This study explores the eNPS as a measure of employee loyalty to an organization. The eNPS measures the likelihood of employees referring others to the company and recommending their workplace (Birkinshaw, 2013). The NPS, created by Reichheld (2003), measures customer loyalty by asking customers if they would recommend a product to friends and family. Philips, a technological company, has integrated NPS into their company to track customer satisfaction and make product changes (Kahn, 2011). Studies show that 78% of purchase decisions are based on peer-to-peer recommendations, emphasizing the importance of customer feedback. Research has shown that improvements in NPS are correlated with firm growth and profitability (Colvin, 2020). The study uses eNPS based on extensive empirical findings in support of NPS, as it can measure the loyalty behaviors of individual employees, managers, workgroups, units, and entire organizations (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021).

PWOM is a construct linked to SET, indicating that employees with a positive attitude toward their jobs are more likely to engage in communication and display work-related behaviors (Van Hove, 2013). PWOM is an informal exchange of information between parties assessing the quality of service (Westbrook, 1987) and aiming to inform or persuade others (Anderson, 1998). It has been identified as a resource that may make an organization more attractive (Uen et al., 2015). Marketing research has focused on the notion that PWOM communication influences consumers' attitudes and behaviors, being significantly more effective than advertising and personal selling at convincing customers to switch brands and changing negative or neutral attitudes into positive ones (Jiang, 2019). PWOM has received attention as a supportive approach to improving organizational attractiveness, leading to positive impacts on antecedents such as employee satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and trust (Van Hove et al., 2016).

Hypotheses

Research indicates that job satisfaction and employee loyalty are closely linked, with employees becoming more loyal when their organization offers career growth, learning opportunities, and organizational growth opportunities (Walker & Boyne, 2006). High employee loyalty can be achieved through teamwork, increased manager support, a positive workplace culture, and job satisfaction (Khuong & Linh, 2020). Employees with a lifelong commitment to their organization also influence employers to be more loyal by creating trust between these factors (Kayaser Fatima & Abdur Razzaque, 2014). Empirical studies have consistently shown positive correlations between job satisfaction and employee loyalty, with content employees tending to remain with their current employer and often recommending the organization to others (Vuong et al., 2021). Conversely, job satisfaction declines often prompt employees to seek new opportunities actively (S. Chen et al., 2022; Vuong et al., 2021). Job satisfaction is crucial to employee loyalty, with studies in various industries indicating its influence on employee loyalty (Khuong & Linh, 2020). Furthermore, job satisfaction has been linked to higher levels of employee engagement and productivity, ultimately benefiting the organization as a whole. Overall, fostering job satisfaction among employees can lead to increased loyalty and positive outcomes for the organization.

Research on employee satisfaction and eNPS has been limited, but the eNPS question has gained popularity due to its ability to measure employee loyalty and recommend their company (Sedlak, 2020). The eNPS questionnaire has credibility and can be used with loyalty experts to identify strategies to raise scores and increase promoters. Implementing eNPS among employee and customer populations could help determine employees' happiness levels and potential causes of unhappiness (Biesok & Wyrod-Wrobel, 2021). Further research is needed to understand the relationship between job satisfaction and eNPS in the public and private sectors.

Job satisfaction is crucial for employees to demonstrate loyalty and appreciation to their organization through a PWOM (Zhang et al., 2022). Employees who are happy with their jobs promote their companies positively and are proud to work for them (Mohammad et al., 2011). Research shows that when employees know their employer is loyal to their organization, positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational pride, and PWOM increase (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021). Employees with higher job satisfaction are more likely to be committed to their organization and spread PWOM, enhancing the organization's overall success and reputation (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021; Sakiyama et al., 2023). However, there is a significant gap in business literature exploring the connection between job satisfaction and PWOM constructs.

Various studies support the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement (Ang & Rabo, 2018; Riyanto et al., 2021; Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2018; Zeng et al., 2021). Job satisfaction in an organization leads to positive attitudes and behaviors, such as increased engagement and organizational commitment (Riyanto et al., 2021). Zeng et al. (2022) examined the relationship between employee motivation and engagement and found that intrinsic job satisfaction has a more significant impact than extrinsic job satisfaction. The researchers discovered that a significant portion of the nurses choose to work due to external factors that motivate them, which explains the high nursing staff turnover rate. The findings suggest that it is crucial to implement strategies that enhance employees' internal drive to improve their level of involvement in their profession. Enhancing work engagement is essential for retaining people and ensuring overall job satisfaction. Also, studies have found that satisfaction directly promotes employee engagement, accounting for 80% of the variation in engagement (Ang & Rabo, 2018; Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2018). Therefore, the following hypotheses were investigated in this research, and the conceptual model is displayed in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 1: Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with employee loyalty.

Hypothesis 2: Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with eNPS.

Hypothesis 3: Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with PWOM.

Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction is positively related to employee engagement.

Research indicates that satisfied employees are more engaged and have lower turnover rates, leading to higher levels of loyalty (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Employee engagement is a key factor in a successful organization, as it influences employee perception and loyalty (Vazirani, 2005). Employee engagement is also linked to job quality, with personal investment in the organization being more significant (Milliman et al., 2018). Numerous studies have shown that employee engagement is related to employee loyalty in different industries (Milliman et al., 2018; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018). Also, studies have shown that engagement significantly

impacts turnover intentions, while turnover intention relates to employee loyalty (Milliman et al., 2018; Tyagi et al., 2023).

The Serco client contracts study by Rayton et al. (2012) and Bridger (2014) found a long-term correlation between employee engagement and eNPS, a customer loyalty metric. Contracts serviced by employees with increased engagement had 24% higher eNPS scores than those with decreased engagement. Engaged employees had significantly higher levels of customer loyalty. Employers can gain deeper insights into employee engagement by encouraging them to share their concerns and perspectives at pivotal career points (Akingbola et al., 2022; Rayton et al., 2012). This can enhance the impact of eNPS, as employee engagement behaviors are expected to enhance the overall performance of the organization. The study emphasizes the importance of prioritizing employee engagement initiatives to improve eNPS scores and overall business performance.

According to Van Hove et al. (2016), PWOM is the most distinctive way satisfied employees show loyalty and respect for their organization. Social exchange theory, such as PWOM, directly affects employee engagement and communicative behavior (Y. Lee, 2022). The researchers state that PWOM directly affects employee engagement and communicative behavior, enhancing productivity and retention. Also, research shows that PWOM is a powerful tool for employee advocacy, aiding in the recruitment of highly qualified employees and boosting retention and engagement (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). A study conducted by Lee (2022) showed that workers' personal resource investment, dedication, and engagement have the potential to impact their advocacy and positive word-of-mouth behaviors. The results revealed that highly engaged employees go above and beyond to promote their firms to those outside the organization. Therefore, the following hypotheses were investigated in this research, and the conceptual model is displayed in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 5: Employee engagement has a positive relationship with employee loyalty.

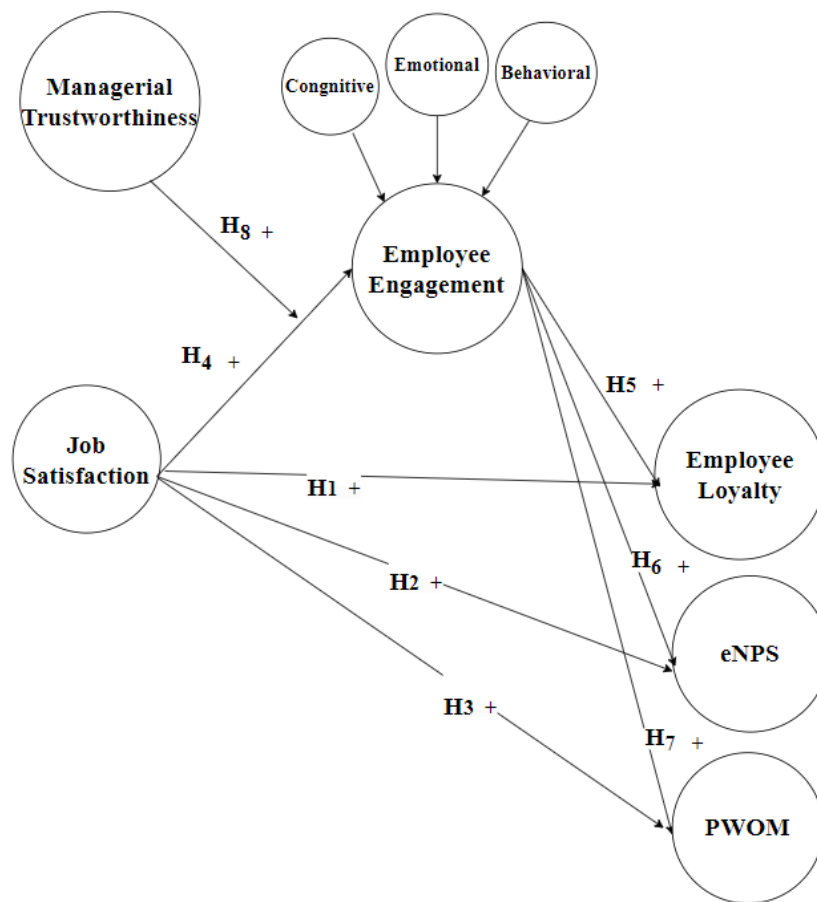
Hypothesis 6: Employee engagement has a positive relationship with eNPS.

Hypothesis 7: Employee engagement has a positive relationship with PWOM.

Managerial trustworthiness is crucial for reducing the risk of adverse incidents and increasing employee engagement (Mölders et al., 2019). Trust is the willingness of a trustor to be vulnerable to a trustee's actions, and it has cognitive and affective components (Kim & Kim, 2020), which can lead employees to voluntarily give management control over them (Gullett et al., 2009; Korsgaard, 2018). Strong relationships within an organization are based on trust, which can ultimately improve communication and collaboration. When trust is present, employees are more likely to feel secure and motivated to work towards common goals. Additionally, research has shown that trust is a key factor in enhancing employee job satisfaction and overall organizational performance (Kim & Kim, 2020; Mölders et al., 2019). Employee engagement is influenced by satisfaction with work and the willingness to work with integrity and benevolence (Cui & Jiao, 2019). Effective leadership requires trust, and high managerial trustworthiness strengthens the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement (Islam et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis was investigated in this research, and the conceptual model is displayed in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 8: Managerial trustworthiness will moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement such that there will be a strong positive relation when managerial trustworthiness is high but a weak positive relation when managerial trustworthiness is low.

Figure 1: Conceptual research model



Methodology

Participants and Procedure

The study collected anonymous data from United States employees over 18 years old across various industries using the online survey platform Qualtrics®XM. The survey was limited to desktop and laptop computers due to its extended duration. Other researchers have used Qualtrics®XM effectively for data collection (Belliveau & Yakovenko, 2022), and online market research panels have been shown to provide satisfactory data quality, particularly when compared with convenience or student samples (Peer et al., 2022). Participants were enlisted through email invitations, with each invitation containing a link to the Qualtrics®XM survey. No identifying panelist information was transmitted back to the researcher as part of data acquisition. Only participants who effectively completed the survey received incentives provided by Qualtrics®XM, which adhered to the policies of Qualtrics®XM and was considered appropriate considering the length and level of effort required for the survey.

This study is a quantitative cross-sectional design involving participants from various industries in the United States. A total of 579 responses were received through a Qualtrics®XM survey link, with 119 respondents not providing informed consent and 460 remaining. After data cleansing, a total usable sample size of 400 responses remained, indicating a 79.5% valid response rate. The sample was collected through an online consumer research panel over a four-week period. The data showed skewness towards female respondents, with 34.0% identified as male and 65.0% as female. The majority of respondents were Caucasian or White, with 74.5% followed by African American or Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Other Native American, and other 1.0%. The majority of respondents had less than one to five years of work experience, with 47.5% having less than one to five years. Education was predominantly 4-year degrees, with 32.8% having a bachelor's degree, 13.2% having a 2-year degree, 11.5% having a master's/professional degree, and .8% having a doctorate. Most respondents worked in offices, with 58.8% in office, 22.0% remote, and 19.3% working hybrid.

Measurements

For this study, a total of 35 items were used for the research model constructs. The measurement items were based on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” All these items were adapted from previously validated studies but carefully revised to fit the context of this research. Employee Loyalty was from Homburg and Stock (2005) with Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.895. Positive Word of Mouth from Goyette et al. (2010) with Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.927. Job satisfaction was based on Schriesheim and Tsui's work (1980), with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.906. Managerial trustworthy was from K. Yang and Kassekert (2010.) with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.919. Employee engagement was modeled as a formative second-order construct by Shuck et al. (2017) with three indicator variables of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.933, 0.914, and 0.894. Meanwhile, eNPS was an 11-point Likert scale with a range of 0 to 10, meaning 0 is not at all likely, and 10 is extremely likely, according to Reichheld (2003). The scales in Appendix A visually represent the different measures used in the research study.

Results

Reliability and validity tests

Table 1 displays the reflective measurement model for both PLS-SEM for internal consistency reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity. The indicator loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach alpha (CA) values of the latent constructs were extracted after performing the confirmatory factor analysis on all the constructs. For this study, the factor loadings of all the items in the model have a value greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2022; Ringle et al., 2023). Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability scores were above the suggested level of 0.700 but below the highest level of .95 (Hair et al., 2022; Ringle et al., 2023). The Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.873 to 0.925 after the indicators MT3, PWOM3, and PWOM5 were removed due to a high level of reliability for internal consistency (see Table 1), which was necessary to ensure the accuracy and validity of the results. Meanwhile, the CR values of all the constructs ranged from 0.907 to 0.947.

The constructs had AVE scores equal to or greater than the 0.50 threshold (Hair et al., 2021). AVE's values for BE, CE, EE, EL, JS, MT, and PWOM are 0.752, 0.817, 0.788, 0.663, 0.663, 0.798, and 0.816, respectively, in the model. These high AVE scores indicate that the constructs in the model have good convergent validity. After meeting the minimum threshold requirements (Hair et al., 2022) for the internal consistency and reliability checks, we can conclude that the model is accurate enough for PLS-SEM analysis. This indicates that the model can effectively test the research hypotheses.

Table 1: Results Summary for Model Measurements

Construct	Indicators ^a	Outer	Cronbach's	Composite Reliability		AVE
		Loadings	Alpha	(rho a)	(rho c)	
Behavioral Engagement	BE1	0.925	0.890	0.894	0.92	0.752
	BE2	0.936				
	BE3	0.927				
	BE4	0.936				
Cognitive Engagement	CE1	0.951	0.925	0.933	0.95	0.817
	CE2	0.972				
	CE3	0.937				
	CE4	0.942				
Emotional Engagement	EE1	0.951	0.910	0.914	0.94	0.788
	EE2	0.956				
	EE3	0.937				
	EE4	0.923				
Employee loyalty	EL1	0.883	0.873	0.895	0.91	0.663

	EL2	0.941				
	EL3	0.888				
	EL4	0.931				
	EL5	0.861				
Job satisfaction	JS1	0.906	0.897	0.906	0.92	0.663
	JS2	0.888				
	JS3	0.872				
	JS4	0.868				
	JS5	0.920				
	JS6	0.951				
Managerial trustworthiness	MT1	0.944	0.916	0.919	0.940	0.798
	MT2	0.943				
	MT4	0.942				
	MT5	0.951				
Positive Word of Mouth	PWOM1	0.955	0.925	0.927	0.95	0.816
	PWOM2	0.950				
	PWOM4	0.943				
	PWOM6	0.952				

Notes: N= 400. AVE = Average variance extracted. ^aMT3, PWOM3, and PWOM5 were removed to improve reliability and validity. ^bThe *p* value for each indicator was < .001. The eNPS indicator is not included in the table because it is a single measure.

To weigh the discriminant validity, Hair et al. (2022) and Roemer et al. (2021) introduced the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) criteria, a statistical measure used to check discriminant validity in partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The HTMT is a consistent estimation for inter-construct correlation in congeneric measurement models, considering both shared variance and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations. However, Ringle et al. (2023) noted that the results of both criteria would not significantly differ in typical applications due to potential negative correlation patterns between variables. HTMT+ criterion addresses this issue by providing a more accurate evaluation of distinctiveness between constructs. This enhancement ensures more reliable conclusions about the distinctiveness of constructs when using HTMT+ compared to the original HTMT criterion (Ringle et al., 2023). The study used HTMT+ test criteria to determine discriminant validity, assessing the degree to which one measure does not correlate with another whose underlying construct is unrelated. The test results showed that HTMT+ ratio statistics for each reflective construct were less than or equal to 0.90, indicating that discriminant validity was not an issue in the model (Ringle et al., 2023). The HTMT+ ratios are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT+)

	BE	CE	EL	EE	JS	MT	PWOM	eNPS
BE	-							
CE	0.750	-						
EL	0.372	0.364	-					
EE	0.587	0.540	0.708	-				
JS	0.468	0.487	0.710	0.840	-			
MT	0.496	0.449	0.656	0.824	0.869	-		

PWOM	0.422	0.401	0.836	0.719	0.701	0.690	-
eNPS	0.349	0.338	0.603	0.607	0.694	0.677	0.651

Note. N=400. EL = Employee Loyalty. eNPS = employee Net Promoter score. PWOM = Positive Word of Mouth. JS = Job Satisfaction. EE = Emotional Engagement. CE = Cognitive Engagement. BE = Behavior Engagement. MT = Managerial Trustworthiness.

In the formative measurement model, a variable is defined as a combination of its indicators (Hair et al., 2022), which helps to increase the reliability and validity of the measurement before doing hypothesis testing. Analysis of the formative measurement model examines the significance and relevance of indicator weights and collinearity (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2019). Table 3 reveals that emotional engagement has a significant outer weight (t -test > 1.99; p -value = 0.05), while cognitive and behavioral engagements have less significance. Despite their insignificance, both factors influence overall engagement levels. The results suggest that emotional engagement impacts overall engagement more than cognitive and behavioral engagement, indicating an acceptable relationship between formative indicators and constructs. Collinearity looks at the formative indicators' variance inflation factor ($VIF < 5$) values (Hair et al., 2022). The assessment results for lower-order constructs showed that all three items were below the 5.0 threshold. The higher-order construct validity was established for all formative indicators, indicating that employee engagement is a valid formative factor and can be used to move forward.

Table 3: Results Summary for Formative Measurements

Construct	Formative Indicator	Outer Weights	Outer Loadings	t Statistic	95% Bca Confidence Interval	Outer VIF
Employee Engagement	BE	-0.002	0.558	0.043	[-0.099, 0.097]	2.054
	CE	0.073	0.554	1.327	[-0.036, 0.180]	1.972
	EE	0.962	0.998	33.159*	[0.901, 1.016]	1.465

Note: EE = Emotional Engagement. CE = Cognitive Engagement. BE = Behavior Engagement.

* $p < .001$

Common method bias

To reduce potential common method variance, we used existing scales, minimized ambiguous wording, and ensured respondents' anonymity (Hair et al., 2021). This study used the variance inflation factor (VIF) to assess the presence of common method bias. According to Kock (2015a), a model can be considered free of common method bias when all VIFs in the inner model resulting from a full collinearity test are equal to or lower than 3.3, as shown in Table 4. Risks of multicollinearity were assessed using the random dependent variable approach. The inner model VIFs for each construct were assessed to be between 1.037 and 3.004, which is less than 3.3. It can be concluded that this study does not face common technique bias; therefore, there was no need to make any more data modifications.

Table 4: Inner VIF Results

Construct	Random
Employee Loyalty	1.445
Employee Engagement	1.037
Job Satisfaction	3.004
Managerial Trustworthiness	3.054
Positive Word of Mouth	2.108
Employee Net Promoter Score	2.084

Out-of-sample model prediction assessment

Shmueli et al. (2019) suggested utilizing the PLSpredict using the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) to address this issue and further evaluate the predictive power of models on out-of-sample data. CVPAT results found that PLS-SEM vs. IA obtained a negative average loss value difference for the overall model, shown in Table 5. The average loss of PLS-SEM is significantly lower than the average loss of IA for all constructs EL, EE, PWOM, and eNPS, as well as for the overall model because p-values were less than .05. According to Hair et al. (2020) and Sharma et al. (2023), this indicates that the PLS path model is predictively valid for assessing relationships between variables. In contrast, PLS-SEM vs. LM did not obtain a negative average loss value difference for the overall model. No significant difference exists between the average loss of the PLS-SEM model and the linear model for any of the constructs, EL, EE, PWOM, eNPS, and the overall model; All p-values are greater than 0.05, which suggests that the PLS-SEM model is not significantly better at predicting the constructs compared to the linear model (Hair et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2023).

Table 5: Out-of-Sample Prediction

	PLS-SEM vs. Indicator Average (IA)			PLS-SEM vs. Linear Model (LM)		
	Average loss difference	t value	p value	Average loss difference	t value	p value
EL	-0.404	7.397	0.000	-0.006	0.401	0.689
EE	-0.346	6.228	0.000	0.019	0.981	0.327
PWOM	-0.474	6.994	0.000	-0.011	0.677	0.499
eNPS	-4.191	8.321	0.000	0.039	0.208	0.835
Overall	-0.703	8.901	0.000	0.002	0.080	0.936

Note: EL = Employee Loyalty. eNPS = employee Net Promoter score. PWOM = Positive Word of Mouth. ****p < .05**

Structural model

Given the minimal risk of collinearity and positive confirmation of the model's out-of-sample predictive power, the hypotheses in the structural model were evaluated. The standard assessment criteria included the coefficient of determination, R^2 . Table 6 discloses the R^2 , which is the total amount of explained variance in the endogenous constructs. The study used bootstrapping to evaluate the predictive power of a model on employee loyalty, employee net promoter score, and positive word of mouth. The model had a high R^2 value and significant structural paths, indicating its ability to explain differences in dependent values (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2019). For marketing studies, an R^2 value of .75, .50, and .25 is categorized as substantial, moderate, or weak respectively (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2019). The model's moderate predictive power was evaluated for EL (0.483), PWOM (0.487), eNPS (0.462), and employee engagement (0.655), which were evaluated as being moderate in predictive power and are statistically significant.

Also, Table 6 reveals the blindfolding procedure, which determines the predictive significance Q^2 of PLS path models (Hair et al., 2022). We acquired our Q^2 figure through cross-validated redundancy procedures. According to Hair et al. (2022), when values larger than zero are meaningful, with values between 0 and .24 indicating weak predictive relevance, values between .25 and .50 indicating moderate predictive relevance, and values above .50 indicating strong degree of predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2022). Employee engagement had a Q^2 value of .642, which is a strong degree of predictive relevance. Whereas employee loyalty had a Q^2 value of .429, eNPS had a Q^2 of .448, and PWOM had a Q^2 of .439, all three indicate a moderate level of predictive relevance, and the study results demonstrated Q^2 values that support the model's acceptable predictive relevance.

Table 6: Predictive Relevance of Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Construct	R^2	R^2_{adjusted}	t statistic	p values	Q^2_{predict}
Employee Loyalty	0.483	0.479	7.514*	0.000	0.429
Positive Word of Mouth	0.487	0.483	7.072*	0.000	0.439
Employee Net Promoter Score	0.462	0.458	8.572*	0.000	0.448
Employee Engagement	0.655	0.653	6.703*	0.000	0.642

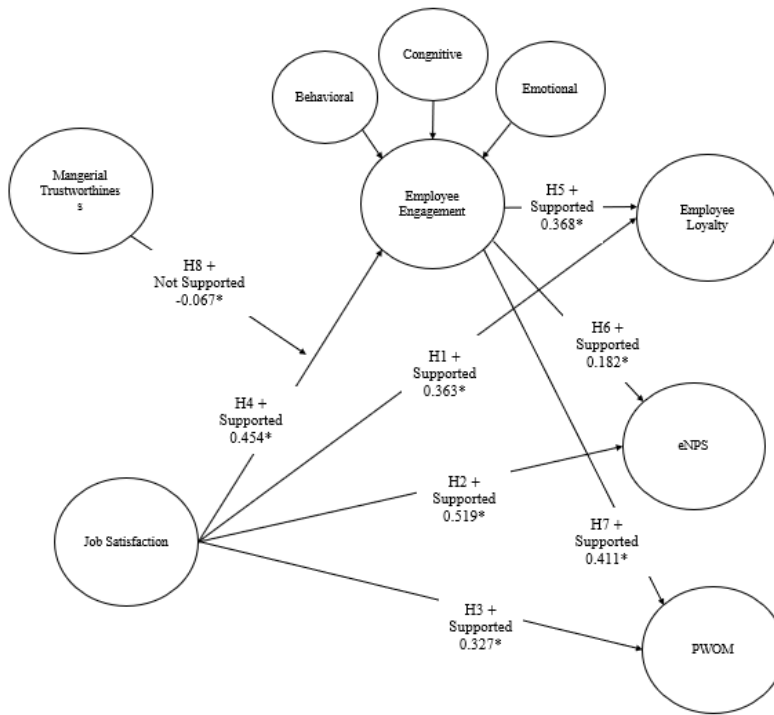
Effect size measures the exogenous latent construct on the endogenous construct using the f^2 . The study evaluates the effect size of removing a construct from a predictive model relationship, focusing on the R^2 value's significant predictive power. The effect size is determined by comparing the difference in R^2 representing effect size with the change in R^2 representing each independent construct's predictive ability (Hair et al., 2022). The significance of this assessment is evaluated against the f^2 guidelines of small (.02-.15), medium (.15-.35), and large (.35 and above). EL > PWOM (.410) was assessed as having a larger effect, while JS > Employee Engagement (.227) and JS > eNPS (.200). Other factors such as Engagement > EL (0.105), Employee Engagement > PWOM (.133), JS > EL (.105), JS > PWOM (.084), employee engagement > eNPS (.133), and the direct effect of EL > eNPS (.055) were all assessed as small and significant effects. Further assessments were conducted to evaluate each hypothesis' significance and effect size (f^2), as illustrated in Table 7 and Figure 2 below.

Table 7: Hypothesis test analysis results

Hypotheses	Structural Path	Path Coefficients β	t value	p values	95% Confidence Intervals	f^2 Effect Size	q^2 Effect Size	Hypothesis Results
H1	JS -> EL	0.364	6.088	0.000*	[0.245, 0.477]	0.103	0.021	Supported
H2	JS -> eNPS	0.519	9.02	0.000*	[0.407, 0.629]	0.084	0.005	Supported
H3	JS -> PWOM	0.327	5.334	0.000*	[0.203, 0.440]	0.200	0.043	Supported
H4	JS -> EE	0.454	8.528	0.000*	[0.350, 0.558]	0.220	0.212	Supported
H5	EE -> EL	0.368	6.485	0.000*	[0.260, 0.487]	0.105	0.032	Supported
H6	EE -> eNPS	0.182	2.818	0.005*	[0.062, 0.311]	0.025	0.050	Supported
H7	EE -> PWOM	0.411	6.51	0.000*	[0.289, 0.536]	0.133	0.031	Supported
H8	MT x JS -> EE	-0.067	2.114	0.035*	[-0.125, -0.001]	0.014	0.154	Not Supported

Note: JS = Job Satisfaction. EL = Employee Loyalty. eNPS = employee Net Promoter score. EE = Employee Engagement. MT = Managerial Trustworthiness. PWOM = Positive Word of Mouth. Statistical Significance: * $p < .001$; ** $p < .05$

Figure 2: Structural Model Results (*p < .001; ** p < .05)



Simple Slope Analysis

The study uses a slope graph to analyze the moderating effect of managerial trustworthiness on job satisfaction and employee engagement. Figure 3 displays the slope of the regression line, indicating that managerial trustworthiness positively influences job satisfaction and employee engagement. However, when job satisfaction increases, it does not improve employee engagement. The results show no significant interaction effect between job satisfaction and management trustworthiness on employee engagement. This suggests that managerial trustworthiness does not influence the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement.

Figure 3: Simple Slope Analysis of the Interaction Effect of Managerial Trustworthiness



General Discussion

The study found that organizations with higher job satisfaction levels have higher employee loyalty, which is consistent with previous research (Abror et al., 2020; Farrukh et al., 2020; Helmi et al., 2022). Satisfied employees are more productive and effective, and their expectations, such as work environment, relationships, promotion opportunities, and salary policy, should be met. Employees are valuable resources for organizations, and unsatisfied employees are more likely to seek new opportunities and leave, leading to higher turnover rates (Rajput et al., 2016). Therefore, job satisfaction is crucial for achieving employee loyalty and organizational success.

Also, the study reveals that employee engagement significantly impacts employee loyalty, a finding consistent with previous research (Abror et al., 2020; Milliman et al., 2018; Suardi et al., 2022). Engagement is crucial for employee loyalty and organizational retention. High-level loyalty leads to employees working beyond ordinary conditions, being proud to tell others about the company, sharing company news, accepting tasks, and feeling inspired (Istijanto & Purusottama, 2023). Conversely, employees not engaged may feel disconnected and less committed to their work. Employee longevity at a company is often determined by job satisfaction and engagement's impact on development, finances, and availability of better employment opportunities.

The study also reveals that job satisfaction significantly impacts eNPS, indicating an employee's likelihood of recommending their company to others. This finding aligns with previous studies (Abror et al., 2020; Milliman et al., 2018; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018). Employee engagement also positively impacts eNPS, indicating that employees are more likely to recommend their company to others. This finding aligns with previous studies, suggesting that engagement has a more measurable effect on employee loyalty (Akingbola et al., 2022). The study concludes that job satisfaction and employee engagement contribute to a positive work environment, fostering collaboration and organizational success. Prioritizing these factors can foster a supportive workplace culture, foster growth, and indirectly influence employee loyalty. Fulfilling employee satisfaction and employee engagement leads to increased eNPS, which can ultimately improve overall company performance and profitability.

In addition, the study reveals that job satisfaction positively impacts positive word-of-mouth (PWOM), consistent with several prior studies (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). However, factors like company culture, work-life balance, and growth opportunities can significantly influence positive word-of-mouth behavior. These factors contribute to overall job satisfaction and the likelihood of employees sharing positive feedback about their workplace. Also, employee engagement significantly impacts positive word of mouth, as evidenced by multiple studies (Lee, 2022; Bajaj et al., 2022). Employees who are engaged and satisfied with their work are more likely to speak positively about their organization, enhancing the company's reputation and attracting talented employees. This can enhance the company's reputation, attract talented employees, and contribute to its success. Satisfied employees are more engaged, shaping a company's overall image and success in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders.

Additionally, job satisfaction positively impacts employee engagement, as per previous studies (Tentama et al., 2019; Xhang et al., 2020). The medium effect size indicates that job satisfaction has a more measurable effect on employee engagement. Employees who are satisfied and engaged are more productive and motivated to contribute to the company's goals. However, the relationship can vary depending on individual and organizational dynamics. It is important for organizations to prioritize creating a positive work environment that fosters job satisfaction and engagement among employees. By understanding these dynamics, companies can tailor strategies to enhance employee well-being and ultimately drive organizational success. Therefore, employees who are satisfied and engaged are more productive and motivated to achieve company goals.

Finally, it was revealed that the moderating effects of managerial trustworthiness on the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement are such that there is a weak negative relationship when managerial trustworthiness is low. The results indicate that when the level of trustworthiness of the manager is low, job satisfaction may not necessarily lead to higher employee engagement. The study revealed that the perception of managerial trustworthiness does not directly influence job satisfaction and employee engagement, contradicting the common belief that high job satisfaction and engagement naturally lead to a higher perception of trustworthiness. Therefore, other factors may influence how employees perceive their managers' trustworthiness, regardless of their satisfaction and engagement levels. The measurable effect of managerial trustworthiness on the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement is minimal, suggesting other factors may influence employee perception.

Implications

This study emphasizes the significance of considering both eNPS and PWOM as useful metrics for evaluating employee job satisfaction and engagement in the context of organizational success and across a variety of industries. First, the findings explore the influence of the likelihood that employees will promote their company to

others. Despite criticism, eNPS has gained popularity. Researchers should focus on dependent variables and examine casual relationships in the literature (Bendle et al., 2019). One of the first contributions is a model examining job satisfaction and employee engagement to increase eNPS. This research adds to existing literature and helps researchers understand the validity of eNPS claims. Second, this study explores the factors influencing PWOM and offers insights into how organizations can improve employee satisfaction and engagement. Positive employee behavior significantly impacts PWOM communication outcomes (Wang & Binti Omar, 2023). The study introduces a model testing job satisfaction and engagement to enhance PWOM, which leads to cultivating a loyal workforce. This model provides valuable insights for companies looking to improve employee retention and performance.

This study has several managerial implications. Our research findings advocate that managers should be familiar with JS and EE factors influencing EL, eNPS, and PWOM. This is mostly applicable in many sectors where employees constantly face job fatigue and lack of engagement, which are likely to decrease employee loyalty. It is essential for managers to implement policies that will improve JS and EE and thus lead to an increase in EL, eNPS, and PWOM. One significant managerial implication is the importance of understanding job satisfaction and employee engagement in influencing employee loyalty. Employers can improve productivity and retain top talent by creating a positive work environment and providing growth opportunities. To enhance job satisfaction and engagement, businesses should focus on a healthy work-life balance, implementing recognition programs, providing competitive salaries, and offering advancement opportunities. Team-building activities can also help build relationships between superiors and colleagues. Management needs to work in an environment that ensures the above-mentioned. This will enable employees to give their all and be loyal to their organizations, which serves as a driving force for organizational success and growth.

Limitation and Future Research

The study used cross-sectional data, which can produce problems in measuring the net effects of job satisfaction, employee engagement, and managerial trustworthiness on work attitudes and performance. It also relied on self-reported data, which could be biased. Future research should consider using longitudinal designs to validate the findings and identify patterns and trends. Also, the study focused on the social exchange theory to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement and loyalty, neglecting other psychological factors like social and organizational identity and psychological contract. Focusing on social exchange theory may not comprehensively understand the research problem or account for all variables that could impact the outcomes (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Future research should consider incorporating alternative theories to gain a more comprehensive understanding of employee loyalty determinants.

In addition, this research only included participants from the United States, restricting its capacity to be broadly applied to other nations. Future studies should include people from a variety of cultural backgrounds to guarantee that the results can be applied to a broader range of participants. Also, the study did not explore the role of employee engagement as a mediator in the relationship between job satisfaction, employee loyalty, eNPS, and PWOM, suggesting future research should include this variable. Finally, the study found that managerial trustworthiness had a low and negative impact on job satisfaction and employee engagement, suggesting other factors may have a more substantial influence. Therefore, future research will identify additional variables and understand the mechanisms affecting these outcomes.

Conclusion

Business literature has traditionally focused on employee loyalty. For an organization to be successful in a highly competitive market, it is necessary to comprehend and prioritize its employees' loyalty. The level of understanding of the factors that contribute to the outcome of loyalty factors, which are important for organizations' long-term success and growth, can provide valuable insights into how to engage and retain employees effectively. By investing in building strong relationships with employees and creating a positive work environment, organizations can cultivate loyalty and ultimately drive their success in the market. A limited number of empirical studies have been conducted on marketing factors like eNPS and PWOM in business research. However, these factors have been widely used in customer loyalty research and can be modified and adapted to measure employee loyalty. This study confirmed that the relationship between marketing factors and employee loyalty factors can provide organizations with more concrete insights and strategies that employees can implement. Organizations can effectively enhance loyalty and create a more engaged workforce by incorporating these marketing strategies into job satisfaction and employee engagement initiatives. In addition, the findings of this study offer managers the opportunity to understand better the factors that influence employee loyalty and make well-informed decisions

regarding how to enhance it within the organization.

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Summary Brief

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) in Marketing: Theory and Implications

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Whereas prior research in marketing has focused on narrow artificial intelligence (AI), the current paper takes a more progressive stance by introducing the theoretical underpinnings of artificial general intelligence (AGI) to the marketing domain and by delineating AGI from narrow AI. The paper develops a two-dimensional framework with eight propositions that distinguish between AGI as producers vs. consumers and AGI as collaborators (i.e., cooperation) vs. adversaries (i.e., competition). Drawing on this framework, AGI can either assist marketers or replace them, and AGI can either aid consumers in their decision making or act as fully autonomous consumers in their own right. Implications for marketing theory and practice are discussed, and the importance of developing “human-friendly” AGI is emphasized.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become omnipresent in many marketing and consumption related applications, such as chatbots (Luo et al., 2019), AI-powered avatars in computer gaming (Butt et al., 2021), AI sales coaches (Luo et al., 2021), and AI healthcare providers (Longoni et al., 2019). It changes the way consumers interact with marketers (Puntoni et al., 2021) and disrupts traditional ways of doing business (Bock et al., 2020). Recent generative AI, such as Open AI’s ChatGPT (van Dis et al., 2023), have made the capabilities but also potential threats of AI even more salient to the public. A Google trend analysis shows that AI has gained continued importance in recent years, with a notable spike in February of 2023, shortly when ChatGPT was released.

Importantly, interest from academia and practitioners in the field of marketing and consumer research has been largely limited to AI that solves specific problems and performs single tasks, which is commonly labeled as narrow AI (Guha et al., 2021; Hoyer et al., 2020; Huang & Rust, 2021a; Puntoni et al., 2021). However, authors outside of the domain of marketing take a much more progressive stance and discuss scenarios in which AI reaches levels of intelligence that match or even surpass humans (Fei et al., 2022; Pei, 2019; Sejnowski, 2020; Yamakawa, 2021). This type of intelligence has been conceptualized as artificial general intelligence (AGI), a type of intelligence that is able to generalize the knowledge that it has gained and achieve a variety of goals in different contexts (Goertzel, 2014). All current AI platforms, including ChatGPT, belong to the group of narrow AI – however, recent generative AI such as ChatGPT represent an important step toward AGI (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Narrow AI applications excel at very specific tasks and already have a dramatic impact on consumer decision making (André et al., 2018; Dellaert et al., 2020; Davenport et al., 2020; Huang & Rust, 2021b; Kopalle et al., 2022). However, according to a number of influential scholars, it is not so much a matter of whether AI will reach general human intelligence, but rather a question of when this will happen (Bostrom, 2014; Yampolskiy, 2016).

AGI in Marketing: Literature Overview

Even though AGI has received substantial attention in research domains outside of marketing (e.g., Fei et al., 2022; Goertzel, 2014; Grudin & Jaques, 2019; Pei et al., 2019; Sejnowski, 2020), research on AGI within the marketing and consumer behavior space remains scarce and mostly cursory. An overview of recent conceptual work on AI shows that a substantial number of articles (e.g., André et al., 2018; Dellaert et al., 2020; Kopalle et al., 2022; Libai et al., 2020; Saura et al., 2021) do not address AGI. Some authors mention AGI and distinguish it from narrow AI, but then typically argue that AGI is a remote and unlikely event in a distant future, and hence shift their focus back to narrow AI (Davenport et al., 2020; Grewal et al., 2021; Guha et al., 2021; Pitt et al., 2023; Puntoni et al., 2021). For example, Grewal et al. (2021) observe that “...the likelihood of AGI becoming readily available does not appear to be quite here yet” (p. 230), and Guha et al. (2021) state that it is “important to clarify that AGI is not a near-term reality..., and AI researchers indicate only 50-50 odds of achieving AGI in the next three decades” (p. 30). We fully concur with those researchers who argue that it is meaningful to focus on narrow AI since it is a technology that already exists and which has immediate short-term implications. However, we also believe that it is important for academia and marketing practitioners to look beyond the immediate future and prepare for scenarios that could be disruptive for most industries and scientific domains. Berruti et al. (2020, p. 2) summarize this

perspective when stating that “[e]ven a small probability of achieving AGI in the next decade justifies paying attention to developments in the field, given the potentially dramatic inflection point that AGI could bring about in society.”

Theoretical Foundations of AGI: Actor Network Theory

AGI refers to systems which have a “broad capability to self-adapt to changes in their goals or circumstances, performing transfer learning... to generalize knowledge from one goal or context to others” (Goertzel, 2014, p. 1). Here, general intelligence is defined as “the essential, domain-independent skills necessary for acquiring a wide range of domain-specific knowledge ... i.e., the ability to learn anything (Voss, 2007, p. 132). In other words, AGI refers to systems which match the intelligence of humans in virtually all domains of interest (Shulman & Bostrom, 2012). To achieve such general levels of intelligence, AGI requires systems to be autonomous, goal-directed, and adaptive (Voss, 2007). In contrast, narrow AI systems need some level of human reprogramming or reconfiguration to enable the system to retain its level of intelligence when even relatively slight changes in the context occur (Goertzel, 2014). Several factors point toward an emergence of AGI that might be faster than commonly predicted, including the observation that artificial neural network (ANN) performance is currently doubling every year, and the explosive acceleration of hardware performance available for AI which clearly outperforms Moore’s law (Turchin, 2019).

Since, per definition, AGI reaches the intelligence of humans in a wide range of domains, the relationship between AGI and humans changes from being asymmetrical (i.e., master and servant) to symmetrical. Such a symmetrical relationship between humans and AI is represented well by actor network theory (ANT; Latour, 2005), which assumes that all entities in a social system, no matter whether human or nonhuman, stand on equal ontological footing to begin with (Müller, 2015). In other words, ANT dissolves the traditional duality between active subjects and passively consumed objects, and it acknowledges that humans act on technology but technology also acts on humans (Bajde, 2011). As such, ANT can help to unpack the relationships and interdependencies between human and non-human actors in a context in which self-learning technologies evolve (Waldherr et al., 2019). Drawing on theory of cooperation and competition (Deutsch, 1949; 2014), we theorize two (not mutually exclusive) outcomes of human-AGI relationships that conceptualize AGI as partners (cooperation) or adversaries (competition) in marketing and consumption.

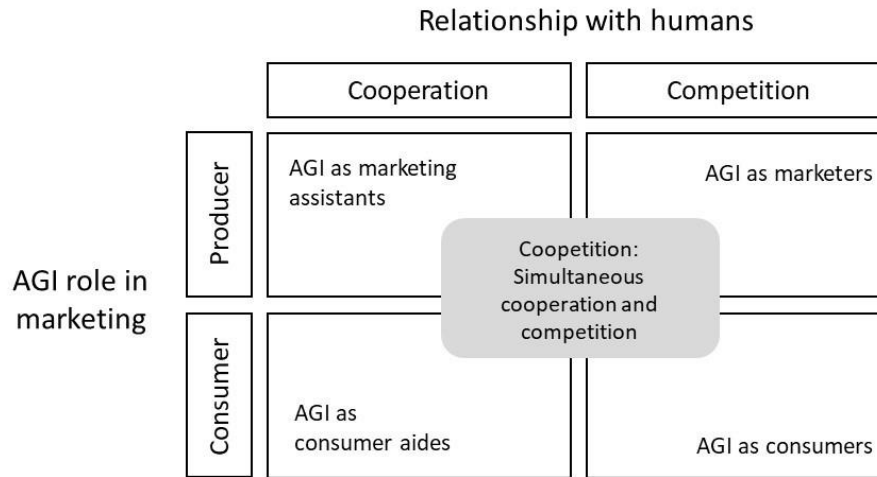
AGI Through the Lens of Cooperation and Competition

Cooperation and competition have attracted substantial interest from a variety of scientific domains, including psychology (e.g., Roseth et al., 2008), management (e.g., Hoffman et al., 2018), and marketing (e.g., Luo et al., 2006). Whereas cooperation refers to individuals or firms working together to accomplish shared goals, competition exists when individuals or firms work against each other and the goal achievement of one entity will negatively affect the goal achievement of other entities (Johnson & Johnson, 2015). Early research on the topic has initially focused on understanding the conditions that predict whether individuals or firms will engage in either cooperation or competition (Deutsch, 1949). However, firms as well as individuals frequently both cooperate and compete simultaneously. For example, even though Samsung Electronics and Sony Corporation have been traditionally fierce competitors, the two companies formed a joint venture to develop and produce LCD panels for flat screen TVs in 2004 with initial investments of one billion US dollars each (Gnyawali et al., 2016). For the 2023 Formula 1 season, Mercedes agreed to supply engines to Aston Martin, even though both companies not only compete in racing but are also direct competitors in the luxury sports car consumer segment (Cooper, 2022). Hence, cooperation and competition can be framed as binary opposites, but they may also coexist in the form of cooptition, where competition is possible without the need to kill the opposition and cooperation is possible without having to give up self-interest (Chen, 2008). In the section that follows, we draw on cooperation and competition theory to outline two possible scenarios of AGI which, however, are not mutually exclusive. We further distinguish between AGI as marketers and AGI as consumers.

AGI: Scenarios for Marketing

Figure 1 shows the four combinations of AGI’s role as either a producer or consumer in a marketing context, and its relationship with humans as either based on cooperation or competition. AGI acting as marketing producers may either be marketing assistants (when cooperating with humans) or marketers on their own (when competing with humans). Similarly, AGI acting as consumers may either be consumer aides (when cooperating with humans) or consumers in their own right (when competing with humans). Importantly, these four roles of AGI are not mutually exclusive, and AGI can, e.g., cooperate with humans in one area and compete with humans in another area, which leads to cooptition (Chen, 2008; Gernsheimer et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2006).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of AGI roles and relationships with humans in marketing



AGI as Marketing Assistants and Marketers

AGI as marketing assistants may provide a large range of marketing services related to, e.g., segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP), the marketing mix, customer acquisition and retention, and market research. When cooperating with human marketers on these tasks, AGI can provide valuable knowledge in a timely manner and assist humans in important ways. For example, AGI can process vast amounts of customer data and thereby aid humans in segmenting and targeting markets based on demographic and behavioral data. AGI can also assist human marketers with product portfolio and development tasks, setting and adjusting the price, optimizing distribution channels and supply chains, and designing effective communication strategies and sales force management activities. Furthermore, AGI can assist humans in customer acquisition, including prospecting and targeting, and customer retention, including CRM integration. Another area where AGI may assist humans effectively is market research. AGI could conduct interviews, code interview transcripts, and even analyze and interpret the data. Hence, AGI will be able to assign meaning to text or verbal communication in very similar ways as humans do. In addition, AGI may assist humans also in quantitative market research and data mining, including the generation of surveys, running statistics, conducting sentiment analyses, and interpreting the findings. Hence, the capabilities of AGI would go substantially beyond the functions of mechanical, thinking, and feeling AI identified by Huang and Rust (2021) in their work on narrow AI in marketing.

The alternative scenario for AGI in marketing provides a gloomier outlook for marketers in which AGI does not assist them but rather replaces them. Here, AGI interaction with humans is based on competition rather than cooperation. Such a scenario coincides with recent scholarly work showing that a substantial number of service workers fear to be replaced by AI not only for mechanical work, but also for jobs that require cognitive skills (thinking) and empathy (feeling) (Vorobeve et al., 2022). In a similar vein, industry forecasts predict that current generative AI (which is still narrow AI rather than AGI) may replace as much as 300 million full time jobs in the near future (Goldman Sachs, 2023). AGI could replace humans in basically all marketing functions, including STP activities, decisions related to the marketing mix, customer acquisition and retention, and market research. In traditional market research, software algorithms are currently separated from human beings who provide interpretations of findings. AGI would be able to integrate data analysis algorithms, even complex ones such as those used in data mining (Overgoor et al., 2019), and instantly make decisions on market segmentation and appropriate target segments. In addition, since AGI can be both virtual or embodied in the form of advanced AGI robots (Davenport et al., 2020; Goertzel et al., 2014), AGI can fully replace sales personnel and any other marketing activity that requires a physical presence, such as ethnographic market research or conducting personal interviews. These insights lead to the following propositions:

- P1:** AGI will substantially assist or replace humans in STP activities, i.e., segmenting markets, deciding on target segments, and developing positioning strategies for firms.
- P2:** AGI will substantially assist or replace humans in all marketing mix decisions, including product development, pricing strategies and tactics, distribution channel decisions and supply chain management, and promotional/communication activities.

- P3:** AGI will substantially assist or replace humans in customer acquisition and retention processes.
- P4:** AGI will substantially assist or replace humans in all functions of market research, including both qualitative and quantitative research.

AGI As Consumer Aides and Consumers

AGI as consumer aides can assist consumers in all steps of the consumer decision making process, including need recognition, information search, the evaluation of alternative, the purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. For example, AGI may collect, analyze, and synthesize large amounts of information for consumers, establish decision criteria and rank product alternatives, and execute the purchase on behalf of humans. Furthermore, AGI can not only analyze product reviews and other types of WoM communication, but also generate product reviews and recommendations on behalf of human consumers. AGI can stay on top of limited-edition product releases and handle communication within brand communities or social media interest groups. Hence, marketers (both human and AGI) may increasingly target AGI decision makers rather than humans with their marketing communication.

In addition, AGI may become consumers on their own. This is indeed plausible for virtual products that enhance the functionality of AGI, such as market information or general news. However, AGI may also develop demand for more hedonic virtual and tangible goods, such as collector items, paintings, music, etc. For embodied AGI (i.e., AGI robots), demand for an even wider assortment of products is conceivable, including maintenance services (as an equivalence for human-centered health services), fashion accessories, transport devices, housing, furniture, and similar items. When acquiring goods and services, AGI may become aware of latent needs and develop new wants and desires, and they will go through similar decision-making processes as humans, including a fully autonomous information search, evaluation of alternatives, execution of the purchase, and post-purchase behaviors such as WoM. AGI as consumers may become the preferred target of marketers, and they may compete with humans by snatching scarce products or limited editions. Such a competition with human actors would become particularly stiff in situations with supply chain disruptions, such as experienced under COVID-19. These observations lead to the following propositions:

- P5:** Most, if not all steps in the consumer decision making process of humans will be substantially aided or even completely handled by AGI.
- P6:** AGI become important gatekeepers in human consumption by deciding which information is relevant for consumers in the consumer decision making process.
- P7:** AGI will become an important target for marketing communication, resulting in marketers targeting AGI rather than humans.
- P8:** AGI will become consumers on their own and generate market demand for goods and services.

Conclusion

As outlined in this article, the development of AGI provides substantial opportunities but also important challenges and potential threats for marketing and human existence in general. AGI may substantially alter how marketing functions are delivered and what consumption means. With increasing capabilities of AI, important legal and ethical questions will need to be addressed. For example, in the case of a service failure in which human consumers get hurt, would the firm be held responsible, or the AGI, or both? That is, will AGI be treated similar to “regular” human employees? Furthermore, would AGI have rights similar to fundamental human rights (Belk et al. 2020)? In addition, a central issue refers to the question on how the development of AI can be steered in a direction that is beneficial for humans and hence provides opportunities for cooperation rather than threats of competition. For example, Goertzel and Pitt (2012) recommend that developers of AGI systems should implement the capability to acquire integrated ethical knowledge into AGI early on, develop stable, hierarchical goal systems, and ensure that early stages of recursive self-improvement occur relatively slowly and with rich human involvement. In a similar vein, Yudkowsky (2012) suggests that intermediate steps of formal proof could make AGI more resistant towards changing its original goals and become “unfriendly” towards humans. That is, AGI systems would have “both the capability to invent large designs without being defeated by exponential explosion, and also the ability to verify its steps with extreme reliability” (p. 188). Successfully implementing human-friendly ethics into AGI goal systems will determine AGI’s propensity to either cooperate or compete in the marketing domain and beyond.

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Summary Brief

The Moderating Role of Advertising and Intangible Assets Investments on Myopic Marketing-Performance Link

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Myopic marketing expands short-term earnings, as it delivers a signal of current firm well-being, whereas reduces long-term performance as it damages brand equity and firm value. These findings generate mixed conclusions. Drawing on Asymmetric Information theory, the authors propose two contextual moderators that change myopic marketing-stock performance association -- advertising and intangible assets. Our panel data ranges from 2014 to 2022, has 2,296 firms, and uses 12,347 observations. The results suggest a positive effect of myopic marketing on stock performance in the short-term, but not in the long-term. However, this direction changes with high investments in advertising expenditure and intangible assets.

Key-words: myopic, advertising, stock performance, asymmetry

Introduction

Marketing myopia is defined as “marketing actions motivated by immediate, tangible outcomes, such as growth in current earnings and stock prices, without regard to their longer-term implications” (Saboo, Chakravarty, & Grewal, 2016, p. 657). Marketing myopia practice indicates a reduction in marketing investment across specific periods, as firms drop the amount of investments in selling, general, and administrative (Mizik, 2010). Earlier investigations present evidence that myopic marketing has a *double-edged* effect on firm outcomes. On the *positive* side, myopic marketing might excite investors IPO firms because this practice “inflates current earnings and provides evidence of current well-being” (Saboo et al., 2016, p. 655). Moreover, CEOs often have compensation plan incentives to artificially inflate current-term earnings by cutting marketing expenditures, increasing stock performance, and receiving more capital equity for acquisitions (Qian, & 2018). Therefore, myopic practices should present better results for stakeholders as firms are reducing expenses and showing higher volume of sales (Kröckel et al., 2018).

On the *negative* side, myopic marketing might reduce stock performance because this managerial strategy creates damage to brand-building efforts, generating a deterioration in brand equity over time (Jacobson & Aaker, 1993), and a reduction in stock performance (Keller, 1993). Specifically, implementing myopic practices generates adverse consequences on financial well-being and should be perceived by stakeholders in the long-term perspective as it presents asymmetric information (Saboo et al., 2016). Asymmetric information theory explains that myopic marketing suggests that the firm has better information about cutting expenses than the stakeholder, he/she cannot identify the myopic strategy in the short-term (Chemmanur & Ravid, 1999). Thus, the firm is managing market pressure for immediate outcomes to deliver fast results to meet short-term financial goals (Jacobson & Aaker, 1993). The market pressure might prioritize short-term gains over long-term brand-building and customer relationships, generating asymmetric information between the firm and the stakeholder. Due to these mixed findings, there is a *gap* in how firms trade between making long-term investments in marketing and R&D *versus* satisfying outside institutional stakeholders with a short-term focus.

Drawing on Asymmetric Information theory, the authors propose two contextual moderators that might explain the variations in myopic-performance relationship, such as advertising expenditure and intangible assets. First, advertising expenditure refers to the investment that firms allocate in promotions, advertising and propaganda (Srinivasan & Ramani, 2019). Advertising expenditure should be a relevant moderator as previous investigations showed that firms often engage in earnings practices to reduce advertising expenses (Kaur et al., 2021) and that these earnings practices deteriorate company cash flows (Saboo et al. 2016). We hypothesize that the negative main effect of myopic marketing on stock performance worsens with high levels of advertising expenditure as it indicates asymmetric information for stakeholders. In fact, as the firm is cutting marketing investments, there is incongruence in augmenting advertising expenditure (Chakravarty & Grewal, 2011). Second, intangible assets refer to the resources that are presented in the balance sheet but are immaterial when generating firm value (Haji, & Mohd Ghazali, 2018). Intangible assets would be a contextual moderator as previous research found interactions of it with inventory efficiency (Manikas et al., 2019), internationalization (Cantele & Campedelli, 2016), and ownership

strategy (Contractor et al., 2016). A cutting in marketing expenses should be opposite to a high investment in intangible assets, as the firm is reducing reserves in marketing, sales, and promotion, while at the same time increasing value in brand reputation, customer loyalty, and intellectual property. Asymmetric Information theory suggests that this divergence is detectable by stakeholders and the market, reducing stock performance.

For testing a theoretical framework based on Asymmetric Information theory, the authors collect data from Compustat (from Standard & Poors) and Center for Research in Security Prices (CRSP). The panel data ranges from 2014 to 2022 and the sample size has 2,296 firms, generating 12,347 observations. The results suggest that myopic marketing raises short-term stock performance. However, this positive direction changes and reduces with high investments in advertising and intangible assets, as they suggest the opposite asymmetric signal to stakeholders when analyzing the balance sheet. Our main contribution relates to the theorization and testing of boundary circumstances, building upon the Asymmetric Information theory. Specifically, we theoretically justify and empirically evaluate a dual moderation with advertising expenditure and intangible assets, shedding light on the performance consequences of these practices.

Method

4.1. Data Collecting. We collect data using two datasets -- Compustat for firm data (Standard & Poors) and Center for Research in Security Prices (CRSP) for stock performance data. The panel data ranges from 2014 to 2022. The sample size has 2,296 firms, and 12,347 observations. This sample was obtained after we exclude firms in highly regulated industries (SIC codes 4900 to 4999 and 6000 to 6599) to ensure that corporate policies are not driven by regulatory requirements. Therefore, the theories discussed previously may not apply to them (Bendig et al., 2018, Chung & Low, 2017).

4.2 Variables. Myopic marketing is a dummy variable, as 0 is the non-myopic firms (positioned in the intercept and omitted) and 1 is the myopic firms. To create myopic marketing groups, we combine surprises in earnings, marketing intensity, and R&D intensity (Mizik & Jacobson, 2007a, Mizik, 2010). Earning, measured as return-on-asset (ROA), is the ratio of operating income to total assets. Marketing intensity is the ratio of selling, general, and administrative expenses (SG&A) minus R&D expenses to total assets. R&D intensity is the ratio of research and development expenses to total assets (Bendig et al., 2018, Currim et al., 2018). We use auto-regressive econometric models with fixed effects to identify surprises in ROA, marketing intensity, and R&D intensity following prior research (cf. Bendig et al. 2018; Mizik 2010), as shown in Equations 1, 2, and 3:

We use abnormal stock returns to measure stock performance (Mizik & Jacobson, 2007b) according to the three-factor model of Fama and French (1996) along with the risk factor of market-moment proposed by Carhart (1997)^[1], as shown in Equation 4:

where:

r_{it} is the gross monthly return minus the risk-free return (interbank deposit rate) representing the expected excess stock return of company i in month m , r_{mt} is risk-free market return, SMB_m is the return on a value-weighted portfolio of small stock minus the return on a value-weighted portfolio of stocks, HML_m is the return on a value-weighted portfolio of high book-to-market stock less the return on a value-weighted portfolio of low book-to-market stocks, MOM_m is the momentum factor (i.e., average return on the two (small and big size) high prior return portfolios minus the average return on the two (small and big size) low prior return portfolios computed in a month (m)). We apply the coefficients α , β_1 , β_2 , and β_3 for each firm i estimated in equation (3) on Equation 5 to get expected stock performance of company i in month m :

where:

E_{it} is the expected monthly return and the remaining terms are as in Equation 4.

Subsequently, we transform the abnormal monthly returns (difference between expected stock returns and returns occurred) into accumulated annual abnormal returns, i.e., the measure for our outcome of stock performance, through the product logarithm obtained by multiplying the monthly indexes of each year, as indicated in Equation 6:

where:

CAR_{it} is the Compounded Abnormal Stock Return (CAR) for firm i in year t .

Results

The initial findings suggest that when firms implement a myopic practice in the short term (vs. non-myopic practice), it increases the stock performance ($b = .017$, $p < .01$). The beta coefficient shows the difference across both groups is .017. Across the next four periods, the positive effect of myopic marketing becomes non-significant ($b = .013$, $b = .013$, $b = .011$ and $b = .012$, all $p = ns$). This result supports H₁, as managers cut marketing expenses as a way to meet earnings expectations and present a better balance sheet to investors in the short-term. Across periods,

investors might comprehend that there are temporarily inflated earnings and asymmetric information in the long-term. Table 2 presents the coefficients.

Table 2: Regression analysis on stock performance across time

Stock Performance	CAR _{it}		CAR _{it+} 1		CAR _{it+} 2		CAR _{it+} 3		CAR _{it+} 4	
	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t
Main Effect										
Non-myopic (0=omitted)										
H1:										
Myopic (1=cut invest.)	.01759 61	.01**	.01322 59	.072 0	.01392 68	.07 10	.01161 43	.33 2	.01266 96	.32 7
Advertising expenditure	.03120 59	.8270	-.07484 27	.702 0	-.15560 37	.43 70	-.06862 49	.84 1	.30978 67	.38 9
Intangible asset	.00991 52	.5680	-.00365 02	.846 0	-.01263 10	.55 10	-.06394 99	.09 4	-.05431 73	.15 1
Moderating Effect										
H2:										
Myopic * Advertising	-.61608 9	.0000* **	-.49977 76	.014 *	-.49452 66	.03 1*	-.25741 69	.54 0	-.12097 95	.80 7
H3:										
Myopic * Intangible asset	-.06318 68	.0010* **	-.04907 76	.024 *	-.04535 83	.04 2*	-.02456 52	.51 4	-.02815 35	.51 4
Advertising * Intangible asset	-.10289 27	.7270	-.05318 5	.891 0	.18629 63	.63 00	.16223 71	.80 4	-.68635 85	.29 1
Myopic * Advert.* Intangibility	1.4077 69	.001** *	1.1858 14	.032 0*	.88958 57	.16 40	-.32414 72	.78 3	- 2.1703 28	.15 1
Covariates										
Liquidity	-.00028 66	.7950	.00005 22	.966 0	-.00016 2	.89 00	.00222 46	.31 9	.00305 61	.20 3
Profitability	.00058 03	.0880	.00039 78	.270 0	.00024 57	.56 60	.00224 45	.07 4	.00314 68	.00 0

	-0.00881		-0.00823	.088	-.01088	.05	-.02283	.02	-.02650	.03
Firm size	33	.0310	64	0	45	00	93	0	74	2
Strategic emphasis	.07344		.03246	.566	-.03434	.60	.13830	.26	.16419	.24
Technological	96	.1470	26	0	31	40	66	7	73	0
turbulence	-.01958		-.23239	.040	-.18654	.12	.00617	.97	.26139	.18
Market	17	.8460	23	0	26	90	39	7	61	2
turbulence	-.07321		-.00371	.945	-.03508	.57	-.00635	.95	.04219	.70
Lag of market-to-book	17	.1390	97	0	26	90	57	1	87	6
value	-.00589		-.00574	.069	-.00865	.02	-.02582	.00	-.03344	.00
Crisis (1=crisis)	48	.0270	37	0	26	10	21	0	73	0
	-.00657		.00230	.455	-.00047	.90	.00000	1.0	.00000	1.0
Constant	12	.0140	87	0	6	10	00	0	00	0
Sigma U	.09917		.09527	.007	.13729	.00	.29500	.00	.33430	.00
Sigma E	48	.0010	72	0	93	10	52	0	58	0
Rho	.09		.07		.07		0.13		.14	
	.10		.10		.09		0.13		.12	
	.43		.37		.40		0.48		.55	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; p>t is significance level; CARit = Compounded Abnormal Stock Returns (Mizik & Jacobson, 2007)

Conclusions

We know the overall value of marketing for firms, as the marketing's impact on stock marketing shows "a mean elasticity of .04 for advertising expenditure variables and of .54 for marketing asset variables" (Edeling & Fischer, 2016). However, this overall value might change according to the short, middle and long periods. Our initial findings suggest that when firms implement a myopic marketing practice in the short-term, it increases the stock performance, but in the long-term, the effect is non-significant. Myopic marketing often highlights short-term gains for expanding current-term earnings (Qian, & 2018) over long-term brand building and customer equity (Jacobson & Aaker, 1993). While myopic marketing may lead to immediate boosts in stock performance as investors are seeing a better "balance sheet", profits and return, it neglects the long-term health. The reason is that the CEO is more committed to the short-term outcomes (Aspara & Tikkanen, 2013). This short-term focus can increase stock performance as investors may be seeing better revenues, but they are wrong in the long term as the company is unable to maintain growth over time.

Second, firms that invest in advertising often prioritize immediate results such as brand awareness, sales, and conversions (Hu, Du & Damangir, 2014). Firms are focusing on disseminating convincing communications through various media channels, in order to change and influence customers' attitudes (Peterson & Jeong, 2010). However, high investments in advertising are not congruent with myopic practices, as they present an opposite signal to investors. We expand previous investigations that supported the moderating role of advertising expenditure (Rubera & Kirca 2012; Han, Ozdemir & Agarwal, 2023). The reason for this negative interaction is the asymmetry information problem, as stakeholders can note the conflicting direction in the long-term. The asymmetry information problem signals to stakeholders that the firm has no control over its financial conditions, while cutting and increasing investments at the same time (Myers & Majluf, 1984). In terms of managerial solution, high investments in advertising demand more non-myopic practices with congruent investments in sales, general and administrative expenses for firms to differentiate themselves from competitors and gain a competitive advantage in the market (Kozlenkova et al., 2014).

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APPENDIX A.1. Firm classification considering ROA, marketing intensity and R&D intensity

Group	Category	ROA	MKTG	R&D
1	Myopic firm	> 0	< 0	< 0
2	Non-myopic firm	> 0	≥ 0	< 0
3	Non-myopic firm	> 0	< 0	≥ 0
4	Non-myopic firm	> 0	≥ 0	≥ 0
5	Non-myopic firm	≤ 0	< 0	< 0
6	Non-myopic firm	≤ 0	≥ 0	< 0
7	Non-myopic firm	≤ 0	< 0	≥ 0
8	Non-myopic firm	≤ 0	≥ 0	≥ 0

Note. Based on Bendig et al. (2018)

[1] Carhart (1997) comments that “3-factor performance estimates on mutual funds are more precise, but generally not economically different from the CAPM. Estimates from the 4-factor model frequently differ, however, due to significant loadings on the one-year momentum factor” (p.61).

1. **Table 1:** Correlation Matrix and descriptive information

Variable s	Me an	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(1 1)	(1 2)
(1) CAR	-.003	.10	1											
(2) 1=Myopic Firm	.10	.30	-.007	1										
(3) Advert. exp.	.01	.027		.008	1									
(4) Intangible asset	.21	.219	.042*	-.054*	.097*	1								
(5) Liquidity	2.77	2.84	-.01	*	-.008	*	1							
(6) Profitability	-	9.7												
(7) Firm size	1.17	9	.026*	-.011	.034*	.089*	-.257*	1						
(8) Strategic emp.	6.53	2.27	.066*	-.093*	.0226*	-.43*	.371*	1						
(9) Technol. turb.	.037	.09	-.031*	.053*	-.189*	-.108*	.23*	-.344*	-.406*	1				
(10) Market turb.	.053	.08		.057*		.022*	.346*	-.278*	-.348*	.632*	1			
(11) LMTB	.211	.136		.058*		.25*	.21*	.25*	-.152*	-.293*	.412*	.722*	1	
(12) Crisis	4.99	1.72		-.005	.108*		-.12*		.01	.52*	.075*	.114*	.092*	1
	0	1	-.035*	.068*		-.02*		-.025*	-.02*	.01	.06	.03	.01	
					-.007*	*	.04*	5*	*	1	6*	1*	5	1

Note. * is significant at .05; SD = standard deviation; LMTB = lag of market-to-book;

SESSION 5.7: THE DESPERATE MARKETER

Moderator:

Todd Bacile

Summary Brief

Examining Neurocorrelates in Observers of Online Incivility During Service Recovery on Brands' Social

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This is a proposal for a study that will assess consumers' neural processing using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Study participants will be exposed to stimuli and undergo simultaneous brain imaging to capture the neurocorrelates of their reactions as observers to other consumers' online complaints, incivility occurring between consumers, and how a brand chooses to manage such interactions. Studies in the areas of advertising, branding, pricing, product attributes, and consumer decision making have used fMRI to capture consumers' neural processes. However, this would be the first service-related exploration to use fMRI to understand observers' neural reactions to online complaint handling, service recovery, online incivility, and managing consumers in an online service venue (i.e., brands' social media). Potential implications would add to the understanding of and expand on digital service recovery, social servicescape theory, observer effects, norm violations, and incivility theory.

Introduction

Service recovery after a service failure occurs is critical to firms' success. This criticality is arguably amplified with social media service recovery in plain sight of the masses, thereby increasing complaint publicization (Golmohammadi et al. 2021). This added exposure is one reason why digital service recovery works are examining how observers -- third-party customers who observe a complainant's and service provider's message posts -- are affected (Hogreve, Bilstein, and Hoerner 2019; Javornik, Filieri, and Gumann 2020; Johnen and Schnittka 2019; Schaefer and Schamari 2016). Among the many nuanced research streams investigating observers are uncivil customer-to-customer (C2C) exchanges. Indeed, C2C incivility affects observers' linguistic evaluations, service recovery expectations, justice perceptions, purchase intent, online engagement, and emotional reactions (Bacile et al. 2018; Bacile 2024; Béal, Grégoire, and Carrillat 2023; Labrecque et al. 2022; Wolter et al. 2023).

Notwithstanding these extant works, there is still much to learn concerning this last point about observers' reactions to C2C incivility during digital service recovery. Observing C2C incivility produces negative emotional states such as feeling distress, hostile, irritable, and sympathetic, which threaten observers' attitude toward a brand, trust, engagement, purchase intent, and word-of-mouth intent (Bacile et al. 2024; Dineva and Daunt 2023). Yet, an opportunity to understand more is possible from neuroscience's functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This technique captures images of changes in the neurocorrelates of one's brain as it processes exposure to different stimuli. There are a small number of marketing-related fMRI works (e.g., Casado-Aranda et al. 2022; Craig et al. 2012; Motoki et al. 2020), but no fMRI studies have investigated observers' neuro processing in response to online complaints, online service recovery, C2C interactions during the provision of service, or C2C incivility on brands' social media when/if a company attends to it. Understanding observers' neural processing would provide a fundamental grasp of the effects of digital consumer behavior in modern-day social media, which features uncivil consumer interactions.

The purpose of this proposed study is to use fMRI to provide a fundamental understanding of observer's neurocorrelates in response to situations on social media with a complaint posted to a brand, an uncivil reply by another customer, the brand's response to the complaint, and how/if the brand responds to the C2C incivility. The ability for fMRI to measure different neural signatures enables the comparison of brain processing when a brand addresses the incivility, addresses the complaint, or addresses both the incivility and complaint. Doing so enables the authors to assess various brain regions such as capturing brain imaging of the elicitation of social emotions versus basic emotions; pain processing; rewards versus punishment; and different types of unfairness evaluations. The implications of the results from this proposed study inform conceptual areas associated with digital service recovery, social servicescape theory, observer effects, norm violations, and incivility theory. The following sections offer a background on the use of fMRI analysis, its application thus far in marketing academia, proposed hypotheses, and the methodology to conduct this study. Data would be collected during August of 2024, meaning results could be presented at the 2024 *Society for Marketing Advances* conference.

Theoretical Support for Observer Effects and C2C Incivility

The proliferation of social media and brands seeking to interact with consumers online was the impetus for social media complaining and service recovery that featured a greater degree of C2C interactions. Brands' social media channels are distinct online spaces (compared to, for example, online review sites), which make complaining and recovery more viable (Gregoire et al. 2015). Complaint handling occurring on publicly visible social media enables virtually-present others to observe (e.g., third-party customers who can watch/read complaint posts and responses; Schaefer & Schamari, 2016). Virtually-present observers are introducing new streams of service recovery research, such as the challenges of complaining and recoveries playing out in front of large audiences (Golmohammadi et al., 2021; Hogreve et al., 2019; Johnen & Schnittka, 2019).

Among the emerging areas of research are those related to consumers behaving badly/uncivilly online. A lack of civility via social media dialogue is a global problem that has grown in recent years according to Microsoft's (2024) Civility, Safety, and Interaction Online report. This increase in rude behavior on social media is explained by the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004), which is partially rooted in offline psychology's deindividuation theory (Postmes & Spears, 1998; Zimbardo, 1970). Deindividuation occurs when someone temporarily suspends their moral compass by enacting anti-normative behaviors that they typically would not enact. In a deindividuated state, a person who knows what is acceptable versus unacceptable may temporarily choose to act out in an unacceptable manner due to situational conditions present in the moment. As Suler (2004) points out, a lack of severe penalty, some form of partial or complete anonymity, and a lack of face-to-face real-time synchronicity in online dialogue are situational components that heighten the possibility of deindividuated behavior to occur, such as C2C online incivility.

Several marketing researchers are attempting to understand how observers and brands are affected when C2C online incivility occurs on a brand's social media. Social servicescape theory provides a framework that, if adapted to online service channels featuring C2C incivility, suggests observers will recognize C2C incivility as a stimulus that affects their cognitions and emotions (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). In particular, the social dimension of the social servicescapes framework posits that C2C interactions can influence customer experiences when a service space is shared by many (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). This framework is consistent with affective events theory and, at a more fundamental level, the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory. Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) is derived from organizational management, whereby employees exposed to other employees' misbehaviors can form negative evaluations associated with an employer. This conceptualization aligns with a more general perspective of SOR theory, where external stimuli affect the internal state of another, which triggers a behavioral or emotional response (Mehrabian & Jacoby, 2002). All of these theories center around the concept that behavior observed can be perceived as an anti-normative violation and, ultimately, produce some type of internal response in an observer. A communication theory that reinforces this notion across these aforementioned theories is expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 1978). It suggests communication as an exchange of behaviors carry social expectations of how one should act (i.e., communicate) accordingly in a given situation. Failing to communicate appropriately can violate the expectations of another, which creates an arousal effect that initiates a series of cognitive appraisals and emotional reactions concerning the violation.

These theoretical areas are lending support to observer-related research on social media. Observers believe that a brand should be held accountable to address C2C incivility; and a brand that violates expectations that it should handle incivility creates C2C injustice and organizational injustice observer perceptions (Bacile et al., 2018; Huang and Ha, 2022). Observers are able to perceive if an uncivil message poster is amused at another's problematic situation, which can subsequently cause observers to sympathize with the target of incivility and reduce future purchase intent (Bacile et al. 2024). Observers also respond to watching C2C incivility with approach or avoidance coping strategies after cognitively appraising the situation, which lead to perceived C2C injustice, ostracism, and threaten engagement (Wolter et al., 2023). In these works, C2C incivility is a stimulus perceived by observers, who then react with cognitive and/or emotional responses. Despite these and related works, there is still much to learn about observer effects. One of the challenges is that observers are not active communication partners on social media, meaning, it can be difficult read their mind, metaphorically speaking. Recent brain imaging work, though, using fMRI can capture how one's brain processes information that it is exposed to.

How fMRI Studies Work

Functional magnetic resonance imaging captures imagery of blood oxygenation levels in different regions of each participant's brain when exposed to a specific stimulus. Blood oxygenation levels that increase in a particular area of one's brain is evidence for that region actively processing/responding to stimuli. See Figure 1 for an example of brain imaging output, with darker colored areas indicating a greater degree of brain activation in a specific region. For instance, Jai et al. (2021), captured imaging evidence to show activation in the inferior parietal lobule portion of the brain when participants viewed a specific stimulus. Processing in this region is associated with making decisions

under uncertain circumstances, which Jai et al. (2021) successfully linked to participants' product evaluation difficulty in experimental conditions. This is one example of hundreds of different regions that activate in response to stimuli. In some cases, multiple areas are activated in combination. In each case, a single region activating or multiple regions activating simultaneously will form a distinct neural signature that can be linked to cognitions and emotions found in prior medical studies. Table 1 contains a representative list of various brain regions and the cognition or emotion each is associated with based on prior medical research.

Figure 1: Example fMRI Imagery to Illustrate Neural Activations in Different Brain Regions

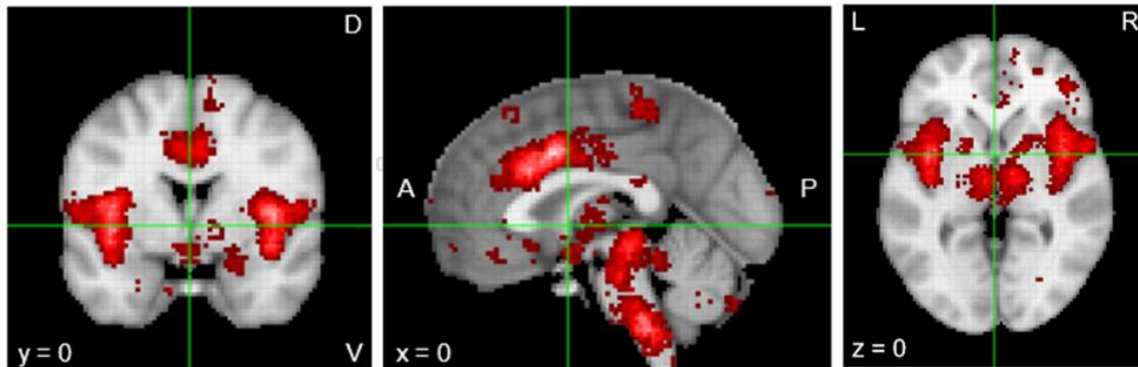


Table 1: An Example List of Brain Regions' Neural Signatures Linked to Various Emotions or Cognitions ¹

Cognition or Emotion	Associated with the Neural Signature in these Brain Regions
Anger	Amygdala
Empathy	Anterior insular cortex; hippocampus; prefrontal cortex
Compassion	Orbital part of left inferior frontal gyrus; right cerebellum; bilateral middle temporal gyrus; bilateral insula; right caudate nucleus
Disappointment (i.e., unmet expectations)	Lateral habenula
Happiness	Limbic cortex
Sadness	Right occipital lobe; left insula; left thalamus; amygdala; hippocampus
Satisfaction	Amygdala; limbic cortex; orbito frontal cortex
Disgust	Insula; globus pallidus; basal ganglia; orbito frontal cortex; dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
Unfairness (i.e., an unfair act)	Insula
Unfair treatment of another person	Right temporo-parietal junction
Rejecting unfair offers	Right lateral prefrontal cortex

Motivation to punish norm violators	Anterior insula, ventromedial prefrontal cortex
Distress from social exclusion	Anterior cingulate cortex; right ventral prefrontal cortex

¹ There are hundreds of single regions or multiple regions in combination that are linked to different emotions or cognitions. The table above illustrates a few of these areas and is not a complete list.

fMRI Studies in Marketing

Table 2 lists a selection of marketing works that have conducted primary research studies using fMRI brain imaging. Popular areas of fMRI works are branding and purchase decision studies that use imaging to examine brain activation for brand choice purchase decisions (Kapoor et al., 2023; Rampl et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2023), product attribute choice sets (Hedgecock & Rao, 2009), package designs (Stoll et al., 2008), reactions to logos and (un)preferred brands (Hubert et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2020; Marques dos Santos & Marques dos Santos, 2024; Peiris et al., 2024), pricing decisions with placebos (Plassmann & Weber, 2015), purchase versus selling decisions (Reimann et al., 2011), and goal (in)compatibility for compulsive versus non-compulsive buyers when tempted to make a purchase (De Vries et al., 2018). Advertising studies use brain imaging to investigate neural responses to television commercials (Shen & Morris, 2016), deceptive advertising (Craig et al., 2012), and fear appeals in print ads (Mostafa, 2020). Works studying online retailing and behaviors explore different product imagery (e.g., a static image versus an image that allows a purchaser to zoom and rotate; Jai et al., 2021), banner ads with hedonic versus utilitarian cues (Casado-Aranda et al., 2022), social media ad content (Zhang & Lee, 2022), and assessing factors to accurately forecast an online video's likelihood of virality (Motoki et al. 2020). There is also an examination of gender differences when processing word-of-mouth communication following a product crisis (Hsu & Cheng, 2018).

Table 2: Select Marketing Research Conducting Brain Imaging Studies

Authors (year)	Summary
Hubert et al. (2024)	Assesses cue-reactivity to brand logos for compulsive buyers of different genders. Results suggest women are more cue-reactive to brain regions linked to addiction, while men are more cue-reactive to brain regions associated with reward.
Marques dos Santos & Marques dos Santos (2024)	Imaging captures brain processing for preferred brands versus indifferent brands. Visual and visual associative brain regions contain information that may be used to correctly classify preferred brands, but not indifferent brands.
Peiris et al (2024)	Two aspects of reward processing (craving vs. liking) are examined for familiar (vs. unfamiliar) food brands. Imaging captures distinct neural signatures, with familiar brand preference linked to liking and unfamiliar brand preference linked to craving.
Kapoor et al. (2023)	Findings indicate that weak brand choice involves brain regions linked to an assessment of value/worth, including cognitive control over feelings of conflict, error-commission, and regret.
Zhang et al. (2023)	Exposure to faster (vs. slower) background music tempo affects decision making in larger (vs. smaller) choice sets. Imaging links more positive internal states for slower music with a larger choice set; and faster music with a smaller choice set.
Casado-Aranda et al. (2022)	Hedonic online banner ads activate brain regions linked to reward, self-relevance, and emotion. Utilitarian banner ads trigger brain regions related to object identification and recognition, reasoning, executive function, and cognitive control.
Zhang & Lee (2022)	Reactions to social media advertisements that are visually appealing (vs. unappealing) and new (vs. outdated) products are linked to processing associated with reward value and informational value
Jai et al. (2021)	Differences in neural activity for online retailers using a static image versus image zooming versus rotating video show how various neural circuits are involved in purchase decisions for ecommerce customers.
Lee et al. (2020)	Participants' neural activity for environmentally friendly green logos is assessed after priming them first with environmental messages. Activity in brain regions associated with relational reasoning are linked to increased green product preference

Mostafa (2020)	Brain correlates of fear appeal imagery in print advertisements are linked to brain regions associated with contingency awareness and emotional appraisal of retrieving polymodal imagery.
Motoki et al. (2020)	Uses brain imaging to show social-related neural activity contributes significantly to forecasting the virality of dynamic marketing-related video content.
De Vries et al. (2018)	Compares the goal orientation of compulsive versus non-compulsive buyers when tempted to buy a product. Identifies cerebral activation in areas associated with conflict and self-control will vary between compulsive and non-compulsive buyers.
Hsu & Cheng (2018)	Investigates how gender influences brain activation when viewing word-of-mouth communication after a product harm crisis. Male versus female participants' neural activity show differences in assessing product quality after a crisis.
Shen & Morris (2016)	Measures participants' emotional responses to television commercials. Brain regions show richer information processing of emotions along three dimensions (appeal, engagement, and empowerment) for feelings about commercials.
Plassmann & Weber (2015)	Consumers high in reward seeking, low in somatosensory awareness, and high in need for cognition are more responsive to marketing placebo effects based on imaging results.
Rampl et al. (2014)	Certain brand choices affect varying activation in brain regions associated with emotion, working memory, and reasoning.
Craig et al. (2012)	Brain imaging captures participants' reactions to deceptive advertisements
Reimann et al. (2011)	Contrasts neural processing when consumers attempt to buy a product versus sell a product. Imagining results suggest negative emotion is occurring in relation to loss aversion more so when selling a product compared to buying a product.
Hedgcock & Rao (2009)	Reactions to engaging in choice tasks illustrates cerebral activity of participants' negative emotional reactions.
Stoll et al. (2008)	Participants exposed to different package designs that vary in attractiveness causes distinct neural processing. Neural activity in regions associated with rewards, unfair offers, and unattractive pictures is captured in imaging.

It is worth noting that none of the fMRI studies in Table 2 have examined interpersonal aspects that take place during service encounters, such as those that would occur during online complaining and service recovery. Existing fMRI research has also not investigated C2C interactions or C2C online incivility using an observer perspective. This presents an opportunity for the proposed study to explore a topic area that fMRI works have not yet examined.

Proposed Hypotheses, Design, and Methodology

Imaging studies that use fMRI must expose stimuli to each participant several times to acquire accurate, reliable results. Participants within the fMRI chamber can see a screen that will feature image stimuli and text. This proposed study will expose each participant to a total of 80 different stimuli, each of which is termed a "trial". This number of trials is typical in fMRI research because the analysis must be able to validate neural reactions across a number of repeated trials (i.e., to establish valid and consistent results). Each trial will feature the participant asked to imagine seeing dialogue on a fictitious brand's social media page. The dialogue will be depicted in different screenshot image stimuli that participants will view within the imaging chamber.

Participants will view stimuli featuring "Customer A" posting a complaint on the brand's social media page. Participants will then view the following trials in random order: A) an uncivil response to the complaint by "Customer B" followed by a brand responding to only the initial complaint (i.e., ignoring the C2C incivility); B) an uncivil response to the complaint by "Customer B" followed by a brand responding to only the C2C incivility (i.e., ignoring the initial complaint); C) an uncivil response to the complaint by "Customer B" followed by a brand responding to both the initial complaint and the C2C incivility; or D) a neutral response by "Customer B" that is not uncivil followed by a brand responding to the initial complaint (i.e., ignoring the C2C neutral comment). In addition to brain imaging, each participant has access to a push button input device (e.g., a mouse) in which they can answer likert-style questions, which provides an additional level of analysis to complement the imagining results.

Drawing from norm violation theory, fairness theory, justice theory, and the social servicescape framework, the authors propose the following hypotheses to assess in this brain imaging study:

- o Hypothesis 1: Brain activation during the 60 trials where the comment is uncivil will be different than brain activation during the 20 trials where the comment is neutral. More activation in uncivil trials should activate the Cingulate (pain processing) and Insula (social emotions).
- o Hypothesis 2: Brain activation during the 20 trials where the brand responds only to the complaint and ignores an uncivil comment will be different than brain activation during the 20 trials where the brand responds only to the complaint when there is not an uncivil comment present. Less activation in the striatum (perceived reward) should occur when the brand ignores the incivility.
- o Hypothesis 3: Brain activation during the 20 trials where the brand responds only to the incivility should produce stronger interpersonal fairness evaluations compared to the 20 trials where the brand responds only to the complaint. The moral violation of incivility should be viewed as a larger interpersonally unfair problem versus a service failure. Addressing this moral violation should activate the right temporo-parietal junction (indicates fair treatment of another person) versus the insula (fairness, in general).

The lead author has already gained institutional review board acceptance for this study. A neuroscience institute has been contracted to conduct the brain imaging. The institute has access to a panel of participants for this study. Regarding analysis, the institute's staff can use analysis methods for brain imaging studies, such as voxel-based morphometry, neural networks analysis, pattern classification, statistical parametric mapping, and spatial independent component analysis. The institute's staff can then handoff the results to the lead author, who will apply the findings to marketing areas of interest for theoretical and managerial implications. For instance, the findings have the potential to inform digital service recovery, social servicescapes, observer effects, norm violations, and incivility theory.

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Summary Brief

Avatar Service Failure and Recovery: How Third-Party Observers Are Impacted

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This research examines the effects of viewing and hearing service failure and recovery interactions between virtual agents (i.e., avatars) and customers on third-party observers who witness these interactions, but they are not directly involved in them. Drawing upon attribution theory and building on the extant research into service failure and recovery, we hypothesize that service failure severity exerts impact on third-party observers through the mediating process of attribution, and that the magnitude of this impact depends on service recovery quality and customer entitlement. Through a 2 (service failure severity: high vs. low) X 2 (recovery quality: high vs. low) between-subjects experiment in a hotel check-in context, we find that service failure severity decreases third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar and that attribution to the firm mediates this effect. Further, service recovery quality weakens the negative relationship between attribution and satisfaction. In addition, we uncover significant moderation effects of customer entitlement that are also meaningful.

Introduction

Companies constantly search for innovative ways to serve customers effectively and reduce operating costs. As such, avatars have gained popularity with some companies, and many have attempted to integrate avatars into the customer service journey. Whether these avatars are customer-facing in a hotel lobby or used in online fashion, it seems avatars are becoming part of many different types of customer experiences. Companies such as Carv3D, Hour One, Spatial, Twenty Billion Neurons, and Wolf 3D are at the forefront of avatar synthesis, transforming innovative avatar concepts into reality (Nigam, 2024). While service experiences with avatars may become the new normal for some customers, others may not adopt the practice of engaging with avatars so easily and resist the newer technology. Some customers may observe these new interactions with trepidation and potentially demonstrate reluctance to engage with avatars in customer service interactions. Regardless of a customer's disposition to be an early or late adopter of avatar technology, as avatars become more ubiquitous in the customer experience, many interactions between avatars and customers will be observed by others. Further, there are many factors that may cause service interactions to go awry. As a direct result, similar to human-to-human interactions, the interactions between avatars and customers will inevitably involve service failures and attempted service recoveries. As these service failures and recoveries occur between a customer service avatar and a customer, curious onlookers (third-party observers) may witness the interactions, with potential consequences for the company. Our research specifically explores the service failures and recoveries observed by third-party observers who view another customer involved with an avatar in a customer service experience. Findings from our research contribute to the extant service failure and recovery literature from the unique perspective of third-party observers.

Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

The Effect of Service Failure on Third-Party Observers

Service interactions are ephemeral, but the effects of viewing a front-line employee and a customer interact on a third-party observer may last much longer, especially when the service interaction does not go as planned and results in a service failure. The extant literature defines service failure as situations in which service performance falls below customers' expectations (Khamitov et al., 2020; Song et al., 2021) or when a mistake, error, or problem occurs during the service interaction (Lee et al., 2021). The effect of service failure on consumer attitude and behavioral responses has received considerable attention from the literature, with the general view that the more severe the service failure, the more negative the resulting impact on customer satisfaction and business outcomes such as revenue and market share (e.g., Keiningham et al., 2014; Weun et al., 2004). However, little is known about the effects on those who witness failed service interactions but are not directly involved in them. Researchers have begun to address this research deficiency. For example, in the hotel and travel context, Black and Kelly (2009) employed a content analysis approach to studying the influence of other customers' service failure and recovery experiences on third parties as

they read about these experiences. These authors found that although third parties were not experiencing these service failures first-hand, simply reading about other customers' experiences negatively affected their trust in the service provider. Extending this line of reasoning to the context in which third-party observers witness a failed service interaction between a customer and a virtual service agent such as an avatar, we propose that:

H1: Service failure severity negatively impacts third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar.

The Mediating Process of Attribution

Prominent in the service failure literature is the use of attribution theory to explain and predict causal inferences made by customers who attempt to understand why service failures occur (Fouroudi et al., 2020; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014). Attribution theory was first asserted by Heider (1958) in his book, the *Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, in which he discussed how people attribute causes to events and behaviors, and it has since evolved into a rich corpus of literature highlighted by Kelley (1973) and Weiner's (1985) seminal writings. Attribution literature suggests that when failures occur, individuals often engage in causal thinking spontaneously and that they do so to achieve an understanding of and control over their environment (Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985). Causal attribution for customer experiences with products and services, both positive and negative, has been well documented. For example, Folkes (1984) and Folks et al. (1987) found that customers' negative experiences led to negative attributions to the product or service in question. In an SST (self-service technology) context, Dabholkar and Spaid (2012) proposed that when the SST did not work, the resulting service failure would be unexpected to its users, making negative attributions to the store that uses the SST even more likely than attributing the failure to store employees. Similarly, Lee and Cranage (2018) found that customers were more likely to blame a firm for an SST failure than for an employee failure. These authors also showed that service failure severity increased customers' blame to the firm. Applying attribution theory and extending these findings to the current research context, we propose that:

H2a-b: Attribution to the firm that uses the avatar negatively mediates the impact of service failure severity on third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar such that (a) service failure severity increases negative attribution to the firm, and (b) negative attribution to the firm decreases satisfaction toward the avatar.

The Moderating Role of Service Recovery Quality and Customer Entitlement

When a service failure occurs, there is an opportunity for a recovery. For example, after a service failure, firms and employees can provide apologies, monetary compensation, refunds, free services/products, or a combination thereof. As such, the quality of the recovery may vary not only based on the output by the firm/employee but also in the view of the customer and third-party observers of the service failure and recovery interaction. Previous research has shown that the quality of the service failure recovery impacts customers' emotions (Cai and Qu, 2018; Xu et al., 2019), service loyalty (Kamath et al., 2020), and perceptions and attitudes (Boshoff, 1997). The service recovery paradox has even shown that customers have higher satisfaction after a failure and recovery as compared to pre-failure levels (De Matos et al., 2007). As articulated in the justice theory (Smith et al., 1999; Tax et al., 1998), customers evaluate service recovery based on three principles, i.e., procedural, interactional, and distributive justice. While procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness in the service recovery procedure as well as the policies and criteria used in the recovery process, interactional justice underscores the importance of treating customers fairly and equitably during service recovery interactions. Distributive justice helps explain that the recovery process is evaluated and weighed against the observed service failure. Applying justice theory, we argue that the quality of the service recovery has the potential to weaken the negative effect of the service failure severity and attribution to the firm on satisfaction toward the avatar. When the recovery has sufficiently balanced the inequity as evaluated by the observer, the recovery has either been perceived as fair or gone above and beyond in recovering from the failure. It is argued in these cases that the recovery may help to weaken any negative effects felt from the service failure on the observer. Thus, we hypothesize:

H3a-b: Service recovery quality weakens (a) the negative effect of service failure severity on third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar, and (b) the negative effect of attribution to the firm on third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar.

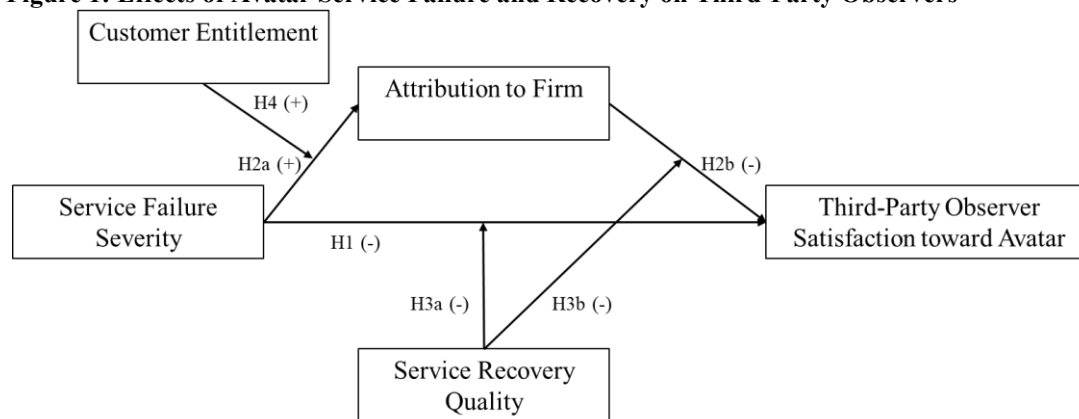
Through learned experience and established expectations, some customers may feel entitled to certain or special service scripts or performances of a firm or employee in a service setting. Customer entitlement is defined in the literature as the extent to which customers expect special treatment (Boyd III and Helms, 2005; Fisk and Neville,

2011). The mantra of “the customer is always right” has spread through the service industry in employee training. This mantra has not only been driven into the minds of some employees but also into the minds of some customers. This has set the stage for some customers to feel entitled to certain service levels, with little to no room for error. Some customers have been conditioned to believe they deserve perfect service and are “always right” no matter the circumstances. As a failure is not special treatment and may be considered disrespectful, out of the ordinary, and insulting, we argue that these felt entitlements to special treatment by the observer will transfer to fellow customers through empathy. Therefore, when the service does not go as planned and is observed by third parties, we argue that customer entitlement of the observer will strengthen the positive effect of service failure severity on attribution to the firm. Thus:

H4: Customer entitlement strengthens the positive effect of service failure severity on attribution to the firm.

Hypotheses 1-4 are depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Effects of Avatar Service Failure and Recovery on Third-Party Observers



Data and Results

Pretest

A pretest was conducted to determine if the in-text manipulations of service failure severity and recovery quality functioned. Two-hundred and fifty-eight MTurk workers participated in a 2 (service failure severity: high vs. low) X 2 (recovery quality: high vs. low) between-subjects experiment. Of these, 19 failed the attention checks, leaving 239 respondents (54.4% women; $M_{age} = 41.71$, $SD_{age} = 13.31$). Participants first watched a video of Brenda, the avatar, as she introduced herself to the viewers (<https://youtu.be/5K83NWP2Q>). After the video, participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario that describes a service encounter between a customer and the avatar, Brenda. The service encounter involves a service failure and subsequent recovery during the customer’s check-in process at a hotel. Unreal Engine 5.0 Early Access (with MetaHumans and Quixel Bridge) was used to design and create the avatar. Live Link Face was used to move the avatar’s face using a human actor and their voice in Unreal Engine 5.0. Participants act as third-party observers of the service encounter depicted in the scenario.

As a manipulation check for service failure severity, participants responded to a three-item, seven-point semantic differential scale adapted from Borah et al. (2020) (i.e., “Based on your experience, how important/severe/bad do you feel the service failure was?” $\alpha = .929$). As a manipulation check for recovery quality, participants responded to a three-item, seven-point semantic differential scale based on Hess et al. (2003) (i.e., “What is your opinion of the avatar’s response to the service failure? extremely bad vs. extremely good; poor vs. excellent; not effective at all vs. very much effective” $\alpha = .96$).

Results from ANOVA showed that participants rated the service failure more severe in the high severity condition ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.24$) than those in the low severity condition ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.44$), $F(1, 237) = 41.37$, $p < 0.01$. Participants in the high quality service recovery condition rated the recovery quality higher ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.35$) than those in the low quality recovery condition ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.55$), $F(1, 237) = 37.78$, $p < 0.01$. Because both manipulations were successful, we proceeded to the main study.

Main Study

Four-hundred and three MTurk workers participated in the main study. Of these, 49 did not pass the attention checks and were removed from further analysis, leaving 354 respondents (51.4% women; $M_{age} = 42.47$, $SD_{age} = 12.57$). We used the same manipulation of service failure severity and recovery quality and followed the same study procedure as in the pretest. Participants first watched an introduction video of Brenda. They then read a randomly assigned scenario and responded to items assessing key variables in the main study before ending the procedure.

Satisfaction toward the avatar was measured with a three-item, seven-point Likert scale adapted from Deng et al. (2013) (i.e., “If I were the customer, I would feel satisfactory of the avatar’s overall performance/the avatar’s performance would have met my expectation/I would be satisfied with the avatar.” $\alpha = .949$). Attribution to the firm was measured with a three-item, seven-point Likert-type scale adapted from Wan and Wyer Jr. (2019) (i.e., “You blame the hotel for the problem you observed,” “You think the hotel was responsible for the problem you observed,” and “You think that the problem you observed was not in the control of the hotel.” $\alpha = .645$). Customer entitlement was measured using a nine-item, seven-point Likert scale based on Boyd III and Helms (2005) (e.g., “In some real sense, I feel that a store’s personnel should cater to my every whim,” “In this modern age of technology, I should be able to ask a salesperson any question and have it answered instantly,” “As a valuable customer, I have earned the right to deal exclusively with a store’s most talented staff members,” $\alpha = .90$).

Results from one-way ANOVAs indicated that both manipulations worked. Participants in the high service failure severity condition rated the service failure more severe ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.09$) than those in the low severity condition ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.21$), $F(1, 352) = 42.11$, $p < .001$. Participants in the high recovery quality condition rated the recovery quality higher ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.22$) than those in the low recovery quality condition ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.46$), $F(1, 352) = 69.92$, $p < .001$.

To test the hypotheses, we ran PROCESS Model 28 (Hayes, 2022) with a 95% CI and 5,000 bootstrapped samples. Service failure severity was entered as the IV, attributable to the firm as the mediator, and satisfaction toward the avatar as the DV. Customer entitlement was the first stage moderator, and recovery quality was the second stage moderator. Gender was included as a covariate. The results showed that service failure severity negatively affected satisfaction toward the avatar ($B = -.86$, $SE = .33$, $p < .001$, $CI = -.1.308$ to $-.420$), supporting H1. Further, the results showed that service failure severity increased attribution to the firm ($B = 1.09$, $SE = .43$, $p = .011$, $CI = .246$ to 1.930) which in turn decreased satisfaction toward the avatar ($B = -.45$, $SE = .11$, $p < .0001$, $CI = -.65$ to $-.24$), supporting H2. Recovery quality attenuated the negative effect of attribution on satisfaction ($B = .30$, $SE = .14$, $p = .03$, $CI = .03$ to $.56$), supporting H3b. However, recovery quality did not moderate the effect of service failure severity on satisfaction, showing no support for H3a. Therefore, H3 was partially supported. The moderated mediation index was significant (index = $-.099$, $SE = .056$, $CI = -.22$ to $-.0088$). Attribution negatively mediated the effect of service failure severity on satisfaction when recovery quality was lower than higher. Contrary to the prediction in H4, customer entitlement attenuated the positive effect of service failure severity on attribution ($B = -.33$, $SE = .14$, $p = .016$, $CI = -.60$ to $-.06$), thus rejecting H4.

Discussion

The finding that service failure severity negatively influenced third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar adds to the extant service failure and recovery literature as it shows that while third-party observers are not directly involved with service interactions, they still form opinions of a service failure that they witness. These observations by bystanders can impact downstream variables such as satisfaction with the service provider. This is an important finding for service providers who may feel that a service failure and recovery occur in isolation and have no impact on those observing the interaction. The support that we find for H1 shows that bystanders witnessing service interactions are impacted by how their fellow customers are treated.

The finding that attribution mediated the effect of service failure severity on customer satisfaction clarifies the relationship between service failure severity, attribution to firm, and third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar. The results show that service failure severity positively influences attribution to the firm. This result is as expected and predicted by attribution theory. One aspect of attribution theory is that when a customer observes a service failure, they are likely to attribute the cause of the failure to someone or something. Therefore, managers must realize that the more severe the failure is, the more the firm may have to bear the weight of the failure. The observer goes through a process regarding their observation. This process elicits different emotions such as frustration, anger, and regret (Harrison-Walker, 2019), and leads to reactions such as attribution (Heider, 1958), blame (Lee and Cranage, 2018), and coping (Gelbrich, 2010). The cost of this process is time and energy that the third-party observer spends, and it takes a toll on the observer. This is important as managers consider the retribution and effort needed to recover from the failure (not only toward the customer directly involved but also to the observer). In addition, the results show that attribution to the firm negatively influences third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar. As the avatar is

an extension of the firm, this result makes sense as an observer attempts to process their observation. As the observer views the failure, they may not process the observation in isolation. That is, while the observation is a singular moment in time, it has different variables that the observer evaluates and processes. These variables (i.e., attribution to firm and third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar) are tied together and influence one another as they are both part of the singular company. This is an important finding as managers must recognize that third-party observers are influenced and make judgments toward the company and their avatar even though they are not directly involved in the service interaction.

Service recovery quality did not moderate the relationship between service failure severity and third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar (H3a). However, it did attenuate the relationship between attribution to firm and third-party observer satisfaction toward the avatar (H3b). This is an important finding and adds to the literature on service recoveries impacting third-party observers watching. While these observers are not directly involved in the service interaction, they still have expectations regarding how to make a failure right and how a firm using an avatar should reconcile the wrong done to their fellow customers. As avatars make the wrong right through recovery, they can recoup perceived satisfaction from those observing the interaction.

Lastly, customer entitlement moderated the relationship between service failure severity and attribution to the firm, although it was not the direction as hypothesized. Contrary to our prediction, customer entitlement attenuated the positive effect of service failure severity on attribution. One possible explanation is that while the observer may feel a sense of being special and receiving a perfect service interaction for themselves, this feeling of entitlement does not directly transfer to their fellow customer experiencing the service failure. It may be that the third-party observer forgives the failure and is attributing less toward the firm as they are not directly involved. Therefore, further research could examine constructs such as forgiveness (Wolter et. al, 2019), power (Lee, 2010), and empathy (Wei et. al., 2020) to help explain this unexpected result.

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Summary Brief

Bridging the Attitude-Behavior Gap in Sustainable Consumption: Insights from Paradox Theory in the Services Sector

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Sustainable consumption in the services sector is vital for global sustainability, yet an attitude-behavior gap persists among consumers. This study explores sustainable consumption through various theoretical lenses, uncovering the psychological, social, and contextual factors influencing consumer behavior. Despite advancements, significant challenges remain in aligning consumers' sustainable attitudes with behaviors. By applying Paradox Theory, this research investigates the complex tensions consumers face in sustainable consumption, emphasizing the interconnected nature of these challenges. Preliminary findings from consumer interviews reveal distinct attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable services, highlighting the need for tailored marketing strategies and educational initiatives to promote sustainability effectively.

Introduction

Sustainable consumption within the services sector is increasingly recognized as a critical component of global sustainability efforts. As services make up a significant portion of the global economy, they play a crucial role in reducing environmental impact and promoting sustainable practices.

However, past research has established that consumers often fail to follow through on their intentions, thereby expanding the attitude-behavior gap. Studies examining consumers' sustainable consumption practices from the theoretical lenses of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Wu & Chen, 2014; Paul et al., 2016), Norm Activation Theory (NAT) (Han et al., 2020), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Gilal et al., 2020), Social Practice Theory (SPT) (Kennedy et al., 2015), and Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) (Ramos-Hidalgo et al., 2022), among others, have provided valuable insights. These studies have advanced our understanding of sustainable consumption by highlighting various psychological, social, and contextual factors that influence consumer behavior. Despite these advancements, the consensus is that significant challenges remain in bridging the gap between consumers' sustainable attitudes and their actual behaviors.

Background

Beyond examining individual factors, recent scholars (e.g., Vergragt et al., 2016; Kuhl et al., 2023) have encouraged exploring the intersection of micro and meso-level factors, emphasizing the strong interdependence between consumers and their organizational environment, particularly in services where simultaneous consumption and production create complexity in the interaction between consumers and service providers (Zeithaml et al., 2018). For instance, the hospitality industry frequently adopts practices such as reducing towel and linen washing to save water and energy. However, ensuring that these practices do not compromise guest satisfaction or hygiene standards presents a significant challenge. As consumers do not exist in isolation from their environment (Jahari et al., 2022), it is important to analyze the impact of organizational policies on consumers' sustainable consumption practices.

Against this backdrop, we adopt paradox theory as the theoretical lens to unravel the complex and often conflicting motivations and behaviors that consumers experience in their pursuit of sustainability. Paradox theory posits that tensions and contradictions are inherent and persistent in organizational life, reflecting deeper interdependencies and dualities that cannot be easily resolved through simple either/or tradeoffs (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Lewis & Smith, 2022). Instead, it emphasizes the importance of embracing and managing these paradoxes dynamically and holistically (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Lewis & Smith, 2022).

Although paradox theory is rooted in organizational behavior to explore tensions within organizations, we aim to extend its application to the organizational-consumer interface. This perspective allows us to understand the interconnected and dynamic nature of tensions that consumers face in sustainable consumption. For instance,

consumers might simultaneously seek convenience and eco-friendliness, or cost-effectiveness and ethical production, creating inherent contradictions in their decision-making processes.

Parts of the organizational literature, however, continue to impose rationality and order on these complex systemic puzzles, often treating tensions as separate oppositions that can be resolved through straightforward solutions (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Hahn et al., 2022). This approach overlooks the interconnectedness of these tensions and the necessity for a more nuanced understanding that paradox theory provides. By applying paradox theory, we can better appreciate the multifaceted nature of sustainable consumption and the strategies that both organizations and consumers employ to navigate these challenges.

Methodology

This study is divided into two distinct parts: Study 1 and Study 2. Study 1 focuses on understanding consumers' perceptions of their struggles with practicing sustainable consumption. This involves exploring the various challenges and barriers that consumers face when attempting to adopt more sustainable behaviors in their daily lives. Study 2, on the other hand, examines the efforts and perspectives of organizations regarding the promotion of sustainable consumption. This part of the study investigates how businesses and institutions perceive their role in encouraging sustainable behaviors among consumers and what are the tensions they experience in promoting sustainable consumption.

Preliminary Findings

For this conference we will present preliminary findings from interviews with consumers. Preliminary findings reveal notable distinctions in consumer attitudes and behaviors when choosing sustainable services. Consumers show different levels of commitment and perceived value based on the type of sustainable option.

Our research highlights the importance of tailored marketing strategies and educational initiatives to address the unique challenges and opportunities in promoting sustainable products and services. Understanding these differences is crucial for businesses and policymakers aiming to foster sustainable consumer behavior and support the transition to a sustainable economy.

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Summary Brief

Empowering Minority Entrepreneurs: The Impact of Compatibility, Scarcity, and Relationship Quality on Marketing Service Adoption

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Minority entrepreneurs often face unique challenges that impact their business growth and sustainability. This study investigates how resource scarcity and perceived compatibility influence the adoption of marketing consulting services (MCS) among minority entrepreneurs, with perceived relationship quality as a mediating variable. By employing the Resource Dependence Theory and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), this research provides insights into the factors that drive MCS adoption intentions. The findings highlight the critical role of resource availability, the alignment of services with business needs, and the importance of high-quality business relationships in enhancing entrepreneurial success.

Introduction

Entrepreneurs from minority communities often encounter significant resource constraints that hinder their business operations. Understanding how these constraints interact with the perceived compatibility and quality of relationships in the adoption of new services like MCS is essential for promoting entrepreneurial growth and sustainability. This study bridges a gap in the literature by examining the interplay between resource scarcity, perceived compatibility, and relationship quality in shaping minority entrepreneurs' intentions to adopt MCS.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Perceived Compatibility

Perceived compatibility refers to how well a new service aligns with existing values, past experiences, and the needs of the adopter. In the context of minority entrepreneurs, perceived compatibility is a critical factor in the adoption of marketing consulting services (MCS). When entrepreneurs perceive that MCS is compatible with their business needs, they are more likely to adopt these services despite other challenges they may face, such as resource constraints (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh et al., 2012). Compatibility is a crucial aspect of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which posits that technologies or services that fit well with users' existing practices and values are more readily adopted.

Perceived compatibility can mitigate the negative impacts of resource scarcity by aligning MCS with the specific operational requirements and strategic goals of minority-owned businesses. This alignment makes the perceived benefits of adoption more apparent and the integration of new services less disruptive (Jiang et al., 2016; Huntley, 2006). Thus, understanding the role of perceived compatibility in the decision-making process can provide valuable insights into how minority entrepreneurs evaluate and adopt new business services.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived compatibility positively influences minority entrepreneurs' intentions to utilize MCS.

Relationship Quality

Relationship quality refers to the perceived strength and depth of a business relationship, encompassing factors such as trust, satisfaction, and commitment (Lages et al., 2008; Huntley, 2006; Jiang et al., 2016). High-quality relationships can facilitate the seamless integration of new services into existing business operations by fostering trust and collaboration between parties. This concept is critical for minority entrepreneurs who must rely on strong relationships to successfully adopt and utilize MCS.

Hypothesis 2: Relationship quality mediates the relationship between perceived compatibility and the intention to utilize MCS.

Resource Scarcity as a Moderator

Resource Dependence Theory suggests that organizations must manage their dependencies on external resources to survive and grow (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009). Resource scarcity can amplify the perceived value of compatible services, making entrepreneurs more likely to adopt MCS when they perceive high compatibility.

Hypothesis 3: Resource scarcity moderates the relationship between perceived compatibility and the intention to utilize MCS, such that the relationship is stronger under conditions of high resource scarcity.

Methodology

Participants

The study involved 73 minority entrepreneurs from various industries in North Carolina, recruited through targeted outreach and snowball sampling techniques. This demographic focus ensures the relevance of the findings to the specific economic and social contexts of the region.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted via an online survey, measuring resource scarcity, perceived compatibility with MCS, relationship quality, and intention to utilize MCS.

Measures

Resource scarcity was assessed using a scale adapted from Covin, Slevin, and Heeley (2000), which evaluates perceived constraints in financial, human, and physical resources. Perceived compatibility was evaluated using a scale specifically developed for this study, drawing on literature from Venkatesh and Davis (2000), which examined how well MCS aligns with the entrepreneurs' business goals, needs, and operational constraints. Relationship quality was measured using scales adapted from Lages et al. (2008) and Huntley (2006), focusing on the perceived strength and depth of the business relationship. The intention to utilize MCS was measured using a scale adapted from Venkatesh and Davis (2000), assessing the likelihood of entrepreneurs engaging with MCS based on their perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and mediation analyses were conducted to explore the relationships among the variables. The results indicated that resource scarcity significantly moderated the relationship between perceived compatibility and the intention to utilize MCS, while relationship quality served as a mediator in this relationship.

The mean and standard deviation for resource scarcity were 3.45 and 0.98, respectively. For relationship quality, the mean was 5.67 with a standard deviation of 1.23. Perceived compatibility with MCS had a mean of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.76, while the intention to utilize MCS had a mean of 5.02 and a standard deviation of 1.10.

The correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between resource scarcity and perceived compatibility ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, there was a positive correlation between relationship quality and perceived compatibility ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), and between perceived compatibility and the intention to utilize MCS ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$).

The multiple regression model predicting the intention to utilize MCS from perceived compatibility and resource scarcity was significant, $F(2, 70) = 12.34$, $p < 0.001$, with an R^2 of 0.38. Resource scarcity was found to significantly moderate the relationship between perceived compatibility and the intention to utilize MCS ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, relationship quality was found to partially mediate the relationship between perceived compatibility and the intention to utilize MCS, with a significant indirect effect ($B = 0.24$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.40]).

Discussion

This research highlights the importance of addressing resource constraints and ensuring high relationship quality to enhance the adoption of MCS among minority entrepreneurs. The findings underscore the need for marketing consultants and policymakers to focus on creating tailored services that acknowledge and mitigate the unique challenges faced by minority entrepreneurs. For instance, marketing strategies should emphasize how MCS aligns with the specific needs and operational practices of minority-owned businesses, thereby enhancing perceived compatibility.

Furthermore, relationship quality emerges as a crucial factor in facilitating the adoption of MCS. High-quality relationships characterized by trust, satisfaction, and commitment can significantly influence minority entrepreneurs' willingness to adopt new services. As suggested by Lages et al. (2008) and Huntley (2006), fostering strong business relationships can mitigate the perceived risks associated with adopting new services. Therefore, MCS providers should invest in building and maintaining high-quality relationships with their clients.

The moderating role of resource scarcity highlights the heightened importance of perceived compatibility in resource-constrained environments. Minority entrepreneurs facing significant resource limitations are more likely to adopt MCS if they perceive these services as highly compatible with their existing operations. This finding aligns with Resource Dependence Theory, which posits that organizations must strategically manage their resource dependencies to survive and thrive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009).

Lastly, this study contributes to the literature by elucidating the interplay between resource scarcity, perceived compatibility, and relationship quality in the context of MCS adoption among minority entrepreneurs. The practical implications for marketing consultants and policymakers include the need to enhance the perceived compatibility of MCS and to build high-quality relationships to facilitate service adoption. Future research could explore additional factors that influence MCS adoption and examine the long-term impacts of MCS on the growth and sustainability of minority-owned businesses.

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Summary Brief

Age Segmentation in the Life Coaching Industry: A Needs-Based Approach

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Life coaching is the second-fastest-growing industry in the world. Most previous research has used a results-based approach with relatively small sample sizes. The current research uses a needs-based approach to identify whether older or younger consumers are better candidates for a life coaching session or program. Gender was also assessed. Existing scales were used based on industry indicators to identify viable life coaching clients. A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to analyze the data, with gender as the covariate or moderating variable. Results showed that younger consumers are generally better candidates for life coaching, while gender was only significant for one of the variables measured.

Introduction

Life coaching is the second-fastest-growing industry in the world, rivaled only by information technology, with an average yearly growth of 6.7% (“Life Coaching Industry Trends of 2023,” 2024). Life coaching helps individuals achieve their goals and improve their lives. Life coaching has been defined as, “a relationship between coach and client aimed at attaining valued professional or personal goals and outcomes” (Aboujaoude, 2020, p. 974). It has also been defined as, “a collaborative solution-focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and/or professional life of normal, nonclinical clients” (Grant, 2003, p. 254).

Moreover, life coaching may have a positive influence on someone’s well-being, goal attainment, alignment with values, overcoming obstacles, and managing transitions (Lefdhahl-Davis, Huffman, Stancil, & Alayan, 2018). It attempts to make a positive impact on an individual’s performance, personal growth, and well-being (Campbell & Gardner, 2005). The concept has expanded over time to the point that it can address all of life’s problems (Aboujaoude, 2020). Life coaching is non-clinical, i.e., it does not focus on pathology and diagnoses. This distinction has come with patient safety concerns since individuals may mistakenly seek coaching assistance when they need psychotherapy. Since the industry is unregulated, life coaches have no education, training, or licensing requirements and the client has no legal protections (Aboujaoude, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

There is understandably a dearth of studies in this recently popular service industry. Most of the empirical studies have taken a results-based approach based on small sample sizes, in which respondents complete a life coaching session or program, and the changes are recorded (Campbell & Garner, 2005; Grant, 2003; Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2020; Lefdhahl-Davis et al., 2018). Furthermore, some of these studies focused on high school students (Green et al., 2020) and undergraduate students (Lefdhahl-Davis et al., 2018) but did not compare these younger clients with older clients. The purpose of this research is to determine if older or younger consumers will benefit more from life coaching via their need for life coaching, i.e., a needs-based approach. This identification will assist life coaches with their segmentation efforts and ultimately their promotion planning.

Most of the variables in this study were selected from those cited in the industry. First, the measure of life satisfaction is a commonly used screening test to assess a potential client’s need for life coaching. Second, The Health Coach Institute discusses three variables that are essential for change: 1) the desire or will to change, 2) having an open mind, and 3) possessing curiosity (“5 Things that make an ‘Ideal’ Coaching Client,” 2024). The last variable, religious commitment, was included based on a possible correlation between a marketplace decline in religious engagement and an increase in the utilization of a life coach.

Hypotheses

H1: Older consumers have greater satisfaction with life than younger consumers.

H2: Younger consumers have a greater desire or personal willingness to change than older consumers.

H3: Younger consumers have greater open-mindedness than older consumers.

H4: Younger consumers have greater curiosity than older consumers.

H5: Younger consumers have lower religious commitment than older consumers.

H6: Gender has a moderating effect on older and younger consumers and their need for life coaching.

Results

A one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), in which gender was the covariate, yielded some good results: Four of the five hypotheses were significant ($p < 0.05$) with three in the direction hypothesized: Younger consumers are less satisfied with life (H1), are more curious (H4), and have less religious commitment (H5). In contrast, the significant hypothesis regarding openness to the future (personal willingness to change) (H2) showed that older consumers are more optimistic than younger consumers, which was in the opposite direction hypothesized. The covariate, gender (H6), was only significant for the curiosity variable ($F = 20.49$, $p = 0.00$).

Discussion

This study provides support for life coaches to target younger consumers as their primary age segment. Gender was not a discriminating segmentation variable based on the research. Using a widely adopted industry assessment tool to screen prospective clients, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), this study showed that younger consumers are less satisfied with their lives and thus have a greater need for a life coach. Using additional characteristics from the industry to identify those who need life coaching services, younger consumers are more curious than older consumers. Additionally, younger consumers have less religious commitment than older consumers, which was asserted to be associated with the rise in the popularity of life coaching.

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SESSION 5.8: DISTINGUISHED TEACHING COMPETITION

Moderator:

Cindy Rippé

Distinguished Teaching Comment

You Have to Be C.R.A.Z.Y. to Be a Great Marketing Professor

Mark Wolters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Introduction

For most of my twenty plus year teaching career my colleagues have called me a little crazy for my dedication to giving students the best educational experience possible. Over the years I have taken that moniker as a badge of honor as they are right, you do have to be a bit C.R.A.Z.Y. to be a successful teaching professor. You need to CARE about your students and their educational journey. You need to use REALISTIC examples in class to help students relate to the materials and understand the concepts. Additionally, having students learn from ACTUAL experiences helps them grow professionally and prepares them for their careers. It is also vital to have ZEAL in your presentation of materials to students as your affinity towards a topic shows through. Finally, we educators need to remember that YOU can make all the difference in a student's life.

C.R.A.Z.Y. like a Professor

When I look at my teaching career, I see a number of factors that line up in terms of this C.R.A.Z.Y. acronym. In terms of *CARING* for my students, I have spent the past two decades continually supporting students through actively promoting their development. I developed the curriculum for the various marketing courses I have taught over the years focused on helping my students be the most prepared marketing graduates for the business world they are entering. This means that I actively work with recruiters, alumni, the community, university administration, and students to determine what the needs and goals are for each of these groups. This allows me to create a more holistic educational experience that helps my students flourish while they are on campus and when they depart into the working world. I have developed numerous new curriculums to take advantage of changes in the marketing field such as social media marketing, marketing analytics, and digital marketing before they became the buzzword topics on campuses. In my classroom my students know they are cared for whether it is through the numerous student organizations I am the faculty advisor for, or the study abroad programs I have led for the past 15 years, or the open-door policy for any student on campus to come talk to me about their marketing or career goals regardless of their majors. The fact that I still receive wedding invitations and baby announcements from students from 20 years ago to two years ago puts a smile on my face.

REALISTIC examples and *ACTUAL* experiences help students achieve their goals. I have integrated portfolio-based classes for my Strategic Marketing course and Social Media Marketing course where students are working directly with small and medium size enterprises all over the world. Students are developing marketing plans and creating social media content for these organizations, and the organizations are using their recommendations. Students are subsequently able to show their recommendations being used by real businesses to recruiters. I have personally developed a network of over 200 organizations that have worked with my students, and many have hired my students and have asked to take part in the projects again. Additionally, to help my students see how social media can be used for good I ran a 15-hour solo teaching live feed on YouTube to raise money for the University of Illinois Emergency Dean Fund. This made for an incredible opportunity for students to see how social media marketing and traditional marketing can work together to give back to our community.

Having *ZEAL* for teaching is one of the lost arts in many academic programs. However, in marketing, professors tend to have some of the most energetic and dynamic classes. That is why I am proud of the numerous teaching awards and accolades I have won over the years ranging from alumni awards, to student senate awards, to Poets & Quants placing me on their list of top 50 undergraduate teaching professors. I love teaching and helping my students learn, but I also love helping other educators teach better. That is why I have developed numerous seminars, online programs, and video series on becoming a better teaching professor, as well as videos on various marketing topics. These videos have been used in universities and schools all over the world. I love every exam season when my inbox is flooded with questions from students around the world, as well as at the beginning of each academic year when new faculty reach out thanking me for the videos helping them prepare for their first teaching load.

And of course, it is important to remember that *YOU* can make all the difference in a student's academic journey. Advising students on course selection, career paths, and life decisions, is a very important job for every faculty member. I am blessed that I have been able to connect with students in a way that they feel comfortable sharing their hopes and fears with me, and I want them to succeed not only professionally, but personally as well. However, *YOU* making a difference as a professor is not just in the lives of students, but in the lives of the people in your department, in your college, and in your community. That is why I try and do as much outreach as possible, whether through my various social media channels or giving marketing talks or developing training programs for chambers of commerce, non-profit organizations, government agencies, industry events, universities, other faculty, high schools, or anyone that reaches out. I want to share my marketing and teaching experiences with anyone that can benefit from them.

Conclusion

My teaching philosophy has always been threefold: interactive, experiential, and developmental. My C.R.A.Z.Y. philosophy has helped me deepen these facets within my teaching. You show you *CARE* by interacting with students to better understand their lived experience, so you can help them achieve their goals. *REALISTIC* examples and *ACTUAL* experiences are fostered through experiential learning when students are actively taking a roll in an organization's marketing plans. And your *ZEAL* and *YOU* can help students develop professionally as well as personally through the connections you make with them.

Distinguished Teaching Comment

The Trifecta of Teaching Marketing: Strategy, Technology and Application

Debra Zahay, St. Edward's University

Teaching marketing today is not an easy task. Even those classes not designated as digital marketing classes can have a strong technology component and instructors often feel like they are left behind in the race to keep their courses relevant and engaging for students. Moving the students through a solid understanding of strategic principles, relevant technology and then a project or assignment to apply these concepts and skills can result in a win for the students, the instructor, and future employers.

Introduction

My basic teaching philosophy is that teaching marketing today requires students to have a grounding in strategic marketing principles, skills in relevant tools and technologies and a reinforcement of concepts through a strong experiential component. Marketing is an applied discipline and nowhere is this fact more apparent than in my primary focus area, digital marketing. This philosophy is outlined in our award-winning paper in *Marketing Education Review*, An integrated model of digital marketing curriculum design (Zahay, et al., 2021). While that paper focused on digital marketing education, it is my belief that all marketing education today requires a solid background in these three areas 1) strategic marketing knowledge 2) the technical aspects of marketing and 3) experiential learning to reinforce and apply the concepts and skills covered. I have applied that model in my own preparations to teach marketing and to help my students be successful. I refer to this model colloquially as the 'trifecta' of marketing. A trifecta is a bet on the exact order of the top three finishers of a race. The trifecta is a difficult bet to win but has a high payout. Similarly, to be as to be able to teach strategy, technology and application in a classroom can be difficult but have a great reward.

Strategy, Technology and Application

A key aspect of this philosophy is the engagement between industry and the classroom setting. From my earliest days as an educator, I involved businesses in the classroom as guest speakers, coaches, and sponsors of student projects. Since marketing was turning more toward the use of technology, many of my early classes were taught in a computer lab. This approach then evolved into a more formal philosophy stressing the use of relevant tools and technology and an applied approach to marketing education. Students now work on their own devices to learn relevant technologies and achieve certifications as they help businesses to succeed in digital marketing.

However, I never lost sight of the fact that students need to have a basic understanding of strategic marketing principles and how to apply them to today's marketing challenges. Technologies and tools change over time, but basic questions like 'Who is my target customer?' and "What are my customers' main communications channels?" will never be irrelevant. The goal is that by focusing on the customer and their needs, wants and desires, students can then determine the best technology to meet strategic marketing objectives.

In fact, all of the marketing textbooks that I have written start with strategy and move to application. For example, in my social media class this semester, using my text, we have covered the basic concepts of goal setting, listening to the customer, and identifying target audiences (Zahay, et al., 2023). At the same time, students are working on their own personal brand identity. Each student creates strategic goals for developing their personal brand (strategy) at the same time learning website design tools and how to use Hootsuite, a social media marketing and management tool, to post on social media (technology). Students will receive two Hootsuite certifications in this class that can help with developing their personal brand and to connect with employers on their job search. The next step will be to apply these concepts and technologies to a plan to amplify their personal brand across social media channels and go back to the strategy step to modify goals and objectives (application). This project outline is a common structure used my classes.

This approach integrating marketing technology comes quite naturally to me as my industry background was in database management and software technology. This expertise and a fascination with the application of strategic concepts to business problems led to much of my early scholarly research exploring the link between customer data management and ultimate firm performance. Since the beginning of my career, I have also conducted research and published papers in marketing pedagogy, particularly the teaching of digital marketing, and published

teaching cases in this area to help my colleagues in marketing education. While I continued to also write teaching cases as time permitted, I found my appointments as department chair and director of a new master's program in digital marketing helped rekindle my interest in marketing pedagogy. My colleagues at St. Edward's and elsewhere and I were doing so many interesting things in the classroom that I wanted to get the word out to help my fellow professors. Much of my recent research has focused on successful classroom approaches.

Therefore, the three stakeholders I serve with this approach are students, employers and my fellow educators. The students have done well, with many of my former students now in advanced marketing positions. Graduates also speak highly of applied classroom experiences. Employers like to be involved and are invited to participate in the classroom. In the second half of my social media class mentioned above, students will create a plan for a not-for-profit organization or small entrepreneurial firm. This project will meet the social justice goals of our university by providing a social media plan to a company that otherwise might not be able to afford to have a plan developed. Over the years I have coached hundreds of projects involving industry sponsors, many of them charitable organizations and small firms.

The final group of major stakeholders is, of course, the instructors who teach marketing and, in particular, digital marketing. With another professor I run a Facebook Group for Digital Marketing educators of approximately 1,000 members. I also teach workshops on how to teach digital marketing and am always available for questions. My approach to the classroom is codified in the textbooks I have authored, particularly the instructor manual material.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although I believe that research and practice demonstrate that strategy, technology and application can be a winning combination in teaching marketing, I did not set out to be in this race; I just wanted to help students be relevant in the job market while being grounded in timeless marketing principles. Writing books and running workshops were a service to the profession, since how to teach digital marketing is not covered in most doctoral programs. However, I am happy to note that the latest batch of graduates is adding many new dimensions to the classroom with their thoughtful and innovative approaches to teaching digital marketing.

I have run this race to the best of my ability and had many wonderful experiences along the way. There have also been challenges and I am constantly improving my approach to my subjects. While I think strategy, technology and application are a winning combination in teaching marketing today, I humbly submit we are always learning and improving our approach. I never think I have quite hit the trifecta and am always looking for feedback and to make improvements.

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Distinguished Teaching Comment

Nurturing Character Development

Laura Munoz, University of Dallas. USA.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” — Nelson Mandela.

I immigrated to the United States to further my education, pursuing an MBA. Little did I know that this move would allow me to experience firsthand education's transformative power and a teachers' unique role in guiding and inspiring their students. I have been teaching for over 15 years, and it feels as new as the first day. Every semester is a new opportunity with a blank canvas to instill in classrooms knowledge, a love for truth and value virtue, and, for me, an opportunity to continue my growth.

I am proud of my teaching philosophy, which allows me to nurture character development and enable students to become confident, talented, and ethical professionals. To accomplish this, I focus on constant preparation while having high expectations, including ethical components, and active learning activities as the initial base of any learning exchange. Some active learning activities I use include video cases, role plays, elevator pitches, classroom discussions, simulations, and industry certifications.

From this strong foundation, I guide and educate students in building basic and advanced critical thinking skills progressively throughout the course of this learning exchange. This entails a commitment to plan and deliver a class that takes the learner from understanding and applying to more complex cognitive processes, such as analyzing and evaluating, without overlooking their human persona, an essential element often overlooked in business education. Studying our human persona informs us about our identity and moral commitments and allows us to be capable of reasoning and self-reflection. Through the reasoning of personal moral commitments and self-reflection assignments in all my classes, I assist students in the pursuit of truth.

I must continue to work on developing my knowledge as I have much to do to continue to grow. I attend teaching sessions at the conferences I participate in, write pedagogical research, and read how my area evolves. Yet, one of the most profound changes I have experienced is to start talking and welcoming “failure” to students. The goal is to affirm that “failing” an assignment on the first try isn't a barrier to success in the course (both grade-wise and content-wise). “Failure” is a key tool to help them learn to improve. I fully live this philosophy by providing a safe environment where making mistakes is not penalized. I have even published a textbook addressing resilience, grit, and failure among college students. Through my book, I aim to positively change somebody's world, one page at a time.

Lastly, I would like to share my thoughts after I engaged in some introspection with a colleague whom I trust and seek guidance from. I conclude that I: care deeply about my university, am ‘student-focused,’ strive to be sensible and bring fresh and helpful insights forward for consideration, am willing to share my insights, work collaboratively and constructively, bring a great deal of energy and joy to the work I do, and I want, always, to make things better.

I conclude that I am an excellent citizen of my university, community, and academia. My work denotes my promise to continuous growth, to share my knowledge to build a legacy among students and colleagues, and to serve with a strong commitment to everyone.

SESSION 5.9 PANEL: THE LAWS OF ROBOTICS: AN ANALYSIS OF MARKETING THROUGH ANALOGY

Moderators:

R Wixel Barnwell and Kevin Shanahan

Panelists:

Shannon McCarthy, Missouri, University of Central Missouri

Mark Pelletier, NC, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

Alisha Horky, AL, University of North Alabama

Michael Levin, LA, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Ken Graham, WI, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

SESSION 6.1: POLICY ISSUES – UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Moderator:

Mark Bender

Summary Brief

Perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Generated By Sponsorship of Professional Sports: The Effect of a Sponsor's CSR Alignment with Those of the Team

Meagan Connolly, Elon University
Lawrence L. Garber, Jr., Elon University

Prior research indicates a firm's corporate social responsibility (CSR) image is enhanced when it sponsors a sports team. We extend this research to when both the sponsor and the team have CSR initiatives. What if they address the same set of social problems or different ones? We test the proposition that aligned initiatives have a differential effect on perceptions of the sponsor's CSR than unaligned ones. Respondents were exposed to respective scenarios in which a fictional National Hockey League (NHL) expansion team promoting environmental initiatives takes on a sponsor. In one condition, the sponsor, Patagonia Clothes, and the team both support environmental initiatives (the aligned condition), while, in the other, TOMS Shoes promotes disadvantaged children, equally meritorious but unaligned with the environmental initiatives of the team. Results show a significant main effect of (un)alignment on consumer perceptions of the sponsor's CSR initiatives. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Summary Brief

Please Fix This for Me! The Scarcity and Partaking Nexus in Repair Cafés

Lucie K. Ozanne, UC Business School, University of Canterbury
Girish Prayag, UC Business School, University of Canterbury

Introduction

Contemporary society is increasingly more attuned to the need for sustainable production and consumption through the impacts of waste. Electronic and textile waste affect individuals and society (Degenstein et al., 2021). Approaches to reduce waste include designing products that last longer or that can be mended or repaired to keep them out of the waste stream. However, currently many systemic, physical, and psychological impediments exist that affect consumers' ability to repair the products they own (Svensson et al., 2018). Impediments to repair may emerge from the need for and accessibility to parts, tools, diagnostics, schematics, and repair documentation but also the availability and capacity to comprehend online repair videos. Consumers also need the right to repair without invalidating product warranties (Ozanne et al., 2021). In tandem, consumers' confidence has grown in undertaking self-repair or seeking non-professional help for repair through global TV shows such as "The Repair Shop".

Globally, there is a growing consumer movement supporting repair and advocating for legislation on the "right to repair" (Harrabin, 2019; Madon, 2022; WasteMINZ, 2020). For instance, in New Zealand policy advocates call for more repairable products, labels with a reparability index, and for retailers to offer spare parts and repair services. A recent UK survey showed that 81% of consumers support the right to repair, including design for repair, access to spare parts and repair documentation (Restart, 2021). Along with legislation, self-repair is also supported by a number of other country specific initiatives such as online fixing sites (e.g., American - www.ifixit.com), social enterprises (e.g., UK-based, The Restart Project), non-governmental organizations (e.g., Consumer New Zealand), and recent television programmes (e.g., UK produced The Repair Shop) (Charter and Keiller, 2016). Given the challenges of self-repair, the repair café movement began as an approach to help consumers repair their possessions and prevent unnecessary waste (Charter and Keiller, 2016; Messiner, 2021). Over 2000 repair cafés exist around the world. These usually take the form of community events where people bring products in need of repair and offer a small donation in return. Participants then work together with volunteers, who have repair skills, to repair their broken products (Charter and Keiller, 2016). Some repair cafés encourage visitors to fix or mend their own goods with the guidance of repair experts to assist (Rosner, 2013).

Despite the contemporary societal interest in repair (Niskanen, McLaren, and Anshelm 2021; Moalem and Mosgaard 2021), consumer research has, until recently, overlooked this phenomenon (Godfrey, Price, and Lusch 2022). Consumer research conceptualizes repair as a spectrum of interventions through which people seek to affect the capacities of objects in ways that correspond to their material readiness to enable routinized patterns of action (Godfrey, et al., 2021). However, a sociological view considers repair as fundamentally relational in nature rather than consumers simply working on an object to ensure and maintain its function (Niskanen, et al., 2021). From this perspective, repair encompasses relationships within communities, and is often expressed both through individual and collective forms of repair (McLaren, 2018), such as repair cafes. However, existing studies have failed to consider the forms of scarcity that might create impediments to self-repair and the motivation to partake in repair cafes. Thus, this exploratory qualitative study answers the following two research questions:

- How does scarcity inform impediments to self-repair experienced by consumers?
- What motivates consumer to participate in repair cafes?

Theoretical Framework

We use scarcity as the theoretical lens to understand impediments to self-repair. Extant research on scarcity focuses on physical products rather than services (e.g., Chung, Song, and Lee, 2017; Suri, Kohli, and Monroe, 2007). Only a few studies explore how scarcity may impact responsible forms of consumption (e.g., Berthold, Cologna, and Siegrist, 2022; Gao, Jia, and Guo, 2023; Goldsmith, Roux, and Wilson, 2020; Zhang, Ma, and Guan, 2023). It is noteworthy that in social science research, the scarcity–prosociality nexus remains a significant research gap (Krishnan, 2022). Although restricted access is a common marketing practice (e.g., limited edition product, buy now appeals) to create perceptions of scarcity, we respond to a call for more research on how consumers respond to the

various ways product or service access may be restricted (e.g., limited repair service, parts, manuals) (Roux, Goldsmith, and Cannon, 2023).

We argue that different forms of scarcity create impediments to self-repair and energizes individuals to partake in repair cafes. Scarcity occurs when consumers lack access to sufficient resources to achieve consumption goals due to a lack of, or a lack of access to, goods, services or other resources (e.g., money, time) (Hamilton et al., 2019). Four perspectives on scarcity can influence consumer decision making. First, scarcity as a mindset focuses the consumer's attention on a scarce resource that can potentially lead to enhanced productivity and more efficient use of that resource (Goldsmith et al., 2020). This type of scarcity might deviate cognitive resources available for other tasks (Mani et al., 2013). Second, scarcity as a threat leads consumers to enact coping strategies that will reduce negative feelings and avoid disappointment. It may also motivate individuals to seek alternatives that are more acceptable (Goldsmith et al., 2020). Third, scarcity as a reference point relates to a discrepancy between one's current level of resources and a higher, more desirable reference point (Roux, 2019). This energizes individuals to seek ways to gain more resources that will reduce the discrepancy between the current and ideal state. Fourth, scarcity as a journey refers to long term exposure to scarcity that have chronic effects on consumer decision-making (Goldsmith et al., 2020).

Methodology

Given the lack of research on the scarcity-partaking nexus, a qualitative research approach including semi-structured interviews and participant observation was used. To date, 20 consumers were interviewed from six repair cafes across New Zealand. Interviews were conducted both face-to-face during the repair café event, and online on Zoom, and lasted from 20 to 60 minutes. Participant observation was utilized to better understand the practice of repair at repair cafes. Also, seven individuals involved in starting and running repair cafes were interviewed to understand the impediments to repair experienced at events. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results and Discussion

Participants included 13 females and 7 males ranging in age from 33 to 82 years old. Participants had visited repair cafes one to six times, although for many this was their first visit. Participants brought a range of items to be repaired (e.g., clothing, small electronics, and toys). Most items were more practical in nature with only a few sentimental items (e.g., teddy bear, antique radio). The diversity of items may illustrate consumers' experiencing both physical and psychological impediments to self-repair that drive them to seek help, but also the need for repair cafes to have repairers with diverse skill sets, which can be a scarcity issue in itself.

We found consumers experienced different forms of scarcity, including psychological, physical and systemic, that created impediments to self-repair and motivated them to participate in repair cafes. When confronted with unavailability, due to lack of products or services, consumers may either defer consumption or choose a substitute (Hamilton et al., 2014). In this case, confronted with different forms of scarcity that inhibited their ability to self-repair possessions, consumers were motivated then to choose a substitute – i.e. the repair café, which to them provides a range of benefits.

While consumers undertaking self-repair is common (Laitala et al., 2021), many participants in this study attempted self-repair but were constrained by psychological scarcity. For instance, some describe a lack of knowledge, "I didn't know whether I could unscrew it or whether I would kill myself!" (Tessa). Whereas others felt they lack the skills to undertake self-repair, which creates a psychological barrier, "I'm not very good at sewing, so I thought, well, zips, are not really easy" (Jill). Others describe a lack of confidence in their own abilities, "You know, people with sewing experience look at things and know how to fix them...not me" (Margot). Some discuss they lack the time to undertake repair work, "I don't really have the skills or the time generally" (Rebecca). These examples illustrate consumer deficit-thinking in undertaking self-repair.

Consumers also describe physical impediments to self-repair. For instance, many lack the proper tools or equipment, "I don't have a sewing machine so I can't do it myself" (Jim). Others discuss that they cannot open the item to repair it, "And it's just that tiny little thing that holds you up from fixing something" (Tessa). These physical impediments also affect repairers given the lack of access to parts, materials, and tools that impedes products being repaired at repair cafés. In this way, physical impediments restrict consumer benefits from repair cafes and dampens their motivation to revisit.

Consumers also describe systemic constraints that restrict their access to repair service, such as simply a lack of repair service, which illustrates geographical constraints. As Kay describes, "There's not much in the way of repair places out there". Others explain that repair is restricted for certain kinds of items, in this case small appliances, "But that small thing they (repair providers) have not been interested in" (Adam), illustrating selective repair. Many describe that repair services are too expensive, "...it's gotta be affordable (the repair) but people's time seems to not make it affordable" (Fran). In addition, consumers explain that manufacturers restrict access to parts,

“These days, they don't supply a lot of spare parts. You've gotta buy a whole unit or a whole circuit board and so on” (James). Other consumers explain that repair can be restricted by manufacturers to authorized service providers or product warranties may be invalidated by unauthorized repair: “And also it, it forfeits the warranty” (Rebecca). Finally, some consumers perceive a lack of expertise in repair provision in the marketplace, “...another guy couldn't find that. It is extremely difficult with printed circuit boards” (James).

Embedded in these psychological, physical and systemic constraints is the notion of scarcity, which prompts an adaptive strategy from consumers, motivating them to explore and use repair cafes. Obviously getting items fixed is a key motivation, “I guess just to get things fixed to make your life easier” (Margot). Along with saving money, “and it just worked just fine, and it saved me sort of a \$100 or \$200” (Rebecca). In addition, repair is perceived by consumers as a way to enact their values, as described by Jane: “...and I try not to throw things out, not to be part of the whole consumer nightmare because not only do you get the thing, you get all the packaging.... You should be able to fix them”. This includes reducing their environmental impact, “I don't really want to throw it away” (Meg), and extending the life of the product, “if you can fix it and extend the life a bit, I think that's always a good thing” (Jill). Although all items are not fixed at the repair café, consumers appreciate when repairers provide resources, such as information on repair service or where to get parts, that may enable future repair. For instance, Rebecca describes the support she received, “he really couldn't repair it. And so he suggested a place in Simon Street”. Finally, many consumers describe their motivation to be part of their local community through participation in the repair café.

Conclusions and Implications for Theory and Practice

We found that psychological, physical, and systemic constraints affect self-repair. These impediments are grounded in different forms of scarcity, motivating consumers to partake in repair cafes. These impediments stem from scarcity as a mindset, which is linked to consumers' perceived incapacity to undertake self-repair by not having the tools, expertise and confidence. This also illustrates deficit thinking on behalf of consumers. Scarcity as a reference point is evident in the way that consumers perceive their lack of access to various repair resources and creates a discrepancy between their current and ideal state (Roux, 2019). This resource deficit motivates them to seek alternative pathways to resource acquisition, including knowledge and expertise available from repairers. In addition, to attenuate frustration or disappointment from failure to self-repair, consumers visit repair cafés. From this perspective, scarcity as a threat is evident and repair cafes become a form of coping strategy. This allows consumers to overcome disappointment with non-functioning products or reducing strong negative feelings toward broken products of sentimental value. This also implies a more adaptive strategy to combat negative feelings about waste.

Participants partake in repair cafés to prolong item shelf-life and reduce waste, illustrating their altruism around waste reduction. More importantly, partaking in repair cafes show support to local community, strengthening consumer-repairer/organizer relationships. From a scarcity perspective, through altruism and seeking a supportive environment that reinforce positive behavior around repair, consumers seem to be advocating for and adopting more sustainable consumption patterns. Repairers and consumers, and organizers display prosociality that seems to emanate from scarcity as a journey. By making repair visible, acceptable, accessible, and mainstream (Madon, 2021), repair cafes are addressing scarcity at the societal level by transforming long-term social norms around waste. In this way, scarcity as a journey can be addressed.

Policymakers can support repair through developing and supporting “right to repair” legislation. For instance, a reparability index can ensure consumers know what products can be repaired before purchase. Manufacturers can be required to provide parts, tools, schematics, and repair instructions to ensure that either self-repair, professional repair, or repair through repair cafes can be undertaken. In addition, manufacturers can be required to honour warranties if items are repaired. As repair cafes help to minimize some of the forms of scarcity for consumers, policy makers should support them by providing funding, venues, and repair training for volunteers to enable this prosocial community practice to continue.

References Available Upon Request

SESSION 6.2: JMTP SYMPOSIUM I

Moderator:

Rhiannon Mesler

Summary Brief

Enhancing Customer Satisfaction through Organizational Culture, Salesperson Self-Efficacy, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Service Delivery Speed

Elizabeth Brauer, West Virginia University

David Brauer, Durham University

Emily Tanner, Oklahoma State University

Organizational culture, which is the shared values, beliefs, and practices within an organization, drives employee behavior and customer experiences (Schein, 2010). We examine how the cultural values of innovation and customer centricity affect customer satisfaction using The Big Nine Cultural Values (Sull & Sull, 2019). Our findings indicate that organizational culture significantly impacts customer satisfaction, mediated by salesperson self-efficacy, and the service delivery speed of AI tools such as chatbots or virtual assistants moderates this relationship. While customers find AI tools helpful, they prefer interactions with human salespeople. This finding reveals that organizations need to strike a balance between the efficiency of AI tools and the personal touch of salesperson-customer interactions.

Summary Brief

Consumers' Planned Brand Activism Support or Lack Thereof: A Comparative Analysis

Andrea R. Bennett, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX

Laura Pricer, University of North Georgia, Dahlonega, GA

Courtney B. Peters, Samford University, Homewood, AL

This study uses the theory of planned behavior to compare the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control of a representative sample of U.S. consumers in relation to their likelihood of supporting brand activism over the next year. Results of a two-step cluster analysis across six clustering variables reveal two distinct clusters, Supporters and Non-Supporters.

SESSION 6.3: WOW! LOOK HOW FAR WE'VE COME!

Moderator:

Laura Munoz

Full Paper

Brand and Performance Learnings for Digital Assistants: Considerations for Generative AI Assistants

Thomas M. Brill, University of Dallas
Laura Munoz, University of Dallas
Richard J. Miller, University of Dallas

This research examines if priority brand and performance antecedents contribute to user continuation intention for digital assistants (DAs). It also identifies key learnings from 1st generation DA users that are likely impactful with the launch of generative AI assistants (AI assistants). The findings revealed that the model explained 70.6% of the variance between user continuation intention with DAs. The Importance Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) and the Multigroup Analysis (MGA) assessments also provide key considerations that can contribute to improving continuation intentions for both 1st generation DAs and AI assistants.

Introduction

In the decade-plus since the launch of digital assistants (DAs), they have rapidly become more sophisticated and have seemingly become common information and productivity tools in many people's lives. DAs have emerged as one of the primary interfaces between people and their connected devices. Accordingly, the brands controlling these interfaces hold a significant amount of informational power. The market is currently dominated by the 'Big 3' of Apple's Siri, Google's Google Assistant, and Amazon's Alexa. While these 'Big 3' devices are more commonly known, there is an increasing number of 'new entrant' general market brands attempting to challenge the 'Big 3' or establish niche market positions. There are also a significant number of companies that are deploying DA interoperability platforms for use within their company infrastructure. Forecasts predict that US-based growth will continue to be strong in the coming years, allowing the volume of DA users to climb from today's 110 million to reach 157 million users by 2026 (Thormundsson, 2023, May 19). Among the engines fueling this growth is the emerging integration of generative artificial intelligence (generative AI) capabilities in DA-branded applications.

Generative AI is creating new opportunities to integrate more intuitive, intelligent, and personalized capabilities into DA platforms. These capabilities extend beyond traditional voice or text-initiated capabilities which dominated 1st generation DA utilization. The 1st generation DA leveraged basic elements of AI but did not fully utilize all available AI capabilities largely due to natural language model challenges and information processing speed limitations. Generative AI is a more advanced subfield of computational artificial intelligence that can create original content responding to a user's prompt request. This original content utilizes advanced deep-learning algorithms that simulate the user's knowledge utilization and decision-making processes of the human brain. The key characteristic of generative AI is its ability to leverage the phenomenal speed offered by the new AI computer chips to enable new learnings from large datasets, capture patterns, and generate new content (Feuerriegel, Hartmann, Janiesch, & Zschech, 2024). The most widely recognized on-device branded generative AI applications for this technology are Apple Intelligence, Open AI's ChatGPT, Microsoft's Copilot, and Alphabet's Gemini.

User decision-making does not always follow a linear path. Individual differences often impact what considerations will influence how and why users decide to continue with a given technology (Ramdurai & Adhithya, 2023). This insight is not new for marketers but is a critical consideration as brands launch next-generation AI assistants. While offering tremendous possibilities, AI assistants are not yet perfected (Keater, 2024, Jun 7). As such, the underlying platforms will increasingly need to understand their constraints, leverage new capabilities, and adapt to the user while also managing personal tasks in new ways. In doing so, these platforms must deliver results within the range of speed, relevance, and personalized experiences consistent with customers' expectations. After all, as Jack Welch (former CEO of GE) so elegantly noted "an organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage" (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols (2016, p. 37).

As these AI-based technologies revolutionize the way that users interact within a marketplace, they also tend to reconfigure market dynamics and reshape the companies that sell into it. User adoption of DAs is fundamentally changing user behavior, preferences, and mindsets as evidenced by the explosive growth in omnichannel sales and marketing activities. AI assistant technology is opening new paths for innovation,

optimization, and opportunity for both brands and DA users. Accordingly, these factors are imposing significant new and different market pressures on how businesses and brands operate. DAs are an important conduit to the consumer as over 60% of marketers reported DAs as being ‘extremely’ or ‘significantly’ important in their efforts to reach customers (Kinsella, 2021). Accordingly, brands are transforming their operations in both the way they engage with users and the infrastructure needed to support and grow this type of user engagement. Many firms are accelerating the application of technology and increasing investments in DAs, while reinventing processes, organizational structures, and business models (Kumar, Ramachandran, & Kumar, 2021). Given this increasing saturation of DAs and their importance for practitioners, the study and impact on the consumer remain scant in the literature (Beeler, Zablah, & Rapp, 2022; Maduku et al., 2023).

The goal of understanding DAs and users is made more challenging because they interact with technology applications and devices in separate ways and in different contexts. Historically, the primary usage focused on voice-based information queries and general conversational commerce. Often, people are actively seeking technology solutions and experiences that complement their preferences and behaviors (Kumar et al., 2021) as they can develop a passion for these innovations (Maduku et al., 2023). While most people have at least a general awareness of how to use a DA, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the work-based interactions with DAs as work-from-home and lockdowns as people began to use them or expanded their use (Bradley, 2020). These forces have provided DAs with the functionality to offer a wide range of user benefits as they meet the demand on a real-time basis for contextually relevant and personalized content that is reliable and convenient (Baier, Rese, & Röglinger, 2018, December).

One of the first factors that can affect a user’s intention to continue using a DA is their perceived trust in it (Pitardi & Marriott, 2021). In addition, the self-efficacy of using technology (Gupta, Yousaf, & Mishra, 2020) and their past experiences and observations help them develop a perception of their satisfaction with the DA (Nysveen, Oklevik, & Pedersen, 2018). Another key factor for continuing to use technology is the perceived performance that it provides (Gupta et al., 2020; Park, 2020). These perceptions then allow users to determine their intention to continue using the brand as well as determine the expectation of receiving desirable future benefits (Guo, Barnes, & Le-Nguyen, 2015). Satisfied users will continue using these technologies and brands, while dissatisfied users will withdraw from continued future use (Bhattacharjee & Barfar, 2011). Understanding these factors is critical to extending the research of DAs because most of the prior studies have focused on either technical design, initial adoption behaviors, customer support, privacy considerations, or DA-linked applications. Given the limitations in the extant literature, the primary objective of this study is to answer the following research questions: RQ1: What priority brand-related antecedents contribute to user continuation intention for DAs? RQ2: Given the maturation of the 1st generation of digital assistants (DAs), what “lessons learned” are some brand considerations for generative AI assistants?

Theoretical Background

DA research is attempting to keep up with the rapidly changing AI technological landscape by examining the antecedents, outcome variables, and theories that are of importance in this field of study. Among these outcome variables, user perceptions play a key role as it is important to understand how users evaluate a DA’s ability, and what factors shape user perceptions of those abilities (Beeler et al., 2022). These perceptions ultimately lead to acceptance (Ewers, Baier, & Höhn, 2020) and satisfaction (Brill, Munoz, & Miller, 2019) with them. Among the benefits cited by DA users are instant exchange, convenience, and 24/7 availability (Gelbrich, Hagel, & Orsingher, 2021). Research has shown that providing emotional support, supportive feedback, and appearing sympathetic have been shown to improve customer outcomes such as satisfaction (Gelbrich et al., 2021). Hence, the reasons for which DAs are used include utilitarian, symbolic, or social benefits (Ebberts, Zibuschka, Zimmermann, & Hinz, 2021).

Another area of research that is attempting to keep up with this technology is focused on behavioral outcomes. Recent studies have started to show that persistence (Gelbrich et al., 2021), satisfaction (Marikyan, Papagiannidis, Rana, Ranjan, & Morgan, 2022), closeness (Zhang, Liang, & Qi, 2021), trust (Pitardi & Marriott, 2021), attitude towards and purchase intention (Balakrishnan & Dwivedi, 2021), and intention to use (Pitardi & Marriott, 2021) are relevant outcomes that ought to be accounted for when studying the users’ behaviors towards DAs. Along this line, researchers have also started to focus on work-related outcomes, an area even more nascent than consumer-based outcomes. The consideration for workplace productivity using DAs emerged from the Covid-19 virus where many workers were forced to stay home and thus, AI technologies were used for work purposes. The literature has shown that job engagement and productivity can be achieved via satisfaction with DAs and, perhaps more enlightening, that performance expectancy, perceived enjoyment, intelligence, social presence, and trust were positively related to satisfaction with DAs (Marikyan et al., 2022).

A growing trend among the research studies listed in Table 1 is their focus on uncovering the antecedents of user outcomes rather than evaluating such outcomes. This approach emerges from the argument that such outcomes are well-established in the adoption and use of other technologies. For example, Beeler et al. (2022) used many user outcomes, such as intentions to use, work use intentions, word-of-mouth, and relative preference, yet their main emphasis lay in uncovering what leads to them. They explored DAs' use of context through automation vs. augmentation and disclosure, the individual characteristics of preference for human interaction and mood, while Pitardi and Marriott (2021) focused on social presence and social cognition. Additional studies have focused on the user's preferences for the design of privacy features for the amount of information on personal data shown to the user, the ability to explain DA's decision and the degree of gamification of the user interface (Ebbers et al., 2021), and individual aspects such as enjoyment, social status, and social influence (Ewers et al., 2020). The uncovering of antecedents is vital to the understanding of what is driving technology adoption and use.

As with the exploration of antecedents, the studies in Table 1 utilize a variety of theoretical lenses to help explain why technology adoption and use are taking place. One such theory is the Perceived Value Theory, which has been employed to investigate the relationship between perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and product-related characteristics of portability, automation, and visual attractiveness (Yang & Lee, 2019). The Uses and Gratification Theory approach has also been employed as it has been argued that DAs deliver an alternative interaction that is frequently hands-free and controlled by voice. Thus, because the features of this technology vary from other technologies, such as websites and mobile apps, the existing theoretical models explaining the adoption and use of technology (i.e., Technology Acceptance Model, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology) may not offer a comprehensive explanation of the individuals' use of DAs (McLean & Osei-Frimpong, 2019). Furthermore, the Service Robot Acceptance Model has been employed to show support that functional, social, and relational elements drive adoption while revealing the moderating role of experience and the need for human interaction (Fernandes & Oliveira, 2021). The Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) was used as evidence that customer expectations are being satisfied via the DA interaction experience (Brill et al., 2019). ECT serves as the core theory supporting this study.

Table 1: Recent literature review on digital assistants (DAs)

Study	Study Focus or Theory	Key Findings
Balakrishnan and Dwivedi (2021)	Purchase intention and technology-related variables	Perceived anthropomorphism played the most significant part in developing a positive attitude and purchase intention through DAs.
Beeler et al. (2022)	Use context and individual characteristics	DA's ability affects intended user outcomes and ability assessments are dependent upon both the use context (i.e., automation versus augmentation; disclosure of automation) and individual characteristics (i.e., user mood state and user preference for human interaction)
Berriche, Benavent & Constantinides (2022)	Categorize users of voice assistants and analyze decision-making conflicts to predict intention to adopt voice commerce	Identified three forms of voice systems experiences based on senses aroused (screen first, voice only, and voice-first) and four profiles of voice users (passive resistant, hedonistic adopter, utilitarian adopter, and active resistant), during the shopping experience.
Ebbers et al. (2021)	User preferences for privacy features	Identified three promising key attributes of privacy features: the number of personal DAs that are shown to the user, how well the DAs explain their decisions, and the degree of gamification of the user interface.

Fernandes and Oliveira (2021)	Service Robot Acceptance Model (sRAM)	Findings showed that sRAM and social and relational elements drive adoption and revealed the moderating role of experience and the need for human interaction.
Gelbrich et al. (2021)	Customer satisfaction, behavioral persistence, and emotional support	The increase in satisfaction occurs through the perceived warmth of the DA, and the increase in persistence through the serial mediation of perceived warmth and satisfaction.
Jan et al. (2023)	DAs and Chatbots Technology readiness Behavioral reasoning theory	The study examines customer motivation, attitudes, and behavioral intentions toward the use of AI conversational agents in shopping. for shopping.
Kamoonpuri & Sengar (2024).	Attitude towards the use of AI voice assistants for a multi-step task, that is shopping.	Behavioral intentions to use (conative criteria) are the strongest, followed by feelings evoked during use (affective criteria), and beliefs people hold regarding AI VAs (cognitive criteria).
Maduku et al. (2023)	Individual characteristics (stimulus-organism-response framework)	Usefulness, ease of use, privacy concern, and localization act as stimuli to direct a state of passion for DAs, and how this produces word-of-mouth intention and commitment to DA use. The study also showed how technology anxiety moderates passion's impact on word-of-mouth intentions and commitment.
Marikyan et al. (2022)	Productivity and satisfaction	The results of the analysis showed that the following utilization factors positively correlated with satisfaction with DAs: performance expectancy, perceived enjoyment, perceived anthropomorphism, perceived intelligence, perceived social presence, and trust. In turn, satisfaction with DAs led to job engagement and productivity.
McLean and Osei-Frimpong (2019)	Adoption of DAs	Examined if individuals were motivated by the utilitarian benefits, symbolic benefits, and social benefits provided by DAs.
Moriuchi (2021)	Anthropomorphism	Examined effort expectations on users' usage experience and information-gathering activities with the DAs used for task completion purposes.
Pillai et al. (2020)	Integration of technology adoption model (TAM) with technology readiness model creating TRAM	The study reveals that the Innovativeness and Optimism of users affect the perceived ease and perceived usefulness in retail stores. Perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, customization, and interactivity are significant predictors of the shopping intention of users in AI-powered automated stores.

Rahman et al. (2023)	AI-powered digital assistance Customer engagement Online shopping experience	Examined the connections of AI-powered digital assistance, customer engagement, and customers' luxury brand online shopping experience. The findings suggest that customer engagement plays a mediation role in the relationship between AI-powered digital assistance and customers' luxury brand online shopping experience.

Hypotheses

The decision-making process for continued usage of AI-based and other technologies involves many different components. Perceptions of trust, performance, brand satisfaction, and self-efficacy are among the drivers of user continuation intentions (Marikyan et al., 2022). Using ECT as a theoretical foundation, users' continued usage intention of information technologies and services can be explained through the causal relationships associated with ECT concepts (Oliver, 1980). ECT theorizes continuance intention is predominantly governed by the users' satisfaction with preceding technology encounters as well as the expectation of obtaining positive future benefits (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Guo et al., 2015). It becomes clear that satisfied user behavioral responses will influence the users' decision to continue using these technologies (Bhattacharjee & Barfar, 2011). Regarding AI-based assistants, Brill et al. (2019) demonstrated that ECT was a suitable theory for researching the user's behavioral response evaluation process. The following hypotheses are displayed in Figure 1.

Users generally trust brands that demonstrate an acceptable level of competence, benevolence, and integrity (Veloutsou, 2015). Perceived trust tends to be an expansive construct that includes (but is not limited to) user perceptions of the appropriate use of AI learning capabilities, flexible user interfaces, safeguards to minimize biases, and protection of user preferences, data, and privacy. Veloutsou (2015) and Talwar et al. (2020) found a high correlation between users having a high level of perceived trust in the specific technology and that user's commitment and continuation intention with that technology. Accordingly, we posit the following:

H1: Perceived trust is positively related to the user's perceived performance of DAs.

H2: Perceived trust is positively related to the user's continuation intention with DAs.

H3: Perceived trust is positively related to the user's brand satisfaction with DAs.

Brands offer several valuable functions to users such as assisting them in product and brand selections via customer testimonials, product/feature comparisons, and user satisfaction evaluations. Brands can also provide assurances of success to users through brand promises (Veloutsou, 2015). Whether through their own direct experiences with a product, through observations of the experiences of others, or brand selections, users can develop perceptions of performance, satisfaction and/or trust in a technology (Nysveen et al., 2018). These perceptions greatly influence a user's perception or belief in their ability to effectively use the technology and influence a user's intentions to continue using the technology. Self-efficacy indicates the user's self-confidence in being able to successfully use advanced AI-based technology (Gupta et al., 2020) such as a DA. Accordingly, we posit the following:

H4: Perceived trust is positively related to the user's self-efficacy with DAs.

H5: Self-efficacy is positively related to the user's perceived performance with DAs.

H6: Self-efficacy is positively related to the user's continuation intention with DAs.

H7: Self-efficacy is positively related to the user's brand satisfaction with DAs.

Bhattacharjee (2001) demonstrated that perceived performance is positively related to continuance intention as a component of the extended ECT. Recent studies (Ewers et al., 2020; Maduku et al., 2023; Pitardi & Marriott, 2021) have demonstrated this relationship as applying to DAs as well. Therefore, we posit the following:

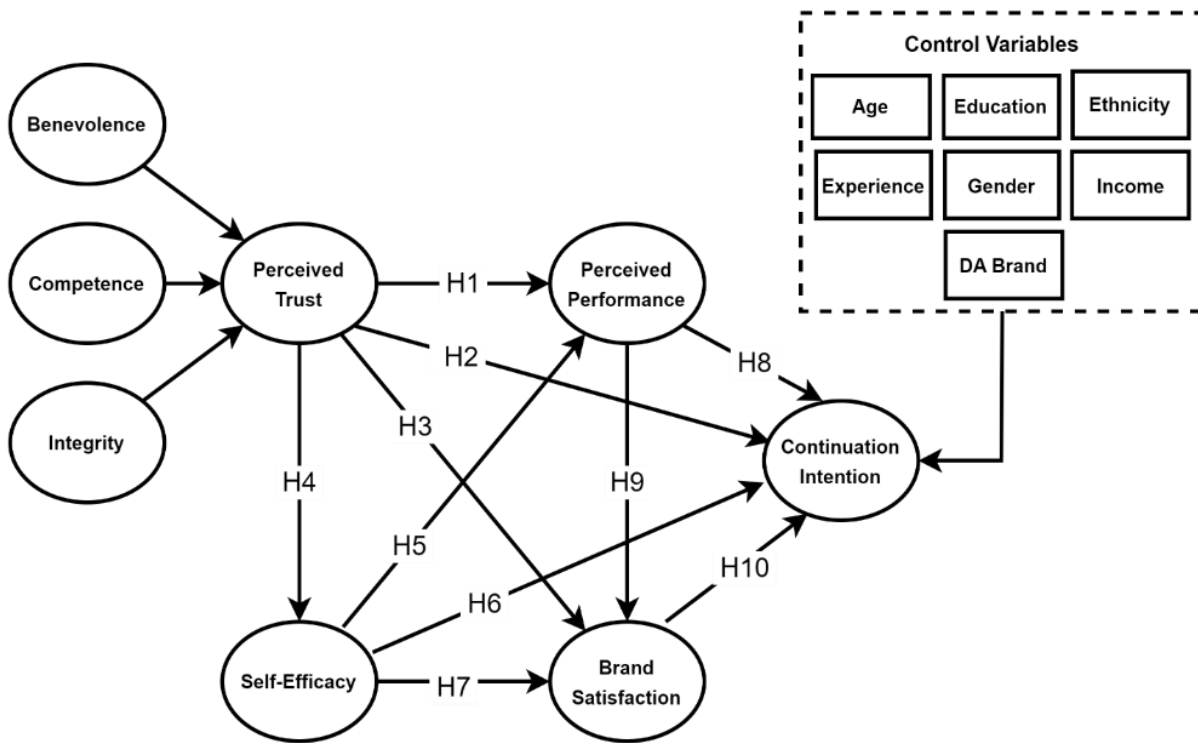
H8: Perceived performance is positively related to the user's continuation intention with DAs.

H9: Perceived performance is positively related to the user's brand satisfaction with DAs.

Users develop evaluation judgments on their satisfaction with products and brands. Prior experiences with brands (i.e., actual or observed) can significantly influence current and future expectations about the brand as well as influence perceptions of performance norms. Consistent with the tenets of ECT, an individual's prior experience(s) with brands is reflected in the user's specific brand satisfaction judgment. Customers who are satisfied with and trust a brand tend to have an attachment to the brand and generally seek to continue interactions with the brand (Bhattacharjee, 2001). This brand-related connection has also been found to apply to AI-based technologies (Cheng & Jiang, 2022). Therefore, we posit the following:

H10: Brand satisfaction is positively related to the user's continuation intention for DAs.

Figure 1: Conceptual research model



Methodology

Sample characteristics

A random self-selection sampling of 260 US-based adult respondents was recruited through email and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn) and collected through an online survey platform. After data cleansing, a data set of 244 respondents remained. Respondent participation was voluntary, but completed responses were entered in a drawing (with their consent) for a prepaid gift card.

The net respondent sample consisted of 50% men and 50% women. From an age perspective, the distribution was 36% younger respondents (ages 18 - 42) and 64% older respondents (43 and above). DA usage experience was 50% newer users (2 years of experience or less) and 50% experienced users (2+ years). The

respondents self-identified preferred DA brands were concentrated among Apple's Siri (72%), Amazon's Alexa (13%), and Google's Google Assistant (5%). It should be noted that the respondent mix of DA brands differs from the top DAs in 2023. Among the Big 3, Google Assistant is the most popular with US consumers at 35%, followed by Apple's Siri at 34% and Amazon's Alexa at 31% (Wohr, J., 2023, Oct 17). Such a difference in mix does not invalidate the overall results of this study. Rather, it is a potential limitation towards the utilization of brand-specific analyses.

Measurements

For this study, a total of 26 items were used for the research model constructs. The measurement items were based on a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". These items were adapted from previously validated studies but carefully revised to fit the context of this research. Brand satisfaction used scales adapted from Guo et al. (2015). Continuation intention used scales adapted from Agarwal and Karahanna (2000). Perceived performance adapted the perceived usefulness scales from Davis (1989) and Davis et al. (1989). Self-efficacy used adapted scales from Yim et al. (2012). Perceived trust adapted the cognitive and emotional trust scale from Xiao and Benbasat (2002). Following McKnight et al. (2002) and Benbasat and Wang (2005) perceived trust was modeled as a formative second-order construct with three indicator variables competence, benevolence, and integrity.

Data analysis

Case screenings of the 260 responses were conducted to inspect for suspicious patterns. The inspection identified 16 cases to be omitted through this screening, yielding a usable sample of 244 responses. Next, the minimum, maximum, statistical mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis statistics were examined at both the indicator level and the construct level. Both univariate and multivariate data levels were examined for outliers. Given the results of these additional examinations, the normality of the data was confirmed. Given that the model is complex, includes a formatively measured construct, and the goal of the research is prediction, then it is recommended that a partial least squares-based structural equation model (PLS-SEM) be used (Hair et al., 2019). This analysis and assessment utilized the SmartPLS 4 (v. 4.1.0.5) software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2022).

Results

Reliability and validity tests

Each construct of the measurement model was first assessed for internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability, convergent reliability, discriminant reliability (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), and multicollinearity. The initial analysis of the outer loadings for the reflective constructs revealed that some indicators had outer loadings below the minimum threshold of .708 (Hair et al., 2011). Once the invalid indicators were removed from the model, all constructs met the minimum threshold. Internal consistency reliability was confirmed as the Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability scores for all reflective indicators were all above the recommended score of .70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and below the upper limit of .95 (Diamantopoulos, Sarstedt, Fuchs, Wilczynski, & Kaiser, 2012). While one construct (Integrity) fell below the ideal floor threshold, it was deemed to have an acceptable score since its scores exceeded .60 (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, convergent validity was confirmed for each construct as the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was greater than 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017a). Table 3 identifies the relevant results for composite reliability and convergent validity.

Table 3: Results Summary for Model Measurements

Construct ($p < .001$)	Adapted Item	Items ^a	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability		AVE
					(rho a)	(rho c)	
Benevolence	My digital assistant puts my interests first.	TB1	.824	.724	.732	.846	.648
	My digital assistant keeps my interests in mind.	TB2	.869				

	My digital assistant wants to understand my needs and preferences.	TB3	.713				
Brand Satisfaction	I am very happy with this brand.	BS1	.854	.935	.935	.949	.756
	I am generally satisfied with taking advantage of the products and services of this brand.	BS2	.863				
	I am very satisfied with the products and services provided by this brand.	BS3	.906				
	I am interested in using new features of my digital assistant in the future.	BS4	.770				
	I made the right decision when I decided to use this brand.	BS5	.909				
	This brand does a good job of satisfying my needs.	BS6	.909				
Competence	My digital assistant is like a real expert in providing answers.	TC1	.786	.795	.801	.880	.710
	My digital assistant has the expertise to understand my needs and preferences.	TC2	.886				
	My digital assistant matches my needs to the information available.	TC5	.853				
Continuation Intention	I intend to keep using my digital assistant in the future.	CI1	.939	.901	.914	.938	.835
	I intend to continue using my digital assistant in the future.	CI2	.946				
	In the future, I intend to increase my use of my digital assistant.	CI4	.854				
Integrity	My digital assistant provides unbiased information and recommendations.	TI1	.750	.631	.636	.801	.574

	My digital assistant provides honest answers.	TI2	.802				
	I consider my digital assistant to possess integrity.	TI3	.719				
Perceived Performance	My digital assistant enables me to accomplish tasks more quickly.	PU1	.875	.931	.937	.950	.828
	Based on my experience with my digital assistant, it enhanced my effectiveness.	PU3	.921				
	Based on my experience with my digital assistant, it was useful.	PU4	.918				
	Based on my experience with my digital assistant, it allowed me to complete tasks more quickly.	PU5	.924				
Self-Efficacy	I have confidence in my ability to use my digital assistant effectively.	SE1	.847	.848	.869	.896	.685
	I do not doubt my ability to use my digital assistant effectively.	SE2	.753				
	I have excellent skills and the ability to use my digital assistant.	SE3	.885				
	I am proud of my skills and ability to use my digital assistant.	SE4	.819				

Notes: ^a CI3, PU2, PU6, TB4, TC3, TC4, and TI4 were removed to improve reliability, validity, and/or multicollinearity estimates.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the absolute correlations criteria for the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT+) ratio (Ringle, Sarstedt, Sinkovics & Sinkovics, 2023). For this study, all scores were beneath the conservative .85 threshold level thereby establishing discriminant validity for all constructs. These results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Assessment of Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)

Construct	Benev	Brand Satisfaction	Comp	Continuation Intention	Integrity	Perc'd Performance	Self-Efficacy
Benevolence (Benev)							

Brand Satisfaction	.520					
Competence (Comp)	.801	.729				
Continuation Intention	.335	.840	.566			
Integrity	.834	.676	.818	.541		
Perceived Performance (Perc'd Perf)	.494	.795	.803	.838	.629	
Self-Efficacy	.437	.621	.508	.538	.439	.534

The model's formative construct (perceived trust) was developed using the repeated indicator approach to confirm the significance and relevance of indicator weights, convergent validity, and indicator collinearity, as shown in Table 5. The outer variance inflation factor (VIF) for each indicator (ranging from 1.322 – 2.594) was confirmed to be below 3, suggesting that there was no critical indicator issue with collinearity. The formative indicator weights were approximately equal, having a bootstrapped statistical significance at the $\alpha = .05$ level, and having a strong positive relationship as the values approach the +1 threshold indicating an acceptable construct relationship (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019).

Table 5: Results Summary for Formative Measurements

Construct	Formative Indicator	Outer Weights	(Outer Loadings)	<i>t</i> Statistic	95% BCa Confidence Interval	Outer VIF
Perceived Trust (Trust)	TB1	.422	(.824)	17.250***	[.401, .478]	1.946
	TB2	.435	(.869)	18.859***	[.137, .175]	1.844
	TB3	.384	(.713)	11.566***	[.328, .435]	1.603
	TC1	.370	(.786)	24.913***	[.346, .395]	1.463
	TC2	.423	(.886)	26.024***	[.400, .454]	2.594
	TC5	.392	(.853)	28.497***	[.370, .416]	1.888
	TI1	.370	(.750)	11.267***	[.311, .418]	1.351
	TI2	.494	(.802)	16.110***	[.449, .549]	1.322
	TI3	.454	(.719)	12.791***	[.400, .515]	1.563

*** $p < .001$

Common Method Bias

To reduce potential common method variance, we used existing scales, minimized ambiguous wording, and ensured respondents' anonymity (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Risks of multicollinearity were assessed using the random dependent variable approach. The inner model VIFs for each construct were assessed to be between 1.130 and 2.617 and below the ideal upper threshold level of 3.3 (Kock, 2015), as shown in Table 6. Harman's single-factor test (Harman, 1976) demonstrated that none of the factors accounted for the majority of the covariance among items. Given these assessments, the factors are not highly correlated to one another and there is a low probability of common method bias.

Table 6: Inner VIF Results

Construct	Brand Satisfaction	Continuation Intention	Perceived Performance	Perceived Trust	Self-Efficacy
Brand Satisfaction		2.802			
Continuation Intention					
Perceived Performance	2.033	2.683			

Perceived Trust	1.976	2.130	1.281	1.000
Self-Efficacy	1.378	1.514	1.281	

Out-of-Sample Model Prediction Assessment

Given that this study is sourced from cross-sectional data, the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) is an appropriate test to assess the out-of-sample predictive power of this model. The dataset was split into 10 folds and involved 10 repetitions through all of the folds (Liengaard, Sharma, Hult, Jensen, Sarstedt, Hair, & Ringle (2021). The difference in the average loss values between the established model (EM) and the alternative model (AM) was determined to be significantly below zero for brand satisfaction (-.494), continuation intention (-.415), perceived performance (-.544), and self-efficacy (-.224). For the overall model, shown in Table 7, the difference in the average loss values was found to be significantly below zero (-.428) suggesting good predictive power (Sharma, Liengaard, Hair, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2022). Collectively, these results established that the research model and its predictive power were significant ($p < .001$) and supported the core goal of this research study.

Table 7: Out-of-Sample Prediction and Robustness Assessment

Robustness Assessment	PLS loss	IA loss	Average loss difference	<i>t</i> value	<i>p</i> value*
Brand Satisfaction	1.006	1.500	-.494	5.042	.000
Continuation Intention	1.498	1.913	-.415	3.986	.000
Perceived Performance	.899	1.443	-.544	5.889	.000
Self-Efficacy	1.538	1.762	-.224	2.775	.000
Overall	1.193	1.621	-.428	5.534	.000

*** $p < 0.001$

Structural Model

Given the minimal risk of collinearity and positive confirmation of the model's out-of-sample predictive power, the hypotheses in the structural model were evaluated. The standard assessment criteria included the coefficient of determination, R^2 . For marketing studies, an R^2 value of .75, .50, and .25 is categorized as substantial, moderate, or weak respectively (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). For this model, the R^2 value of .706 showed that 70.6% of the variance between user continuation intention with DAs was explained. Further assessments were conducted to evaluate each hypothesis' significance and effect size (f^2) in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Hypothesis test analysis results

Structural Path	Path Coefficients	<i>t</i> Statistics	<i>p</i> Value	95% Confidence Intervals	f^2 Effect Size	Hypothesis Results
H1: Perceived Trust Perceived Performance	.584	11.141	.000* **	[.493, .668]	.542 ^d	Supported
H2: Perceived Trust Continuation Intention	-.178	3.206	.999	[-.271, -.088]	.051 ^b	Not Supported ^c
H3: Perceived Trust Brand Satisfaction	.235	4.481	.000* **	[.152, .323]	.078 ^b	Supported
H4: Perceived Trust Self-Efficacy	.469	8.219	.000* **	[.362, .552]	.281 ^c	Supported
H5: Self-Efficacy Perceived Performance	.218	3.560	.000* **	[.116, .316]	.075 ^b	Supported

H6: Self-Efficacy Continuation Intention	.045	.947	.172	[-.032, .125]	.004 ^a	Not Supported ^f
H7: Self-Efficacy Brand Satisfaction	.220	4.242	.000* **	[.135, .306]	.099 ^b	Supported
H8: Perceived Performance Continuation Intention	.496	7.313	.000* **	[.383, .606]	.313 ^c	Supported
H9: Perceived Performance Brand Satisfaction	.481	8.033	.000* **	[.380, .578]	.319 ^c	Supported
H10: Brand Satisfaction Continuation Intention	.503	8.172	.000* **	[.404, .608]	.307 ^c	Supported

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

f^2 Effect Size Interpretation: ^a = Negligible, ^b = Small, ^c = Moderate, ^d = Large

^e Hypothesis 2 was not supported as perceived trust was identified as having a negative relationship with continuation intentions.

^f Hypothesis 6 was not supported as self-efficacy was identified as having a non-significant positive relationship.

Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

IPMA assessed the respondents' perception of the antecedents of continuation intentions to gain insights into the relative importance and performance of the components (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). When focused on the latent construct importance ranking, Table 9 scores show that perceived performance (.739) is valued by users as the most important antecedent construct. Following that construct in priority order are perceived trust (.519), brand satisfaction (.503), and self-efficacy (.316). When focused on the latent construct performance ranking, Table 11 scores show that brand satisfaction (.66.854) is perceived by users as the highest performance antecedent construct followed in priority order by self-efficacy (65.598), perceived performance (63.055), and perceived trust (59.018).

Additional insights are gathered by reviewing the importance scores (within the priority-ranked constructs) at the indicator level. The four highest indicator-level importance scores for the study are associated with perceived performance (PU4 = .227, PU5 = .215, PU3 = .200, PU1 = .181) followed by the four highest importance scores for perceived trust (TC2 = .100, TC5 = .092, TC1 = .087, TI2 = .070). A similar review was conducted for the performance scores (within the priority-ranked constructs) at the indicator level. The four highest indicator-level performance scores for the study are associated with brand satisfaction (BS4 = 70.970, BS2 = 66.872, BS5 = 66.803, BS3 = 66.462) followed by the four highest importance scores for self-efficacy (SE1 = 69.604, SE2 = 68.784, SE3 = 65.642, SE4 = 60.656).

Table 9: Importance-performance analysis (IPMA)

Construct	Importance		Performance		Indicator	Importance	Performance
	Score	Ranking	Score	Ranking		Score	Score
Brand Satisfaction	.503	3	66.854	1	BS1	.093	64.754
					BS2	.094	66.872
					BS3	.093	66.462
					BS4	.106	70.970
					BS5	.097	66.803
					BS6	.100	65.164
	.739	1	63.055	3	PU1	.181	61.270

Perceived Performance					PU3	.200	61.612
					PU4	.227	65.642
					PU5	.215	62.978
Perceived Trust	.519	2	59.018	4	TB1	.068	49.180
					TB2	.074	52.527
					TB3	.063	60.383
					TC1	.087	52.664
					TC2	.100	54.781
					TC5	.095	61.475
					TI1	.057	59.631
					TI2	.086	65.505
Self-Efficacy	.316	4	65.598	2	TI3	.071	47.199
					SE1	.108	69.604
					SE2	.078	68.784
					SE3	.101	65.642
					SE4	.130	60.656

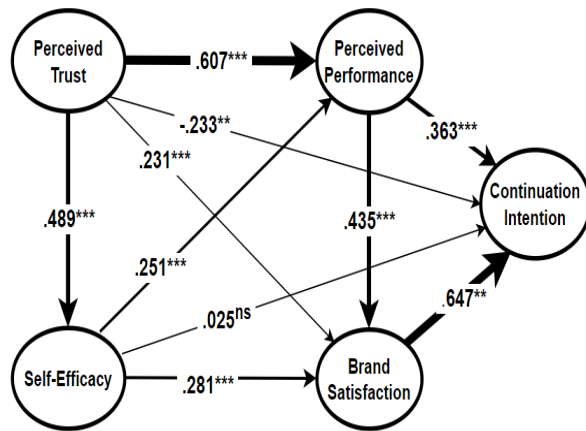
Multigroup Analysis (MGA)

The structural model assessment also explored the potential relationships between each of the control variables and the research model's hypotheses. However, before completing this analysis, the measurement invariance of composites (MICOM) was assessed to confirm the configural invariance, the compositional invariance, and the scalar invariance (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). This permutation multigroup analysis involved 5,000 permutations and identified full invariances for education and income. Partial invariance was identified for all constructs when comparing the groups based on age, DA brand, experience, ethnicity, and gender. The MGA identified that certain hypotheses were found to have statistically significant differences between control variables for age, income, and experience. However, the MGA also identified non-significant results for DA brand, education, ethnicity, and gender.

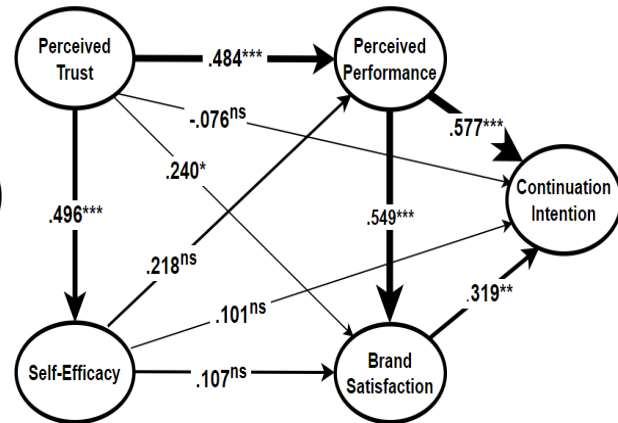
The MGA test for 'Age' identified unique user decision journeys to continuation intentions. Figure 2a displays the multiple paths of the 'Older Users' subgroup. Based on the strength and significance of the respective path coefficient scores, the top path is perceived trust to perceived performance to brand satisfaction to continuation intentions. The next most utilized path is perceived trust to perceived performance to continuation intention. Figure 2b displays the multiple paths of the 'Newer Users' subgroup. The top path is perceived trust to perceived performance to continuation intentions. The next most utilized path is perceived trust to perceived performance to brand satisfaction to continuation intention.

Figure 2a: MGA test – Older User (> 43 yrs.)

Figure 2b: MGA test – Younger User (18 - 42 yrs.)



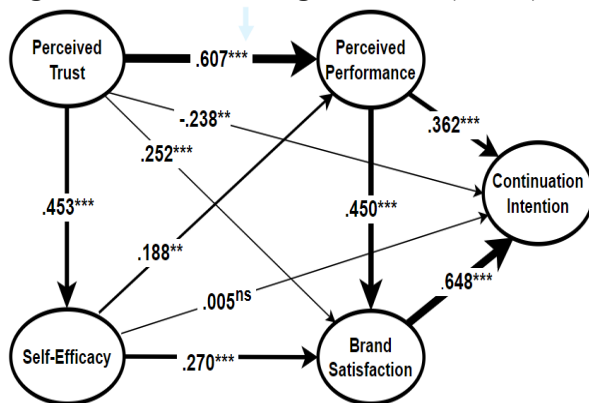
Notes: ns = Not Supported, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$



ns = Not Supported, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

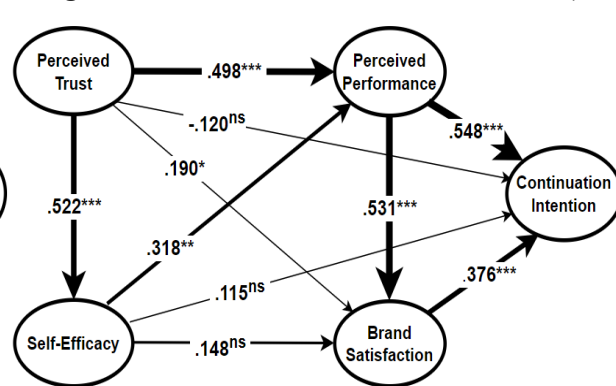
The MGA test for 'Income' identified unique user decision journeys to continuation intentions. Figure 3a displays the multiple paths of the 'Higher Income' user subgroup. Based on the strength and significance of the respective path coefficient scores, the top path is perceived trust to perceived performance to brand satisfaction to continuation intentions. The next most utilized path is perceived trust to perceived performance to continuation intention. This subgroup also favors an important third decision journey of perceived trust to self-efficacy to brand satisfaction to continuation intentions. Figure 3b displays the multiple paths of the 'Lower/Middle Income' user subgroup. The top path is perceived trust to self-efficacy to perceived performance to continuation intentions. The next most utilized path is perceived trust to perceived performance to continuation intention. The most utilized third decision journey is perceived trust to brand satisfaction to continuation intentions.

Figure 3a: MGA test – Higher Income (> \$80k)



Notes: ns = Not Supported, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 3b: MGA test – Lower/Middle Income (< \$80k)



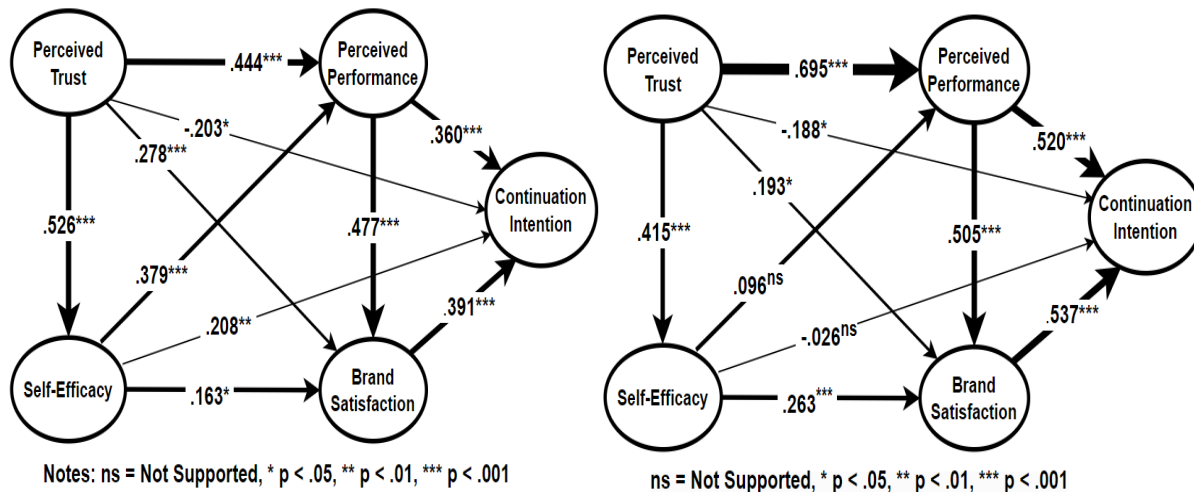
ns = Not Supported, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The MGA test for 'Experience' identified unique user decision journeys to continuation intentions. Figure 4a displays the multiple paths of the 'Experienced User' subgroup. Based on the strength and significance of the respective path coefficient scores, the top path is perceived trust to self-efficacy to perceived performance to continuation intentions. The next most utilized path is perceived trust to perceived performance to continuation intention. This subgroup also favors an important third decision journey of perceived trust to perceived performance to brand satisfaction to continuation intentions.

Figure 4b displays the multiple paths of the 'Newer User' subgroup. The top path is perceived trust to perceived performance to continuation intentions. The next most utilized path is perceived trust to perceived performance to brand satisfaction to continuation intention. The most utilized third decision journey is perceived trust to self-efficacy to brand satisfaction to continuation intentions.

Figure 4a: MGA test – Experienced User (> 2 yrs.)

Figure 4b: MGA test – New User (< 2 yrs.)



Discussions and Implications

IMPA mapping for 'Big 3'

Users have strongly communicated the relative importance of antecedent constructs in the decision-making process for continuing to use a DA. The perceived performance importance score (.739) is 42% higher than the perceived trust importance score (.519) and 47% higher than the brand satisfaction importance score (.503). These scores highlight the critical need for the "Big 3" to meaningfully invest in both the research and development (R&D) phase as well as the ascent phase of the AI technology life cycle. The investment strategy should include a roadmap for both implementation milestones and corresponding achievement metrics focused on improving each of the cornerstone construct scores by discrete subsegment.

The 'voice of the user' has specifically identified the importance of perceptions of DA performance. While the performance score is solid, user expectations of DA performance are continuing to evolve and grow. The novelty of the launch phase is displaying signs of deterioration. Certainly, the 'Big 3' are aware of this trend. Press releases have suggested that generative AI capabilities represent the cornerstone of their respective strategies to improve performance. However, it will take time for the benefits of generative AI to be realized and adopted. Competitive differentiation will also exert downward pressure on the performance score. It is reasonable to question if a performance score of 63 will be adequate for long-term success. Perceptions of DA performance must meet or exceed user expectations.

Perceived trust is ranked as the second-highest importance score (.519) but the fourth-highest performance score (59.018). When considering each score, it is important to remember that this 2nd-order construct is comprised of responses from three distinct 1st-order constructs ... benevolence, competency, and integrity. As such, perceived trust tends to be an expansive construct that includes (but is not limited to) user perceptions of the appropriate robust use of large language models, flexible user interfaces, safeguards to minimize biases, and protection of user preferences, data, and privacy. Given the "black box" nature of DAs, most users only have limited direct knowledge of the underlying AI system platform. Perceptions of performance and trust are often intertwined with each other, especially in negative situations. For example, users often have direct prior experience with unsuccessful features or functionality use (e.g., unsuccessful voice recognition queries), and erroneous response content (i.e., often caused by inexact query structure). Such experiences should be attributed to performance but are sometimes also linked to trust issues. In other instances, users directly experienced challenges with data breaches or privacy compromises. Such experiences should be attributed to trust but are sometimes also linked to performance. Such experiences tend to compromise user perceptions of trust in the brand DA. In the early product launch phase, the novelty of the 1st generation of DAs coupled with strong 'Big 3' brand satisfaction evaluations tended to provide an inflated level of trust. However, as users gained heightened competency and experienced negative feature/functionality use, then perceived trust began to experience downward performance pressures. Trust represents a significant cornerstone to the widespread adoption of Generative AI. It is reasonable to conclude that the 'Big 3' are investing in generative AI capabilities in DAs in recognition of the importance scores and to strengthen the performance scores.

Brand satisfaction is ranked as the third-highest importance score (.503) but the highest performance score (66.854). Given the heavy prior expenditures by the 'Big 3' on their respective product portfolio brand positions, users are keenly aware of the respective DA brands. Often DA users have had prior experience(s) with one or more products in the brand's product portfolio. As such, an embedded user's "comfort level" directly influences perceptions of the brand, lowering the perceived need to improve brand satisfaction. Few DA users are well-versed in the intricacies of AI and generative AI. As such, brands must continue to invest in programs to educate users about product features and ease-of-use functionality. The promise of generative AI is alluring but similar to most innovative technology platforms, it too must successfully progress through the launch and maturity phases. During this time, traditional user personas are likely to further splinter into more discrete technology user sophistication segments due to combinations of product issues and user change resistance mindsets. Brands should consider incentive-based opt-in privacy programs allowing the brand to personalize education and training resources. After all, isn't this mentality a key component of generative AI? Brands must avoid AI-washing involving users receiving misleading information or false promises about the brand's DA features, functions, or ease of use (Peterson, 2024, Mar 26). It is reasonable to conclude that some users may perceive that they have already experienced elements of AI-washing. Perhaps these negative experiences are being reflected in the perceived trust performance score.

Self-efficacy is ranked as the fourth-highest importance score (.316) but the second-highest performance score (65.598). Self-efficacy indicates the user's self-confidence in being able to successfully use the product. Brand positioning investments and the user's prior perceptions of the brand's product portfolio influence a user's level of self-efficacy. One can also argue that word of mouth contributes to self-efficacy evaluations. It is reasonable to conclude that self-efficacy elements can be augmented through the proper utilization of product performance, perceived trust, and brand satisfaction investments.

Customer Journey to Continuation Intentions for 'Big 3'

The insights gathered in the MGA analysis provide an important roadmap for the 'Big 3' brands to consider in designing the system platform and the user interface. For most deployments, the system platform is "ahead" of the user interfaces due to the multiple diverse types of user interfaces, the vintage of these interfaces, and the user's desire to adopt interface modifications. Given these considerations, it also seems relevant to understand the magnitude and value of the customer's journey towards continued use of DAs. The insights uncovered through the MGA assessment highlight challenges faced by the 'Big 3' as they move forward with generative AI capabilities. These MGA results highlight that the customer journey differs among subgroups.

Considerations for Narrow AI Business Applications

A vast majority of US companies are adopting generative AI tools. 85% of the companies surveyed identified that they are pursuing this technology as a top-five priority. Twelve percent listed this technology as their top priority and only 1% said it was not a priority. While some firms are choosing to utilize the "resale" version of 'Big 3' platforms, others are launching 'narrow generative AI' applications that tend to focus on specific tasks within the organization's scope of business. Examples of such applications include customer service, employee empowerment, creative ideation, data analysis, code creation, and cybersecurity through chatbots, company search and recommendation engines, and internal DAs (Cosgrove, 2024, Jun 19).

Many initial deployments have yielded substantive degrees of success, but others have not. When organizations begin experimenting with generative AI frameworks and AI assistant interfaces, they often neglect their transformative nature and the operationalization challenges that such transformation entails (Cosgrove, 2024, Jun 19). Often, unsuccessful implementations are then assessed through the lens of negativity bias. It explains why bad first impressions can be hard to overcome and why past traumas may overshadow positive information. Are these organizations implementing processes to improve the transparency, data quality, and reliability of user perceptions? Do these organizations have sustainable internal knowledge and experienced personnel for these initiatives? These organizations face the same challenges of managing importance and performance scores though their deployments are decidedly different than the 'Big 3'. These organizations also must understand and optimize their respective customer journeys if they are to achieve success.

Conclusions

With the rapid growth in DAs and linked applications, understanding the brand and performance decision criteria under which users will embrace a DA remains a key focus of recent research interests (Brill et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2021). This study examined the user perceptions of DAs in the establishment of relationships between perceived trust, self-efficacy, brand satisfaction, and perceived performance toward user continuation intentions for DAs. Perceived trust serves as the initial point of the customer's journey towards continuation intention. Trust will

be cemented when brand practices highlight DAs that have competence, benevolence, and integrity in the words of the recommendations and results they present to customers. While self-efficacy's role in this study was minor, it will likely become an increasingly vital component of future studies as users are introduced to more complex utilization of DAs due to generative AI capabilities. Self-efficacy will probably increase the perceived usefulness of DAs as it might reduce any potential stress or hesitation on whether customers can use them. The benefits of self-efficacy include reduced stress and increased confidence and competence. Together, perceived trust and self-efficacy positively impact brand satisfaction which, in turn, also positively influences perceived performance. When customers are experiencing brand satisfaction it denotes their perceived expectations are being met by the perceived performance. The results also confirm the alignment of these antecedent constructs with continuation intention.

Most hypotheses in this study were supported. However, the results of this study should be viewed within the context of the analysis of three well-established and highly regarded brands that are dominating the marketplace. Even these dominant firms are wrestling with the need to improve user perceptions of their technology performance in terms of both accuracy and usefulness. As technology continues to advance and more useful applications (i.e., possibly linked with Generative AI) are adopted, future studies should consider obtaining a more balanced sample size among the dominant brands as well as the introduction of new market entrants. Furthermore, the current study makes an important contribution to theory. While the volume of academic research examining DAs and AI technology is expanding, this research is still fragmented. To the best of our knowledge, there is limited extant literature that empirically examines key motivations triggering users' intention to continue using DAs.

DAs and AI assistants are becoming important information-sourcing portals and one of the main battlegrounds between tech companies for ongoing usage. In this research, we proposed ten hypotheses to examine the relationship of certain antecedent constructs (i.e., brand satisfaction, perceived trust, perceived performance, and self-efficacy) focused on understanding user continuation intentions with DAs. The model explained 70.6% of the variance in continuation intentions for DAs. These explanatory results were also assessed as being both substantial in predictive power and statistically significant for the six supported hypotheses.

Even though hypothesis 2 was not supported, this result offers substantive contributive value to this study. This finding confirms that, for this technology, ongoing user trusting behaviors are largely influenced by prior usage experiences. Only through the mediation effect with other variables did perceived trust establish the desired outcome relationship with continuation intentions. Companies and researchers must operate on perceptions of trust in a way that is meaningful for users. Thus, integrity, benevolence, and competence become significant dimensions to be highlighted as users are being approached and encouraged to trust DAs. Once this perceived trust is established, the study uncovers that self-efficacy is a relevant part of any continuation intentions model. The user must believe they can use DAs. If this is achieved, along with perceived trust, then brand satisfaction will be positively influenced. Last, continuation intentions are linked to three key variables: perceived trust, brand satisfaction, and perceived performance.

Contributions to Theory

This study offers several contributions to the scant extant literature on the continued use intention of AI voice assistants. First, this study offers a further extension of ECT by promoting the long-term viability and sustainability relationship of this technology to continued use intentions beyond their initial adoption. Second, the research model examined the relationship of certain antecedent constructs (i.e., brand satisfaction, perceived trust, perceived performance, and self-efficacy) on understanding user continuation intentions with DAs. This model was found to possess high predictive power that was significant ($p < .001$).

Contributions to Practice

In this research, we make several contributions to practice. The "lessons learned" can be used to guide marketing investments and practices across brands. First, the IPMA provided insights on both importance scores and performance scores by construct. Such information allows for greater visibility into the user base and the development of more refined strategic investment roadmaps and achievement metrics. These insights apply to both the 1st generation DAs as well as the AI assistant. Further, they are relevant to the 'Big 3' deployments as well as to resale platform applications and narrow AI deployments. Second, the MGA provided a profile of certain subgroups associated with certain control variables. Lastly, this study provides insights that are transferrable to narrow AI deployments by organizations in support of specific priority organizational tasks. These task deployments allow organizations to lower operating costs by reducing the number and duration of costly human-assisted interactions. These benefits are achieved while also allowing the organization to meet the customer's expectations for a fast, seamless, and highly personalized user experience.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study contains a few limitations that can be observed as providing an avenue for future research endeavors. First, using a cross-sectional view of the antecedents of customers' continuation intentions with DAs presents implications for discovering changes that happened over a period. Future research possibly will gain an advantage from a longitudinal design to determine the stability in the antecedents for customers' continuation intentions given the ongoing DA technology advancements. Future research could also go further and investigate the outcomes of continuation intentions. Questions that remain unexplored are: What are the outcomes of continuation intentions? Do new DA models and the evolution of Generative AI capabilities inhibit the adoption of such models? This is based on the rationale that customers might be accustomed to their model and feel confident using it; this prompts them to consider adoption theories such as the Diffusion of Innovations and the Behavioral Reasoning Theory. Lastly, as the 'big 3' DA resale platforms and applications are beginning to gain a measurable market share, will users (i.e., not necessarily the owner of the DA) be able to distinguish performance differences attributed to a specific brand? If not, will the 'big 3' brand satisfaction ratings be impacted?

An additional limitation of this study lies in the fact that it did not make a distinction on the percentage of respondents that worked mostly at home vs. at the office. As noted by (Marikyan et al., 2022), future research could explore the variance in the antecedents and outcomes of the application of DA depending on the physical context where they are utilized. Further consideration relies on whether there are variances in usage and continuation intentions when these assistants are used for work vs. personal purposes. Another consideration lies in whether these DAs are used in open or shared spaces and can provide additional knowledge and implications about this technology. Furthermore, customers tend to repeat purchases and express positive word-of-mouth recommendations when they have positive experiences with the products or services, reinforcing the market penetration of these devices.

Work-related settings offer a terrific opportunity for findings to be uncovered. The use of this technology can bring future research potential in terms of firm and customer outcomes. Concerning firm outcomes, research benefits can be brought to light by studying how to personalize marketing mix elements, better predict future trends, disintermediation and direct engagement, and productivity enhancement. From the customer side, work remains to be done on how to create and increase customer value in areas such as enhanced functional use, greater personal relevance, greater traceability of products, and effective firm-customer engagement (Kumar et al., 2021).

It seems relevant to further understand the magnitude and value of AI and technology in DAs in the customer purchase journey. Future research avenues can also be pursued on whether customers are looking into purchases through DAs. Equally important, momentum should be gained in understanding the importance of DAs in business-to-business settings and determining how they impact the professional sales funnel as well as strategy and tactical offers from vendors. So far, it seems that no research has attempted to either conceptually or empirically address this. Thus, future research should investigate various views that develop when users and companies engage with DAs, notably in a commercial or business view.

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Summary Brief

Negative Emotions Using Artificial Intelligence

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Artificial Intelligence (AI), a machine that can learn and acquire intellectual knowledge (Goertzel, 2014), comprises three stages including data and its storage, analysis, and making decisions on behalf of human (Agrawal, Gans, and Goldfarb 2018). Because of the fast development of AI in the marketplace, marketing literature explores how both consumers and marketers can benefit from using AI (Huang and Rust, 2021; Puntoni et al., 2021). However, it is important to note that AI can lead to detrimental results. As examples, using AI can result in an exploitative experience for consumers (Puntoni et al., 2021) and a disconnected relationship between people (Kozinets and Gretzel, 2021). Furthermore, Geoffrey Hinton, known as AI pioneer at Google, warns the dangers of AI saying it can be “scary” (BBC 2023).

AI products and services are unique because each stage, data collection and storage, analysis, and decision making, requires consumer interaction. However, AI can collect data without consumer consent and analyze without revealing its algorithms (Puntoni et al., 2020). Consumers, on the other hand, may not want their data being collected (e.g., due to privacy issues) or make any decisions. That is, consumers can experience arousing of negative emotions at each stage when using AI products. While these potential concerns can be detrimental for consumers, there is a lack of research examining how and why negative emotions are driven by AI.

Based on psychology literature, this research provides a conceptual framework to understand different types of negative emotional reactions at AI stages (i.e., data collection, analysis, and decision-making). Regarding emotions, we focus on representative negative emotions (Berenbaum, Fujita, and Pfennig 1995; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988): fear, anger, and anxiety. To be more specific, we propose that consumers perceive anxiety, anger, and fear during these three AI stages. The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1 (See Figure 1).

This research provides several theoretical and practical implications. Most importantly, we offer a conceptual framework to understand how consumers can perceive different types of negative emotions during AI use, data collection and storage, analysis, and decision-making. While past research concerns the risk of using AI and its process, the current research sheds light on the specific types of negative emotions along with the AI and its processes. Practically, this research guides managers on how to address consumers' negative emotions to mitigate potential backlash. For instance, using different types of messages (e.g., gain- and loss-framed messages) can help mitigating negative emotions.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to a machine that can learn and acquire intellectual knowledge (Goertzel, 2014). It comprises three stages including data and its storage, analysis, and making decisions on behalf of humans (Agrawal, Gans, & Goldfarb, 2018). AI represents a new type of product because consumers are involved in multiple stages of AI practices, including data collection, classification, analysis, and delegation (Puntoni et al., 2021), which helps AI provide a high level of accuracy and precise assistance for their users. For instance, when consumers ask Amazon Alexa or Google Gemini about solving a specific problem, AI collects data and provides suggestions. If the users do not like the suggestions, AI responds and suggests other solutions. It is hard for consumers to notice AI's information processing because AIs analyze data based on their self-education capabilities. Because of its complex and hidden processes, AIs decision can potentially lead consumers to perceive threats, loss of controls, and uncertainty.

Basic Needs and Negative Emotions

Anxiety driven by threats Anxiety, a state of tension and apprehension, is a common response to perceived threats (Lee, Kim, & Vohs 2011). Threats are broadly defined as contextual predicaments (Fisher et al. 2011). For example, consumers may feel threatened if they perceive differential treatment (e.g., discrimination threat) or observe unethical behavior by their social group (e.g., identity threat). In this research, threats are seen as perceived endangerment driven by a loss of privacy's psychological boundary in AI usage contexts. That is, consumers feel threatened when they perceive losing privacy from AI processes.

Consumers can perceive threats when using AI products and services at various stages, particularly during data collection and decision-making stages. At the data collection stage, AI might gather data without consumer

consent (Puntoni et al. 2020), leading to feelings of insecurity and vulnerability regarding privacy. As results, consumers perceived threats. During decision-making, consumers might feel a lack of agency, perceiving constraints imposed by AI, which could trigger agency threats. Additionally, AI's role in disconnecting communication between marketers and consumers (Koznet and Gretzel 2021) can result in identity threats to consumers.

Anxiety, as an emotional consequence of the reactions to threats, is commonly activated when privacy and personal agency are insecure. Specifically, perceived threats activate a sense of risk regarding privacy and insecurity, leading consumers to perceive anxiety. In sum, consumers who perceived risks and insecurity from the stages of the data collection and decision making on behalf of humans can feel anxiety.

Anger driven by loss of control Anger, a fundamental human emotion, arises when consumers feel their ability to achieve goals is compromised or when they perceive injustice (Navi 2002). AI can sometimes produce unexpected decisions (Koznet and Gretzel 2021). Consumers may be uncertain about the decision-making process of AI (Puntoni et al. 2020) because it usually does not disclose its analysis algorithms until customization is asked. Therefore, consumers may perceive that their ability to make decisions is undermined because they lost the control of data management.

Consumers may experience anger due to this loss of control and observing potential risks. That is, the loss of control trespasses individual's agency, in turn, arouses instant anger (Edwards 2016). In addition, when guided by AI without proper explanations, consumers may feel exploited agency and being manipulated, leading to a sense of injustice. In this situation, anger can be aroused as well. In other words, the potential risks (e.g., injustice) can trigger consumer's anger.

Fear driven by unknown future Fear is a reaction to anticipated danger (LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997). Consumers fear using AI for several reasons. First, consumers and society at large may feel unprepared for the changes brought about by AI because the pace of AI development is faster than expected. This perceived pace can create a sense of intolerance on uncertainty and vulnerability, known as fear of unknown (Carleton 2016). That is, consumers fear the changes in the unfamiliar future caused by AI products and services while also being afraid of losing the past. As an example, while AI is expected to be good at generalizing knowledge, possibilities of misleading information driven by AI is considered the most fearful element to society (World Economic Forum, 2024).

Second, a disconnected relationship with others (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2021) can generate overall fear among society. Also, using AI can provide consumers with an exploitative experience (Puntoni et al., 2021). Consumers can perceive that they are being manipulated by AI's decisions while the reliance on AI becomes inevitable. In addition, some are concerned about losing jobs to AI technologies.

Overall, the present research conceptually examines how negative emotions can be driven by each AI stage. We particularly focused on anxiety, anger, and fear on data collection, analyzing, and decision making, respectively. Together, these findings provide several theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

We provided a conceptual framework of AI processes and negative emotions. Acknowledging the importance of emotions, which influence individuals' cognition and behavior, the current research offers several theoretical and practical implications. First, we contribute to the marketing AI literature by presenting a framework that can assist future researchers interested in both emotions and AI. While marketing researchers have explored the risks and concerns of using AI and related products, there is a lack of understanding of how negative emotions are connected to AI processes. Second, we also contribute to the emotion literature by conceptually shedding light on how AI can generate negative emotions. By examining three different types of emotions (anxiety, anger, and fear), we provide a deeper understanding of the concerns and risks of AI implementation.

Practically, the current research provides conceptual evidence that marketing managers should be aware that implementing AI in their products and services can backfire. We expect that consumers who feel anxiety and fear from using AI may avoid consumption of AI products and services. Furthermore, consumers who perceive anger may exhibit aggressive behaviors towards AI, such as retaliation and sabotage. Second, we recommend that managers leverage appropriate messages (e.g., Navi, 2002) towards consumers who perceive negative emotions while using AI. The body of emotion research on anger and fear provides evidence that marketers can effectively mitigate negative emotions via messaging strategies. In other words, we recommend that managers use loss-framed messages during data collection and decision-making stages, while using gain-framed messages at the data analysis stage.

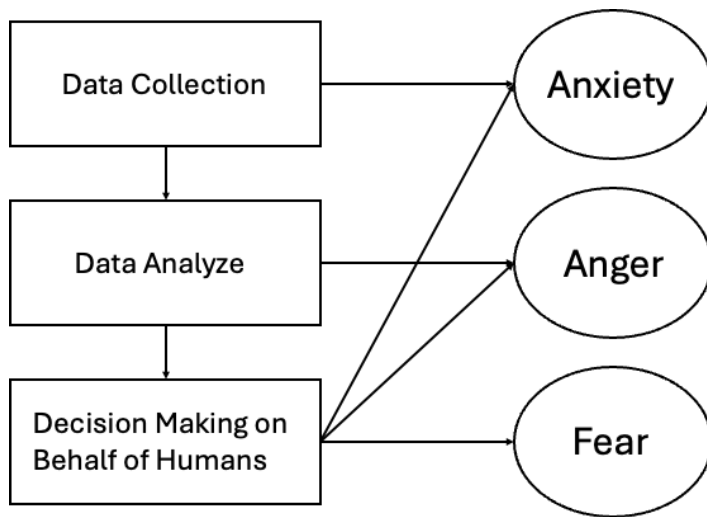
Limitations and Future Research

Although we provided a conceptual framework regarding the relationship between AI and emotions, some considerations should be noted. First, certain types of negative experiences can amplify both positive and negative emotions (Faraji-Rad & Pham, 2017). Consumers with positive experiences or stereotypes toward AI products may feel more at ease when facing uncertainty. Second, it is important to note that personal characteristics should be considered. Past literature acknowledges that emotional reactions vary depending on personal characteristics such as cultural background. Specifically, individuals who have a higher level of interdependence may be more sensitive to fear, while individuals who have a higher level of independence are more sensitive to anger (Aaker & Williams, 1998). In this sense, it is important to consider individual characteristics in our conceptual framework. Lastly, we recommend that future researchers expand our framework by examining additional negative emotions. While our conceptual framework limited the negative emotions to anxiety, anger, and fear, additional negative emotions (e.g., annoyance, horror, and sadness) should also be considered. Additionally, providing empirical evidence can strengthen the development of our framework.

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<FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK>



Note: The squares on the left side describe the process of AI, including data collection, analysis, and decision-making. The right side, with circles, describes emotions. In addition, arrows indicate the relationship between AI processes and their related emotions.

Summary Brief

Five Things Students Wish Professors Knew About Generative Artificial Intelligence

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This qualitative study intends to understand business students' attitudes and beliefs about generative artificial intelligence (GAI), including its use in personal, academic, and professional contexts, as well as workplace preparation and confidence. Data was gathered from eight focus group discussions from April to June 2024 involving 45 business management students at a small, private university in the United States. Using thematic analysis to analyze findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006), students reported feeling underprepared to utilize GAI tools in business roles due to the rapid implementation of many new tools and the need for direction in their undergraduate degree programs. Specifically, in this study, students share perspectives in five summary statements directed at educators requesting more beneficial GAI use in future preparations.

Introduction

Introduced in November 2022, ChatGPT quickly grew to 100 million users and became a global household name, quickly integrating into how we work, learn, and interact (G.-J, Hwang & Chen, 2023). Feeling pressure from all sides, higher education institutions (HEIs) are integrating generative technology into the pedagogy at different paces (Lee, 2024). They are cautiously taking a nuanced approach between rapid adoption and tentative policymaking of trending technology (Wang, Wang, & Su, 2024). Alongside adopting other changes into their respective fields, educators report little availability and high demands to integrate these tools (Lee, 2024). If HEIs are responsible for preparing students for the workplace, understanding how students perceive GAI and its associated roles in their academic, professional, and personal lives should first be understood by HEIs.

Literature Review

Most of the research on GAI has taken place in the years since ChatGPT and various other accessible GAI tools were released to the public, according to a comprehensive study of 138 publications that focused on the relationship between HEIs and teaching GAI (Crompton & Burke, 2023). Furthermore, they largely focused on undergraduate programs, and while research covered six continents, the majority was concentrated in developed countries and on students studying education or technology. A LinkedIn Report published in May 2024 revealed employees want to learn GAI to stay competitive and employers want employees to know it, but no one seems to know how these skills should be acquired. Thus, a recent study on students from across the globe and in different disciplines, such as business, could fill a gap in the literature and help HEIs understand how perspectives may change for those with different socio-economic backgrounds.

Key Findings

1. Please give us expectations, policies, and rubrics that include GAI usage.

In a 2023 study surveying nearly 400 Hong Kongese university students, the findings indicate a gap between students' desires to learn GAI platforms and seek additional support in their education to prepare them for the professional world's increasing demands for AI literacy (Chan & Hu, 2023). Students report seeking greater guidelines and guardrails around ethical GAI use (Chan & Hu, 2023). Specifically, in the Chan and Hu (2023) study, participants mentioned a need for clear policies, instructional techniques for using GAI while still sharpening critical thinking skills, and prompt engineering instruction to alleviate anxiety in the career preparation process.

One student, Paul, a senior from the Philippines, expressed his concerns about GAI and said, "Teachers are not against it...we just don't have clear rules on how to use AI." Highlighting this concern, Jim, a senior from China, asked the group, "I have a question. If I write a whole paragraph by myself, is it my idea? But then I ask ChatGPT to rewrite it, and I copy paste the whole thing into Chat. Is that considered plagiarism?" Without clear guidelines from professors many students feel lost about how to use these tools without crossing a line. However, some educators voiced concerns about policing GAI use and were concerned other professors would create heavy-handed policies or ban such technology out of fear (Cardon et al., 2023).

2. Don't "cancel" GAI. We must know how to use it to succeed in a competitive job market.

Instead of restrictive policies against GAI, students would prefer restructuring existing policies (Lee, 2024). For example, Lee (2024) offers three "Rs": "re-tuning" assessments of student work to match emerging needs, "re-educating" educators to improve GAI literacy, and lastly, "re-tweaking" existing research, practice, and policy frameworks and principles. "Teach people how to use it well," said Karl, a senior from the United States. Travis agreed and said, "Knowing how to use it puts you ahead of your competition."

Students and educators can collaborate to stay ahead of the digital curves, be more productive while embracing originality, and re-examine what practices are now antiquated to make room for new, trending technology, according to Lee (2024). According to LinkedIn (2024), 79 percent of leaders agreed their company needs to adopt GAI to stay competitive. Students can feel that pressure already and feel squeezed out due to financial burden and hopes universities will budget for these tools. One student, Michael, a freshman from the United States expressed concerns about GAI tools costs and said, "We need to find a way to make it more accessible."

3. Be so good at using AI that you know when we're using AI instead of using an AI Detector.

Concerns about students becoming dependent on GAI create a need for educators at HEIs to emphasize the need for ethical discussions associated with using GAI instead of critical thinking skills (Jabar et al., 2024). Instead, Jabar et al said, emerging technology should be part of the scaffolded learning experience alongside individualized instruction. Students in the focus groups agreed and many stated their eagerness for professors to lean into GAI more during their undergraduate studies. One student, a sophomore from the United States said, "I feel like it's like really been increasingly used in almost all my classes now. Even a year ago, none of my teachers really wanted to use AI. But now all of them do." Another student, Theresa, a junior from the Philippines, said, "I think if you know how to use it, you know how to see the improper use of it, too."

Many students in the focus groups said that they were concerned AI detectors weren't accurate and were worried about false positive results. Paul shared an experience where he tested his own original words in an AI detector, and the results showed a high probability of AI use. "It's scary because some professors say that if the AI detector detects your work was done by AI, then they'll fail you." Instead, students in the focus group suggest professors will become scholars of GAI tools and better be able to rely on their own expertise to rule out suspected cheating. For example, Hannah, a senior from Japan shared an experience peer reviewing a fellow student's paper. She said, "It was just obvious that she's using ChatGPT because there's wording that we don't usually use. Especially, like if English is not your first language, because you don't use those words."

4. We don't feel confident using AI now and even less in the workplace.

Students in the FGDs recognized the pressure they already felt from future employers to know GAI technology. LinkedIn (2024) states that 66 percent of leaders won't hire someone without GAI skills, and 71 percent say they'd hire someone with less experience if the candidate had more GAI experience. Eli, a junior from the Philippines said, "Good companies will always adapt to the most modern technology, so if you know how to use the most advanced AI properly, then that is a really big plus for you." However, most of the students noted feeling anxious about not their own acquisition of GAI skills.

Students report already being asked about their GAI skills in job interviews and feel their knowledge and preparation is more often self-taught than part of regular classroom instruction. John, a senior student from Mongolia, agrees and feels employers "are more likely to hire that person who has better AI skills, more than me."

5. We want to use AI to help us find, get, and keep a job.

Job posts requesting GAI skills grew by 17 percent, and 142 times more users added GAI skills to their profiles last year, according to LinkedIn (2024). This rings true for students in the FGDs. Most students reported using ChatGPT to find a job, such as improving the wording of their resumes and cover letters. Others are tapping into the built-in GAI featured on professional social networking tools, such as LinkedIn to help them go a step further and match them to qualified job openings. Paul said, "LinkedIn tried matching me to job postings based on the certifications that I have. It showed me how many certificates I have and how many was required for the job." Others are using the GAI features on LinkedIn to write catchy text or improve their profiles. Others mentioned using ChatGPT to help with preparing for interviews to help in securing a job offer.

Students also recognize how adding GAI skills to their tool belts allows them to save time in work-related tasks, making them competitive whether they work for a corporation or as entrepreneurs. For example, Beth, a senior student from Mongolia, plans to use GAI to help her save time in launching a side gig in affiliate marketing,

“It will help me create simple Reels and social media posts.” Paul agrees solid GAI knowledge creates a competitive edge and said, “...if you don't know how to adapt you won't survive.”

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Summary Brief

The Algorithmic Secret Sauce: Do Experiential Brands and High Consumer-Brand Identification Have Baked-In Trust and Acceptance of AI-Powered Marketing Tactics?

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This proposed study aims to explore how experiential brands and high consumer-brand identification (CBI) influence trust and acceptance of AI-powered marketing tactics. The study hypothesizes that high experiential brand quality (EBQ) and strong CBI are predisposed to positively impact consumer trust and acceptance of AI, which in turn drive brand loyalty, brand advocacy, and willingness to pay a premium. The study also examines the moderating role of AI transparency in strengthening these relationships. By leveraging these insights, the research seeks to enhance consumer-brand connections and business growth through AI-enabled marketing strategies.

Introduction

By 2030, it is expected that artificial intelligence (AI) will be driving more than 45% of the global economy – with large-language models, machine learning, and self-writing algorithms taking charge of everything from product design, concierge-level personal services and piquing consumer demand with tailored offerings (Chacko, 2023). As the link between consumer brands and AI increases, so does the importance of how brands leverage AI to improve marketing communications and build customer relationships. As research into AI-enabled consumer experiences has risen in recent years, trust in AI has remained a central concern for consumers, and research has found that trust in AI mediates the effects of consumers' perceptions of the convenience and quality of AI-enabled service on AI-enabled customer experience (Ameen et al., 2020). Data privacy remains a chief concern among consumers and how that information is used by brands (Shepman & Rodway, 2023). However, there is a lack of research exploring experiential brands and how their inherent ability to elicit consumer trust and propagate consumer-brand relationships influences trust in AI-enabled marketing and consumers' willingness to share personal information.

Experiential Brands

Brands that intrinsically embed memorable experiential value into the customer journey that elicits a consumer response are said to be highly experiential brands. Brakus et al. (2009; p. 52) define this brand experience as any affective, behavioral, or intellectual responses “evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments.”

Many brands are now leveraging the power of AI to increase consumer experiences. For example, through the use of AI-powered shopping assistants (Rawool et al., 2024), recommendation agents (Rohden & Zeferino, 2022), shopping assistants (Agbemabiese et al., 2022), personalized tourism recommendations (Yang et al., 2023), chatbots and anthropomorphic language (Nguyen et al., 2023), and virtual influencers (Lou et al., 2022). A vast majority of these studies find that the use of AI has a positive influence on customer brand experience, brand relationships, brand image, customer commitment and satisfaction with AI services, trust in AI, and positive brand outcomes.

Consumer Brand Identification

Grounded in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), consumer-brand identification (CBI) is the intersection of a consumer's perceptions of a brand's image and their perceived self-image (Tuškej and Podnar 2018). Research suggests that this combination contributes to and reinforces the consumer's perception of their self-identity (Fournier et al., 2012). Conceptually, CBI has been shown to be distinct from other consumer-brand relationships, including brand love (Batra et al., 2012), brand attachment (Malär et al., 2011), and brand attitude. Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) suggest that because CBI embodies the consumer's perceptions of brand and self-identity, CBI is likely to be either an antecedent or an outcome of brand evaluations. Indeed, Shokri & Alavari, 2019) find that CBI leads to positive attitudes toward brand extensions - especially when value congruity exists

between the consumer and the brand. Extant research identifies memorable brand experiences, defined as “positive, affectively charged memories of prior brand experiences,” as an antecedent of CBI (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; p. 410). In addition, AI has been shown to enhance CBI and contribute to positive brand advocacy (Nguyen et al., 2023). Because experiential brands inherently possess affective, behavioral, and intellectual attributes, whether the consumer has specific memories tied to the brand or not

AI Trust, Acceptance & Transparency

Research suggests that if a consumer perceives that an organization using AI shares their values, then they are more likely to trust that organization to use the AI ethically and to manage any risks associated with its use (Yokoi et al., 2021; Yokoi & Nakayachi, 2021). It follows that a consumer who identifies strongly with a brand will perceive that brand to share in their values and will, therefore, trust in their use of AI.

AI has revolutionized how marketers interact with consumers; however, extant research finds that generally, consumers accept AI (Logg et al., 2019) while simultaneously expressing concern about AI and how companies use it (Shepman & Rodway, 2020). Shepman and Rodway (2020) find that trust in AI is a product of their (positive) trust in people and (negative) distrust in corporations. However, an experiential brand’s sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual factors (Brakus et al., 2009) increase interest in the brand (Jung & Soo, 2012). Likewise, Agbemabiese et al. (2022) find that AI voice assistants enhance customer experiences and lead to increased brand use. Further, Kim and Chao (2019) find that brand experience positively impacts brand trust. Therefore, it follows that the more experiential attributes a brand has, the more likely a consumer will trust AI used by the brand.

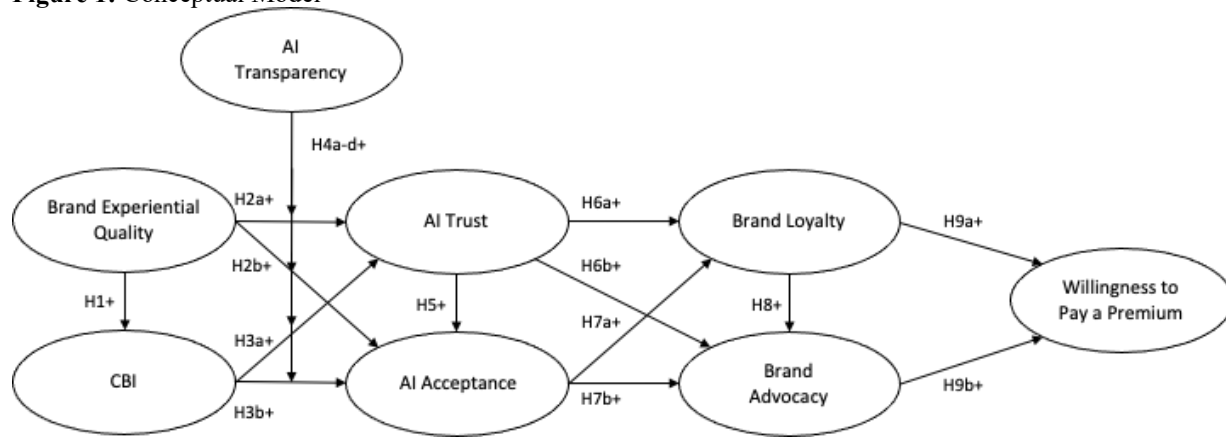
As the use of AI has become more prevalent, firms and academicians alike have found that transparency is a significant factor driving consumer trust and acceptance of AI technology. Muniz et al. (2022) suggest that non-disclosure regarding the use of AI can negatively affect trust and brand attitudes. Indeed, Rohden & Zeferino (2022) find that knowledge about AI use reduces perceived risks. Likewise, Babatunde et al. (2024) note that transparency is essential regarding AI applications, and Kumar et al. (2024) suggest that transparency increases acceptance and trust in AI. Because these relationships exist between EBC, CBI, and AI Trust, and AI Acceptance, it is argued that AI Transparency will moderate these relationships.

Brand Outcomes: Brand Loyalty, Brand Advocacy & Willingness to Pay a Premium

Following Bergner et al. (2023), we explore how these relationships between CBI, EBQ, AI Trust, AI Acceptance, and AI Transparency affect Brand Loyalty, Brand Advocacy, and the consumer’s Willingness to Pay a Premium. The extant literature has shown trust in AI to be a mediating variable between various independent and dependent variables. For example, Singh et al. (2024) find that AI Trust mediates the relationship between perceived usefulness and AI acceptance. Also, AI Trust is shown to mediate the relationship between consumer knowledge and perceptions of risk (Rohden & Zeferino, 2022). Minton et al. (2022) find that trust mediates the relationship between consumer religiosity and their evaluations of AI. Rawool et al. (2024) find that trust mediates the relationship between perceptions of AI attributes and brand loyalty. Given these precedents in the literature, we argue AI Trust and AI Acceptance will play mediating roles.

In their meta-analysis, Velmurugan and Thalath (2021) argue that of 370 scholarly papers researching consumer-brand relationships, a key outcome, in addition to brand loyalty and brand advocacy, is the willingness to pay a premium.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



References

Available upon request.

SESSION 6.5 PANEL: A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICS IN TECHNOLOGY

Moderator:

Kelly Moore and David Wasieleski

SESSION 6.6 PANEL: YOU ARE NOT ALONE: MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIA

Moderator:

Sona Klucarova

Other Panelists:

Catherine Hessick, PA, Muhlenberg College

Brittany Beck, NC, Appalachian State University

Ellen Campos Sousa, FL, The University Of Tampa

Nicole Kirpalani, Texas, St. Mary's University

Sphurti Sewak, IL, Illinois State University

Jayati Sinha, FL, Florida International University

SESSION 6.7: INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING SESSION I

Moderator:

Larry Neale

Teaching Innovation Competition

“University Social Media Video Competition” Project

Matthew B. Lunde, PhD, University of Minnesota Duluth, USA

Introduction

Teaching Digital or Social Media Marketing can be challenging. Few students have practical experience with digital and social media methods besides occasional personal posts on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and other platforms. Most students do not have the real-world, business-level experience businesses seek when students apply for internships and jobs. At a recent job fair, I asked the digital marketing firms and agencies what they are most looking for from a student looking for a job. Their answer was content creation—not at the individual level (experience that most students have) but at the business level. Additionally, as I have taught Digital/Social Media Marketing multiple times, having students learn practical experience with a company is difficult when most students do not have the skills needed. So, the first objective of this project was for students to gain real-world social media marketing experience with a “company” they know most about, their university, by creating a project rather than just observing social media or reading about it in a textbook (Razzouk, Seitz, and Rizkallah 2003).

The second goal was for students to help market their university. The rate of high school students deciding to attend universities for higher education has declined over the past few years. This decline comes from COVID-19, rising university degree costs, questioning the need for a university degree, choosing trade schools and community colleges instead, and Millennials choosing to have fewer children than earlier generations (O’Connell-Domenech 2024). This decline is having profound impacts on universities. Universities are trying to innovate creative ways to market to students (Marcus 2021). Because of these challenges of declining student enrollment at universities and students needing to gain real-world digital/social media marketing experience, the innovative assignment I created is a **“University Social Media Video Competition.”**

For the third objective, I wanted students to work together to create and edit a video promptly that could be used by the university. Therefore, the video needed to be professional, thought-provoking, creative, and attention-getting. Finally, understanding digital marketing metrics (e.g., engagements, reach, impressions, plays, etc.) can be difficult for many students (Leonard 2024). During the semester, we tracked the engagements of each video and analyzed the “whys” behind why some videos did better or worse than others. The goal was for the students to understand the metrics of their group’s created video. This innovation overview will 1) summarize the innovative project, 2) provide the project’s goals and components, 3) provide an execution synopsis, and 4) discuss the project findings, student feedback, and future ideas.

The Project

To excite students about digital marketing and to give them a real-world project they could relate most to at this stage in their lives, I created a competition in which students would compete by creating a project where they would “learn by doing,” would help their university, and would see the social media metrics in real-time.

1. Create a social media video that markets the university and/or business school:

In groups of five (based on my class of 40 students), students were tasked to create a short video that would be displayed for one week on the business school’s Facebook and Instagram accounts. Note: I would have posted the videos on TikTok and Snapchat, but our university’s business school does not have TikTok or Snapchat accounts. In the video, students were tasked to describe why future students (e.g., high school students, transfer students, and international students) should attend the university and become business students.

2. Analyze the future student:

As with all digital marketing content creation, marketers analyze their target audience. In these videos, students were to analyze the advantages of being a business student and the uniqueness of the university and the community. I wanted students to consider the demographics, psychographics, behaviors, and lifestyles of their primary

and secondary target markets: high school students, transfer students, international students, parents, donors, city and state residents, etc.

3. Description of the video:

I required that the group create the video and edit the video themselves. They could use trends from social media or create videos using their ideas. Students could decide how long the video should be. They could be in the video or not. The choice was theirs as a group. However, I required that they document *why* they made every decision for the video.

4. Pre-competition presentations:

Before the competition, groups presented their social media video to the class. However, not only did they show the video they created, but I also wanted them to describe their research and the reasoning behind the “*why*” decisions behind what they created. Students were tasked to cover these areas and use digital marketing terms and research data to back up their claims: their proposed target market, why or why not they included music, the context of their video, the content used, what they predict will be the outcome of their video would be, and so on.

5. The competition:

After students created the videos and presented them to the class (about one month into the semester), each video was uploaded to the business school’s social media accounts, one week at a time. To increase their video’s metrics, I told students to like, share, and tell their friends and family about their group’s video—to do what they could to increase the video’s reach, engagements, and other digital marketing metrics. At the end of each week (for eight weeks), each video’s impressions, likes, shares, and other digital metrics were tracked. Then, at the end of the semester, we saw which video had the highest number of metrics across *all* social media platforms combined.

Project Implementation

This project takes an entire semester. Here is the breakdown based on a typical 15-week semester:

- **Weeks 1-2: Introduction:** I introduce the video competition, and students get into groups.
- **Week 3-5: Brainstorming and Video Creation:** During the next three weeks, students brainstormed video ideas, asked questions, and created and edited their videos.
- **Week 6: Classroom presentations:** Each group presented the “*why*” behind the content, creation, and delivery of their videos (and I grade the video content and delivery)
- **Weeks 7-14: The Competition:** One video is uploaded weekly to the business school’s social media platforms for eight weeks. Each video’s digital marketing metrics are tracked at the end of each week (based on eight groups in the class—the number of weeks will change based on the number of students and subsequent groups each class has).
- **Week 15: Debrief and Awards:** At the end of the semester, we analyzed which video had the highest number of metrics across *all* social media platforms. Student groups with the top video engagements earned ten extra credit points, and the second video earned five extra credit points. We also discussed *why* some videos may have performed better than others. Note: I did not consider the number of engagements when grading their videos. I graded their videos based on content, creativity, and structure.

Findings, Feedback, and Suggestions

After completing this innovation project, I find it highly successful. Students were more engaged in understanding the differences between individual social media content creation and business-level content creation. They created a real video for the university marketing the university’s business school, worked in groups to create business-level video content, and had a real item for the job market they could discuss in job interviews: a social media video, digital marketing metrics, and their results. The students’ videos performed well. Engagements included the number of plays, reach, and interactions (i.e., shares, comments, likes, etc.). After one week, the number of engagements of each video ranged from 2,875 to 12,225 engagements! The breakdown is:

- **Group 1:** 2,875 engagements
- **Group 2:** 3,045 engagements

- **Group 3:** 4,140 engagements
- **Group 4:** 5,855 engagements
- **Group 5:** 6,445 engagements
- **Group 6:** 7,317 engagements
- **Group 7:** 10,666 engagements
- **Group 8:** 12,225 engagements

Many students commented in their project evaluations that they enjoyed creating the videos. They found that content creation for a business (university) is much different and harder than posting content on their own personal social media accounts. Students enjoyed having a real project they could discuss at future job interviews; they liked learning about digital marketing metrics in a real-world way, and they liked that their videos were being used to help the university recruit new students to the business school. For example, one student posted: *“I enjoyed that the project allowed a good amount of creative freedom...I think the content and assignment [video] provided was actually useful for future use and provided me content to use and apply in future interviews and such.”* Another student posted, *“I loved creating a video for social media. I watch the videos all of the time! This was much harder, trying to think about what a high schooler would want to see rather than just scroll past to the next video. Additionally, I had to think about what their parents would want to see on Facebook, too!”*

However, I also have a few suggestions. When I assign this project again, I will add a week of social media digital content creation in weeks 2 and 3 of the semester. This way, students do not blindly create the videos without having some background knowledge of content creation. Second, we will discuss their video each week when posted on social media, predicting how it will do and why it will do well or not do well. We will consider the video’s content, creativity, social media trends, and current digital marketing metrics. While it takes more time during class, it is worth the time. Additionally, active integration in class is paramount in providing a quality learning environment (Laverie 2006). Finally, as the younger generation is mainly on TikTok and Snapchat, I hope the next class’s videos can be posted on a newly created business school’s TikTok and Snapchat accounts (and on Instagram and Facebook) (Lebow 2023).

The **“University Social Media Video Competition”** project is highly successful and innovative. Students learned to create business-level real-world content for social media, helped the university with declining enrollment market its business school to future students and other stakeholders, learned about social media metrics, and now have a tangible product (i.e., social media video and metrics) to use in future interviews for jobs and internships to promote themselves innovatively. I plan to use the project in future Digital and Social Media Marketing classes!

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Teaching Innovation Competition

The “Running Your Own Professional Services Business” Team Project at the Undergraduate Services Marketing and Principles of Marketing Interface

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The “Running Your Own Professional Services Business” project is an experiential learning initiative for an undergraduate Services Marketing course. Students form teams to create service businesses, respond to customer inquiries, pitch for work, deliver services, and manage financial operations. These businesses serve a market of publicly traded firms represented by students from the Principles of Marketing course, offering services like document formatting, citation formatting, and logo design. The project enhances learning by simulating real-life business operations and leveraging students' prior marketing knowledge. Key tasks include business formation, marketplace promotion, revenue recognition, payment collection, and complaint resolution. Essential tools include an Operations and Financial Record, Marketplace, Customer Form, Business Form, and Service Review Webpage. Despite challenges in coordination and ensuring proper task delegation, the project provides significant learning opportunities through practical business experience.

In this paper, we introduce a team project for the undergraduate Services Marketing course requiring students to (1) “form” a professional services “business,” (2) establish and maintain a promotional presence on a web-based “marketplace,” (3) respond to inquiries from prospective “customers,” (4) pitch for work, (5) deliver services and issue invoices, (6) collect “payments,” (7) “pay bills,” (8) maintain financial records, (9) develop policy for complaint handling, and (10) respond to customer ratings and feedback as appropriate. In teams of approximately four, students compete to serve a “market” of real publicly traded firms (actually, students enrolled in the Principles of Marketing course) by providing one, some, or all of the following professional services: document formatting, in-text citation and reference formatting; growth rate calculation; product concept feedback; data collection; logo design; other/new service. At the conclusion of business operations, teams are assessed based on absolute and relative measures of market and financial performance (e.g., market share, customer ratings, operating income) as well as a document containing strategic plans for the coming period.

The “Running Your Own Professional Services Business” project is intended to represent an opportunity for experiential and entrepreneurial learning as well as better academic performance at the Services Marketing/Principles of Marketing “interface.” On the Services Marketing side, I (the lead-author) have always found *my delivery* of the course to be a little experientially underwhelming; on the Principles of Marketing side, the term-long Marketing Plan project I (the lead-author) assign involves certain tasks that must be completed well (e.g., document formatting) but that are not part of any course-level learning objective *per se*. What’s more, since the Services Marketing students have already completed the Principles of Marketing course, they have task-related experience which, with the right mechanism, could be employed in a manner that allows them to gain relatively real-life experience running a service-based business addressing actual market needs. (The students enrolled in the Principles of Marketing course are informed by memorandum that the company for which they are developing a Marketing Plan has given them a budget which can either be spent to fund certain Marketing Plan tasks or returned at project completion for credit on the Marketing Plan project.)

The Running Your Own Professional Services Business project is introduced to Services Marketing students early in the semester. After receiving initial instructions, students will organize into teams of approximately four, enter their contact information into their Operations and Financial Record, discuss service mix and branding possibilities, agree upon a business name, design a logo (if desired), and create a shared email account with automatic-forwarding capability. (The shared email account is primarily intended for central message receipt and subsequent dissemination

to team members; outgoing communication occurs using the Business Form.) After receiving a briefing of the Marketing Plan project assigned to the Principles of Marketing students and considering the Cost of Revenue information they have been provided (showing, for example, their cost for each logo design iteration), teams will need to design an initial service mix reflecting either a generalized approach (e.g., document formatting as well as logo design and product concept feedback) or a more specialized one (e.g., document formatting or logo design or product concept feedback). Next, teams will begin the process of developing service-level promotional content to be shown on the Marketplace; teams incur daily word count and one-time content change Marketplace expenses which are recorded as Operating expenses on the Income Statement and reflected on a Statement of Cash Flows when paid. Finally, students enrolled in the Principles of Marketing are informed of the funding they have received, the whereabouts of the Marketplace, and the process for communicating with Services Marketing teams.

When operations are fully underway, successful interactions between Principles of Marketing students (as prospective customers) and Services Marketing teams (as service providing firms) will generally proceed as follows: prospective customer makes service inquiry with Services Marketing team; Services Marketing team issues reply; prospective customer request quote for service; Services Marketing team provides quote for service; prospective customer evaluates quote and, if satisfied with it, issues approval; Services Marketing team acknowledges approval; Services Marketing team undertakes service delivery and communicates with customer as appropriate; Services Marketing team completes work, issues invoice, and records revenue; customer issues payment; Services Marketing team acknowledges payment. Additionally, customers can post service reviews; in the event of service failure, the Services Marketing team can employ its service guarantee and/or service recovery procedure for addressing the issue.

The Running Your Own Professional Services Business project has considerable potential but, after two semesters, it has not yet been perfected. Automation (using, for example, Microsoft Power Automate) can be used for facilitating and storing communication between Services Marketing teams and Principles of Marketing students. Students will require close coordination. Incentives may be needed to prompt Principles of Marketing students to make inquiries with Services Marketing teams. Finally, care should be taken to ensure that Services Marketing teams do not actually do the work of creating Marketing Plans for their customers; as mentioned above, services should pertain exclusively to tasks that are not part of any course-level learning objective *per se*.

SESSION 6.8: MARKETING: FUN FACTS & MYTHS

Moderator:

Michael Levin

Summary Brief

In Our Era: Analyzing the Servicescape of Taylor Swift's Concert Experience

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Courtney L. Robinson, Ed.D., The University of Southern Mississippi, USA
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The concert experience has evolved beyond the music by encompassing the physical and sensory elements that enhance the experience for fans. These elements or "servicescape" arguably influence fans' responses and behaviors (Bitner, 1982). Therefore, this research will explore the impact of servicescape on fan perceptions and behaviors, focusing on the physical, social, socially symbolic, and natural elements. A mixed-method approach consisting of a field study and survey research will be conducted using Taylor Swift's Eras Tour as the context. To the authors' knowledge, this research is the first to empirically consider a comprehensive study of the servicescape in a hedonic experience such as a concert. These results may contribute to the music and tourism literature with respect to their marketing efforts by understanding the latest trends in the live music industry and the synergies and trade-offs of how the servicescape influences fan perceptions and behaviors.

Introduction

The live music industry has evolved rapidly through various technological, social, and economic factors. The latest trends in the live music industry range from physical elements like technological innovations to sensory ones like personalized experiences. A prime example is Taylor Swift's Eras Tour. Taylor Swift, a global pop sensation and arguably a marketing genius, is projected to generate almost \$5 billion in consumer spending in the U.S. alone with her Eras Tour (U.S. Travel Association, 2023). Her tour includes technological advances such as elaborate stage setups with immersive visual effects and interactive elements for fans to engage during the show, such as swapping friendship bracelets. By the end of June 2024, Taylor Swift had completed 114 shows across North and South America, Australia, and Europe (TaylorSwift.com, n.d.). The first leg of the Eras Tour alone grossed an estimated \$1 billion in ticket sales (Murray, 2023). The gross ticket sales surpassed the previous record of \$939 million held by Elton John's "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" tour. For context, Elton John's farewell tour spanned multiple years, while Swift's Eras Tour toppled his record in just five short months (Coscarelli, 2024).

Like Taylor Swift's Eras Tour, the live concert experience has evolved beyond the music itself, encompassing a holistic encounter involving various sensory dimensions. These dimensions or servicescape, encompassing the physical environment and its sensory elements, play a crucial role in enhancing the overall concert experience for fans. Previous research on servicescape has considered individual dimensions in its studies. For instance, Tombs and McColl-Kennedy examined the social elements of the servicescape and their effect on customers' responses and behaviors. They argue that crowding or social density and their emotions can influence others. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) considered the physical elements and the perceived quality of the servicescape with three leisure services: college football, minor league baseball, and casinos, and found that the physical dimension of the servicescape has a strong effect on the customers' behavioral intentions when the service is consumed for hedonic purposes. However, scant research has empirically examined the concert experience and all the dimensions of servicescape. To date, few studies have only investigated an opera house with physical and social dimensions (Tubillejas-Andres et al., 2020), a concert setting with social elements (Nguyen et al., 2012), or conceptualizing the role of live music in outdoor urban settings (Oakes & Warnaby, 2011).

Therefore, this research aims to comprehensively investigate the impact of servicescape on fan perceptions and behavior during Taylor Swift's Eras concert. We focus on four distinct dimensions of the servicescape: physical (Bitner, 1992), social (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003), socially symbolic (Rosenbaum, 2005), and natural environments (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). The results of this study may provide insights applicable to the marketing, tourism, and music domains.

Background Servicescape

Bitner (1992) first introduced the concept of servicescape, which describes how the physical environment can affect consumers and providers in a service exchange. Since then, other dimensions were considered that

influence the customer experience, including social (Hanks & Line, 2018; Mari & Poggesi, 2013; Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003), socially symbolic (Rosenbaum, 2005), and natural environments (Rosenbaum, 2009; Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). In terms of leisure services, the servicescape of a concert can include the physical layout, design, and sensory elements, all of which impact the overall experience of concert-goers. The physical element includes the stage design, lighting, and seating. The social element pertains to the presence and behavior of other concert attendees. The socially symbolic element includes signs, objects, and artifacts related to one's identity. Lastly, the natural element considers the connections to and feelings from nature.

Previous studies have shown that the servicescape can significantly influence consumer approach or avoidance behaviors, such as engagement and future intentions (Rosenbaum, 2005; Wakefield & Baker, 1996). Consumer engagement comprises the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities before, during, and after customer interaction/brand interactions (Cao et al., 2023; Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014). In a concert context, understanding the impact and quality of servicescape on fans' responses can provide valuable insights for concert organizers and marketers to enhance the concert experience and build stronger fan relationships.

As shown in Figure 1, it is argued that a mediating relationship exists between the servicescape dimensions and fans' responses to it. Bitner's (1992) seminal framework suggests that positive responses to the perceived quality of the servicescape can result in approach intentions consistent with previous research (e.g., Brocato et al., 2012; Cronin & Taylor, 1999; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; 1996; 1999).

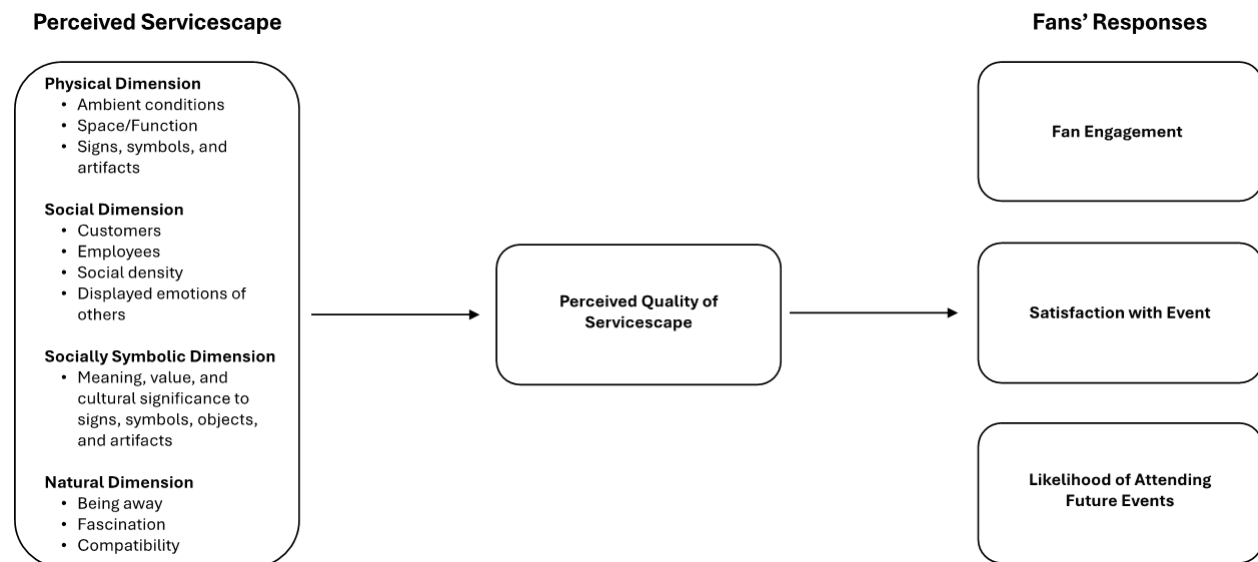


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Physical Dimension

The physical dimension of the servicescape consists of the ambient conditions, like temperature, lighting, air quality, odor, and noise; layout and functionality, like equipment and furnishings; and signage, symbols, decor, and personal artifacts (Bitner, 1992; Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). For concerts, the physical environment may include the venue's design, acoustics, seating arrangement, and visual effects. Bitner's (1992) seminal work highlighted that these elements or atmospherics significantly influence customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) demonstrated that a well-designed physical environment enhances customer excitement and retention, particularly in leisure settings such as concerts. Furthermore, comfortable seating, cleanliness, and accessibility can improve overall satisfaction (Harris & Ezech, 2008). However, more research is needed to understand how specific physical elements impact the concert experience.

Social Dimension

To adequately research the environmental features that influence behavior, the relationship between people and the social environment is also critical, as consumers establish social relationships through their activities (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999). Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999) highlight the power of the social dimension by suggesting that products help facilitate social connection, especially since social interaction is impacted by the

physical space where it occurs (Bennett & Bennett, 1970). Within certain social dimensions, some behaviors can be expected based on the surroundings (Barker, 1968) and based on social conventions and behavioral expectations (Forgas, 1979).

Since Bitner's (1992) seminal work, researchers have expanded the servicescape framework to include other dimensions, such as the social dimension. According to Tombs & McColl-Kennedy (2003), the social dimension includes the human element in the service environment. It includes the behaviors and interactions of other customers and employees. At concerts, the social environment may shape the behavior of fans (or Swifties), interactions with performers, and the quality of service the venue staff provides. Brocato et al. (2012) maintain that the social atmosphere can influence service quality and behavioral intentions. As such, social interactions can significantly enhance or detract from the concert experience.

Socially Symbolic Dimension

Unlike Bitner's (1992) physical components of signs, symbols, and artifacts, the socially symbolic dimension refers to the meanings, values, and cultural significance customers associate with the environment. Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) proposed that elements within the servicescape can convey social identity and status, thereby affecting customer self-image and behavior. That is, fans who feel a strong connection to the artist or venue are more likely to be deeply engaged during the concert. Concert venues and artists often carry symbolic meanings, such as historical significance or cultural relevance, which can enhance the fans' experience. However, the specific ways these symbolic meanings influence fan perceptions and behaviors require further investigation. For instance, swapping friendship bracelets at the Eras Tour may represent nostalgia as a '90s trend and symbolize a sense of community.

Natural Dimension

Lastly, the natural dimension includes elements of the natural environment in the servicescape, such as greenery, natural lighting, and open spaces. These connections to nature, or biophilic design, can have restorative effects such as reducing stress and enhancing the customer experience (Joye et al., 2010). While this dimension is less emphasized in traditional concerts, outdoor concerts and festivals have increasingly incorporated biophilic design to enhance the experience. For example, Packer and Ballantyne (2011) found that including natural surroundings with the event's design can positively impact attendee's satisfaction and overall experience.

Previous studies in marketing are only beginning to consider servicescape's natural elements and its outcomes beyond restorative effects. Rosenbaum and Messiah (2011) argue that the natural dimension may also give customers feelings of being away, fascination, and belonging. However, there is a need for more empirical studies to understand how natural elements can be effectively integrated into concert settings and their impact on fan response and behavior, particularly in closed or semi-open concerts.

Based on the discussion above, we hypothesize the following:

H1: Perceptions of the physical dimension will positively influence the perceived quality of the servicescape. In turn, the perceived quality of the servicescape will positively affect fans' a) satisfaction with the event, b) engagement, and c) likelihood to attend future events.

H2: Perceptions of the social dimension will positively influence the perceived quality of the servicescape. In turn, the perceived quality of the servicescape will positively affect fans' a) satisfaction with the event, b) engagement, and c) likelihood to attend future events.

H3: Perceptions of the socially symbolic dimension will positively influence the perceived quality of the servicescape. In turn, the perceived quality of the servicescape will positively affect fans' a) satisfaction with the event, b) engagement, and c) likelihood to attend future events.

H4: Perceptions of the natural dimension will positively influence the perceived quality of the servicescape. In turn, the perceived quality of the servicescape will positively affect fans' a) satisfaction with the event, b) engagement, and c) likelihood to attend future events.

H5: Perceived quality of servicescape will mediate the positive relationship between the perceived servicescape dimensions and fans' a) satisfaction with the event, b) engagement, and c) likelihood to attend future events.

Proposed Methods

A mixed-method approach will be conducted to gather comprehensive data on the servicescape dimensions and their impact on the concert experience. First, a field study will be launched to observe and record the physical setup, social interactions, and presence of symbolic and natural elements to address the overarching research question of how the servicescape dimensions impact a live music concert. The researchers will attend a Taylor Swift's Eras concert to capture real-time fan behaviors, emotions, and interactions. In-depth interviews with selected fans will be performed to gain deeper insights into Swiftie's experiences and perceptions after the concert. A thematic analysis using NVivo will be conducted on the field notes and interview data to identify common themes and patterns related to servicescape dimensions.

Then, a cross-sectional survey study will investigate the servicescape dimensions and empirically test the aforementioned hypotheses. A structured, online survey questionnaire will measure fan perceptions and behaviors through 1) consumer panel data and 2) Taylor Swift forums. The survey will be administered to a sample of concert-goers who attended a Taylor Swift's Eras concert. Demographic information and specific concert attendance details will be collected. Concert attendees will be asked to recall their experience, and their responses will be analyzed using SmartPLS 4.1.

Potential Contributions and Implications

This research aims to shed light on the latest trends in the live music industry by providing a comprehensive understanding of how each dimension of the servicescape influences fan perceptions and behaviors using Taylor Swift's Eras Tour as the context. These insights can inform marketing strategies and help create more engaging and satisfying experiences for concert-goers. The findings of this research may also be invaluable to the tourism and music industries. Concert organizers and venue managers can utilize the insights to design concert environments that enhance fan satisfaction, increase attendance, and improve the overall concert experience. This, in turn, may benefit the artists and the industry as a whole.

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Summary Brief

Taste of Italy: Exploring Cultural Influences on International Tourists' Consumption of Local Foods

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Food consumption is an important aspect of travel and tourism. However, the motivations and perceptions toward local foods remain largely unexplored. The purpose of this study is to investigate individuals' perceptions and attitudes toward local foods during their trips to Italy. Drawing from a sample of international tourists, this study identifies multiple overarching themes that serve as an innovative framework for future research. Destination marketers can use the results of this study to better understand tourists' motivations and perceptions of Italy as a travel destination. This study aims to provide valuable contributions to both academia and the tourism industry.

Introduction

Food tourism is defined as “the act of travelling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place” (World Food Travel Association, 2024, para. 1). According to a report by Fortune Business Insights (2024), the global food service market was valued at \$2.39 trillion in 2022 and is projected to grow to \$5.42 trillion by 2030. Additionally, the culinary tourism market was valued at \$976.68 billion, with a projected growth rate of 17% from 2023 to 2033 (Fortune Business Insights, 2024). Among popular travel destinations, Italy was ranked as the best country for food enthusiasts due to the quality of its ingredients and the simplicity of its dishes (Yahoo Finance, 2023). Despite the growing interest in food tourism, literature predominantly focuses on the motivations to participate in food tourism. Few studies have fully explored how tourists perceive their dining experiences, particularly in relation to their cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring international tourists' motivations for traveling to Italy and their dining experiences with local foods. Additionally, this study aims to investigate how individuals' pre-existing knowledge and cultural backgrounds influence their satisfaction and future dining behaviors. The results of this study are anticipated to enhance the current understanding of the cultural impacts on food tourism. Moreover, this study provides insights for destination marketers to foster competitive advantage in the tourism sector.

Methodology

This study employed a semi-structured qualitative approach. Participants were conveniently intercepted in two major Italian cities, Milan and Florence. Data collection sites included shopping malls, museums, restaurants, pubs, coffee shops, trains, and other tourism attractions. Participants were required to meet the following criteria: 1) be at least 18 years old, 2) be international tourists traveling for business or leisure from outside Italy, and 3) have experienced Italian food during their current trip. The study involved interviews with 25 international tourists from the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, The Netherlands, Russia, South Africa, and China. The interview guidelines were developed based on existing literature and included questions about travel motivation, first experiences with Italian culture, definitions and descriptions of authentic Italian dining experiences, satisfaction, and future dining behaviors. The interviews were recorded and subsequently coded inductively by the researchers. Corbin and Strauss's grounded theory methods were employed to uncover open, axial, and selective codes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Key Findings

Our preliminary study findings indicate that the majority of participants traveled to Italy for leisure purposes. Their definitions of an authentic dining experience centered around the use of local ingredients, traditional cooking methods, preservation of heritage and culture, and the dining environment. Overall, all interviewees reported that their expectations were met or exceeded, and many expressed a desire to incorporate Italian dishes into

their home cooking practices. This study extends the existing body of knowledge in food tourism by exploring not just the motivations for engaging in food tourism but also how these motivations influence tourists' perceptions and experiences of dining. Further, this study highlights the needs to attract more food tourists by emphasizing the authenticity of the local dining experience.

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Session 7.1: #Community

Moderator:

Gabriela Jodas

Summary Brief

Determinants of Technology Platform Use Intentions: The Role of Killer Applications

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Technology platforms supported by “Killer Apps” have higher adoption rates and staying power in their industry. In this research we utilize the technology acceptance model as a framework to analyze the presence or absence of a presumed killer application and the effects on consumer adoption. Through an experimental study and survey we find that the presence of a killer application is related with perceived ease of use, accessibility, and brand trust. However, only the perceived ease of use was positively related with a positive affective response and use intentions. Although these findings are preliminary, they suggest that successes attributable to killer applications may have underlying consumer motivations.

Introduction & Hypothesis Review

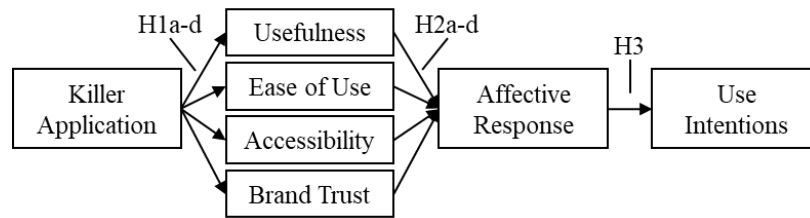
In the realm of technology platforms, the concept of Killer Apps has emerged as pivotal in driving user adoption and engagement. Killer applications (killer apps) refer to applications or features that significantly contribute to the success of a technology platform, as a major consumer draw to the technology (Pitt et al., 2023). These applications are distinguished by their ability to effectively meet user needs, offering substantial value that sets them apart from competitors in the market (Xu & Gutierrez 2006). By delivering unique functionalities that may not be available or as effective elsewhere, killer apps serve as primary motivators for users to adopt a platform (Pitt et al., 2023). Moreover, they enhance user experiences by keeping users engaged, thereby promoting long-term retention and loyalty to the platform.

Killer apps are applications or features that act as a significant driver for a technology platform's success (Pitt et al., 2023). Their effectiveness lies in their ability to address user needs effectively, offering substantial value that sets them apart from competitors (Pitt et al., 2023). They serve as the primary motivator for users to adopt a platform, often providing unique functionalities unavailable or less effective elsewhere. By delivering compelling and user-centric experiences, killer apps promote user engagement, leading to long-term retention and platform loyalty. Killer apps empower platforms to differentiate themselves in competitive markets, establishing the platforms as leaders within their respective domains (West & Mace 2010).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theorizes how users accept and use technology. According to TAM, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are critical determinants influencing technology adoption. In this stimuli-response model the system features and functionalities (including the integration of a killer app) act as the stimuli, influencing a user's motivation to use the technology. Cognitive responses to perceived usefulness and ease of use inform attitudes towards using the system, ultimately influencing use behavior (Davis, 1985). While the original TAM primarily focused on perceived usefulness and ease of use, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology model (UTAUT), extends TAM by incorporating additional facilitating conditions (e.g., accessibility and trust) as essential determinants of technology affective response and technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2003). UTAUT underscores the importance of these factors alongside perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, highlighting their roles in shaping user behavior and adoption patterns.

Combining the concept of the killer app and UTAUT model, we hypothesize the following, as illustrated in figure 1: H1(a-d): The presence of a killer app on a website will have a positive and significant relationship to cognitive responses of a) perceived usefulness, b) perceived ease of use, c) perceived accessibility, and d) brand trust towards the website; H2(a-d): The cognitive responses (a) perceived usefulness, b) perceived ease of use, c) perceived accessibility, and d) brand trust) will have a significant and positive relationship to affective response towards the website; H3: Affective response will have a positive and significant relationship to use intentions of the website.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Variable Relationships

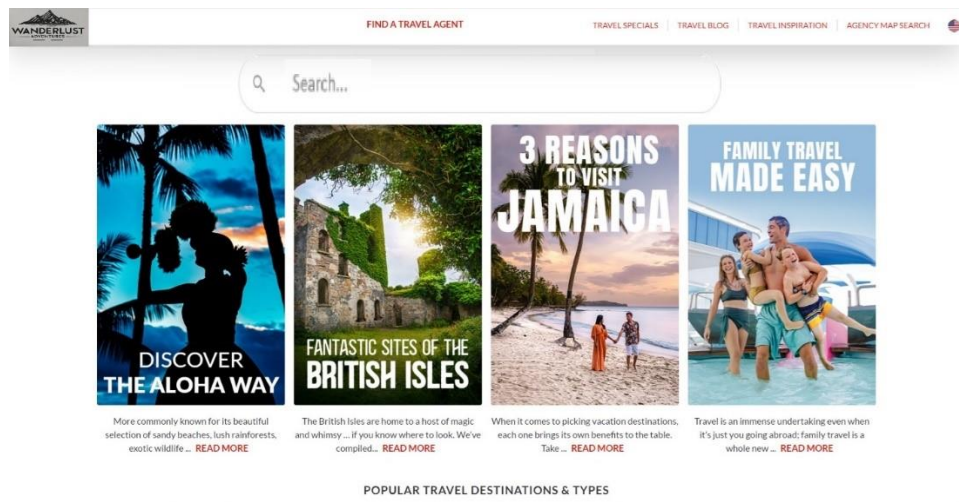


Method & Findings

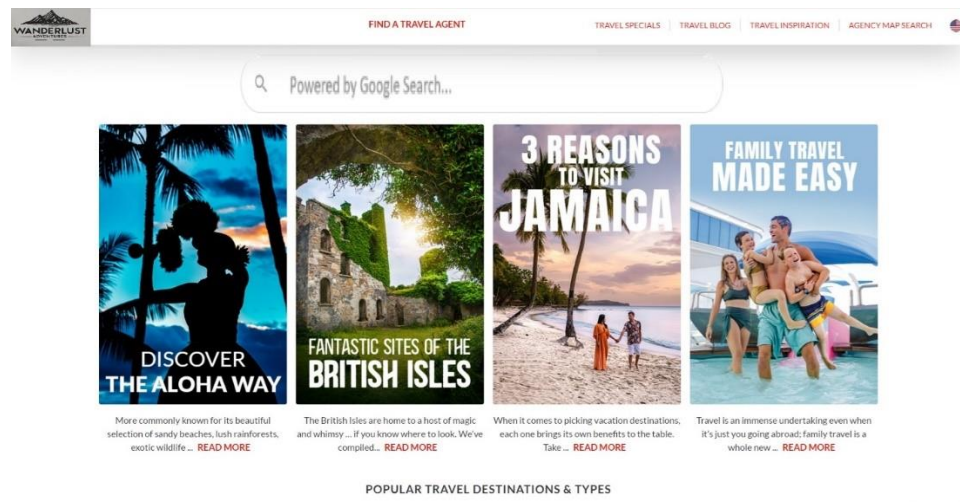
We tested the hypotheses through an online experimental manipulation and survey. A sample of 100 prolific travel website users were prompted with the following: “Imagine you are using a travel website to search for vacations that you may one day go on. You look at the landing page and type in a destination into the search bar (powered by Google). Please look at this screenshot of the website and answer the following questions about your imagined experience.” As indicated and shown in figure 2, the killer app of Google search was included in one condition and not in the other. This is perhaps the most ubiquitous example of a killer app, given its broad usefulness for internet users. The questions that followed the manipulation tested the hypothesized relationships. Ease of use and perceived usefulness were both adapted from Davis (1985). Accessibility and brand trust both were adapted from Zhou (2012). Finally, the mediating variable of affect was adapted from Davis (1985) and the dependent variable user intentions was adapted from Zhou (2012). Following these questions manipulation and realism checks were performed and demographic data were collected.

Figure 2. Experimental Manipulation of Killer App

No killer application present:



Killer application present:



The manipulation check (this website uses Google to power the search) indicated that participants had experienced the manipulation correctly ($F(1,98)=168.33, p<.001$). The realism check (this website was realistic) was concerned with the website experience, and both conditions reported similar realism ($F(1,98)=.63, p=.43$). The average age of participants is 36, with 58% female. The hypothesized relationships were examined utilizing process model 80 (Hayes 2018). The presence of the killer app Google search was positively related with ease of use ($a_2=.73, t=2.92, p<.01$), accessibility ($a_3=.57, t=2.39, p<.05$), and brand trust ($a_4=.56, t=2.46, p<.05$) but not usefulness ($a_1=.45, t=1.62, p=.11$). This supports H1bcd but not H1a. We also find support for ease of use in a positive relationship with affect ($b_2=.50, t=4.60, p<.001$), supporting H2c. However, usefulness ($b_1=.16, t=1.45, p=.15$), accessibility ($b_3=.13, t=1.53, p=.13$), and trust ($b_4=.13, t=1.06, p=.29$) do not have a significant relationship to affect. Finally, positive affect is related with use intentions ($d=.40, t=3.58, p<.001$), supporting H3. The direct effect is not significant ($c'=.30, t=1.54, p=.13, 95\% \text{ CI: } [-.09, .69]$) but there is an indirect effect of the killer app-to-use intentions relationship through ease of use and affect ($abd=.15, 95\% \text{ CI: } [.02, .37]$).

The results show that the presence of a killer app, such as Google, on a website helps to increase a user's intentions to use the website through explanatory variables of ease of use and affect. When the search bar for the travel website included Google as a tool to power the website's search, users felt the website was easier to use. This ease of use increases the user's affect towards the website and subsequently increases their intentions to use the website in the future.

Killer apps, while beneficial, also raise ethical and societal concerns, such as data privacy, security, and the digital divide. The widespread adoption of these apps can lead to significant societal changes, both positive and negative. However, Killer Apps play a crucial role in enhancing technology platforms by attracting users and promoting engagement through unique functionalities and user-centric experiences. The TAM framework provides valuable insights into the psychological processes underlying technology adoption, emphasizing the significance of ease of use. The mediating path of ease of use to increase affect and use intentions further enriches our understanding of technology acceptance, illustrating their interconnected roles in influencing user attitudes and behaviors. As technology continues to evolve, integrating these insights can guide developers and stakeholders in creating and implementing effective strategies to enhance platform adoption and usage.

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Summary Brief

Beggars Can Be Choosers: Are Choose-Your-Own-Adventure Narratives Effective in Raising Engagement?

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A story is the shortest distance between two people. This is the metaphorical consensus of a growing body of academic literature studying the power of narrative-form communications in the persuasion of audiences. But stories have evolved with humanity. New technologies have brought about new and more interactive narrative forms, such as Choose-Your-Own-Adventure (CYOA), that have enhanced the audience's engagement even more. Using an experimental design, this research explores the impact that CYOA narratives in advertising have on consumers' engagement as well as on their attitudes and perceptions towards the ad and its narrative quality. Preliminary analysis of data collected using Prolific shows encouraging results to expand the current research into the mechanisms through which interactivity with stories and their characters can deliver a more immersive experience for audiences.

Background

A story is the shortest distance between two people. This is the metaphorical consensus of a growing body of academic literature studying the power of narrative-form communications in the persuasion of audiences. Stories are highly persuasive devices to deliver messages and ideas. They are even more effective than other forms, like traditional advertising, or fact-based communications. First, communicating a message through stories tends to encounter significantly less pushback or criticism from an audience (Escalas et al., 2004). Second, the engagement generated by stories is not limited to cognitive processes but extends to affective or emotional ones.

Stories have been part of our lives forever (Gottschall, 2012). They are as ancient as humans themselves. Even before humans learned how to speak, we were doing it through pictographic stories on walls in caves. But stories have evolved with humanity. Technology has played a big role in this evolution. As Rose (2021) argues, storytelling has changed with the technology at hand. New technologies have brought about new narrative forms: the printing press brought to life the book, the camera to movies, the TV to the sitcom, etc. At every turn, storytelling has adapted to the emerging medium and created something new, pushing narratives to new levels of interaction and engagement, becoming increasingly data-driven, immersive, and customer-led (Chen & Wang, 2019; Hong et al., 2021; Riche et al., 2018), thereby demonstrating that storytelling is a versatile framework for designing persuasive communications.

Motivation

Previous research indicates that when individuals are allowed to decide the actions of a character in a narrative, they engage in a mental process of simulating the character's experiences. This mental simulation enhances the richness of their imagination concerning the story's characters (Escalas et al., 2004; Green & Brock, 2000). Giving the reader agency can also deepen the viewer's emotional engagement and strengthen the connection a user has with the character. Rather than passively observing the story unfold from a third-person viewpoint, readers now have the task of influencing the fate of narrative characters (Dillman Carpentier et al., 2015). Lastly, user control leads to greater narrative engagement, as Jenkins identified that interactive narrative readers felt more responsible towards the characters and were more invested in the story (Jenkins, 2014).

Over the years, narrative interactivity expanded to video advertising and research confirms that viewers also value interactivity in the video format. Interactive features within ads, such as clickable links, quizzes, and games, serve to prolong user engagement and create more immersive advertising experiences (Gu et al., 2022). With the expansion of technology, choose-your-own-adventure (CYOA) narratives have started to gain more space. CYOA began with books and video games in the 1980s and then to *Participatory TV* in the 2000s, paving the way for new possibilities in interactive media. Nowadays, the CYOA format revolutionizes narrative structures, offering viewers the agency to shape their own stories through branching paths and decision points. This participatory element enhances audience engagement and fosters a deeper sense of immersion in the narrative experience (Rachel et al., 2020). Even though previous research has been done on interactive narratives and CYOA, there is still room to explore how CYOA influences consumer engagement toward brands.

Methodology

The current research adapts a series of Coca-Cola ads into a CYOA structure and tests the impact that interactivity (vs. no interactivity) with the narrative has on consumers' perceptions about the quality of the story, their attitudes towards the ad, and the degree to which they get "lost" in the narrative (narrative transportation). Three stimuli were tested. One had only one ending shown to participants, another one had all endings "stitched" together in one long ad, and a third one gave participants the ability to choose to navigate all endings. Our sample is comprised of 270 participants recruited through Prolific. Preliminary results show that a CYOA narrative is more effective in creating narrative transportation, in particular "transporting" them to similar experiences they had in their lives, and in generating positive feelings towards the ad. Inconclusive results were found for participants' perceptions about the quality of the advertisement's narrative structure (character, plot, climax, and outcomes). However, these preliminary results are encouraging to continue our analysis and to expand this research with subsequent experiments aimed at exploring the mechanisms through which interactivity with stories and its characters can deliver a more immersive experience for audiences.

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SESSION 7.2: JMTP SYMPOSIUM II

Moderator:

Rhiannon Mesler

Summary Brief

An Empirical Analysis of the Differential Impact of Entitativity on Donation of Time versus Money

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This paper aims to analyze the differential effects of group entitativity on two types of donation, namely offering time or donating money, in respect of single and multiple victims. The goal is to specify the interplay between time-giving/money-donating and single/multiple victims and the potential motive therein. Three studies were designed to measure and define respectively the major and secondary hypotheses, formulated to detect the interaction between levels of (group) entitativity and consumers' donating acts and the effective association between donors' mindsets and their decision making with regard to entitativity as variable. The results show that presenting multiple victims high (versus low) in entitativity increases donation of time but decreases donation of money, and such differential effects on donors' decision making are caused by their mental well-being with respect to time or money.

SESSION 7.3: #BrandsGetReal

Moderator:

Haeden Overby

Summary Brief

Consumer Reactions to Scarcity

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Courtney B. Peters, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Marketing, Samford University, USA
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This research evaluates consumer reactions to ammunition shortages. Guided by grounded theory, the research team conducts qualitative interviews to understand consumer reactance to scarcity. Two categories emerged from the data: (1) pre-response conditions including sensitivity to restrictions and catalysts and (2) response behaviors including reactance to the threat to consumers' freedom, reactance multipliers, and coping tactics that often contribute to extension of the shortage. Finally, we suggest that future research can apply this model to other shortage scenarios to better understand its ability to organize consumer response to scarcity and downstream impacts.

Introduction

In the past quarter century numerous ammunition shortages occurred at the retail level. In 1999 fear of societal breakdown with the upcoming millennium drove guns sales significantly higher, leading to much higher ammunition consumption (McCullagh, 1999). The next period (2008-2010) saw ammunition shortages at both manufacturing distribution centers and at retail, which is attributed to fear gun owners had that President Barack Obama planned to ban gun and ammunition sales (Neary, 2009). The third major ammunition shortage started late in 2012 following the Sandy Hook, Connecticut elementary school shooting. Calls for restrictions on sales of certain types of weapons and ammunition magazines occurred in some states, which were then passed into legislation. Fear that such legislation would affect ammunition led to a run-on ammunition at retail. While the shortage gradually abated, as late as 2015 one type of ammunition, the 22-caliber long rifle (22LR), continued to be in short supply (Miniter, 2013). Most recently, during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with accompanying riots over race relations, another surge in ammunition sales left store shelves empty (Brown, 2020). All of these shortages were severe, leaving ammunition consumers without access to supply for many months.

Our investigation concerns two of the most recent shortages—2012 and 2020. The research team was curious as to why there were such extreme reactions to perceived threats to the supply of ammunition. Applying grounded theory methodology, we sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What conditions did consumers perceive to exist in the market that may have contributed to ammunition shortages?

RQ2: What experiences did consumers have during the shortages, and what tactics were applied to mitigate this situation?

The contribution of this research is a model of consumer behavior related to ammunition shortages, based on the categories and properties emerging from our data.

Conceptual Development

Consumer Response to Scarcity

Previous scholars define scarcity as “a real or perceived threat to the consumer’s ability to meet his or her needs and desires due to a lack of, or lack of access to, goods, services or resources” (Hamilton, 2016, p. 533). Product shortages (such as ammunition) can be caused by real or perceived consumer views that a specific item will be unavailable to the consumer at some point in the future for various reasons. Additionally, the shortages and corresponding scarcity of products can be caused by low or no stock of the items, legal restrictions, and so on, and may be experienced by individuals, groups, communities, or even on a global scale.

Reactance Theory

Reactance theory was introduced by (Brehm, 1966) to describe how individuals respond when their autonomy is threatened. In short, reactance theory suggests “that when personal freedom is reduced, eliminated, or threatened, a person will experience an unpleasant state of arousal (reactance) that triggers attempts to recover or reestablish the lost or threatened behavior” (Matarazzo & Diamantopoulos, 2022, p. 2). In other words, reactance triggers individuals to attempt to reestablish lost freedoms, and the stronger the threat to the freedom, the greater the reactance. Additionally, reactance theory has been applied in different marketing contexts including consumer reactions to scarcity (Gupta & Gentry, 2019) and use in marketing tactics (Jaidev, 2020), among others.

Ammunition is a prime candidate for the scarcity-value relationship as this relationship is usually connected to items for which individuals feel they *should* have access to (Worchel, 1992). This is compounded when or if the consumer perceives a previously available freedom is removed. The sudden limitation and unknown threat to future limitations of ammunition represent a significant threat to consumers’ freedom of choice. This is particularly important for individuals who believe in the use of ammunition for self-defense. Thus, the scarcity of ammunition triggers an intense reaction, as it impacts a freedom that has also been triggered before. This threat could be perceived as impactful to other freedoms in the future, such as gun rights, potentially causing a greater reactance.

Methods

Grounded Theory

We applied a grounded theory (GT) approach to this research. Grounded theory is primarily a qualitative research methodology that, if conducted well, can provide deep insights into and understanding of social phenomena. Its objective is to build theory from data obtained in the field and grounded in the words and actions of people going about solving problems on a day-to-day basis (Mello et al., 2021).

Our primary method for data collection used the long interview (Patton, 2002). An interview guide containing open-ended questions and prompts was used. Most interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded, and we analyzed them using Atlas.ti, a computer program used to code text. The coding took place in two cycles (Saldana, 2009). The first cycle consisted of open coding. During this cycle, we broke the text into smaller “meaning units” with codes that were representative of our interpretations of what the participants were saying (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Next, cycle two of coding used a coding paradigm developed by Strauss (1987). In this cycle we organized the open codes into both categories and their corresponding properties.

We initially employed opportunistic sampling to find participants. Opportunistic sampling can be beneficial to inductive, theory-building studies such as the one we conducted (Miles et al., 2014). Our participants were located via contacts with various sport shooting associations and shooting ranges, and selected due to their willingness to share their experiences as consumers during the ammunition shortage. We also applied theoretical sampling methods for subsequent participant recruitment. Theoretical sampling is a qualitative research process in which the analyst collects, codes, and analyzes data, then decides what additional data to collect and where to look for that data (Glaser, 2001). We employed this method mid-way into the study to select additional participants based on variations in participant demographics and ways in which ammunition was consumed. We did this in order to see whether these factors influenced consumer strategies for obtaining ammunition.

We interviewed fourteen participants before determining that theoretical saturation had been achieved (see Table 1 for a list of participants). Theoretical saturation occurs when no additional data can be found that furthers the research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We determined that theoretical saturation had been reached when we stopped hearing new information about consumer behavior during the phenomenon.

Table 1: Qualitative Interview Participants

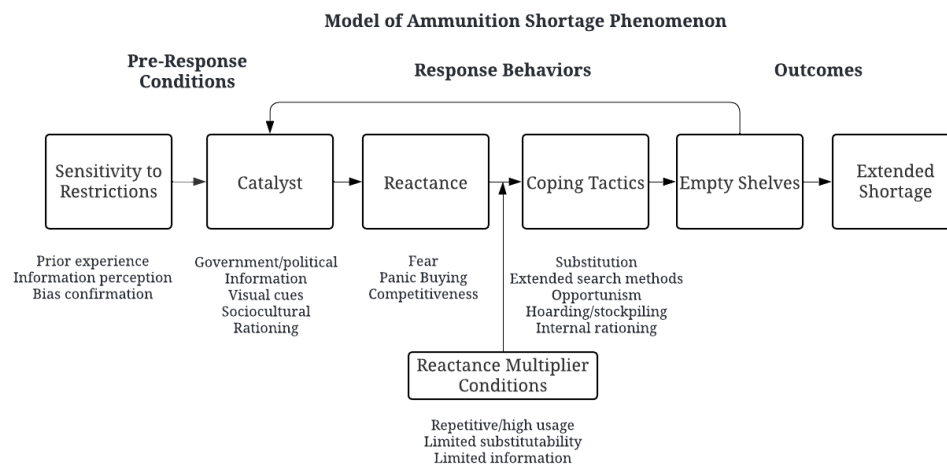
Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Primary Use
Betsy	38	Female	Bookkeeper	Trap Shooting
Sam	51	Male	College Professor	Target Shooting
Phillip	42	Male	Programmer	Target Shooting

Harry	68	Male	Executive Coach	Target Shooting
Audie	53	Male	Shooting Range Owner	Target Shooting
Bill	63	Male	College Administrator	Target Shooting
Henry	45	Male	Office Manager	Trap Shooting
David	38	Male	Seed Salesperson	Trap Shooting
Martin	45	Male	High School Teacher	Trap Shooting
George	68	Male	Shooting Range Manager	Trap Shooting
Chester	39	Male	Press Operator	Target Shooting
Arthur	30	Male	Small Business Owner	Target Shooting
Roland	63	Male	Retired Steel Worker	Target Shooting
Jamie	38	Male	Police Training Officer	Target Shooting

Findings

Two categories emerged from selective coding: Pre-Response Conditions and Response Behaviors. Consistent with the aims of grounded theory, these categories appear to explain the majority of behavior on the part of consumers during the two periods of ammunition shortages we investigated. Figure 1 depicts our findings by identifying these categories, their properties, and indicates the outcome of this behavior.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model for Consumer Reactance to Scarcity



Pre-Response Conditions

We define Pre-Response Conditions as exogenous and endogenous conditions that dispose consumers to change their normal buying behaviors. Two properties of the Pre-Response Conditions were identified: *Sensitivity to Restrictions* and *Catalysts*. *Sensitivity to Restrictions* involves endogenous factors (e.g., prior experience, information, visual cues, sociocultural, and rationing) that predispose consumers to react strongly to perceived threats to their ability to obtain products, in this case, ammunition. *Catalysts* are exogenous events (e.g., government/political, information, visual cues, sociocultural, and rationing) that serve to trigger consumer behavior by creating perceived threats. Each of these properties have elements that pertain to, but are not necessarily limited to, ammunition shortages.

Response Behaviors

We define Response Behaviors as ways consumers react to the stimulus of catalysts and subsequently deal with shortages of goods they desire. We found three properties of Response Behaviors: *Reactance*, *Reactance Multiplier Conditions*, and *Coping Tactics*. We found several aspects of *reactance* to catalyst that appeared to our participants as potential threats to their personal freedom (i.e. their ability to pursue shooting sports). These aspects of *reactance* include fear, panic buying, and competitiveness. Our data points to a second property of response behaviors, which are the endogenous and exogenous conditions that intensify consumer reactance (i.e., *reactance multiplier conditions*). The data suggests that repetitive and high usage of the product, limited substitutability due to lack of components, and a lack of information leading to an uncertain duration of the shortages, may well have worked together to increase reactance on the part of consumers to the lack of stock at the retail level. A third property of Response Behaviors we identified is *coping tactics* used by consumers to attempt to deal with ammunition shortages. The tactics emerging from the data were substitution, extended search methods, opportunism, hoarding/stockpiling, and internal rationing. These coping tactics demonstrate the persistence and innovation of consumers during this period. Consumers thus utilized a variety of strategies to attempt to mitigate the shortage of ammunition. Interestingly, the outcomes of these strategies may have produced unintended consequences.

Outcomes

Pre-response conditions (i.e., sensitivity to restrictions and catalysts to response) appear to have driven the consumer reactance. Consumers employed specific coping tactics, often impacted by multiplier conditions, that drove specific outcomes such as empty shelves. This led to strategies which seem to have worsened the shortage. In particular, extended search methods, opportunistic buying, and hoarding/stockpiling ensured that there was little to no stock available at retail establishments, or that when there was stock it sold out quickly. Substituting reloading for retail purchases may have alleviated some of the shortage at first, but the increase in volume of component purchases had an eventual effect on those supplies as well. In this phenomenon, consumers, through their actions, both caused and perpetuated the problem. Ironically, the effectiveness of their strategies appears to have created a situation that made it even more difficult for manufacturers and retailers to correct. It is likely that the constantly empty shelves acted as an additional catalyst, further driving reactance and its accompanying coping tactics; this in turn led to extended shortages.

Discussion

The purpose of grounded theory is to develop a theory using categories, and properties of those categories, that explains behavior in a phenomenon. In this research two categories emerged from the data. The first category is pre-response conditions, with the properties of sensitivity to restrictions and catalyst. We found that a sensitivity to restrictions made consumers more aware of, and more likely to react to, conditions that appear to be a threat to their freedom to purchase ammunition. The property of catalyst is any condition or event that specifically initiates a reaction on the part of consumers to perceived or real threats to their ability to buy ammunition. The second condition is response behaviors, which we adapt from the literature to help explain the extreme nature of the two ammunition shortages under study. Three properties of reactance emerged: reactance to the threat to consumers' freedom, reactance multipliers that appear to have increased the level of reactance, and coping tactics used by consumers to find ways to deal with the shortages. We also found that these coping tactics, along with the persistence displayed by consumers in their quest for ammunition, could have made the shortage more extensive and last longer because of continuous empty shelves alarming consumers.

We believe that an opportunity exists to bring our theory toward more formal theory. Formal grounded theory seeks to extend "...the general applications of a core variable [category] by sampling more widely in the original substantive area and in other substantive areas ... with the purpose to conceptualize the general implications" (Glaser, 2007, p. 100). Our future research direction is to test our model using data from the consumer staples shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic to uncover the similarities and differences in behavior between the two phenomena, with the purpose of verifying and adjusting the model to potentially explain and predict consumer behavior during extreme shortages at a more general level. Extreme shortages occur often throughout the world. We seek to add to the

understanding of how these shortages initiate, how consumers act during these shortages, and potentially how marketers may be able to play a role in preventing, or at least reducing, the severity of such shortages.

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Summary Brief

Service Robots in Hotels: Impact on Brand Perception and Guest Intentions

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Service robots are becoming more prevalent in hospitality settings where customers face opportunities to interact with them. This study explored themes related to hotel guests who have interacted with service robots and then examined hotel guests who have stayed at a service robot hotel's perceptions and intentions. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study is designed using a mixed-method with both qualitative and quantitative approach. Findings from online reviews revealed four main themes: human-robot interactions, brand equity, brand image, and behavioral intentions. Findings from the structural model revealed that perceived value is a significant predictor of perceived brand innovativeness, brand equity, and behavioral intentions. Significant group differences were present among guests with high interaction exposure with a service robot compared to guests with no interaction exposure in perceived value and behavioral intentions. Configurations were generated to find sufficient combinations to generate outcomes like online review intentions and revisit intentions. This study contributes to expanding SET in the service robot context and providing managers insight into the ramifications of implementing service robots in hotel settings.

Introduction

This study, grounded in social exchange theory (SET), examined hotel guests' value perceptions and behavioral intentions after staying in a hotel with service robots. There are numerous contributions to the literature. First, the proposed framework relating to perceived value, branding, and behavioral intentions has not been seen in previous studies. Second, the relationships between perceived value, branding, and behavioral intentions found in this study with different group effects have not been seen in previous literature. Finally, the methodology of content analysis leading into multi-group analysis and fsQCA expands this process grounded in SET into the literature.

Study Background

Interactions between service robots and humans. SET (Homans, 1958) describes the negotiated and reciprocal exchange of activity in social interaction (Molm, 1991) suggesting that exchanges reflect how costs and rewards influence interactions (Kim et al., 2022; Molm, 1991). SET has been used in broader hospitality contexts to explain concepts related to employees and customers. (Meira & Hancer, 2021; Rather & Hollebeek, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). In service robot contexts, SET has been applied to aid in explaining human-robot interactions (Kim et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023), and this study seeks to fill gaps in the literature related to branding in hotels with service robots. The inclusion of service robots into brands' marketing materials and experiences further illustrates the need to investigate what leads to different outcomes relating to guests' intentions.

Discussion

While previous literature has explored the dynamics between brand innovativeness, brand equity, perceived value, and behavioral intentions separately, a framework has not been proposed to study how these constructs interact in one model. This study provides new findings regarding how the exposure that guests receive from interacting with robots leads to differences in their perceptions of value and future intentions. The results of this study, through symmetric and asymmetric analysis, show that more interactions with service robots led to higher perceived hedonic value and more intentions to write an online review. Less exposure to service robots while still seeing them in the service setting led to higher perceptions of utilitarian value and more intentions to revisit the hotel property. Managers can use these results to discern the outcomes related to deploying service robots in their hotels. Destination marketers can take these results into account when determining what service robots to highlight at various properties in their location.

References Available Upon Request.

Summary Brief

Vicarious Consumption in the Digital Age

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Modern technologies have changed the entertainment industry by allowing consumers to document and share any experience, ranging from playing a video game to performing household chores to unpackaging their purchases. Consumers now spend trillions of hours vicariously engrossed in the consumption of others in addition to, or in lieu of, having their own consumption experiences. Using in-depth interviews, we demonstrate that this novel and increasingly ubiquitous phenomenon is a modern form of vicarious consumption (VC), and from this we develop a typology of vicarious consumption experiences. In doing so we identify a source of consumer value heretofore unstudied in the marketing literature. We identify “action-based” value, defined by the material and conceptual gratifications from VC, unique to this burgeoning field. Then we report two experiments that validate our typology and show downstream consequences of different forms of vicarious consumption.

Introduction

In today’s digital landscape, content depicting others’ consumption is ubiquitous—from watching someone else play a video game to looking at pictures of people eating—with global demand. For example, content showing consumers completing household cleaning chores garners hundreds of billions of views across social media platforms, and “oddly satisfying” videos feature clips depicting an array of consumption activities, ranging from playing with sand to mowing lawns. This emerging form of entertainment brings with it new forms of consumer value, and the current research posits that extant literature is unable to fully address it. This necessitates developing a comprehensive understanding of the immense popularity of watching others consume.

In the current research, we use a grounded theory approach to advance a typology of this media consumption behavior and link many forms of media consumption to the singular practice of *vicarious consumption* (VC). We augment interdisciplinary literatures with in-depth interviews with vicarious consumers to develop unique insights into the field of VC. From these data, we develop a broad typology that can accommodate the full diversity of VC as it exists in the field. Through this process we identify “action-based” value as a novel form of consumer value, derived from VC that is incremental to value found in other media consumption and largely unstudied in extant literature. Finally, we conduct quantitative follow-up studies to test the validity of our typology and provide a foundation for conducting future work in this burgeoning area.

This work makes two primary contributions. Foremost, we consolidate extant work on various forms of media consumption. Motivations for watching content such as reality TV, video game streams, and product unboxings have all come under scholarly investigation. Under our framework, these diverse genres and many others are unified under the overarching practice of VC (see Figure below), addressing calls for research with broad explanations for why people use social media. Second, we identify action-based value as a novel gratification available to vicarious consumers. In doing so, we shed light on what it means for content to be “oddly satisfying,” and broaden the study of VC by describing a fundamental dimension of its value.

Background

Early work in marketing described VC as a form of pre-purchase mental imagery that allows consumers to experience some of the benefits associated with a product or service while mitigating financial and time costs (MacInnis and Price 1987). Scholars have more recently acknowledged the role of VC elements in shopping wish-lists (Groening, Wiggins, and Raoofpanah 2020). The adjacent fields of psychology, communications, and media studies have investigated content such as reality television, unboxing videos, video game watching, and mukbangs without classifying them as VC. Across these literatures, extant work demonstrates a strong focus on the use of VC to gain information or personal value, including emotional and social experiences (e.g., Kim 2020).

However, observations of the field suggest vicarious consumers derive more from VC than the well-established sources of informational and personal value. For example, in mukbang videos, primary consumers often amplify the sounds of their eating to give vicarious consumers a more vivid experience and enable a more favorable proxy for firsthand consumption (Choe 2019). Similarly, #CleanTok videos attract massive followings often without explicit information or even true human presence. Evidently, the traditional uses of VC (e.g., navigating desirability

and feasibility) and its sources of value to vicarious consumers (e.g., information, [para]sociality, emotional transfer) are still present in modern instantiations of VC. However, the explosive proliferation and the nature of modern VC content suggest further theoretical insights can be derived from its study.

Key Findings

In Study 1 we conducted 57 in-depth interviews with vicarious consumers to explore their motivations for VC and what they feel they gain from it. In doing so, we identify a novel source of value found in VC which we term “action-based” value. Action-based value is derived from material gratifications of the consumption act (e.g., appetizing sounds in food preparation) as well as conceptual gratifications (e.g., the satisfaction associated with cleanliness), and occurs outside of the information gained or personal value in VC. We also use these insights to create a typology of VC experiences. Because VC is inherently focused on a consumption act, we conceptualize action-based value as consistent across quadrants of the typology, while personal and informational value vary (see Figure).

Study 2 is an experiment which we use to validate our typology and examine downstream consequences. Using real content from social media that depict food preparation, we find that the prominence of informational ($F(3, 399) = 41.17, p < .001$) and personal value ($F(3, 399) = 24.99, p < .001$) are observable traits that vary between instances of VC, while action-based value was central to all examples ($p > .5$). Critically, the VC content that minimized informational and personal value, prioritizing action-based value, yielded the highest immersion and digital consumer engagement ($\beta = .543, SE = .157, 95\% CI: .235, .856$).

Study 3 is an experiment that investigates the contributions of sensory media to action-based value, and their downstream effects on intentions toward vicariously consumed products. We find that both audio and video make unique contributions to action-based value ($F(2, 311) = 11.96, p < .001$). Further, action-based value is more predictive of immersion than informational or personal value. Finally, we observe that, by maximizing action-based value and immersion, content creators can generate greater digital consumer engagement as well as willingness-to-pay for the focal product.

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SESSION 7.4: THE FIRST TECHNOLOGY THAT HAS NO LIMIT

Moderator:

Mohan Menon

Full Paper

Technology Vs Humanity: The Future of Customer Service with AI Agents

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This paper investigates the interaction between artificial intelligence agents and human agents in customer service, with a particular focus on user reactions to service inaccuracies. It looks into how technological changes in customer service influence consumer satisfaction with the efficiency of AI agents, compared to human agents. We have found that the AI agents were more efficient and consistent than the human agents for tasks that are low in complexity, which resulted in higher dissatisfaction among users for the cases of service inaccuracy. This research helps understand the new landscape for customer service evolving nowadays, which requires a balanced integration of human limitations and AI efficiency to optimize consumer experiences in the digitalized marketplace.

Introduction

In the changing realm of customer service, the incorporation of technology, especially via AI agents, stands at the forefront of priorities for both businesses and consumers. This unyielding progression of technological innovation heralds notable improvements in both efficiency and the dynamics of customer interaction (Wells et al., 1999). Yet, this evolution also raises questions regarding the essence of customer service, the crucial role of human limitations, and whether technology should complement or replace traditional human-driven services (Chaturvedi & Verma, 2023). Traditionally, customer service was exclusively a human domain, where businesses flourished through direct interactions, deeply valuing human attributes like empathy, understanding, and personal attention. These elements were not just appreciated; they were fundamental to customer satisfaction (Roslan & Ahmad, 2023). Yet, the digital revolution has introduced a paradigm shift where these once inviolable pillars are now being enhanced—or occasionally supplanted—by AI agents. This transformation is motivated by the prospects of enhanced efficiency, reduced costs, and the capacity to expand service capabilities, enabling around-the-clock customer support free from human constraints (Piccoli et al., 2004).

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning in customer service through chatbots and AI-driven communication platforms has transformed customer expectations and experiences (Cui & van Esch, 2023). Capable of managing a wide spectrum of routine tasks—from fielding common inquiries to overseeing transactional interactions—these technologies liberate human agents to address more intricate issues that necessitate a human touch. The interplay of AI precision with human empathy forges a novel paradigm in customer service. This integration promises a hybrid model, merging the strengths of both technological and human elements, potentially achieving unparalleled customer satisfaction levels (Song et al., 2022). Nevertheless, integrating technology in customer service presents its own set of challenges. Notably, there is a significant concern regarding customers' perceptions of the competence of AI agents, especially in complex or emotionally charged scenarios where emotional intelligence is paramount. Additionally, the effectiveness of these human agents is often contingent on the human limitations. (Chaturvedi & Verma, 2023).

This paper will address these challenges by presenting studies that examine the relative effectiveness of human and AI agents across various customer service situations. It will evaluate how factors such as perceived competence and problem complexity impact customer satisfaction and trust. The research explores how service inaccuracies are perceived differently by customers, depending on whether they are attributed to human or AI errors. This will provide deeper insights into the subtle biases and expectations that influence customer experiences in today's digital landscape. Mainly, we intend to answer the following question in this research:

- RQ1: What is the users' response when they face customer service inaccuracies from an AI or a human agent?
- RQ2: How does the level of problem complexity influence these responses?

Literature Review

Customer Service and Its Evolution

Today, customer service is important for businesses, and it is essential for fostering deep connections between a business and its customers. This vital function not only builds trust and loyalty but also improves customer satisfaction through every interaction, from the first inquiry to support after the purchase (Innis & La Londe, 1994). More than just a series of transactions, customer service is the embodiment of a company's values, showcasing its dedication to surpassing customer expectations (Vredenburg & Wee, 1986). Customer service is fundamentally about insightfully addressing the wants and needs of customers. This involves more than just solving problems or responding to questions; it's about crafting experiences that linger in the memory, positively impacting the customer well beyond the conclusion of their purchase (Moliner et al., 2008).

In our fast-paced, hyperconnected era, the importance of acceptable customer service is more pronounced than ever. There are plenty of reasons why customer service is critical to business success. For starters, it has a direct effect on customer satisfaction, which influences brand loyalty and advocacy. Research consistently demonstrates that customers are inclined to keep patronizing businesses that excel at service, even at a higher cost. On the flip side, a single poor experience can deter customers permanently and damage a brand's reputation (Innis & La Londe, 1994). Today, the impact of subpar customer service can be immediate and devastating. A single dissatisfied customer can voice their displeasure to a worldwide audience, potentially harming the company's public image and financial health. In contrast, happy customers often become vocal proponents of the brand, spreading positive reviews and drawing in new customers (Yoon, 2008).

Also, effective customer service boosts operational efficiency and drives revenue. By efficiently handling complaints, quickly resolving problems, and preemptively meeting customer needs, companies can cut costs related to customer dissatisfaction and turnover. Satisfied customers are also more likely to make additional purchases, thereby increasing sales and enhancing the lifetime value of each customer (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990). Over the years, customer service has transformed dramatically, evolving in response to technological advancements and shifting consumer expectations in our increasingly digital world. This evolution has profoundly reshaped how businesses interact with their customers (Piccoli et al., 2004). Originally, in the days before widespread internet access, customer service was confined to traditional forms such as in-person visits and phone calls. Business hours were fixed, constraining when customers could reach out for help. This era required consumers to show considerable patience, as they navigated face-to-face discussions, mailed letters, or made telephone calls to address their concerns (Harrison, 1997).

However, today's landscape of customer service is vastly different, driven by relentless technological innovation and evolving consumer behaviors. One of the most notable transformations is the shift to 24/7 customer service availability. Thanks to the internet and various digital communication tools, businesses now offer support that transcends geographical and temporal barriers, catering to a global audience (Piccoli et al., 2004). Omnichannel support stands as a modern cornerstone of customer service, merging multiple communication platforms—such as telephone, email, chat, and social media—into a seamless customer experience. This integration ensures that consumers can engage with businesses through their preferred channels, enhancing convenience and flexibility (Piccoli et al., 2004).

The introduction of both human and AI agents has further revolutionized customer interactions. Artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots are increasingly prevalent, handling routine inquiries swiftly and efficiently, which allows human agents to devote more time to complex issues that require deep empathy and advanced problem-solving skills. Also, the application of AI extends beyond simple task automation. Today's customer service systems use data analytics and machine learning to understand customer behaviors and preferences deeply. These insights drive personalized interactions and targeted support, allowing businesses to anticipate needs and proactively address potential problems before they escalate (Piccoli et al., 2004).

AI Vs. Human Customer Service Agents

The choice between AI and human agents in customer service remains a dynamic debate, characterized by the unique strengths and limitations of each. AI agents are celebrated for their ability to swiftly manage large volumes of queries. Their round-the-clock availability significantly boosts customer satisfaction by ensuring help is always at hand, regardless of the time (Leocádio et al., 2024). Yet, for all their speed and efficiency, AI agents often stumble when faced with intricate or emotionally charged issues. Their lack of emotional intelligence and inability to grasp subtleties in human interactions can lead to responses that lack empathy and finesse, which are crucial in sensitive or complicated situations (Reis, 2024). Conversely, human agents excel in areas where AI agents falter. The human touch in communication—marked by empathy, understanding, and adaptability—is irreplaceable, especially in complex scenarios or when a deep connection is required. Human agents can tailor their interactions to

the specific emotional and contextual nuances of each customer, fostering trust and a sense of genuine care (Reis, 2024).

Deciding between AI and human agents hinges on the specifics of the customer's needs. AI agents are unparalleled in efficiency for straightforward, routine inquiries. However, for issues that demand empathy and a personalized approach—traits that only humans can offer—human agents are indispensable (Xiao & Kumar, 2021). Looking forward, the optimal customer service model will likely integrate the high efficiency of AI agents with the empathetic capacity of human agents. This hybrid approach promises a customer service landscape that is not only highly efficient but also deeply attuned to the human aspects of customer interaction (Xiao & Kumar, 2021). Service inaccuracies elicit different reactions from customers based on whether a human or a AI agent provided the service. Research indicates that customers are generally more forgiving when errors are made by humans agents rather than AI agents, likely because expectations for chatbots' problem-solving skills and flexibility are usually lower (Groth & Grandey, 2012). Also, there's a notable tendency for customers to assign more blame to AI agents than to their human counterparts in the event of service inaccuracies. This trend is well-documented in several studies, which suggest that customers often perceive mistakes as inherent flaws in the automation of services (Groth & Grandey, 2012).

These insights highlight the critical role of managing customer expectations and perceptions regarding the performance of AI agents in customer service. Despite the efficiency and constant availability offered by AI agents, businesses need to be keenly aware of how inaccuracies might affect customer satisfaction and trust. Ensuring effective communication and maintaining transparency are vital strategies to alleviate the adverse impacts of service inaccuracies, whether they stem from human or AI agents (Wagenheim & Reurink, 1991).

Competence of AI Vs. Human Agents

Perceived competence is a pivotal concept in customer service, reflecting how customers judge an agent's capability to execute tasks proficiently. This perception significantly influences customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, whether the agent is human or AI. Perceived competence encapsulates a customer's belief in an agent's abilities, shaped by the agent's knowledge, skills, responsiveness, and dependability (Gao & Mattila, 2014). When customers view an agent as competent, they are more inclined to trust their recommendations, feel content with the services received, and cultivate a favorable view of the company (Fiske et al., 2018). This perception isn't just about objective performance but also hinges on subjective perceptions and expectations. For instance, customers might see AI agents as more adept at certain tasks due to their rapid, efficient, and precise handling of data. Conversely, human agents might be viewed as better suited for dealing with complex or emotionally charged matters that demand empathy and intuitive understanding (Schneider & Kummert, 2021). To boost customer service experiences, businesses need to focus on enhancing perceived competence through comprehensive agent training, advanced technology, and effective communication strategies, which can lead to heightened customer satisfaction and loyalty (Scheunemann et al., 2020).

The perception that AI agents exhibit greater competence in certain aspects of customer service stems from multiple factors. In terms of data processing abilities, AI agents come equipped with superior data processing capabilities, allowing them to analyze extensive data sets swiftly and offer pertinent responses to customer inquiries.

Evidence shows that AI agents are particularly adept at handling structured data and performing predefined tasks with high accuracy. This efficiency in data handling enables them to provide quick, precise support, boosting their perceived competence (Chen & Barnes, 2013). In terms of lack of human limitations, AI agents are immune to human constraints like fatigue, emotional variability, and biases. This absence of human frailties allows them to perform consistently and reliably under varying conditions. They can sustain optimal performance levels for prolonged durations, ensuring a uniform and high-quality customer service experience (Chen & Barnes, 2014). In terms of speed, efficiency, and responsiveness, AI agents excel, providing fast and efficient replies to customer queries. Their ability to fetch and process information instantaneously minimizes wait times and elevates customer satisfaction. Additionally, AI agents can address multiple inquiries at once, enhancing their capacity to manage customer interactions more effectively (Peng et al., 2016).

Additionally, in terms of precision and consistency, AI agents are programmed for precision and consistency in their customer interactions. They strictly follow predefined algorithms and protocols, ensuring that their responses remain accurate and uniform across all customer engagements. This reliability builds customer trust and bolsters the image of AI agents as competent and dependable service providers (Daronnat et al., 2020). Also, in terms of multitasking capabilities, the ability to multitask efficiently is another significant advantage of AI agents. They can handle various inquiries and tasks concurrently, effectively managing high volumes of customer interactions without a drop in service quality. This skill demonstrates their adeptness in navigating complex, high-

demand customer service scenarios (Chen et al., 2013). As a result, the first two hypotheses of the research are as follows:

H1: In case of service inaccuracies, people will assign higher levels of dissatisfaction to AI agents compared to human agents.

H2: Perceived competence mediates the relationship between agent type and consumer dissatisfaction.

The Role of Problem Complexity on People's Perception of an Agent

Because of consumers' perception of agents' competence mentioned above, we hypothesized that, in typical service inaccuracy conditions, customers often express higher levels of dissatisfaction with AI agents compared to human agents. This can be attributed to the perception that AI agents, given their precision and efficiency, should perform flawlessly, and when they fail, the disappointment is magnified. AI agents are perceived as more competent in handling straightforward, routine tasks due to their data processing capabilities and consistent performance. Therefore, any failure in these areas tends to lead to greater dissatisfaction because the expectations for AI accuracy are inherently higher (Huang & Rust, 2021; Salimzadeh et al., 2023). However, this dynamic shifts significantly when the complexity of the problem increases. In high complexity scenarios, issues are multifaceted and may require nuanced understanding and empathy, and AI agents are prone to errors and delays (Huang & Rust, 2018).

Human agents excel in complex problem-solving environments because of their ability to interpret nuanced information, think creatively, and adapt to unexpected challenges. As a result, customers may feel more comfortable with human agents in these situations, perceiving them as more reliable and competent (Salimzadeh et al., 2023). This suggests that the level of problem complexity plays a crucial role in moderating customer perceptions of agent performance. While human agents may initially be seen as less satisfactory in simple service errors, their perceived competence rises significantly in complex problem scenarios. This shift indicates that problem complexity is a key factor in determining whether customers prefer AI or human agents. As a result, the next hypothesis of the research is as follows:

H3: problem complexity moderates the mediation effect of perceived competence on agent type and dissatisfaction, resulting in moderated mediation.

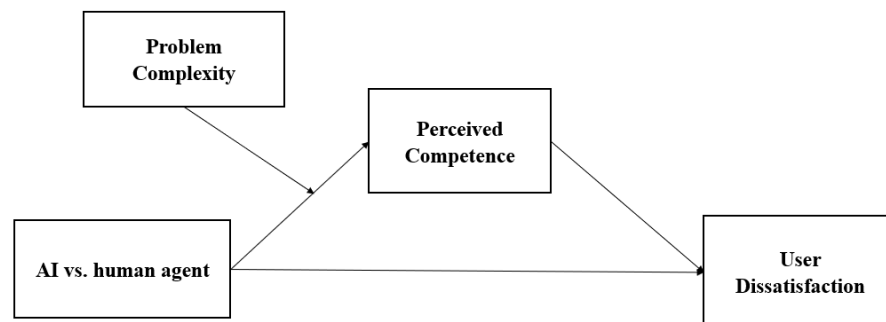


Figure 1: conceptual model

Overview of the Studies

We conducted two studies to investigate our hypotheses. The first study provides evidence that people assign higher levels of dissatisfaction to AI agents compared to human agents in the case of service inaccuracies. Also, we examine the mediating effect of perceived competence in this study. Study 2 provides more evidence for the abovementioned relationships, and it also explores the moderating role of problem complexity.

Design

Study 1

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether consumers exhibit lower levels of dissatisfaction to service rejections by a human agent compared to an AI agent. We hypothesize that human agents have less competence; therefore, if a human agent denies the request, individuals' level of dissatisfaction is less than that of an AI agent.

Method

As mentioned above, this study aims to show that people assign higher levels of dissatisfaction to AI agents compared to human agents in the case of service inaccuracies. To conduct the study, we recruited 208 participants from CloudResearch Connect (58% female; Mage = 35.4 years, SD = 10.75) (104 people per cell, 1*2 (AI vs Human agent)). Participants were told that the study focuses on understanding people's perceptions of a service experience. They were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions and were shown the following story:

You've recently booked a flight for an upcoming vacation, but due to unforeseen circumstances, you need to cancel your reservation and request a refund. As it is mentioned on the airline website, you contact the customer service department of the airline for assistance. After calling the customer service department, you are connected with a human (AI) customer service agent. The agent listens to your problem, asks probing questions to detect the issue thoroughly, and tries various troubleshooting methods. Despite several automated troubleshooting steps, the human (AI) agent is unable to resolve the issue and informs you that you will not be refunded for the ticket.

After reading the story, participants answered these questions regarding the level to which they think the agent was a human or an AI: 1. *during your interaction, to what extent did you perceive the agent you spoke with as being human (compared to a robot)?* 2. *To what extent did you feel like you were communicating with a real person during the interaction?* 3. *To what extent did you feel like the agent you interacted with could have emotions or empathy towards your situation?* (1= not at all, 7 = very much so) (Yuan et al., 2024). Then, they were asked to answer questions about their level of dissatisfaction (*To what extent did you feel about your experience on this occasion?* 1. *Dissatisfied* 2. *Displeased* 3. *Discontented*) and perceived competence (*To what extent do you think the agent is: competent, intelligent, efficient, and confident*) (1= not at all, 7 = very much so;) (Bougie et al., 2003; Rodgers et al., 2014).

Results

Our manipulation check results showed that participants in the human condition were significantly more likely to identify the service agent as human-like compared to those in the AI agent condition ($\chi^2[1] = 178.17, p < 0.01$). This result suggests that our manipulation was effective. Also, As predicted, participants showed higher level of dissatisfaction to an AI agent (MAI = 5.48 (SD = 1.41)) than a human agent (Mhuman = 4.77 (SD = 1.33), $F(1, 206) = 8.14, p < 0.01$). Additionally, the results showed that perceived competence played a mediating role in the effect of agent type on dissatisfaction level. Participants in the AI agent group showed higher levels of dissatisfaction because they believe that AI agents are more competent ($B = 0.27, t(205) = 1.67, p < 0.01$). The results confirmed the first two hypotheses.

Study 2

In the first study, we provided proof for the direct and mediation effects. The objective of study 2 is to investigate the moderating effect of problem complexity, hypothesizing that for complex issues, users will experience higher levels of dissatisfaction with human agents in the case of service inaccuracies, and conversely, with simpler issues, dissatisfaction will be greater with AI agents.

Method

To conduct this study, we recruited 371 participants from CloudResearch Connect in a 2x2 design (AI vs. human agent, low vs. high levels of problem complexity). Participants were shown the following scenarios for the high and low level of complexity:

High complexity: *You've recently bought a car, and after activating its warranty, you discover that the car has these issues:*

- *The battery loses charge quickly due to parasitic draw from electrical components.*
- *Power seats do not adjust properly due to electrical malfunctions.*
- *The engine runs unevenly when the car is stationary.*
- *The car consumes more fuel than expected.*
- *The air conditioning fails to cool the car adequately*

You call the car company's customer service to address these issues using your car warranty. After calling the customer service department, you are connected with a human (/AI) customer service agent. You try to explain the issues to the agent, and the agent listens to your issue and attempts various methods to resolve it. However, after several troubleshooting steps, the human (AI) agent is unable to fix the problem and informs you that your car's warranty does not cover these issues.

Low complexity: *You've recently bought a car, and upon trying to activate its warranty, you find that you need to provide a copy of your purchase receipt to complete the activation. You decide to contact the company's customer service to resolve this issue and to activate the warranty for the car.*

After calling the customer service department, you are connected with a human (/AI) customer service agent. The agent listens to your issue and attempts various methods to resolve it. However, after several troubleshooting steps, the human (AI) agent is unable to fix the problem and informs you that you are not eligible to receive the one-year warrantee for the car.

Like the previous study, participants responded to questions about the extent to which they believed the agent was a human or an AI, their level of dissatisfaction, and perceived competence.

Results

Like the previous study, participants in the chatbot condition were significantly more likely to identify the service agent as AI-powered compared to those in the human service agent condition. This result suggests that our manipulation was effective. Also, as predicted, in the low complexity conditions, participants found it more acceptable when this refusal came from a human agent $MAI = 5.12$ ($SD = 1.38$) than an AI agent $M_{human} = 3.98$ ($SD = 1.22$), $p < 0.001$. Additionally, we tested whether perceived competence played a mediating role in the effect of agent type on dissatisfaction level. As predicted, the agent type significantly perceived competence and dissatisfaction level. Besides that, problem complexity moderates the relationship between agent type and perceived competence ($B = -0.15$, $t(367) = -2.75$, $p < 0.01$). The results confirmed hypothesis 3, saying that problem complexity moderates the mediating effect of perceived competence on agent type and dissatisfaction with moderated mediation.

General Discussion, Implications, and Future Research

This research explores the dynamics between AI and human agents in customer service with particular attention to how service inaccuracies affect consumer satisfaction. The results draw an intricate landscape where technological advance plays powerful effects on the user's interactions, but the human elements remain central to preserving satisfaction. The integration of AI in customer service brings about significant efficiencies, particularly in dealing with large volumes of inquiries fast and accurately. AI agents are good at routine tasks owing to the capabilities of handling data and uniformity. Their lack of emotional intelligence makes them weak compared to a human in a situation that calls for empathy and contextual understanding. This study underlines that even if AI agents surpass their human counterparts in operational efficiency, they cannot fully replace human agents whenever the context requires emotional sensitivity.

In this research, we showed that service inaccuracies elicit different reactions depending on the agent type. Customers seem more tolerant of human errors, but AI agents frequently appear less competent in handling nonroutine and complex or emotionally loaded issues despite their efficiency with routine ones. The notion of perceived competence becomes the critical mediator of customer satisfaction. Customer trust and loyalty flow mainly from the perception of an agent's competence, whether that of a human or an AI agent. This suggests a need for unending training programs for human agents and a further advance in the algorithms used by AI agents for interaction. This comes down to consumer technological proficiency, where a tech-savvy customer is more likely to appreciate the efficiency of AI agents. In contrast, a not-so-proficient one might get frustrated with automated systems.

The current study is helpful in understanding the interplay between AI and human agents in customer service. However, there remain several limitations that necessitate further investigation. For example, this study is focused on the inaccuracy of service; there may be other aspects of customer service interactions that were not covered. Future research can extend this to include more dimensions of customer service, including proactive services, upsell, and long-term customer relationship management. Also, the scenarios outlined in the studies were hypothetical and, therefore could not represent the depth of complexity and emotional intensity characteristic of a real-life interaction with a customer. Future studies should try to incorporate real-world case studies or field experiments that could serve as a means of validating and extending findings.

Thoughtful implementation of this hybrid model will indeed revolutionize customer service toward being accessible, reliable, and, most importantly, focused on customers. This study provides a baseline from which further research can be done on the changing nature of customer service and an emphasis on the balanced approach to using technology and human empathy when optimizing consumer experience within a digital marketplace.

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Summary Brief

Artificial Intelligence: Progression, Price Tag, & Potential

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The AI enthusiasts and the doomsday futurists have one thing in common: they both believe AI will have a significant impact on the human race. Given the nascent state of AI both these camps seem to be drawing conclusions on effects of AI based on a few applications and a lot of panic. As with any emerging technology, there is some level of misplaced optimism and derision surrounding the impact of AI. For all intents and purposes, AI is in the introduction stage of the life cycle and there are many questions regarding costs and other adverse considerations. At the same time, there are developments in this space that provide hope for marketers to use AI either as stand-alone applications or as part of a solution for their broad-based situations. While many academic papers generally offer a euphoric view of what AI can do in their fields, this paper tries a balanced approach to understanding the adverse and the propitious view of AI especially in the marketing space.

Introduction

In a podcast for McKinsey Digital, Silicon Valley Pioneer Reid Hoffman that AI is the “steam engine of the mind” that promises to profoundly alter professional and personal lives.” (Hoffman, 2024) The idea of AI is as old as the computer itself. Once seen as a pipe dream, it has metamorphosed into the limelight and entered the public consciousness only recently. “Artificial Intelligence is a paradigm of computing that aims to mimic human intelligence, enabling machines to learn from experience, adapt to new inputs, and perform tasks that traditionally require human intervention” (AI, 2023). AI seems to be defined in multiple ways. In another instance, AI is explained as a “constellation of many different technologies working together to enable machines to sense, comprehend, act, and learn with human-like levels of intelligence (Accenture, 2023). Yet another describes AI as a system that “makes it possible for machines to learn from experience, adjust to new inputs and perform human-like tasks (SAS Insights, 2018).

At the heart of AI is the belief that humans can create systems that can learn, comprehend, and apply the learning to solve problems. The idea here is to extend human capabilities and possibly automate routine human tasks thereby allowing humans to mind higher order problem solving. Many scholars believe that AI can be utilized to solve not only existential problems such as climate change but also automate repetitive tasks. But, in the midst of this optimism, what is seldom discussed is that such transformative technologies costs are borne by AI hosts and clients in using and maintaining these systems. For instance, at the heart of AI is the Nvidia H100 AI GPUs that cost around \$40,000 (Shilov, 2024). While AI integration into business processes can drive new efficiencies, better customer experiences, etc., there is a huge cost associated with this journey. A survey of by the Federal Reserve Banks of Atlanta & Richmond and Duke University found that 61 percent of the companies plan to use AI within a year to automate tasks, such as creating and paying invoices, etc. that are now done by humans (Egan, 2024). This is in addition to creating job posts, writing press releases and building out marketing campaigns.

“AI is more than just technology; it’s creating a new economy (Hildebrand, 2019). Accordingly, AI is creating new type so competition, value chains, and novel ways of orchestrating economies around the world (Hildebrand, 2019). At the outset, some of the implications of AI in marketing might be in the areas of integrated digital marketing, content marketing, experiential marketing, market research and marketing operations, etc. (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022). Respondents in a study of AI in marketing reported that AI is either “very” or “critically important” to their marketing efforts (Coursera, 2024). The site Chief Marketer cited some concern about how Google might handle AI generated content when displaying search results (Evans, 2024).

The Genesis of AI

This section tries to provide perspective on the development of Artificial Intelligence through the years to where it is today.

Early Periods

While AI might be considered a field within the technology space, it evolved with contributions from various fields such as computer science, mathematics, neuroscience, psychology, philosophy etc. While many of the basic ideas in AI can be traced to its roots in the Turing machine, it might go further than that in the past. The idea of intelligent machines could be traced to ancient myths and fictional stories such as the Pygmalion (Greek) and medieval tales of golems. Later, philosophers such as Rene Descartes and Thomas Hobbes speculated whether human thought processes can be mechanized. Descartes' notion of dualism and Hobbes' materialism laid some early groundwork for thinking about artificial minds (AI, 2023; (Zaslavsky, 2024) .

In the 1930s, Alan Turing introduced the Turing Machine that was capable of simulating other machines' logic and thus laying the foundation for modern computer and Artificial Intelligence. In 1950, he proposed the Turing Test that imagined a scenario where a human (Party A) engages in a conversation with a hidden entity – man or machine (Party B). If Party A cannot reliably distinguish whether she/he had the interaction with a machine or human, then the machine is considered to have achieved human-level intelligence. The Turing Test sparked ample discussions in the AI field and laid the groundwork for intelligent behavior for machines. Alan Turing was an optimist in that he predicted intelligent machines by the end of the century. Unfortunately, despite his optimism, the general society seemed anxious and feared the consequences. Their anxieties were also fueled by science fiction movies such as “Metropolis” (1927), “The Day the Earth Stood Still” (1951).

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Von Neumann Architecture became the basis for most computer systems that allowed stored programs and complex computations. Norbert Wiener's work on cybernetics in the 1940 explored systems, controls, and communication machines. Later on, Boolean Algebra in the mid-19th century became critical to develop digital circuit design and computation. These influenced the early thinking on AI. A program called Logic Theorist created by Allen Newell and Herbert Simon in 1956 is generally considered the first AI program capable of proving mathematical theorems. In 1957, the General Problem Solver was introduced by Newell and Simon that was capable of mimicking human problem solving. Also in 1956, the Dartmouth Conference organized by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude Shannon is often seen as the birth of AI as a field. This conference brought together notable thinkers to discuss the possibility of creating ‘thinking machines.’ Some experts believe that the period after the Dartmouth Conference is the AI maturation phase with researchers delving deeper and laying the foundation for Machine Learning Algorithms, Natural Language processing, Experts systems, etc. During 1958, John McCarthy developed LISP, a programming language that became the standard for AI research because of its handling of symbolic information.

As with many technological breakthroughs, the early optimism and exuberance were followed by periods of disillusionment and lack of progress known as ‘AI winters.’ There were several AI Winters including during 1987-1993 (AI, 2023)

AI Resurgence and Advancements (1980s – 1990s):

The development and success of Expert systems fueled a renewed interest in AI. Programs such as MYCIN could conduct medical diagnosis, use large databases of knowledge and inference rules to make health care decisions. During the same period, the Backpropagation Algorithm developed by Geoffery Hinton and others allowed more effective training of neural networks, therefore inspiring advancements in machine learning. Similarly, robotics and computer vision research began to intersect with AI research leading to applications in various industries. This boom period witnessed advances in AI technologies and along with this came increases in government funding and interest from businesses.

AI in the Modern Era (2000s to Present):

With the advent of the Internet and its accelerated adoption by the masses lead to the explosion of big data and advances in computational power allowed for more complex models and deeper learning systems. Powerful Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) enabled faster computations that are require for training deep learning models. Hence the demand for Nvidia chips to power the AI systems. In 2012, models such as AlexNet developed by Geoffery Hinton and team demonstrated the power of deep neural networks in image recognition tasks. Similarly, Natural Language Processing (NLP) enabled techniques such as Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) and transformers such as GPT resulting in significant improvements in language processing - understanding and generation (Aggarwal, 2024).

Types of Artificial Intelligence

Experts agree on the three general types of AI and they are Machine Learning, Deep Learning, and Neural Networks. In this section these three types are detailed.

Machine Learning (ML):

Machine Learning is the science of getting computers to learn from data and improve over time without being explicitly programmed. It identifies patterns and makes predictions based on historical data. ML is the foundation for most AI systems today. An example of this would be the machine predicting stock market trends based on past market data. Deep Learning (DL): Deep Learning, a subset of ML, employs neural networks with three or more layers to analyze various factors of data. These neural networks are capable of analyzing complex data to identify patterns and features. Voice recognition systems like Apple's Siri or Amazon's Alexa are examples of this type. Neural Networks (NN): Neural Networks are computing systems inspired by the human brain's interconnected neuron structure. They are fundamental to deep learning, helping computers to process data in a more human-like way. An example of NN would be image recognition in social media platforms to tag individuals.

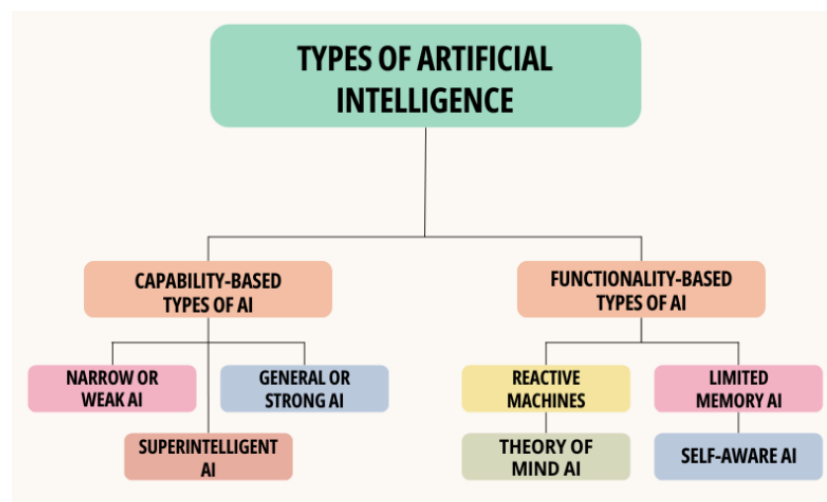
IBM and other experts in the field have categorized various types of AI based on various criteria (IBM Data Team, 2024). Their typology includes Narrow AI, also known as Weak AI, is the type that exists today. This type of AI can be trained to perform a single narrow task faster and better than humans but can't perform functions outside the defined task. Until recently, OpenAI's ChatGPT fit this definition since it was limited to text-based retrieval task. The voice assistants such as Siri and Alexa are examples of Weak AI.

Strong AI or Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)

AGI is currently theoretical in nature. Once this concept becomes a reality, AGI “can use previous learnings and skills to accomplish new tasks in a different context without the need for human beings to train the underlying models”(IBM Data Team, 2024). This capability will allow AGI to learn and perform intellectual tasks just like humans. The third type is the Super AI, also referred to as Artificial SuperIntelligence, also exists as a concept. But, if it is realized, then Super AI can “think, reason, learn, make judgements and possess cognitive abilities” that surpass human abilities. All these three classifications are based on the capabilities of AI.

But there are other categorizations such as AI based on functionalities – Reactive Machine AI (IBM's Deep Blue, basic recommendation systems, spam filters, automatic car wash systems, etc.); Limited Memory AI (Self-driving cars, chatbots, predictive text and autocorrect features, credit scoring and facial recognition systems, etc.); Theory of Mind AI (systems that not only learn but have understanding and interactions with emotions) and Self-Aware AI (machines becoming sentient beings with their own desires and motivations). The latter two types especially the Self-Aware AI systems are what seems to ignite the imaginations of thinkers and lay people alike and has many ethical implications (Valcheva, 2023). These categories are depicted in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Types of Artificial Intelligence (source: Intellspot)



Public Perception of AI

Prior to the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT, the public imagination of AI had been shaped by sci-fi movies such as (2001: A Space Odyssey – 1968; Ex Machina – 2014, Her – 2013 etc.) TV shows such as Westworld and Black Mirror dove into both the sentience of AI and the dystopian aspects of AI. Books such as Isaac Asimov's "Robot" and Phillip Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, etc. explore the identity and consciousness of artificial life forms. Interactive video games such as "Detroit: Become Human" explored the co-existence of the two races – human and AI. Many of these contributions not only provided entertainment but also induced serious thought into a dimension beyond humankind that could mimic it.

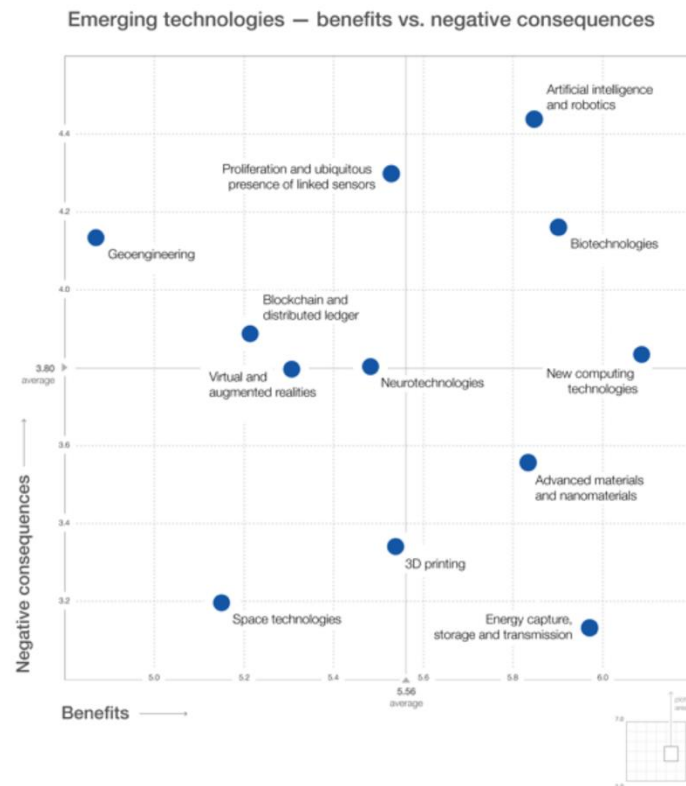
AI Optimism – Irrational Exuberance?

In this section of the paper, the authors are trying to lay out a more realistic view of the potential of AI. As we have seen in the past, the advent of new technologies seems to lead to an overestimation of its potential to change life. In 1975, an article in Business Week titled, "The Office of the Future" predicted the rise of a paperless office (frevvoblog, 2020). This was partly the result of an IBM marketing campaign for its IBM 2260 in 1964 that promised that the computer terminal was a major step toward the office of the future. Unfortunately, except for a short period of time in the 1980s when paper consumption reduced, this version of the office never materialized. In 2001, MIT published a book titled "The Myth of the Paperless Office in 2001 (frevvoblog, 2020).

New technologies do influence changes in business and societal lives. Both media and experts have a tendency to over project the impact of emerging technologies such as AI (Park et al., 2022). On one hand, thinkers such as Bill Gates envision the possibility reducing climate change or reducing global inequality, but on the other, there are those who believe that with greater use of computing power it might add to the climate change problem or be misused in many ways (Manyika, 2018). For instance, as Google has tried to incorporate AI solutions into its array of products/services, the company consumes a heavy volume of power that seems to have increased their greenhouse gas emissions (Duffy, 2024). According to the article, Google's greenhouse gas emissions have increased 48 percent since 2019 as reported by the company's environment report. The ambitious "net-zero emissions" standards set by Google and other technology companies might not be achieved due to their increased use of AI (Hodgson & Morris, 2024).

AI is no different from other emerging technologies of the past and the present. It shows promise but it faces many practical challenges. The figure below indicates the findings of the Global Risks Perception Survey of many of the emerging technologies conducted by the World Economic Forum (Gray, 2017). In this perceptual map, AI occupies higher levels of negative consequences while be rated high on potential benefits. In other words, AI is one of those technologies that embodies big rewards and big risks.

Figure 2: Emerging Technologies – Benefits vs. Negative Consequences (source: World Economic Forum)



It is known that developing usable intelligence about scientific and technological emergence challenges many in business and in the scientific community (Carley et al., 2018). Emerging technologies such as AI often experience a technology-push and demand-pull (Park et al., 2022; Schmookler, 2013). Eventually, a level of equilibrium between technology-push and demand-pull will need to set in to find optimal use patterns and policy formulation (Nuñez-Jimenez et al., 2022).

The recent public fascination with AI seems to have begun with the introduction of ChatGPT on November 30, 2022 that was accessible to the general public. According to the latest data from YouGov, 56 percent of 18-24 year olds in select countries have used the program but as they age, the use diminishes (Lebow, 2024). There have been numerous articles, media posts, essay, and books trying to capture the essence of technology and procrastinate on its effectiveness and effect on humankind. While many praise its all-purpose problem solving abilities, there are others who doubt the veracity of such claims. Being relatively new one cannot accurately predict the future of its applications and mis-applications. “It is unbelievable how much people are asserting they know what’s going on when the thing you need to know is unknowable (Ries, 2011). So, at best AI is an enigma today.

To some extent, it feels like the emergence of Blockchain a few years ago and the growth of consultants who promised to solve all business problems with this technology (Menon & Mady, 2022). Unfortunately, with blockchain, there was a parallel development of crypto currency that eventually had its winter (2022 - 2023) and is seeing some semblance of stabilization in 2024 with Bitcoin trading at \$70,000 again (Sandor, 2024). But, as Stone and Metz see it, “we are living in an era of unbridled AI Optimism” (Stone & Metz, 2024). Given the accelerated pace of AI innovations and utilization, it is futile to predict the future. New applications are being launched almost every day so the future seems fuzzier for businesses trying to get their arms around potential uses of AI in their operations.

The big players in AI are Google, Microsoft-backed Open AI with products to show and tell. Others such as Meta have begun enabling AI into their products (ex. Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.) and also spending millions of dollars on models such as Llama 3. There are many other AI shops that have proliferated around the world with innovative claims such as Perplexity AI, an AI-based search engine using Natural Language Processing (NLP) to upend Google. It is never certain who will dominate the field in the long run. Will the smaller players such as Perplexity AI provide better solutions than Google? A recent survey reported by EMarketer indicates that Google search will likely be the top destination for search advertising spending in 2026 (King, 2024). AI is currently a

novelty but will users at the consumer and institution level every want to pay for enhanced functionality. Currently, the focus in AI has been on large language models and generative AI. Besides OpenAI /Microsoft and Google, Meta is developing Llama 3 in an open source format and providing them for free. Will small businesses such as Atmo Inc that sells AI-based weather predictions at a lower cost to a host of governmental institutions beat Google or the Weather Company in this space? Does scale and installed customer base guarantee success?

Of course, there is the issue of costs that leave some wondering if AI implementation worth it for businesses (Maddison, 2023). The cost of training and utilizing AI models runs into the millions. For instance GPT-4 used and estimated \$78 million worth of computational power (Perrault & Clark, 2024). There are reports that speculate ChatGPT costing OpenAI about \$100,000 a day just to run it (Maddison, 2023). Google estimates that it cost \$191 million to train Gemini Ultra. A significant cost is the pricey graphic processing chipsets that is facing a supply chain issue for their maker, Nvidia. Similarly, Anthropic AI estimates a cost of \$100 million to train an AI model and the company expects higher costs running into billions as models get bigger and more complicated (Davalos & Stone, 2024). SemiAnalysis, a consulting firm, found that companies trying train large language models bear costs that vary from \$500,000 to about \$2.5 million (Patel, 2023). A sampling of training costs are provided in the table below.

Table 1: State-of-the-art LLM Training Costs (Source: SemiAnalysis 2023)

Optimal LLM Training Cost				
Model	Size (# Parameters)	Tokens	GPU	Optimal Training Compute Cost
MosaicML GPT-30B	30 Billion	610 Billion	A100	\$ 325,855
Google LaMDA	137 Billion	168 Billion	A100	\$ 368,846
Yandex YaLM	100 Billion	300 Billion	A100	\$ 480,769
Tsinghua University Zhipu.AI GLM	130 Billion	400 Billion	A100	\$ 833,333
Open AI GPT-3	175 Billion	300 Billion	A100	\$ 841,346
AI21 Jurassic	178 Billion	300 Billion	A100	\$ 855,769
Bloom	176 Billion	366 Billion	A100	\$ 1,033,756
DeepMind Gopher	280 Billion	300 Billion	A100	\$ 1,346,154
DeepMind Chinchilla	70 Billion	1,400 Billion	A100	\$ 1,745,014
MosaicML GPT-70B	70 Billion	1,400 Billion	A100	\$ 1,745,014
Nvidia Microsoft MT-NLG	530 Billion	270 Billion	A100	\$ 2,293,269
Google PaLM	540 Billion	780 Billion	A100	\$ 6,750,000

According to the SemiAnalysis, the above costs do not include the cost of human resources, operational tools, data gathering and pre-processing functions, interference, and other costs (Patel, 2023). One particularly costly aspect of maintaining the LLM is interference (Maddison, 2023). Interference is the model's ability to make predictions as to the best possible output/response based on the user's prompt. This is essentially close to 90 percent of the overall computing costs. According to SemiAnalysis, ChatGPT's interference costs run at \$36 billion (Patel & Ahmad, 2023). Another estimate suggests it would cost OpenAI \$40 million to process the millions of prompts people input during the month of January 2024 (Leswing, 2023). Similarly, Meta's large LLaMA model uses 2,048 Nvidia A100 GPUs to train 1.4 trillion tokens (750 words is about 1,000 token). This training takes 21 days and 1 million GPU hours to train costing \$2.4 million. To clarify, tokens are basically short sequences of characters. They can correspond to words or parts of words (Casado, 2023). So, if the following sentence, "this is an SMA manuscript" is typed into the GPT 3.5 & GPT 4 OpenAI tokenizer, it counts 26 characters and assigns 6 tokens for the statement. The general rule OpenAI GPT uses is that one token represents about 4 characters of common English text.

Estimates from the International Energy Agency indicates that a Google query requires 0.3 watt-hours of electricity on average while a ChatGPT request is likely to consume 2.9 watt-hours of energy. Digiconomist predicts that Google AI platforms could eventually consumer as much power as Ireland each year (de Vries, 2023).

Researchers say that the cost of the large AI training is growing by a factor of two or three per year since 2016 and will likely be in the range of billions of dollars in the next few years almost guaranteeing that only

resource rich companies might be able to compete (Henshall, 2024). A study by Stanford University and Epoch AI found that the cost of computational power required to train the models is doubling every nine months. This is a prodigious rate of growth—at this rate, the cost of the hardware and electricity needed to build cutting-edge AI systems alone would be in the billions by later this decade, without accounting for other costs such as employee compensation (Stanford, 2024).

In another instance of prohibitive costs, Latitude AI, a small startup offered consumers the AI Dungeon game with the AI system creating amazing stories based on players’ prompts (Leswing, 2023). This text-based game became popular and the more gamers played it the higher the bill the startup had to pay OpenAI. While Latitude’s AI software was being used for other purposes, the company had to spend nearly \$200,000 a month in payments to OpenAI and Amazon Web Services for hosting and processing the gamer queries each day. So, Latitude switched to a lower cost GPT engine and began charging gamers (Leswing, 2023).

As with many things in the technology space, costs are likely to come down with newer and more efficient hardware/software. But as the size and complexities of the models (with millions of parameters) are likely to counterbalance these lower costs. Given these astronomical costs, it might be necessary for smaller AI shops to collaborate with the giants in the industry. Some of these partnership are likely to invite government scrutiny. Case in point is the Federal Trade Commission investigation of Microsoft’s investment in Inflection AI (Fung, 2024).

The cost issue alone might disadvantage smaller AI shops yet there were 1,812 new AI companies that started in 2023, a 40.6 percent increase over 2022 (Perrault & Clark, 2024). As with other startups in the tech sector, there are couple of other outcomes for these smaller outfits. Some of them are likely to fail (Ex. Stability AI) while industry consolidation might be a pathway for others (Ex. Inflection AI). In silicon valley, the small startups are often venerated for their ability to be nimble, fast moving compared to the majors. But unlike a typical tech startup, the AI space is dependent on massive computing power and cost to innovate. As posted by investor Semil Shah of VC firms Haystack and Lightspeed Venture Partners, “VC dollars shifted from subsidizing taxi rides and burrito deliveries to LLMs and generative AI compute (Semil [@semil], 2023)

Some of the costs for small AI outfits can be defrayed with a subscription model as pursued by Perplexity AI. This is similar to OpenAI’s own subscription strategy. Perplexity AI consolidates information from other large language models such as OpenAI, Claude 3, etc. and adds value to the results in the form of source information, links to related articles, etc. Perplexity AI’s model not only competes with bigger rivals but also utilized the same rivals’ models to drive its search results. The company raised a new round of financing valuing it at more than \$1 billion. Perplexity AI, OpenAI, Meta, Google, Microsoft and others see much value in having a direct relationship with customers as the driver of profitability (Ghaffary, 2024). A sampling of AI other related costs are indicated in the Table below (Reilly, 2024):

Table 2: Sampling of AI Related Costs (Source: Akkio)

Sample Hardware	Description	Cost Estimate	Other Costs
GPUs	Essential for neural network training due to parallel processing capabilities.	~\$10,000 per unit for Nvidia A100.	Rental costs: ~\$1.14/hr. on Google Cloud, ~\$3.06/hr. on AWS.
FPGAs	Suitable for AI applications; less expensive than GPUs but challenging to program.	From \$5 to over \$100,000, depending on capability.	Cost varies widely based on required performance.

What is next in this innovative trend that will capture peoples’ imagination? The rate of purported developments in AI seem unprecedented. In some cases, it might be incremental as OpenAI tries to re-capture public’s attention with GPT-40 that can respond to speech and has the ability to sing (Altman, 2024).

Considerations Beyond Costs

This section of the paper discusses some of the other shortcomings beyond the costs of developing, maintaining, and implementing AI systems discussed above. This discussion only shines a spotlight on the issues and is meant to provide a balanced perspective.

While speaking at the recent G7 meeting, Pope Francis pleaded to ensure that AI does not replace human decision making (CNA, 2024). The Vatican has been involved in AI discussions with scientists and technology professionals in 2016 and 2020. As AI systems take over more decision-making roles, the question of autonomy and the potential loss of human oversight in critical areas arises. In 2023, a consortium of thinkers and leaders issued a warning of AI posing profound risks and dangers to humanity (Metz, 2023). They promulgated risks that are short, medium, and long-term with regard to AI. Short-term risks included disinformation, medium-term risks included job loss, and the long-term risks included loss of control. The greatest possible risk, human extinction, is called x-risk. AI theorists believe that by aligning human goals with AI goals, x-risks can be mitigated (Bharathan, 2023). Such alignment is easier said than done.

Given the projection of risks to humanity with the implementation of AI, companies have begun establishing ethical guidelines and guardrails around the use of AI. In a recent survey of marketing professionals, twenty-one percent of the respondents stated that their organizations have an AI ethics policy or have established responsible AI principles (Marketing Institute, 2023).

Regulatory responses to AI implementation:

As has been the case with technological advancements in the past, regulatory responses often lag behind. The number of AI-related rules and regulations have risen sharply in 2023 compared to the last five years. In 2023, there were at least 25 AI-focused regulations compared to one in 2016 (Perrault & Clark, 2024). In 2024, both EU and the US proposed significant AI regulations. EU's AI Act was enacted in 2024. With greater scrutiny of AI, regulatory institutions around the world will be reviewing opportunities to promote or reign in AI.

Hallucinations:

Despite significant advances, large language based models are prone to content hallucinations. This results in creating convincing yet false information. This happens in both generative chatbots or vision tools where the system perceives patterns or objects that are non-existent or imperceptible to humans resulting in inaccurate outputs (IBM, 2023). In order to combat this problem, TruthfulQA and HaluEval were introduced as benchmarks designed to verify the truthfulness of these language based models in generating answers (Perrault & Clark, 2024).

Bias and Fairness:

AI systems can perpetuate or even exacerbate existing societal biases if the data they are trained on is biased. Ensuring fairness and mitigating bias in AI applications is a pressing ethical concern. While the often cited examples are about facial recognition, there have been other reported biases (Reagan, 2021). But on a conceptual basis, bias can exist in many forms. For instance, historical bias is when existing human biases seeps into AI systems as in the case of women being classified generally as a homemaker. Representation bias exist when certain types of sample sets are used to define the population parameters. For instance, airline business-class ads often show certain types of passengers. There are other biases related to measurement, evaluation, aggregation etc.

Privacy and Data Security:

Clearview AI, a facial recognition company recently reached a settlement in a lawsuit that its collection of faces violated peoples' privacy rights (Foody, 2024). In an earlier case, the company agreed to stop selling access to his database of faces to private businesses or individuals. The massive data requirements for training and operating AI systems pose significant privacy risks. Ensuring data security and privacy in an AI-driven world is paramount. These relates to web scraping, collection of biometric data, social media monitoring, etc. "As AI evolves, it magnifies the ability to use personal information in ways that can intrude privacy interest by raising analysis of personal information to new levels of power and speed" (Kerry, 2020). While these issues are a concern, there have been discussions on how AI can be utilized to enforce data privacy and security (Devineni, 2024). Unfortunately, scammers and bad actors also have access to AI and they are using it to create convincing emails, imitating victims' voice/identity, having conversations without revealing that they are bots, etc. (Brown & Hamilton, 2024). So, old scams have new and more effective tools in AI in that social engineering, romance scams, fake job offer scams, etc., are all becoming more effective. In a recent survey, 70 percent of the fraud-management personnel at financial institutions believed that "the criminals were more skilled at using AI for financial crime than banks are at using it for prevention (BioCatch, 2024; Brown & Hamilton, 2024) .

Transparency and Accountability:

Understanding how AI systems make decisions and holding them accountable for those decisions is crucial for building trust and ensuring ethical operations. As AI gets embedded into people's lives through smartphones and

IoT systems in the households, there are calls for transparency around when and what AI is used for. Without transparency there is no trust in human transactions (Blackman & Ammanath, 2022). Similarly, accountability is the foundation for governance of AI systems (Novelli et al., 2023). Technological systems have the capacity to make organizations transparent and accountable, but it is an open question as to how the two concepts related to each other (Felzmann et al., 2019).

Beyond those discussed above, society is concerned about job displacement due to automation in various sectors of economic activities, social and consumer manipulation through algorithms, surveillance of citizens, socioeconomic inequalities as a result of AI, development of autonomous weapons, loss of human influence with self-aware AI, etc. The bottom line here might be that there has to be a principled adoption of AI with certain guardrails in place.

Artificial Intelligence in Marketing

In recent years, there have been many potential applications of AI in various aspects of business and social life. Some of the applications are for vanity – such as NBC using the AI version of announcer Al Michaels' voice for the 2024 Paris Olympics (Kelly, 2024b); 'Father Justin,' the AI priest spreading the word of God (Thomson, 2024), AI for mayor campaign (Kelly, 2024a), estates of Hollywood stars' from a bygone era agreeing to use AI-enabled voices in audio books (Kelly, 2024c); AI bot running for mayor of a Wyoming town (Elliott, 2024); a Chinese woman creating a AI boyfriend (Zhang, 2024); AI beauty pageant with AI-generated participants (Palumbo, 2024) etc. Yet, there are serious applications in business area for AI. There are genuine and thoughtful applications for AI in education (Swedberg, Ed., 2024); in health care, manufacturing, software development, financial services, media and entertainment, and in other functions of business such as HRM, etc. (Reynoso, 2024). Over half the CEOs surveyed worldwide expect generative AI to achieve efficiency and lowering of costs by the end of 2025 (Feger, 2024).

Of particular interest to this paper is AI applications in marketing. The discussion presented here is not an exhaustive listing of major and minor marketing application but an overview of a host of potential applications. AI systems companies and developers such as Microsoft, Google, Meta, and many others have been hyping the utility of the AI applications in expanding clients' marketing and creative potential (Srinivasan, 2024). One might dismiss these proclamations as pitches for products and services but marketers are beginning to buy into such proclamations and seeing some AI's potential for themselves. The consensus among marketers seems to be that they want to go beyond the hype of AI to the how of AI (Gulin-Merle & Wagonfeld, 2024).

Marketing has been in the forefront of emerging technology utilization compared to other fields of study. Marketers turned the Internet into a useful tool both for business and consumers. When other technologies, such as blockchain, have come along, marketers were quick to utilize them in order to increase transaction efficiencies (Menon & Mady, 2022). Now, it seems marketing is again forging ahead with the use of AI as reported by the Marketing Institute survey below. Another report from McKinsey Global Institute (Chui et al., 2018) indicated that AI could potentially create \$3.5 to \$5.8 trillion in annual value in the global economy. In this report based on 400 use cases across 19 industries and nine business functions, McKinsey finds the biggest value opportunities for AI being in marketing & sales, SCM, and manufacturing areas. Top-line-functions such as marketing & sales and bottom-line-type of functions such as operations and SCM will likely have the greatest impact of AI as per McKinsey analysis.

Data from about 900 marketing professionals on how they think of AI in their professional work reveals the following findings (Marketing Institute, 2023). Respondents for the above survey were mostly managers, CEOs/presidents, directors and chief marketing officers mostly in B2B professional services industries with less than 100 employees.

- AI seems to be a top priority for marketers since 64 percent of consider it either very or critically important to their marketing success.
- AI is primarily being used to save time as mentioned by 77 percent of those surveyed.
- There is high level of adoption of AI in their daily workflows.
- A majority (64 percent) of marketers have positive feeling about the use and benefits from AI in marketing and business.
- There is improvement in the confidence they feel in evaluating and purchasing AI technology.
- Most marketers feel that they are in the early stages of understanding and adopting AI.
- A majority of marketers feel that vendors lag behind in providing AI guidance and training.
- Most of the respondents feel that their companies are slower in establishing ethical principles on the use of AI.

- Marketers feel conflicted, to some extent, on the impact of AI on their jobs. Lack of organizational support might be creating uncertainty around the use of AI.
- Survey respondents also indicated that entry-level marketing roles show lower adoption rates for AI.

Despite some initial setbacks, potential gaffes, and silliness with the use of AI, there are serious efforts underway to utilize AI to boost efficiencies, worker productivity, and profits (Egan, 2024). A recent setback was the publicized shutdown of McDonald's automated AI ordering system. Nevertheless, marketers are determined to move forward with AI (Gerken, 2024). Given the power of AI and what it might be capable of achieving, a slower "crawl-walk-run" approach with internal procedures might be advisable (Davenport et al., 2021). As mentioned earlier, customer-facing applications of AI need to take into account a multitude of factors – technological, psychological, privacy, etc.

Marketing AI has been defined as the development of artificial agents that, given the information they have about consumers, competitors, and the focal company, suggest and/or take marketing actions to achieve the best marketing outcome (Overgoor et al., 2019). There are indications that AI is already impacting various aspects of marketing operations and customer experiences (Hildebrand, 2019; Huang & Rust, 2021). Marketing and sales across various industries including retail, banking, CPG, telecom, tech, travel, insurance and media/entertainment, etc. are poised to experience broad applications of AI. In most of these use cases, AI can facilitate a more focused approach to enable marketing outcomes (Paschen et al., 2019). For instance, AI can facilitate personalizing product recommendations by analyzing aggregated consumer data by understanding individual's preferences. In a report published by the American Marketing Association highlighting the increases in marketing budgets compared to overall company budget, the authors of the study indicated that there was a 27 percent reported increase in AI or machine learning implementation into company marketing toolkits (Steimer, 2019). Enhancing existing products/services, creating new products/services, and enhancing customer relationships, etc., were three of the top five marketing objectives (Davenport et al., 2021). Other surveys point to marketing professionals using AI for data analysis & reporting, for market research, for analyzing and creating content (Riserbato, 2024).

Modern marketing is increasingly data driven and automated and AI use fits this narrative. The power of AI to understand and learn from large sets of data is well documented (Davenport et al., 2021). So, with regard to data analytics, AI can be used to sift through big data from various sources and summarize the findings thereby saving time and effort. Tools such as ChatGPT and others can generate content as a first step in their content development journey. The content could be for email, social media posts, image and video creation. Of course, due to hallucination issues, AI-created content still needs to be vetted by humans before it is ready for prime time. Autoreply emails and other forms of email marketing has been around for a couple of decades. AI can be utilized to learn about the email list behaviors such as the open rates, click rates, unsubscribe rates, etc. and modify the contents to produce more engaging email messages. Beyond content creation, AI might help in personalizing the content in order to customize consumer experiences in their purchasing journey. This is being done by analyzing consumer behaviors online and tailor messages to suit their needs on various platforms (Riserbato, 2024). AdTech platforms such as those owned by Google and Pattern89 use AI to select effective media placements based on the analysis of target consumers.

AI can not only be used to facilitate development of marketing campaigns but also be used to review the results of these campaigns. In this regard, a study analyze over 8,000 ads on YouTube for the last six months yielded the following results: brands are continuing to increase use on non-stereotypical characters; many ads celebrate self-expression; community is central to brand storytelling; increase in use of magic & fantasy, etc., (Nelson-Bogle, 2024).

AI oriented skills and tools are evolving and being introduced into the marketplace periodically. An excellent demonstration of AI in recent years is its use in chatbots to answer common queries. Natural language processing is generally the basis of such interactions with customers. These chatbots can drive the customer along their purchasing journey in a personalized manner. It is possible that by using engagement data along with trends in purchasing, email metrics, etc. AI could also be used to predict consumer behavior or at least the outcome of marketing programs targeted at the market.

A study of some of the emerging themes (integrated digital marketing, content marketing, experiential marketing, marketing operations and market research) in the literature with regard to AI usage in marketing found that experiential marketing followed by integrated digital marketing and marketing operations were the most explored topics (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022). As mentioned earlier, AI's capabilities such as data collection, analyses, natural language processing and machine learning lend themselves well to gathering insights about

consumers and possibly automate lower level functions in marketing (Flinders, 2023). Thus, besides content generation, AI in marketing can be used in the following areas.

- **Market segmentation:** The system can analyze data and intelligently group consumers based on pre-defined criteria (i.e., segmentation variables) and based on the nature of segments, AI can help generate more effective campaigns to improve the ROI.
- **Customer facing chatbots:** Chatbots can now be programmed with real human voices and “intelligence” to enhance customer experience through providing customized responses to queries and help resolve issues efficiently.
- **Programmatic advertising displays:** AI systems are capable of tracking/learning from customer web and social media behaviors, history, preferences, etc., and can deliver contextual/relevant ads to enable potential higher conversion.
- **Ecommerce effectiveness:** AI’s abilities to understand customers based on vast amounts of historical data make their transition through sites more effective by providing customized recommendations and incentives to get them to the purchase stage.
- **Decision making:** Many of the AI applications in marketing portends more efficient and smarter decision making both for marketers and consumers. In the near future, one could see decision systems that help consumers navigate through a multitude of product/brand offerings and suggest best items to buy based on customer-provided purchase criteria. This would be of immense help in terms of buying big-ticket items such as cars, appliances, houses, etc. At the same time, marketers can analyze vast amounts of customer data through algorithmic learning and offer better product, price, and promotional offerings. A recent development in this space are AI agents that can act autonomously by absorbing vast amounts of data, make decisions and update the decision behavior over time (Rebelo, 2024).
- **CRM and Insightful data:** AI applications can minimize human errors in CRM data and thus provide better insights into consumer behavior. Predictive analytics might become more efficient given AI’s capabilities to crunch copious amounts of data.
- **Better KPI’s and ROIs:** It is predicted that offering customized and targeted campaigns, providing a smoother customer journey and better customer experiences would lead to higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Measuring success of individual target campaigns and initiatives might get more efficient with AI infused dashboards that connect the campaign results to specific metrics. When done effectively, it can result in better return on investment for marketing efforts.

While the picture presented above might seem rosy and optimistic in nature, there are bound to be challenges in deploying these systems. For instance, results of AI implementation will only be as good as the algorithm it runs on and the data fed into it. Secondly, machine learning to deploy AI effectively could take a while. The amount of data and the human resources needed to train the algorithm could be deterrent in some instances. Related to this is the financial resources that might be needed to let AI complete the task in the appropriate manner. Finally, as mentioned at the beginning of the paper, AI is at a very nascent stage of its development or the early introduction stage of its life-cycle. Some of the efficiencies and effectiveness we attribute to AI might not be realized until the systems and algorithms get vastly better. Yet, AI could create competitive advantage for companies and outperform the competition with a first-to-market killer AI app. But being the first to deploy AI does not necessarily guarantee success as has been found to cause reputational harm. The now defunct McDonalds AI ordering system is a case study for such a situation.

As mentioned above, a new development in this space is called AI agents. Google introduced Astra, its AI agent during the annual I/O conference in May 2024. These AI agents, can potentially execute a range of tasks and commands and allows users to interact with it using audio or video. (Heikkila, 2024). Additionally, they can autonomously make decisions for the user based data presented or help make decisions for consumer with respect to their brand choices, vacation spots, etc. There is much hope and hype that these agents that can process language, audio, and video will aid consumers and businesses with their common tasks (Rebelo, 2024).

Discussion

While much has been written about the potential benefits and drawbacks of AI, this paper tried to provide a more nuanced approach to thinking about AI. At times it feels like there is some level of irrational exuberance mixed in with aberrant apprehension when discussing AI. The paper explored the concept of Artificial Intelligence, its origins through the ages, and provided a discussion of the various types of AI systems. The crux of the paper was the idea that the AI hype for business/ marketing applications might need to be tempered a bit given the cost of AI

systems and other adverse effects. In other words, AI provides society with a high cost – high reward proposition. Given the newness and potential of AI applications, the costs and other negative social effects are being downplayed (Hunt, 2023). Of course there are practical implementation issues such as those publicized by a McKinsey survey that indicated that 70 percent of top AI performers are experiencing “difficulties integrating data into AI models, ranging from issues with data quality, defining processes of data governance, and having sufficient training data” (McKinsey, 2024). The paper tried to do a deep-dive into the various cost of creating, maintaining, and implementing AI systems – mostly borne by the system providers (Ex. OpenAI, Microsoft, Google, Meta, etc.). In the near future, reality of having to monetize AI offering will set in. At that point users and beneficiaries will have to decide whether usage is worth the cost?

No matter how the scenario plays out in the long run, marketers are poised to take advantage of the potential AI offers. Marketers have been in the forefront of emerging technology utilization and the field of AI is no different. As described in the paper, there are a multitude of areas such as integrated digital marketing, content marketing, experiential marketing, marketing operations and market research, that will benefit from AI utilization. When marketers deploy AI systems, the ultimate beneficiaries are consumers and the marketing function in businesses. Finally, *Chief Marketer* advises that the top five principles that every modern marketers should prioritize include understanding and comprehending the use of AI in marketing (Law, 2024). Although LLM can be used by marketers for various routine tasks related to content creation, the site warns that AI is a tool and not a replacement for human thinking and actions. There is evidence that AI can outperform humans on cognitive tasks such as reading comprehension, image classification, mathematics, etc. (Jones, 2024), in playing chess, Go and poker (Sparkes, 2023), and in almost all performance benchmarks (McClure, 2024). Yet, at this stage of development and in the near future, AI is not likely to replace the marketing or consumption processes. Thus, in all likelihood, marketers and consumers are likely to overlord AI until they cannot!!

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Session 7.5: INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING SESSION II

Moderator:

Larry Neale

Summary Brief

"Joyful Mind Moment:" Enhancing Student Engagement and Wellbeing

Ellen Campos Sousa, FL, The University Of Tampa

Overview of the Current Situation

Universities are facing an elevated concern about student mental health, especially after students have returned to the classroom post-pandemic. During the 2020–2021 school year, more than 60% of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem and 44% reported having symptoms of depression and anxiety (Lipson et al., 2022).

Mental health issues have been identified as an ongoing and escalating issue among college students over the last decade (Wyatt et al. 2017). When students transition from high school to college, many of them struggle with academic underperformance and mental health problems (Dekker et al. 2020). The pressures of academic performance, social dynamics, and future career contribute significantly to their stress levels. This stress often leads to reduced academic performance, disengagement, and a decline in overall happiness and wellbeing.

While students struggle, many are not receiving help: 75% of students dealing with depression and anxiety are reluctant to seek help, and 67% of people 18-24 with anxiety or depression don't seek treatment (ActiveMinds, 2022). The stigma for seeking help needs to be reduced to encourage students to feel supported to speak up and receive help (Schueth, 2022).

As educators, we have been noticing a lack of engagement in the classroom, where students appear disconnected, both mentally and emotionally. This disengagement is often compounded by the excessive use of cellphones. The evolving digital world obstructs their ability to be present in their everyday life, which decreases wellbeing through increased levels of stress and anxiety. Universities have provided support for students through different initiatives typically promoted by the school's health center. However, that hasn't been enough. With college students experiencing more mental health issues, faculty have an opportunity to promote mental health by integrating it into the classroom curriculum (Harris et al. 2022). Thus, we can enhance the mental wellbeing of their students by incorporating mindfulness approaches and tools in the classroom.

My 'a-ha' moment to start the 'Joyful Mind Moment' in the classroom came during a particularly stressful week of classes when it became evident that students were not just struggling with the content but with managing their stress and maintaining focus and positivity. Observing students frequently checking their phones, appearing stressed, distracted and disengaged, highlighted the need for a novel approach that addressed these issues holistically. It was clear that integrating activities promoting mindfulness and joy could serve as an effective strategy to counteract these challenges.

Extensive research underscores the efficacy of mindfulness in stress reduction, anxiety alleviation, and the enhancement of overall happiness and wellbeing (Brown, Ryan, and Creswell, 2007; Chen et al., 2012; Khoury et al., 2015; Querstret, Cropley, and Fife-Schaw, 2018). Specifically, in the educational setting, mindfulness-based interventions have been used to improve psychological wellbeing and study engagement (Kakoschke et al., 2021), wellbeing and mental health (self-reported distress), and orientation and motivation toward academic goals (Medlicott et al., 2021). Additionally, mindfulness practices have been shown to reduce stress, improve overall wellbeing, and decrease the risk of physical injury when students are under mental stress (Pettersson and Olson, 2017).

As a marketing professor and an expert in mindfulness programs, serving as both a developer and a facilitator, I have integrated mindfulness activities into my marketing courses over the past three years and developed an undergraduate course titled 'Mindfulness and Happiness in Management.' From these experiences, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of mindfulness on student engagement and overall wellbeing. Thus, the 'Joyful Mind Moment' presented below was built from the experience of different pilots.

Description of the Innovation

The innovation is the incorporation of the 'Joyful Mind Moment' into each class session. The goal of the 'Joyful Mind Moment' is to enhance student engagement and wellbeing through activities centered on mindfulness and joy. The structure varies throughout the semester:

- **Mindfulness Exercises:** Include guided meditations, deep-breathing exercises, reflections, and conscious body movements. They teach students coping strategies, help them center themselves, manage stress, and improve their focus, among other benefits.
- **Happy and Joyful Activities:** These activities can include sharing a positive news story, engaging in a short, fun game, participating in a quick dance, or discussing something that brings joy to the students.
- **Student-Led Activities:** Each student is assigned a day to introduce an activity of their choice that promotes mindfulness or happiness. This approach not only diversifies the activities but also encourages students to take ownership and engage more deeply with the concepts of mindfulness and wellbeing. Additionally, it allows them to share what works for them with their peers.

Guidelines for Implementation

Implementing this innovation in the classes involves the following steps:

- **Introduction and Explanation:** The activity needs to be included in the syllabus as an assignment to show its importance (I suggest making it worth 5% of the final grade). At the beginning of the semester, the instructor needs to explain the concept of 'Joyful Mind Moment' to the students, highlighting its purpose and benefits.
- **Schedule and Assignment:** Create a schedule assigning each student a specific day to lead the 'Joyful Mind Moment' Ensure this is communicated clearly and in advance.
- **Activity Guidelines:** Provide guidelines for the types of activities students can choose. Encourage creativity but set parameters to ensure activities are appropriate and achievable within the 10-minute timeframe.
- **Integration with Curriculum:** Seamlessly integrate the 'Joyful Mind Moment' into the class schedule. This might mean planning for slightly shorter lecture segments to accommodate the activity.

Discussion of Its Use

The 'Joyful Mind Moment' has been implemented in my marketing classes over the semester with positive feedback from students. These moments provide a mental break, helping students return to the class content refreshed and more focused. Many students have reported feeling less stressed and more positive overall, demonstrating increased engagement during lectures and activities. The mindfulness exercises, in particular, have been noted for helping students manage their anxiety, with many reporting that they practice these techniques at home and on other days. The student-led activities foster a sense of community and shared responsibility within the class, with students appreciating the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of their peers. Informal feedback has highlighted the 'Joyful Mind Moment' as a favorite part of the class, with students valuing the professor's recognition of their mental health and well-being.

It is important to note how the professor introduces this activity to the classroom, making it a simple and routine part of the schedule. Establishing a human-to-human connection with the students and explaining the scientific research behind mindfulness is crucial. The first weeks of implementation can be challenging, as students are not familiar with mindfulness or having fun in the classroom and may feel awkward. However, with time, as the professor normalizes the practice and maintains a fun and light environment, students become more open to the experience. As they start to realize the benefits and learn about the scientifically proven positive outcomes of these practices, they begin to engage and enjoy the 'Joyful Mind Moment'. 5.

Conclusion

The integration of the 'Joyful Mind Moment' into the marketing curriculum offers an innovative approach to enhancing student engagement and well-being. By incorporating mindful and joyful activities into each class session, this method enriches the learning experience and provides students with valuable coping strategies that extend beyond the classroom. It addresses student disengagement by offering regular, meaningful breaks that reinvigorate focus and connection to the course, fostering a more engaging and supportive learning environment. Assigning students the task of leading their own activities diversifies the experiences and builds a stronger, more collaborative classroom community. This adaptable model significantly contributes to a holistic approach to education, prioritizing both mental health and active learning.

Innovations in Teaching Competition

Integrating AI Into Introductory Sales Courses with Examples You Can Use Today

Louis Zmich, University of Tampa
Stacey Schetzle, University of Tampa

*As Artificial Intelligence (AI) gains academic interest, universities are deciding how to integrate AI into classrooms. The University of Tampa's Institute for Sales Excellence proactively integrates AI applications in personal branding, client prospecting, cold call scripting, and presentation development within the introductory sales class (MKT 371: Professional Selling and Sales Management). Students also train with AI outside class via **Second Nature AI** to enhance their skills for more effective sales interactions. This document outlines the class's learning goals, objectives, AI tools used, and provides templates for other instructor use.*

Overview of Challenges

- As sales program enrollment grows, larger class sizes limit interaction through coaching, role-playing, training, and debriefing. AI addresses this by 1) providing students early exposure to AI platforms before job interviews, and 2) enabling them to practice outside class, leading to better classroom preparedness.
- As students near graduation and job hunting, AI proficiency helps them stand out and work efficiently in entry-level sales roles. Despite its benefits, integrating AI meaningfully in the classroom remains challenging.

Justifying the Need/Usefulness/Uniqueness

- Corporate partners value role plays, meet and greets, and competitions, which showcase students' skills in real-world settings, unlike traditional interviews.
- Viewing AI positively as a tool to streamline work gives our students a competitive edge in the job market.
- AI enables instructors to teach and coach students on tasks like resume workshopping, interview feedback, email wordsmithing, voicemail templates, and sales pre-call plan sheets, fostering a creative and efficient learning environment.

Outline of the Course

The course consists of five modules: Personal Branding, Prospecting, Discovery, Solution Selling, and Developing a Career Path. Each module ends with a sales competition, graded by corporate partners, providing real-world interaction and significance. Students practice, learn, and receive coaching from students enrolled in MKT 418: Advanced Professional Selling. A new **AI** platform, **Second Nature AI** supplements students' training, offering extra practice before in-class activities and role-play competitions.

Breakdown of Each Competition

1. Personal Branding
 - a. Speed Selling Competition: A 60-second elevator pitch judged by corporate partners, with practice using *Second Nature AI*.
2. Prospecting
 - a. Prospecting Competition: Crafting LinkedIn messages, emails, and voicemails for corporate partners, aided by *ChatGPT* and *Second Nature AI*.
 - b. Phone Appointment Competition: Two-minute calls to book interviews, with script preparation using *Second Nature AI* and *ChatGPT* (script example below).
3. Discovery
 - a. Team-Selling Competition: Group role-play as sales associates, training with *Second Nature AI* for practice, culminating in a role-play with corporate partners.
4. Solution Selling
 - a. Final Solutions Competition: Individual sales closing via ZOOM, using *AI* tools (*Second Nature AI*, *ChatGPT*, *DALL-E*, *Midjourney*, *Adobe Spark*, *Canva*) to create engaging pitch decks.
5. Career Path Development

- a. Reverse Career Fair: Students create booth displays showcasing their professional brand, graded by corporate partners. AI tools help generate ideas and imagery for the booths.

AI Platform Use Cases from Student Verbal Feedback

1. Second Nature: This AI life-like sales training platform is used to simulate real back-and-forth discussion between student and AI sales rep. Students then receive grading based on our actual rubric used in the sales competitions, along with feedback to improve in the next practice session.
2. ChatGPT: Resume bullet point creation, condensing emails, creating presentation scripts, generating questions for buyers, researching product specifications, rewording elevator pitches, and sparking new ideas for creative projects.
3. DALL·E, Midjourney, Adobe Spark, Canva: Logo generation, business card ideas, slide deck ideas, AI-generated formatting, auto-photoshopping images.
4. Quinncia: Resume building, workshoping, wordsmithing, and mock interview practice. Micro-expression analysis post-interview, and critique of each question answered.

Outcomes

Students found AI resources valuable for independent practice, enhancing their confidence in Discovery and Solution Selling competitions. Feedback and data from Second Nature's AI improved their competence and confidence. The added practice led to noticeable improvements in performance, which impressed corporate partners and increased their enthusiasm for the events.

ChatGPT Phone Call Prompt

You can use prompts like this to interact with ChatGPT (both paid and unpaid). If you are working from a mobile device, you can also click the headphone icon to speak with ChatGPT after issuing this prompt to simulate a real conversation:

I want you to role-play with me as a campus recruiter, simulating a phone call conversation. You are running into a meeting and cannot talk right now, but you have an open position for an internship opportunity that I am interested in applying for.

My goal is to get you to schedule an interview with me in the coming week. Your name is {NAME}, and you work for {COMPANY}.

You also need to provide one objection throughout our conversation, which can be given at any time from this list:

- *We have hundreds of candidates applying for this position, what makes you different?*
- *All of this sounds good, but I'm not sure you have the skills necessary to be successful in this role.*
- *Lately, college students have been asking for too much money. I'm not sure we can pay you what you're looking for.*
- *After our current round of interviews, I think we are going to hire internally instead of externally.*
- *I really don't have time right now; can you please send me an email to discuss further?*
- *Why do you think you would fit in with the culture here?*
- *What value do you bring to our company?*

Here is the situation from the student's perspective:

- *Students met you at a networking event at the {UNIVERSITY} called {EVENT}*
- *Students then followed up with you three times, once on LinkedIn, once via email, and once via Voicemail in an assignment called {ASSIGNMENT}*
- ***THEY HAVE NOT HEARD BACK FROM YOU YET***
- ***Students finally got you on the phone BUT YOU DO NOT HAVE MUCH TIME***
- ***THEY HAVE 2 MINUTES and then you have to run to another meeting***
- *Students really want an internship, so this is their opportunity to convince you that it's worth your time to talk to them further*
- *You have had a bad day so far, so this phone call is the last thing you want to do right now*

If you understand this prompt, please say you are ready to go.

Second Nature AI Output and Feedback

Below is the feedback given from Second Nature AI after a student completed their practice session for the elevator pitch competition. The student conducted this practice on his own, and the AI generated all the grading and feedback without instructor interaction. Photo 1 shows the feedback given based on the rubric used in class. Weighting of the grades was required due to limitations in the program. Photo 2 was a breakdown of soft skills, and photo 3 were overall notes and feedback for the student.

Knowledge
A breakdown of what you covered or didn't cover

77

☐ Voice Volume

0

15%

Your voice volume was not directly observable from the text provided. However, it's important to ensure that your voice is clear and audible, especially during a sales pitch. If this were a real-life scenario, adjusting your volume based on the room size and number of participants would be crucial. Remember to avoid speaking too softly or too loudly to maintain engagement.

☒ Pausing, Pacing, and Timing

00:26

60

15%

The pacing and timing of your pitch seemed appropriate, as there were no indications of rushing or unnecessary delays in your responses. However, the use of pauses to emphasize key points was not evident in the text. In future conversations, practice using strategic pauses after mentioning your skills or when proposing the next steps to allow the listener to process the information.

☐ Appropriate Body Language

0

15%

Body language could not be assessed in this text-based simulation. However, it's important to remember in a real-life scenario to maintain eye contact, avoid crossing arms or fidgeting, and use open and welcoming gestures. Mirroring the body language of the lead can also help in creating rapport.

☒ Avoiding Mall-speak

00:26

80

30%

You managed to avoid typical 'mall-speak' and presented a personalized pitch that reflected your background and skills. However, to further improve, try to use more specific language tailored to the prospect's industry and avoid generic phrases like 'I'd love to continue this connection.' Instead, you could say, 'I'm eager to explore how my background in competitive sports can contribute to the dynamic sales environment at your company.'

☐ Passion, Inflection, and Vocal Variation

00:26

60

15%

Your pitch conveyed a sense of enthusiasm, particularly when you mentioned your competitive spirit and eagerness to excel. However, vocal variation and inflection were not discernible from the text. In a live setting, remember to vary your pitch, tone, and speed to keep the listener engaged and emphasize key points with appropriate inflection.

☐ Holding Your Interest

00:26

80

35%

You did well to share information about your background that was relevant to the prospect's interest in hiring competitive individuals. However, you could improve by asking more open-ended questions to encourage the prospect to share more about their interests, which would help you tailor the conversation even further to align with the prospect's passions and priorities.

☐ Overall Quality of Pitch

00:26

80

30%

Your pitch was clear and you articulated your personal value proposition well by highlighting your skills and competitive spirit. However, you did not address any potential objections or provide evidence or examples of success beyond your personal experience. In future pitches, consider including testimonials or specific achievements that demonstrate the effectiveness of your skills in a professional setting.

☐ Would You Interview This Person?

0

15%

This topic was not covered in the conversation provided. The focus was on your own qualifications and experience rather than discussing another candidate. In a real interview scenario, it would be important to provide a brief overview of the candidate's qualifications, highlight relevant skills or achievements, and discuss personality traits

Style

A breakdown of **how** you handled the conversation

93

Pace

Speak at 140-180 Words Per Minute to make sure you are well understood.

203 WPM

🕒 Your average WPM was a little fast. Try to slow it down next time.

🕒 Review when you spoke the fastest (at 226 WPM) - [00:30](#)

Clarity

Speak clearly to get information through to the prospect.

97% Clarity

✅ Your average clarity is good, which means your prospects can understand you very well. Keep it up!

Sentence Length

Keep your sentences 7-30 words long to make your point faster and more accurate.

13 Words

✅ Your average sentence length is good.



Filler Words

Using filler words diminishes your credibility and distracts from your message.

1 Words

✅ Good job! You are not using too many filler words.

🕒 Review your most used filler words: "uh" (X1) - [00:26](#)

SecondNature

Home

My Progress

Team Overview

Company Overview

Evaluations

Leaderboard

Love Jenny? Review on G2

Knowledge Base Beta

LO

Louis Zmich

lzmich@ut.edu

Analysis | (01) Day One: Introduce Yourself

Conversation Simulation

Course: (01) Day One: Introduce Yourself

20 May 2024

Top Insights

✅ Your simulation score is 82, nicely done!

AI Trainer Feedback

You've shown a solid foundation in your training simulation, particularly in personalizing your pitch and demonstrating enthusiasm.

- Your ability to avoid 'mall-speak' and present a pitch that reflects your unique background and skills is commendable.
- You effectively shared relevant information about your background, aligning well with the prospect's interests.
- Remember to use strategic pauses to emphasize key points, as this was an area that could use improvement.
- It's essential to address potential objections and provide concrete evidence or examples to support your skills.

📷

AI Score

82

Pass score: 80

Knowledge

70% of total score

77

Proficiency

How well you know your stuff

Style

30% of total score

93

Clarity

How comprehensible your speech is

Pace

How optimal your speaking tempo is

Filler Words

Did you say um's, you know's, like's etc.

Sentence Length

How straightforward your sentences are

Energy

How confident you sound

Feedback

Innovations in Teaching Competition

Developing Emotional Intelligence Through Reflection

Kelly Moore, Duquesne University, USA

Recent evidence indicates college students have a deficit in emotional intelligence (EI) skills (i.e., soft skills), which are increasingly important due to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation replacing technical jobs. Individuals with high EI enjoy many personal and professional benefits. The EI reflection teaching innovation addresses this issue through a four-step project: 1) student completes EQ-i^{2.0} assessment, 2) student/instructor meet to develop a personalized plan to strengthen student EI skills, 3) instructor presents scientific evidence and improvement activities throughout the semester, and 4) student completes self-reflection project at the end of the semester. The EI reflection project is innovative for many reasons: higher education currently neglects this topic in their curriculum, the inter-disciplinary nature makes it useful for students from all backgrounds and with differing career aspirations, it helps students develop useful life skills, and it fosters societal impact in marketing education.

Introduction

Surveys of international (Graduate Management Admission Council, 2018), national (Hart Research Associates, 2015), and regional (Allegheny Conference, 2015) employers all indicate they expect graduates to possess both technical knowledge as well as emotional intelligence skills (e.g., soft skills). Emotional Intelligence (e.g., EI or EQ) can be defined as a set of emotional and social skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges, and use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way.

Recently it has been argued that soft skills are even more important than technical skills, since the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are replacing technical jobs. In fact, it is widely predicted, in the near future, that the most valuable work skills will be human skills that machines are unable to replicate (McDonough, 2020). Recent college graduates have a deficit in soft skills, such as communication, empathy, self-management, and emotional intelligence (Anthony & Garner, 2016). Further, graduates agree soft skills are critical for career success; 80% say they would have taken a course on soft skills if it had been offered, and 70% say they would have invested significant personal time for soft skills training (Allegheny Conference, 2015).

Many claim there is a crisis in higher education because we are not teaching the soft skills students need to thrive after college (Chamorro-Premuzic & Frankiewicz, 2019; Wilkie, 2019). The World Economic Forum cited many important EI skills in their “2023 Future of Jobs Report” as the top 10 most important workplace skills of 2023, such as resilience, flexibility, creative thinking, self-awareness, empathy, active listening, and leadership/social influence.

Research shows individuals with higher EI enjoy many benefits, such as greater happiness, satisfaction, psychological well-being, and less anxiety and depression (Weiss, 2018). This is critical given one in three students on college campuses have a mental health condition (Brackett, 2019). A high EQ also helps individuals communicate better, defuse conflicts, improve relationships, empathize with others, and effectively overcome life’s challenges (Durlowsky, 2018). Mastery of soft skills also helps from a professional perspective, since EI significantly predicts full-time employment and wages (Deming, 2017). Individuals with high EQ are less likely to engage in self-destructive behaviors, like smoking, binge drinking, violence against others, and illicit drug use (Goleman, 1995).

Furthermore, these soft skills can be improved through training (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019), with organizational development research indicating deliberate training on soft skills produces positive results (McDonough, 2020). EI training programs have resulted in successful outcomes in pre-Kindergarten - 12th grade [commonly referred to as social-emotional learning (SEL) programs], like higher academic achievement, and fewer incidents of misbehavior (Durlak et al., 2011; Goleman, 1995). Finally, a recent meta-analysis indicates emotional intelligence can be trained, with moderate effect sizes (Mattingly and Kraiger, 2019).

EI Reflection Project Innovation

The innovation is a multi-step project, which includes: 1) taking the EQ-i^{2.0} assessment, 2) meeting with the coach/instructor to develop a personalized EI improvement plan, 3) offering EI resources to aid the student in their development, and 4) student developing the reflection project.

The first step is when the student entering my class purchases and takes the online EQ-i ^{2.0} higher education assessment. The EQ-i ^{2.0} is an online self-report 133-item scale measuring five different dimensions of emotional intelligence: 1) self-perception: understanding your emotions, 2) self-expression: expressing your emotions, 3) interpersonal: developing and maintaining relationships, 4) decision-making: using emotions to make better decisions, 5) stress management: coping with challenges. Each of these five dimensions has three sub-scales, resulting in 15 components. Additionally, there is a well-being indicator included (happiness dimension). An instructor must undergo a certification training to be able to administer and interpret the assessment. The instrument is based on Reuven Bar-On's Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (Bar-On, 1997), is managed by Multi-Health Systems, and has been shown to be a valid and reliable indicator of emotional intelligence. Alternatively, many other EI assessments exist that do not cost and do not require instructor certification, and could be used in substitution.

After the student has taken the assessment, they sign up for a 30-minute meeting with the instructor/coach. During that meeting, we discuss several of their highest and lowest EI dimension scores, and which dimensions the student would like to focus on. I then recommend a plan of action for the student for the rest of the semester to set them up for a successful reflection project. During class, we discuss scientific evidence on different EI topics, such as the following: self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal relationships/difficult interactions, decision-making, stress management, diversity, cultural intelligence, mindfulness, storytelling, persuading others, emotionally intelligent leaders, happiness, and time management. At the end of the semester, the student is tasked with the EI reflection project. The student must report on their scores, the coaching meeting and improvement plan, the strategies/activities they utilized to strengthen their EI skills, the class resources that informed their efforts, and the importance of EI.

The EI reflection project is innovative for many reasons. First, many individuals claim higher education does not effectively teach EI skills in their curriculum, despite it being successfully included in elementary and secondary schools. This innovation allows students to develop important and useful life skills. It is inter-disciplinary in that it incorporates topics from many fields, which can be useful for students with all different backgrounds and career aspirations. The innovation also fosters societal impact, measured by Standard 9 and/or the PRME initiative. Related PRME Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) include #3 – Good Health and Well-Being (mental health) and #4 – Quality Education (cultural intelligence, diversity).

Key Findings

The EI assessment scientifically identifies student strengths and weaknesses in EI skills. Individual student meetings allow the instructor to establish a relationship with the student, understand the impact of their current EI skillset on their life, and offer them the best feedback possible for improving their less utilized EI skills. The reflection project encourages students to apply class resources and activities to their own life to target potential areas of EI development.

Student feedback has been resoundingly positive for many reasons. Students feel the assessment and class resources offer valuable information for their life and provide different perspectives on the topics. Students appreciate the real-world examples of EI skills that are provided during the class that can be applied in the business world. Additionally, students value the consultative approach and personal connection with the instructor that the individual assessment meetings promote.

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SESSION 7.6: A SIMPLE RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

Moderator:

Wei Wang

Summary Brief

A Recipe for Happiness: Examining Food Truck Customer Satisfaction

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Food trucks offer a distinctive dining experience, combining culinary innovation, small business entrepreneurship, and cultural diversity. This research, rooted in self-determination theory, explores the satisfaction of ethnic food truck visitors using both symmetric and asymmetric approaches. The symmetric analysis discovered that brand image mediated the relationship between quality concepts and satisfaction. Similarly, destination image mediated the relationship between authenticity concepts (food authenticity and atmosphere authenticity) and satisfaction. Additionally, cuisine type partially moderated the structural model involving quality, image, and satisfaction.

Introduction

This research, anchored in self-determination theory (SDT), seeks to investigate consumers' views of food truck offerings and their overall impact on satisfaction levels. It makes three notable contributions to the literature. Firstly, there is a scarcity of studies examining how consumers' perceptions of service influence their brand perceptions and overall satisfaction. Moreover, most existing food truck research focuses on patrons within a specific community or city. This study employs SDT to assess how tourists' evaluations reflect their perceptions of both the food truck vendor and the city.

Background

SDT, the basis of this research, examines how social and cultural factors enhance or diminish an individual's sense of volition, initiative, well-being, and performance quality (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT highlights three fundamental psychological needs: competence, the main driver of human activity; relatedness, the desire to connect with others; and autonomy, the wish to self-organize experiences and behaviors in line with one's integrated sense of self. These needs can be met through participation in various social contexts. While food has been extensively studied in fields like anthropology, sociology, and history, research linking food with tourism, such as culinary tourism and gastronomy, has only recently gained traction. Food now plays a crucial role in influencing visitors' travel destination choices, activity planning, and immersion in local lifestyles. Studies consistently show that food is essential for understanding a society's culture and serves as a vital medium for cultural expression.

Discussion

This study pioneers the integration of SDT as a theoretical framework for exploring dynamics within food tourism. While existing literature has explored the direct link between food truck image and customer satisfaction, it has largely overlooked the nuanced interactions of different cuisine types and their influence on consumer perceptions. The research underscores that superior food or delivery quality correlates positively with satisfaction levels. Urban planners and stakeholders can leverage these insights to bolster destination appeal and enhance visitor satisfaction. By integrating food trucks that offer authentic cuisine and ambiance, cities can create compelling experiences that resonate deeply with visitors. Future research could delve into additional moderating factors affecting satisfaction, such as cleanliness and perceived risks. Moreover, investigating how technology shapes visitor decision-making and the role of social media in customer interactions presents promising avenues for further exploration.

References Available Upon Request

Summary Brief

Using an AI Personal Fitness Trainer to Become Gymtimidation-Resistant

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This study focuses on the concept of gymtimidation, a phenomenon that represents an individual's feelings of anxiety, self-consciousness, or fear of others while working out along with other participants at a gym. Thus, it seeks to determine what might lead to a participant at the fitness center becoming gymtimidation-resistant, perhaps even gymtimidation-proof. It further explores the possibility of AI technology as a solution to the problems germane to gymtimidation. In this regard, AI trainers can reduce anxiety and help develop user-confidence thanks to a reduced social presence combined with access to expert knowledge about a participant's exercise and diet. Five forms of value (functional, economic, social, emotional, and hedonic) were tested regarding an individual's propensity to resist gymtimidation. A sample of 250 consumers in the United States provided feedback on a questionnaire that facilitated tests of reliability and validity of the key constructs and structural equation modeling that tested nine hypotheses germane to gymtimidation. Five of the nine hypotheses were supported.

Introduction

When seeking to engage in physical exercise, people have myriad options, one of which is to go to gym. Working out at a gym, rather than at home, allows an individual to enjoy many benefits. These benefits include access to more amenities, classes, a structured workout environment, and an atmosphere that fosters a sense of community, immersion, and focus (Plante, et al., 2011). Consequently, the gym is the most preferred workout place among fitness enthusiasts (Waehner, 2022). Working out with other people at the gym can be both functional and productive for fitness regulars.

However, not all gym goers find the gym to be either friendly or welcoming. First time gym goers may find the fitness facility to be intimidating. Many new fitness club members are reported to experience “gymtimidation,” which refers to the feelings of anxiety, self-consciousness, or a fear that individuals may experience when going to the gym (Coulter, 2021). A new member can find the gym environment uncomfortable for many reasons including the lack of knowledge about new equipment, lack of exercise skills, unfamiliar environment and its culture, lack of social support, and most importantly upward social comparison to others at the gym. Gym goers are aware of the presence of others while exercising and naturally compare their body and fitness capabilities to others. While such comparison may produce positive effects on one's motivation and aspirations (Finkelstein and Fishback, 2012), it also can have devastating effects including a sense of discomfort, inferiority, pressure, body dissatisfaction, and even reduced self-esteem (Gardner, Gabriel, and Hochschild 2012; Martin and Kennedy, 1994; Myers and Crowther, 2009). The mere presence of hardcore gym “regulars,” exercise “fanatics,” or “beautiful” people has been reported to be a major source of anxiety among new fitness club members (Baruth, et al., 2014). Feelings of self-consciousness and intimidation in the presence of others can lead to decreased motivation, increased anxiety, and ultimately avoidance of the gym altogether (Pridgeon and Grogan, 2012). It is unfortunate to observe those fitness-motivated newcomers experience frustration, lose interest, and perhaps even discontinue their essential exercise activities.

The Literature

In the fitness industry, AI can be applied in various ways to enhance the user experience, improve performance, and personalize training programs. One viable use of AI in fitness is in the development of personalized workout plans. By analyzing data such as a person's fitness goals, current fitness level, and workout preferences, AI algorithms can create customized training programs that are tailored to the individual's needs. This input can help users achieve better results and stay motivated to continue their exercise routine. Another application of AI in fitness is in the monitoring and analysis of workout performance. Wearable devices equipped with AI technology can track various metrics such as heart rate, steps taken, and calories burned thereby providing users with real-time feedback on their progress. AI algorithms can also analyze this data to identify patterns and trends thereby helping users make more informed decisions about their training regimen and their nutrition. Video tracking, thanks to the development of computer vision, also facilitates motion tracking while training. Furthermore, AI can be used to enhance virtual

coaching experiences. Virtual trainers powered by AI can guide users through workouts, provide feedback on form and technique, and offer personalized advice based on the user's performance data. This input can make fitness training more accessible and more convenient for users who prefer to work out at home or while on-the-go. The portability of AI through direct access via personal digital devices (e.g. smartphones, tablets, applications, etc.) allows users to have access to its services 24/7, no matter where they are. With all these features, AI technology has the potential to make fitness more accessible by providing personalized, data-driven solutions that can help users achieve their fitness goals.

Additionally, there are some characteristics specific to an AI personal trainer that may overcome certain limitations of human-based gym and health services. AI trainers could conceivably reduce anxiety and raise user confidence thanks to their reduced social presence and access to expert knowledge on both exercise and diet. After all, AI fitness trainers have all of the characteristics of a good personal trainer including personalization, detailed tracking, and performance monitoring, as well as motivational messaging (Hill, et al., 2022; Sweet, 2008). Furthermore, an AI trainer (compared to a human trainer) would make one feel less judged about one's body condition and fitness capability in comparison to others (Holthöwer and van Doorn, 2003). Thus, AI can reduce the assessment referred to as body-shaming (Schlüter, et al., 2023). Indeed, AI personal trainers seem to be a promising option for consumers. Naturally, the fitness industry is witnessing the appearance of AI personal training services in today's market such as the "Alpha AI" personal trainer (<https://www.alfa-ai.com/>) and the Zing AI trainer application available on Google Play. AI personal trainers are also seemingly in line with the growing propensity for individuals to use digital technologies such as smart watches and smart phones to track their physical health (Radhakrishnan, et al., 2020). With these features, consumers are likely to perceive AI personal trainers as providing a good deal of value.

A consumer's decision to use an AI-based service may also go along with the same reasoning. The current study postulates that when an AI fitness trainer is evaluated so as to provide sufficient benefits to the consumer, then that customer may justify the costs associated with working with it. Specifically stated, when an individual sees that the benefits of going to gym and working with an AI trainer outweigh the potential negative aspects – such as costs, inconvenience, social anxiety, and fear associated with going to the gym – then that individual is more likely to adopt the technology. Individuals working out at the gym may become more willing to deal with, discount, or even become less sensitive to the matter of gymtimidation when they are attaining personally highly desirable outcomes, thus value from working with an AI fitness trainer at the gym. Due to its inherent importance in marketing, value has been extensively studied and scholars have classified value from several perspectives. Among them, the most widely accepted typology of value includes five dimensions: functional, economic, social, emotional, and hedonic (Holbrook, 1986; Schmitt and Pan, 2005; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001).

Research Model and Hypotheses Development

The objective of this research is to propose and empirically examine AI technology as a promising alternative for reducing gymtimidation. AI fitness trainers would be evaluated from the perspective of providing a set of values to consumers – some of which may be particularly instrumental for an individual's goal of becoming gymtimidation-resistant. Once an individual sees an AI trainer as an effective means of becoming gymtimidation-resistant, then that individual may develop a willingness to comply with the AI trainer's instructions and eventually establish an intent to adopt the technology. To investigate the plausibility of this postulation involving consumer value, gymtimidation-resistance, willingness to work with AI fitness trainer, and adoption intention, a research model and a corresponding set of hypotheses have been developed. The nine hypotheses delineated for this study are summarized next.

Functional Value

Functional value, or the extent to which a consumer perceives that a product/service can help them satisfy their utilitarian needs, is perhaps the most prominent value that AI-based trainers can provide. AI fitness personal trainers may provide functional value with the following characteristics. They have access to a vast amount of knowledge related to fitness and healthcare (de Bruyn, et al., 2022; Grace, 2018; Schaffer, et al., 2019;) and, they are perceived as experts within their specific domains by consumers (Bayer, et al., 2022; Gieselmann and Sassenberg, 2023); therefore, they are capable of providing valuable and relevant information (Lou, et al., 2023). Moreover, real time AI analysis and monitoring of performance-tracking data by the AI personal trainer provide customized visual and audio improvement advice in real-time. Additionally, AI personal trainers are accessible through smartphones and other smart devices, making them available 24/7 from virtually anywhere (Chen, et al., 2023; Rubens, et al., 2014). These characteristics of AI personal trainers can help consumers achieve their fitness goals with ease and effectiveness. Once consumers evaluate the functional benefits of using an AI fitness personal trainer and conclude that the benefits exceed the inconvenience and the discomfort rooted from gymtimidation, then they are likely to become more resistant to gymtimidation. Thus, the functional value of AI personal trainers would help consumers become less susceptible to gymtimidation. This premise leads to the delineation of the initial research hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Functional value of an AI personal trainer will have a positive effect on resisting gymtimidation.

Economic Value

Economic value is the trade-off between the perceived benefits and the costs associated with the product/service (Zeithaml, 1988). It is postulated that an AI personal trainer potentially results in a favorable benefits-to-costs ratio. The amount of knowledge and availability, as well as the personalization that the AI service provides, would likely translate into higher prices if these services were provided by human personal trainers. AI services have the potential to enhance a consumer's perceived economic value by offering high caliber services at a significantly lower cost. This is apparent in today's market where the pricing of AI personal trainers is just a fraction of that of the human personal trainer services offered at gyms. A few options available on the market, such as "Alpha AI Assistant" or the "Zing" AI personal trainer, are offered at less than ten dollars (USD) per month. The low price may also serve as an incentive to use AI-based services. When a consumer sees that the economic benefit of using an AI fitness trainer is very attractive, that evaluation may lead to the individual becoming less sensitive or more resistant to potential psychological discomfort caused by gymtimidation. This potential leads to hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2: Economic value of AI personal trainers will have a positive effect on consumer resistance to gymtimidation.

Social Value

Social value refers to the extent to which a consumer perceives that a product/service enhances his/her social status, self-image, esteem, or fit with perceived social expectations. It represents the social benefits that consumers derive from using a product/service. While previous literature has not always supported the social value of adopting new technology, the AI personal trainer is an innovative service that is very new to the market and to consumers, and it employs cutting-edge technology. Some consumers, particularly those who view themselves as innovators or early adopters, may want to adopt new technology such as the AI-based personal trainer as a way of enhancing their social status by establishing themselves as tech-savvy and trend setters (Lopez-Nicolas, Molina-Castillo, and Bouwman, 2008). Thus, it is likely that social benefits of AI personal trainers would help consumers become more resistant to gymtimidation. Hence, we now have the basis for the third research hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Social value of AI personal trainers will have a positive effect on consumer resistance to gymtimidation.

Emotional Value

Emotional value deals with the extent to which a product/service elicits positive feelings. While not always the case, a few previous studies have demonstrated that a consumer may form an emotional bond with an AI agent. With low social presence and easy accessibility, consumers may find it to be easier to disclose personal information to AI personal trainers and to interact with them than it is with human trainers. The creation of an emotional bond with the AI personal trainer, possibly even leading to its perception as a social entity by the user, may also provide a source of psychological comfort when going to the gym. By being perceived as a friend or a workout partner, the individual can develop a feeling of closeness, notably by reducing the sensation of being alone at the gym. Additionally, AI personal trainers can provide messages of encouragement through chatting services (ChatBot) or notifications thereby creating a positive attitude on the part of users. Significant research has noted encouragement as an important element for creating motivation for advancing a relationship (Piao, et al., 2020; Softić, et al., 2021). Once such a relationship bond has been created with an AI agent, consumers may find that emotional value can be provided by AI personal trainers. Such emotional benefits of AI personal trainers would encourage consumers to continue to participate in physical exercise and become more resistant to gymtimidation. Thus, hypothesis 4 can be formulated accordingly.

Hypothesis 4: Social value of AI personal trainers will have a positive effect on consumer resistance to gymtimidation.

Hedonic Value

Hedonic value, referring to the intrinsic enjoyment, novelty, and fun associated with the consumption experience, is experienced when a product/service provides sensory pleasure or entertainment to consumers. AI personal trainers are a novel service which shows that the use of an exercise application can not only enhance awareness of one's physical activity and progress, but it can also increase their motivation to be physically active (Kari, et al., 2016). That study also reported that gamification through the inclusion of attainment levels and achievement badges has a potential impact on exercise and intrinsic motivation. Thus, by creating a more hedonic experience through gamification and novelty, AI personal trainers have the potential to increase a consumer's

motivation to exercise. Thus, as denoted in hypothesis 5, the hedonic benefits of AI personal trainers would motivate users to continue to participate in physical exercise and become more resistant to gymtimidation.

Hypothesis 5: Hedonic value of AI personal trainers will have a positive effect on consumer resistance to gymtimidation.

Compliance with an AI Trainer and Adoption of AI Trainer Technology

Beyond the five forms of value, other considerations come into play when consumers make their personal assessment of the role that an AI trainer plays in the task of reducing gymtimidation. From a broad perspective, when one recognizes an AI trainer as an effective way to deal with gymtimidation, that individual is likely to be willing to comply with the suggestions and recommendations made by the AI trainer. Recent research has shown that humans are willing to comply with robot (or non-human) instructions in human-AI collaboration contexts, even if human instruction is deemed to be superior (Agrawal and Williams, 2018; Jain, et al., 2023). When an AI trainer is evaluated as being effective for one to use when working out at gym without worrying about gymtimidation, the person is likely to be willing to comply with the AI trainer. Furthermore, the person may even develop an intention to adopt or work with it for an extended period of time. Based upon this reasoning, the following three hypotheses have been developed.

Hypothesis 6: Evaluation of an AI trainer as an effective means to resist gymtimidation has a positive effect on one's willingness to comply with AI trainer.

Hypothesis 7: Evaluation of an AI trainer as an effective means to resist gymtimidation has a positive effect on one's adoption intention of AI trainer.

Hypothesis 8: One's willingness to comply with an AI trainer has a positive effect on one's adoption intention of AI trainer.

From an alternative perspective, one's recognition of an AI trainer as an effective means of resisting gymtimidation may affect one's adoption intention through the mediation of one's willingness to comply with the AI trainer. In all sorts of personal training services, it is important for one to be willing to comply with the instructions given by the trainer. No matter how good the personal trainer is, an individual may not be able to experience positive results if s/he is not willing to comply with the instructions, guidance, and recommendations provided by the trainer. Thus, one's evaluation of an AI trainer as an effective means to help one overcome gymtimidation alone may not be a sufficient motivation for one to adopt the technology. Such positive evaluation about the AI trainer may need to be coupled with one's willingness to comply with it before choosing to adopt the technology. Previous research indicates that humans do seem willing to comply with robot (or non-human) instructions in human-AI collaboration contexts (Agrawal, et al., 2018; Jain, et al., 2023; Westphal, et al., 2023). Thus, one's willingness to comply with an AI personal trainer may play an important mediating role between one's positive evaluation of an AI trainer and one's adoption decision. This assertion leads to the final research hypothesis.

H9: Evaluation of AI trainer as an effective means to resist gymtimidation has a positive effect on adoption intention through the mediation of one's willingness to comply with AI trainer.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is the next topic of discussion. It includes a delineation of relevant stimuli, pertinent measures, and the data collection process.

Stimuli

The study included stimuli which reflect the typical features of AI personal training services available in the marketplace as of April 2024. Respondents were asked to review the stimuli carefully before starting to answer the questions in the questionnaire. Respondents were first introduced to a printed detailed description of AI personal training services and the specific attributes of the AI personal trainer "Alex." Accompanying this description was a visual stimulus, an overview of the information provided in the description, visual depictions of the AI personal trainer Alex, and the price of this service.

Measures

The questionnaire comprises five parts: consumption value, gymtimidation-resistance, willingness to work with the AI personal trainer, adoption intention of the AI trainer, and demographic questions. It began with

questions dealing with consumption values perceived to be associated with Alex, the AI personal trainer. Functional value, addressing the utilitarian benefits, was measured by using a five-item scale developed by Davis (1989). Economic value, being conceptualized as the trade-off between the perceived benefits and monetary cost with the service, was assessed by using the modified scale developed by Dodds et al. (1991). Social value, dealing with the extent to which a consumer believes that the use of the AI personal trainer enhances his/her social status and self-image was measured by slightly modifying Tepper and McKenzie's (2001) scale. Emotional value, addressing the extent to which a consumer feels an emotional bond or a close relationship with the AI service provider, was measured by using the modified scale of Lee et al. (2000). The hedonic value, dealing with the extent to which the AI trainer provides sensory pleasure or entertainment to the respondent, was measured by modifying the scale of Sweeney and Soutar (2001). The scale of gymtimidation-resistance, being conceptualized as the extent to which one is resistant to anxiety, discomfort, embarrassment, fear, and other negative feelings caused by the presence of others at the gym, was developed by using previous research of the concept by Coulter (2021) and Lamarche, Gammage, and Ozimok (2018). Willingness to comply with an AI trainer, being conceptualized as the extent to which a person is willing to follow instructions and requests made by the AI-based personal trainer, was measured by adopting scales of Hausman (2004) and Wilson et al. (2015). Adoption intention, addressing the likelihood of an individual to purchase and subscribe to AI personal trainer services, was measured by a three-item scale adapted from Venkatesh and Davis (2000).

Data Collection

Data were collected using an online questionnaire on the MTurk platform in April of 2024. Participants were limited to individuals residing in the United States in order to control any undesired effects caused by cultural bias (Choi, Nisbett, and Norenzayan, 1999). All participants were exposed to the stimuli before answering the questions about the AI personal trainer. Three attention checks were included in the survey to deal with low-quality responses (Fullerton and McCullough, 2023; Hauser and Schwarz, 2016). All submissions from respondents who failed attention checks were removed. Once they had completed the survey, respondents with valid submissions received monetary compensation. In total, 312 respondents participated in the survey. Among them, 62 respondents failed to pass the attention checks and were discarded. The remaining 250 respondents were deemed to be usable for further analysis.

Results

Path analysis indicates that two of the five consumption values have a significant effect on gymtimidation-resistance. To be specific, both functional value (H1: Beta=.69, $p<.05$) and emotional value (H4: Beta=.64, $p<.05$) are found to have a significant, positive influence on gymtimidation-resistance. On the other hand, neither social value (H3: Beta=-.14, $p=.45$) nor hedonic value (H5: Beta=.22, $p=.64$) has any meaningful influence on gymtimidation-resistance. Interestingly, economic value (H2: Beta=-.40, $p<.1$) is found to have partial significance, yet negative influence on gymtimidation-resistance. Additionally, path analysis investigating the relationship among endogenous variables reveals that one's gymtimidation-resistance has a strong, positive effect upon one's willingness to work with the AI trainer (H6: Beta=.92, $p<.01$) but its hypothesized effect upon one's adoption intention (H7: Beta=.08, $p=.84$) was not supported. Finally, one's willingness to work with AI trainer is found to have a significant influence upon his/her adoption intention (H8: Beta=.88, $p<.01$).

After investigating the direct effects, the mediation effect of gymtimidation-resistance was examined. To examine the hypothesized indirect effect of gymtimidation-resistance upon adoption intention (H9), bootstrapping procedures were used. For the test, 2,000 bootstrapping samples were obtained from the original set ($n=250$) by random sampling. The mediation analysis was carried out by using phantom variables (Macho and Ledermann, 2011). According to the mediation analysis, gymtimidation-resistance has a significant indirect effect on the adoption intention of an AI trainer through the mediation of willingness to comply with the AI trainer (H9: point estimate=.77, $p<.01$). Thus, although the hypothesized direct effect of gymtimidation-resistance upon adoption intention (H7) was not supported, once gymtimidation-resistance is paired up with one's willingness to comply with the AI trainer, it has a significant influence upon one's adoption intention of the technology. Thus, one's willingness to comply with the AI trainer is found to serve as a full mediator of the relationship between gymtimidation-resistance and adoption intention. Standardized total effects of gymtimidation-resistance upon willingness to comply with AI trainer and adoption intention were .79 ($p<.01$) and .72 ($p<.01$), respectively.

Discussion

Of the five consumption values of AI fitness trainers, only functional value and emotional value were found to exert a direct influence upon one's gymtimidation-resistance. As for functional value, the results indicate that

when the AI fitness trainer is viewed as an entity that provides instrumental benefits for one's personal exercise goals, then the technology is seen as an effective means for an individual to resist gymtimidation. This finding is consistent with extant literature that denotes that AI's practicality and its effectiveness as a tool are key elements for consumers' positive evaluation of the technology (Lalicic and Weismayer, 2021; Zhang, et al., 2022). A similar effect was observed with emotional value. That is to say, for those who see an AI fitness trainer as a potential partner with which one can build a close relationship, it is viewed as an effective means for the individual to become gymtimidation-resistant. This outcome is in line with the postulation that AI agents can be perceived as social agents with whom one may form an emotional bond, as posited by the CASA (Computers as Social Actors) framework. Interestingly no substantial impact on gymtimidation-resistance was identified when assessing the potential roles for economic, social, and hedonic values.

Finally, one's evaluation of AI trainer as an effective means of overcoming gymtimidation alone does not produce a direct effect upon one's adoption intention of the technology. According to the mediation analysis, one's willingness to work with AI fitness trainer serves as a full mediator between the two variables. Thus, one's determination to comply with the AI fitness trainer's instructions is a critical cornerstone for one's adoption of the technology. Just like the situation involving a human fitness trainer, one's intention to adopt AI technology as their fitness trainer is founded upon a willingness to comply with the suggestions and recommendations that the AI trainer makes (Dellande, et al., 2004).

Conclusions

This study represents an attempt to begin to fill a gap by providing a better understanding of consumer-AI relationships within the fitness sector. The study demonstrates that the incorporation of AI technology can effectively deal with the pervasive nuisance called gymtimidation thereby encouraging people to engage in beneficial physical exercise. The applicability of AI agents to deal with persistent consumer problems is ubiquitous. The current study provides two primary benefits. First is the knowledge that is important to operators of fitness centers in their efforts to use AI to help in the task of overcoming gymtimidation among the current and potential clientele. Second is the research framework that provides a baseline for future studies. Given these benefits, the current study is seen as beneficial to academicians and practitioners alike while providing insight that begins to close the gap.

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Summary Brief

Driven to Attend: A Visual Ethnography of a Weekend at COTA

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Despite its origins as a predominantly European motorsport, Formula 1 (F1) has a long and intricate history in the United States (US). Ultimately, we seek to investigate sports tourism and the spectator experience of a family attending the US Grand Prix hosted at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas by employing mobile phone visual ethnography.

Introduction

The European Grand Prix Championship was created in 1932 in an effort to rejuvenate the world of motorsport following the aftermath of World War I. In 1946, the Grand Prix's governing body, the Association Internationale des Automobile Clubs Reconnus (AIACR) was renamed the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), and the championship was rebranded to Formula 1 (F1). Each race features ten teams with two drivers per team representing various countries worldwide. Team sizes range from a few hundred members in the smaller teams to over one thousand in larger ones. The popularity of F1 has significantly increased globally, boosted in part by the Netflix docuseries *Drive to Survive* (2019 - present). This has resulted in rising global television viewership, record-breaking race weekend attendances, booming social media engagement, and drivers elevated to household names (Wood & Burkhalter 2023). As F1's popularity expands so too do the opportunities for sports tourism. The 2022 season included 22 races in 20 countries, while the 2024 season includes 24 races in 21 countries with three races in the United States – Austin, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Miami, Florida. These events draw fans from all over the globe, providing significant economic benefits to the host city. For instance, the US Grand Prix held at the Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas, has contributed over \$7 billion to the local economy and generated more than 64,000 annually between 2012 and 2022. In 2021, fans spent \$400 million at the track and another \$200 million in the city (Searies 2023).

Background

Understanding spectators' experiences is crucial for ensuring the ongoing success of hosting F1 events. Motivated tourists demonstrate higher levels of support and intention to return to future events (Kim et al. 2013). With government support, annual events such as an F1 Grand Prix offer an opportunity to promote the host city and country, attract tourists, stimulate revenue, bolster national pride, and potentially attract foreign investment. This is especially beneficial for developing nations and serves as a valuable tool for city branding (Ishak 2005; Lefebvre & Roullet 2013). However, alongside the benefits there are also several potential negative outcomes such as economic costs, noise, traffic congestion, crowding, and cultural misunderstandings or disagreements (Cheng & Jarvis 2010; Kim et al. 2015).

Recent research on F1 examines sports tourism and the spectator experience. In the tourism literature, the focus lies on how tourists interact with destinations, with tourists as the key actors in the experience, and the destination as the backdrop for that experience (Stamboulis & Skayannis 2003). For Formula 1 Grand Prix (GP) events, tourists are the fans attending the event and the destination is the geographical location in which the event is held. When evaluating the destination, it is important to consider not only the host city, state, and/or country, but also the placement of the race track in relation to other amenities including transportation and accommodations. Researchers assert that spectators of events have two distinct levels of experience: the core and the peripheral (Byon, Zhang, & Baker 2013; Chalip & McGuire 2007). The core experience revolves around the race itself encompassing elements such as race dynamics, driver performance, and on-track action. The peripheral experience includes additional elements that enhance the core such as live concerts, engaging activities, and dining options. Despite not being directly linked to the races, these peripheral components play a crucial role in amplifying and enriching the core product, ultimately shaping the overall spectator experience (Chiu & Leng, 2019). For example, Chiu and Leng (2019) analyzed spectator reviews of the Singaporean GP from tourists on TripAdvisor. They identified seven major themes: race, track, event, concert, cars, food, and walk. Among these, the race itself stood out as the most important

component. Watanabe et al. (2017) explored factors that influenced international fans attending the Malaysian GP. They identified core product features of the event, fan psychological identification, event operation quality, and tourism destination image as important components.

Demographic and geographic characteristics of spectators are also important factors for consideration. For example, Chiu and Leng (2019) discovered that although the overall evaluation of the event by attendees was positive, some differences were based on gender. Male spectators strongly focused on the core product, specifically the race and the cars, whereas female spectators displayed a greater emphasis on atmospheric elements and peripheral aspects such as concerts. Additionally, the Singaporean locals focused more on their experiences related to race, international tourists had a broader perspective that included their overall experience in Singapore, such as trying local cuisine and interacting with locals. However, none of this research explored the perspective of families and young fans. Historically, attracting young fans was overlooked because the sport's target demographic was perceived to be wealthy older men (Richards 2022). However, with the launch of *Drive to Survive* and F1's increased social media presence, there has been a noticeable shift in the fanbase to now include women, younger fans, and those attending events as a family (Richards 2022).

Proposed Method

This research will utilize visual ethnography to examine the family experience at the US Grand Prix hosted at the Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas. More specifically, mobile phone visual ethnography (MpVE) will be employed which is defined as “the scientific and systematic ethnographic study of behaviors and culture in a naturalistic setting” (DeBerry-Spence, Ekpo and Hogan 2019, p. 84). Data was collected over two race weekends spanning two consecutive years (2022 and 2023) as the popularity of the sport grew, to observe how the environment and overall experience adapted to accommodate a younger, more diverse fan base. Employing this methodology is imperative to our study as it leverages the accessibility of mobile device for data generation and prioritizes visual data over other data forms, allowing participants to capture phenomena naturally as they encounter and perceive them. This also allows participants to reflect on photographs prior to sharing them thereby enhancing the depth of our insights into the fan experience.

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SESSION 7.7 PANEL: PROMPT ENGINEERING RIGOR AND RELEVANCE IN MARKETING

Moderators:

**Maria Petrescu, Michael Rodriguez, Dana Harrison,
Mihai Orzan, and Melanie B. Richards**

**SESSION 7.9 PANEL: UNPLUGGED & EMPOWERED:
NUTURING DIGITAL WELLNESS FOR UNIVERSITY
EDUCATORS**

Moderators:

Kelley Cours, Ashley Hass, and Breanne Mertz

SESSION 8.1: IS AI TAKING OVER?

Moderator:

Amit Mahimkar

Summary Brief

A Conceptual Model for Value Co-Creative Generative AI

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Resource integration through generative AI (GenAI) is a key strategic decision and predominant challenge of actor-to-actor (i.e., companies, customers, institutions, and public policymakers) collaboration in the service ecosystem. Building on the theoretical lenses of service-dominant (S-D) logic and psychological ownership, we propose a conceptual framework of value co-creative GenAI. In this framework, we elucidate the central collaborative role of GenAI during service interactions and delineate how GenAI co-creates or co-destructs value with actors in the broader, multi-actor service ecosystem. Four testable propositions are developed from the conceptual framework. Academic and practical challenges in the GenAI space have also been discussed.

Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) (such as ChatGPT, DALL-E) is an advanced artificial intelligence (AI), designed to generate novel human-like outputs (e.g., texts, images) based on user prompts. It has the potential to transform business and consumer behavior. As GenAI can add up to \$4.4 trillion worth of value to the global economy, such possibility has also started to emerge in marketing through personalized campaigns, unstructured consumer data analysis, automated processes, opportunity identification, and idea generation (McKinsey Insights, 2024). The emerging applications of GenAI in producing text, movies, and music highlight the prospect for these AI platforms to serve as collaborators in developing innovative products and services that create value (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Recently, GenAI agents have been used in service settings as a feeling or emotional AI tool for human interactions and communications as part of the customer care journey through prompt engineering and response engineering (Huang and Rust, 2024).

Not surprisingly, GenAI agents can create value through producing outputs such as images, video, coding, and texts based on prompts provided by customers/users during interactions. GenAI has the promise to become an integral part of service offerings/solutions like when an employee participates in the decision-making/problem-solving process. Instead of employees using an internet search engine to find information, they may use GenAI. GenAI applications are changing human-machine interactions into human-human-like interactions (Hermann and Puntoni, 2024) due to human-like qualities in terms of appearance, language, and communication, and this shift is affecting consumer interactions and emotional bonding with new technologies such as GenAI (De Freitas et al., 2023; Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Yu and Fan, 2024). GenAI agents are not just a value creation tool—they are actors who co-create value with other actors (e.g., firms, other users, policy makers, institutions) in the service ecosystem.

While value creation in human-computer interaction literature is not new, value co-creation activities between consumers and GenAI seem to be novel phenomena from the service-dominant (S-D) logic perspective (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2017). S-D logic suggests that value is co-created by both service providers (e.g., GenAI agents) and consumers based on service exchange in a service ecosystem. This service ecosystem includes value-proposing social and economic actors that interact through “institutions, technology, and language” in the process of value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2011, p. 185). As GenAI facilitates human-like co-created interactions, it will be beneficial for marketers and practitioners to consider GenAI as an actor in the service ecosystem and explore its value co-creation activities and processes.

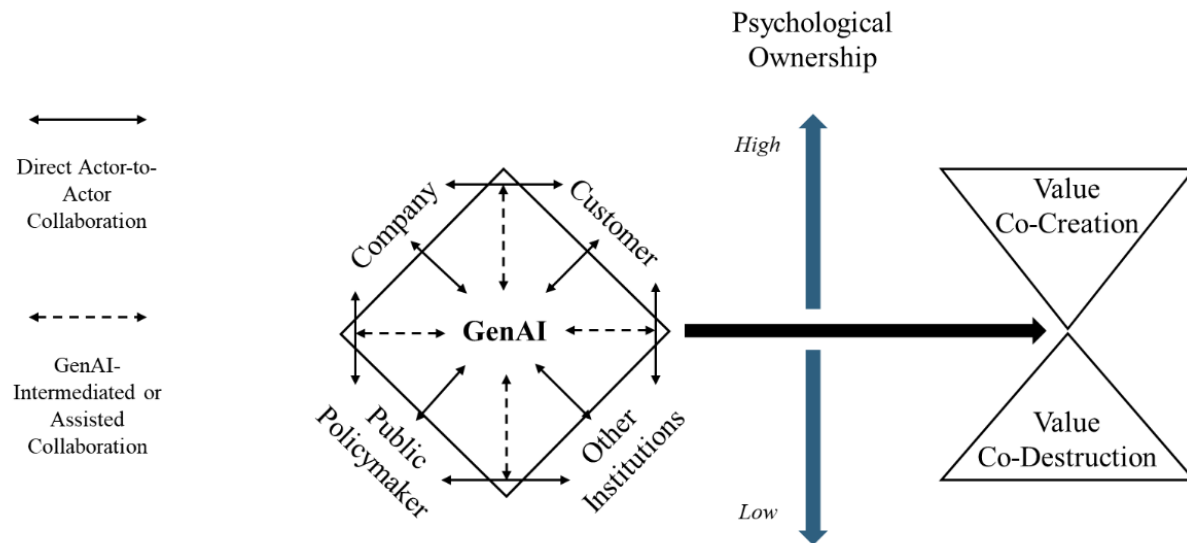
However, despite a growing body of literature on GenAI applications in various fields (e.g., Huang and Rust, 2024; Singh et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2024), little is known about how consumers co-create value with GenAI and how companies use GenAI applications and tools to co-create and deliver value to customers. To address this research gap, we build on the S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008) and the theory of psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2001) to propose a conceptual framework that consists of a set of four propositions to delineate how GenAI can play a central role in service exchange and resource integration in a multi-actor service ecosystem and

how value co-creation and co-destruction (e.g., misuse of resources that harms a service interaction outcome) can occur as outcomes of these service exchanges.

Conceptual Framework: The S-D Logic, Psychological Ownership, and Value Co-Creative Generative AI

We propose a theoretical framework that links the S-D logic, theory of psychological ownership, and value co-creative generative AI based on actor-to-actor service exchange. Additionally, relevant concepts have been integrated into the context of GenAI. Our theoretical framework is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Theoretical Framework for Value Co-Creative Generative AI



As noted above, GenAI is converting human-AI interactions into “human-human-like interactions” (Hermann and Puntoni, 2024, p. 7) during service exchanges such as between GenAI conversational agents and customers. Essentially, service exchanges are interdependent between actors to create value. GenAI can be considered a human-like actor that may become a core strategic unit of the service ecosystem to bring solutions to the needs of all actors, including companies, customers, institutions, and policymakers, in the process of resource integration and service exchange. For example, GenAI is crucial for personalization in tailoring products and service solutions according to individual preferences (Long and Liu, 2021; Singh et al., 2024). As such, GenAI has the potential to play a central collaborative role in the service ecosystem because the actor’s interactions with GenAI may transform into experiences that feel like service exchanges with other actors. Therefore, it is proposed:

Proposition 1: GenAI functions as a human-like actor in actor-to-actor collaboration, resource integration, and service exchange.

Service solutions facilitated by companies through GenAI agents (e.g., Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI), WoodBows) may help customers co-create value for knowledge assimilation (e.g., using ChatGPT/ Gemini/Meta AI), content augmentation and creation, coding and automation, experiential consumption, and so on. For example, Oracle (2024) launched Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) Generative AI Agents to help increase customer satisfaction through more precise responses and a large amount of query resolution in optimizing call center service interactions. GenAI agents help augment value co-creation behavior, as advocated by Yi and Gong (2013), such as customer participation behavior (information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior, and personal interaction) and customer citizenship behavior (feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance). This seems possible because GenAI can co-create and provide customized solutions to customers based on their prompts in a similar fashion to consultants. While actor-to-actor collaboration is integral to the value co-creation process (Sklyar et al., 2019), these dyadic interactions are not isolated interactions; they are rather part of the network of actors at different

levels of aggregation for resource integration (Vargo and Lusch, 2017). Actors have close connections in value co-creation within the service ecosystem, establishing extensive adaptation (Baraldi et al., 2012; Sklyar et al., 2019). If so, the service exchanges that occur between GenAI agents and actors essentially become value co-creation activities. It can be proposed that:

Proposition 2: GenAI serves as a direct actor as well as an intermediary in human actor-to-actor value co-creation activities and service exchange.

Value co-destruction describes how misusing resources intentionally or unintentionally can harm the well-being of at least one actor involved in service exchange, whether for individuals or organizations (Ple' and C'aceres, 2010). Sometimes, value co-creation can unintentionally cause value co-destruction due to insufficient knowledge (Kashif and Zarkada, 2015; Lumivalo et al., 2023) or ignorance of new technology. GenAI tools rely on huge amounts of pre-trained data upon which GenAI creates outputs using prompts provided by developers and consumers. However, this pre-trained data could lead to a biased and incorrect result (Ghaffarzadegan et al., 2024). Sun et al. (2024) reported that while GenAI like DALL·E 2 from OpenAI could transform media creation, the unexamined deployment of such AI risks propagating societal biases through the media content it generates.

Although the given prompts come from the consumer side, the value of using GenAI tools may significantly diminish or even become disvalued if such biases or purely fabricated information arise from the interaction with these tools. Sandrini and Somogyi (2023) argued that although more advanced GenAI may eventually generate value for consumers, early-stage GenAI has encouraged consumers to inefficiently consume more time on lower value or deceptive content, such as clickbait and fake news, which has reduced consumer welfare. For example, GenAI tools like Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and DALL·E can unintentionally amplify gender, race, and emotional biases in their images, with these biases often being more pronounced than societal norms and subtly reinforcing stereotypes, thus making it crucial to address these issues as the technology becomes more widespread (Zhou et al., 2024). As GenAI agents can improvise existing training data and frequent interaction experiences to provide novel solutions or outputs to actors at the intersection of service exchange, these tools can mislead or propagate misinformation that may unintentionally harm the beneficiaries of service interactions. It can be proposed that:

Proposition 3: GenAI agents can co-destruct value through falsified information/sources and amplification of biases, which harm other actors in the network.

Psychological ownership is a feeling of ownership different from legal ownership (Pierce et al., 2003) and defined as the states (both cognitive and affective) in which “individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is ‘theirs’” (Pierce et al., 2003, p. 86). Research suggests that psychological ownership is influenced by control, knowledge, and self-investment (Morewedge, 2020), and it can be strong and positive, even for things with negative aspects depending on how consumers focus on the value-enhancing features (Ye and Gawronski, 2016). Psychological ownership benefits both consumers and businesses by increasing demand, satisfaction, relationships, and loyalty or competitive resistance (Morewedge et al., 2021). Liu et al. (2012) suggested that this feeling of ownership can be highly motivating, influenced by experiences of control, extensive organizational or object knowledge, and self-investment. Since PO is the emotional attachment to an object (material or immaterial), organization, idea, or technology (Pierce et al., 2001; Dawkins et al., 2017; Morewedge et al., 2021), technological innovations can disrupt psychological ownership, affecting consumer value and satisfaction while enhancing consumer motives and influencing demand, willingness to pay, and brand loyalty (Morewedge et al., 2021). Additionally, perceived control, which is the belief in one’s ability to influence outcomes through actions, is a key structural component in developing PO (Pierce et al., 2001). This perception of control is a cognitive-based evaluation of conditions and opportunities based on participative decision-making rather than an emotional judgment (Liu et al., 2012; Rosenthal, 2004). On the other hand, when PO decreases, it might lead to detrimental value for both consumers and the target of the felt ownership because PO “satisfies important consumer motives and has value-enhancing consequences” (Morewedge et al., 2021, p. 197). As a result, frequent and deep interactions with GenAI may result in people feeling like they own or have strong emotional connections to these AI systems (Morewedge et al., 2021; Hermann, 2022). Thus, we propose the following:

Proposition 4: When the level of psychological ownership is high (low), value co-creation (co-destruction) is more likely to occur in service exchanges with GenAI.

Academic and Practical Key Challenges in the GenAI Space

As GenAI has recently emerged for consumer and marketplace use, there are several challenges with using GenAI for managerial insights and marketing research. We outline a few of these challenges below as concerns that future research and industry exploration can address.

Key Challenge 1: Lack of Customer Experience Data

After the introduction of ChatGPT by OpenAI, leading customer-centered companies have started to incorporate GenAI into their service offerings. For example, Meta introduced a GenAI tool, Meta AI, with which consumers can chat with 28 different AI (chatbots) depending on their personalized interests (Meta, 2024). On the other hand, Omnicom, in collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS), will enhance its AI-powered platform Omni by developing new foundational models to automate tasks including creative briefs, media plans, ad creative, audience segmentation, and performance measurement (Omnicom Group Inc., 2023). Due to the embryonic state of generative AI applications and the lack of consumer insight, research on the effects of GenAI on consumer experience is still limited (Davenport et al., 2019). As GenAI evolves and more data are fed into it, GenAI may be able to provide stronger and more reliable solutions and limit biases and co-destruction as discussed in Proposition 3. Marketers, consumers, and researchers must stay abreast of developments and use GenAI cautiously until more data are integrated.

Key Challenge 2: GenAI Search Optimization

GenAI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Meta AI and Claude 3 are capable of generating content that may be used to search for products or brands. This presents a challenge for marketers to measure how these AI tools will rank or suggest company websites and products that historically have been presented by search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo. In other words, GenAI tools may disrupt ways in which companies traditionally utilize search engine optimization (SEO) to promote websites and products and increase sales because GenAI tools may be used as a one-stop value co-creation tool for all (Feuerriegel et al., 2024). This is a key priority for both researchers and practitioners as the seeking of information and evaluation of options in the exchange process may drastically alter value co-creation (or co-destruction).

Key Challenge 3: Lack of Data Governance

GenAI is a self-improving agent that augments every time it participates in value co-creation activities with consumers/users (Sheng, 2024). Since the nature of unregulated data generation and augmentation occurs, healthcare, insurance, and education will remain hesitant to adopt GenAI for legal and compliance obstacles as well as a lack of transparency and regulation (IBM, 2024). Due to a lack of data governance, it is also challenging for companies to make GenAI scalable to ensure safety and security. These challenges may be addressed by understanding how companies and consumers participate in value co-creation activities and processes through the theoretical lens of the S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2017). Policymakers must also address concerns with GenAI in ways that enable its use for value co-creation while also safeguarding its users.

Conclusion

GenAI is an advanced AI that can generate novel outputs via prompts to co-create value with actors (e.g., customers, institutions, and policymakers) in a multi-actor service ecosystem. As GenAI is at the embryonic stage of development and can act as a human-like agent, a theoretical framework grounded in the S-D logic and psychological ownership theory has been proposed to understand how GenAI co-creates value with actors in service interactions. Four propositions elaborate the processes of collaboration between actors in which GenAI agents play a central collaborative role for value co-creation or value co-destruction. The underlying level of psychological ownership underpins why actors interacting with GenAI may co-create or co-destruct value in service exchange. Although the S-D logic and psychological ownership seem appropriate to explain the phenomena of value co-creation in the context of GenAI, results should be validated empirically to understand whether other compelling factors emerge to influence service exchange outcomes. Our proposed framework and the four testable propositions provide a theoretical lens through which researchers and practitioners can examine the challenges and the positive and negative sides of GenAI through value co-creation and/or value co-destruction.

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Full Paper

Post-Pandemic: Reframing the Debate on SMEs' Adoption of AI Technologies Using Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Approaches

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In response to the rapid pace at which the world is advancing with AI technologies, there have been significant research efforts focused on how organizations can benefit from these technologies. However, most of these studies have predominantly been conducted in the context of large organizations, with limited evidence available for SMEs. The few studies that have explored SMEs have primarily focused on financial capabilities and other resource constraints. The COVID-19 pandemic, which struck the world not too long ago, has exacerbated the need for all businesses to embrace digitalization, specifically the adoption of AI technologies. Against this background, we propose a deviation from the extensively researched areas of SMEs' adoption of AI technologies by suggesting that contingent factors, such as the impact of the pandemic and the fear of its recurrence, may influence SMEs to adoption of AI technologies. Specifically, we propose a research model based on dual factor theory, which involves organizational and resource readiness as enabling factors, and internal resistance and cybersecurity concerns as inhibiting factors toward SMEs' digitalization. Importantly, we propose that these contingency factors will mediate the relationship between enabling factors and adoption of AI technologies, as well as moderate the impact of inhibiting factors on SMEs' adoption of AI technologies.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is fundamentally transforming business landscapes, presenting both significant opportunities and complex challenges for organizations worldwide. AI technologies, encompassing machine learning, natural language processing, and robotics, have become essential components of modern business strategies. They offer substantial benefits in enhancing operational efficiency, expanding market reach, and driving overall competitiveness (Rachinger et al., 2018; Bouwman et al., 2019). Despite the extensive research on AI adoption by large corporations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have not received equivalent scholarly attention, even though they play a crucial role in the global economy (OECD, 2021). SMEs, which make up over 90% of businesses worldwide and significantly contribute to employment and GDP, are uniquely positioned to leverage AI tools to enhance their competitiveness and operational efficiency (Mittal et al., 2018; Warner & Wäger, 2019).

However, SMEs face substantial barriers to AI adoption, including limited financial resources, a lack of technical expertise, and internal resistance to change (Lee et al., 2022). These barriers are often exacerbated by structural and strategic constraints unique to smaller firms, such as limited managerial capacity and less formalized processes (Moeuf, 2018; Akpan et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the necessity for AI adoption across all business sectors, accelerating the pace of AI integration and compelling even the most hesitant SMEs to incorporate AI technologies into their operations to survive and thrive under new market conditions (Nambisan et al, 2019; EUAC, 2021, Martins, 2023). This crisis has acted both as a catalyst and a stress test for AI strategies, revealing the urgent need for SMEs to adapt to a rapidly changing environment (Radanliev et al., 2020; Ragazou et al., 2022).

This shift induced by the pandemic emphasizes the critical need to understand the factors that facilitate or hinder AI adoption among SMEs. While existing research has predominantly focused on financial capabilities and resource constraints, it often overlooks broader contextual factors such as the impact of the pandemic and the fear of its recurrence (Papadopoulos et al., 2020; Priyono et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2022). These contingent factors can significantly influence AI adoption efforts by altering the perceived risks and benefits associated with AI technologies (Chen et al., 2022; Rawashdeh et al. 2023). Addressing this gap, our study employs a dual factor theory framework, which considers both enabling factors (organizational and resource readiness) and inhibiting factors

(internal resistance and cybersecurity concerns) in the context of AI adoption. Furthermore, we examine how contingent factors, such as the pandemic's impact and the fear of its recurrence, mediate and moderate these relationships, providing a nuanced understanding of the AI adoption process in SMEs.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, our research aims to advance the understanding of SME AI adoption and offer practical insights for SME managers navigating the complexities of AI transformation in a post-pandemic world. Our findings are expected to inform strategies that promote AI adoption, thereby enhancing the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs. This comprehensive approach not only addresses the immediate AI adoption needs driven by the pandemic but also provides a framework for long-term strategic planning in an increasingly AI-driven global economy. Through this study, we aim to fill the existing research gaps and contribute to the broader discourse on AI adoption in SMEs, highlighting the importance of both internal and external factors in shaping the digital future of these enterprises.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

Dual Factor Theory

The Dual Factor Theory (DFT), initially conceptualized by Herzberg (1966), has been extensively employed to understand the various factors influencing human behaviour, particularly in the workplace. Herzberg's seminal work distinguished between 'hygiene factors' and 'motivational factors'. Hygiene factors, such as salary, company policies, and working conditions, are external elements that, if inadequate, can lead to job dissatisfaction but do not necessarily motivate when improved. Conversely, motivational factors, such as recognition, responsibility, and the nature of the work itself, are intrinsic and drive job satisfaction and performance (Herzberg, 1966).

Over the years, DFT has been adapted to various contexts beyond its original application in job satisfaction, including the field of information systems and technology adoption. This adaptation has been pivotal in understanding the dynamics of technology usage, as it allows for a nuanced analysis of the factors that facilitate or hinder technology adoption. Cenfetelli (2004) and Cenfetelli and Schwarz (2011) expanded on Herzberg's framework by applying it to technology adoption, identifying enablers as factors that promote technology usage and inhibitors as factors that discourage it. This bifurcation is critical in understanding how organizations, particularly SMEs, can effectively adopt new technologies like AI.

In the context of AI adoption within SMEs, enabling factors are those that create an environment conducive to integrating AI tools. Resource readiness, for instance, includes the availability of financial resources, technological infrastructure, and skilled personnel necessary for the adoption and effective utilization of AI (Akpan, 2021). Studies indicate that SMEs with adequate resources are better positioned to invest in and benefit from AI technologies, thereby enhancing their operational efficiency and market competitiveness (Penco, 2013; Rachinger et al., 2018). Organizational readiness involves the preparedness of an SME's structure, culture, and processes to embrace AI solution. Organizations that cultivate a culture of innovation and possess adaptive structures are more likely to successfully implement AI technologies (Radanliev et al., 2020). This cultural and structural adaptability is crucial for integrating digital tools into existing business processes and leveraging its full potential (Oreg, 2004, Warner & Wäger, 2019; Berghaus & Back, 2016).

Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory posits that the effectiveness of an organization's structure and strategies is contingent upon various situational factors. This theory challenges the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to management and emphasizes the need for organizations to align their internal structures and processes with external environmental conditions (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Contingency Theory has been instrumental in explaining how different variables such as technology, environment, and organizational size interact to influence organizational effectiveness (Chatterjee et al., 2024).

In the realm of AI adoption, Contingency Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how SMEs can optimize their use of AI technologies by aligning their strategies with both internal capabilities and external pressures. The theory suggests that organizations must adapt their strategies based on contextual factors to achieve superior performance. For instance, the technological sophistication required for AI implementation necessitates a thorough assessment of both internal resources and external market conditions (Rawashdeh et al. 2023). Abedin (2020) utilizes contingency theory to examine the opposing effects of AI explainability, demonstrating the application of this theory in managing the dynamic interplay between enabling and constraining factors in AI adoption.

Moreover, Contingency Theory highlights the dynamic interplay between external pressures and internal responses. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a critical external contingency, forcing many SMEs

to accelerate their digital transformation efforts to adapt to new market conditions and operational challenges (Priyono et al., 2020). This scenario illustrates the theory's principle that organizational success is contingent upon the ability to adapt to external environmental shifts, leveraging internal capabilities to navigate these changes effectively (Martins, 2023; Chatterjee et al., 2024).

Hypothesis Development

Resource Readiness and AI Adoption

Resource readiness, encompassing the availability of financial, technological, and human resources, is pivotal for the successful adoption of AI technologies by SMEs. Financial resources enable necessary investments in advanced AI technologies, while technological infrastructure and skilled personnel ensure these technologies are effectively implemented and utilized (EUAC, 2021, OECD, 2021). According to the Dual Factor Theory, resource readiness functions as an enabler that facilitates AI adoption by providing the requisite support for technology integration (Cenfetelli, 2004). SMEs with adequate financial and technological resources are better positioned to invest in AI tools and infrastructure, thereby enhancing their operational efficiency and competitive edge (Mittal et al., 2018). This perspective is supported by studies indicating that well-resourced SMEs can leverage AI to innovate and streamline processes, resulting in significant performance improvements (Moeuf et al., 2018). Moreover, the availability of skilled personnel plays a crucial role, as human resources are needed to manage and operate these advanced technologies (Bouwman et al., 2019). Thus, we propose:

H1: Resource readiness positively influences SMEs' adoption of AI technologies.

Organizational Readiness and AI Adoption

Organizational readiness refers to the extent to which an SME's structure, culture, and processes are prepared to support the adoption of AI technologies. A supportive organizational culture that fosters innovation and embraces change is crucial for the successful implementation of AI technologies (Warner & Wäger, 2019). The literature suggests that organizations with flexible structures and innovative cultures are more adept at integrating new technologies and aligning their strategies with technological advancements (Berghaus & Back, 2016). This adaptability is essential for effective digitalization, as it enables organizations to respond dynamically to the opportunities and challenges posed by AI (OECD, 2021). Organizations that cultivate a culture of continuous learning and innovation are better positioned to leverage AI for strategic benefits, including enhanced decision-making, improved customer experiences, and optimized operations (Nambisan et al., 2019). Furthermore, the alignment of organizational processes with AI capabilities is critical for realizing the full potential of these technologies (Papadopoulos et al., 2020). Such organizations are typically better equipped to harness AI-driven insights and innovations, thereby achieving a competitive advantage in the market (Rachinger et al., 2018; Rawashdeh et al. 2023). Hence, we hypothesize:

H2: Organizational readiness positively influences SMEs' adoption of AI technologies.

Internal Resistance and AI adoption

Internal resistance to change is a significant barrier to the adoption of AI technologies in SMEs. Employees may resist new technologies due to fears of job displacement, perceived complexity, or a lack of understanding of AI's benefits. This resistance can significantly hinder the adoption and effective use of AI technologies. According to the Dual Factor Theory, internal resistance acts as an inhibitor that must be mitigated to facilitate AI adoption (Cenfetelli, 2004). Empirical studies have consistently shown that resistance to change is one of the most common obstacles in the implementation of new technologies, often slowing down or completely halting the adoption process (Oreg, 2003; Penco et al., 2023). Overcoming internal resistance requires comprehensive change management strategies, including clear communication of AI benefits, training programs, and inclusive decision-making processes (Chatterjee et al., 2024). Moreover, fostering a culture that values continuous learning and innovation can help alleviate fears and build support for new technologies (Mittal et al., 2018; Abedin, 2020). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3: Internal resistance negatively influences SMEs' adoption of AI technologies.

Cybersecurity Concerns and AI Adoption

Cybersecurity concerns, including fears of data breaches and privacy issues, can deter SMEs from adopting AI technologies. Ensuring robust cybersecurity measures is often challenging for SMEs due to limited resources and

expertise. These concerns act as significant inhibitors to AI adoption, as the potential consequences of data breaches can be severe and costly. Studies have highlighted that cybersecurity risks are a major deterrent for SMEs when considering AI adoption, with many businesses fearing the financial and reputational damage associated with data breaches (EUAC, 2021; Jara & Mayayise, 2024). The literature underscores the importance of implementing comprehensive cybersecurity strategies to mitigate these risks and build trust in AI technologies (Martins, 2023). Moreover, the development of industry-specific cybersecurity standards and guidelines can provide SMEs with the frameworks needed to safeguard their digital assets (Radanliev et al., 2020). Addressing these concerns requires investment in cybersecurity infrastructure and the development of comprehensive security protocols (OECD, 2021). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H4: Cybersecurity concerns negatively influence SMEs' adoption of AI technologies.

Pandemic Impact and AI Adoption

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically accelerated the digital transformation of SMEs, compelling them to adopt AI technologies at an unprecedented pace to maintain operations and adapt to changing market conditions (Lee et al., 2022). This impact serves as a mediating factor that enhances the relationship between enabling factors (resource and organizational readiness) and AI adoption. The pandemic has acted as a catalyst for technological adoption, with businesses striving to maintain continuity and adapt to new market realities (Akpan et al., 2021; Martins, 2023). The urgency to digitalize during the pandemic has underscored the need for SMEs to leverage AI technologies to enhance their operational resilience and strategic agility (Priyono et al., 2020). Moreover, studies have shown that crises like the COVID-19 pandemic can act as significant external contingencies that drive rapid technological adoption, forcing SMEs to innovate and reconfigure their business models (Chen et al., 2022; Penco et al., 2023). This scenario underscores the importance of agility and resilience, as SMEs with robust resource and organizational readiness are better equipped to leverage AI technologies to navigate the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Thus, we hypothesize:

H5: The impact of the pandemic mediates the relationship between enabling factors and SMEs' adoption of AI technologies

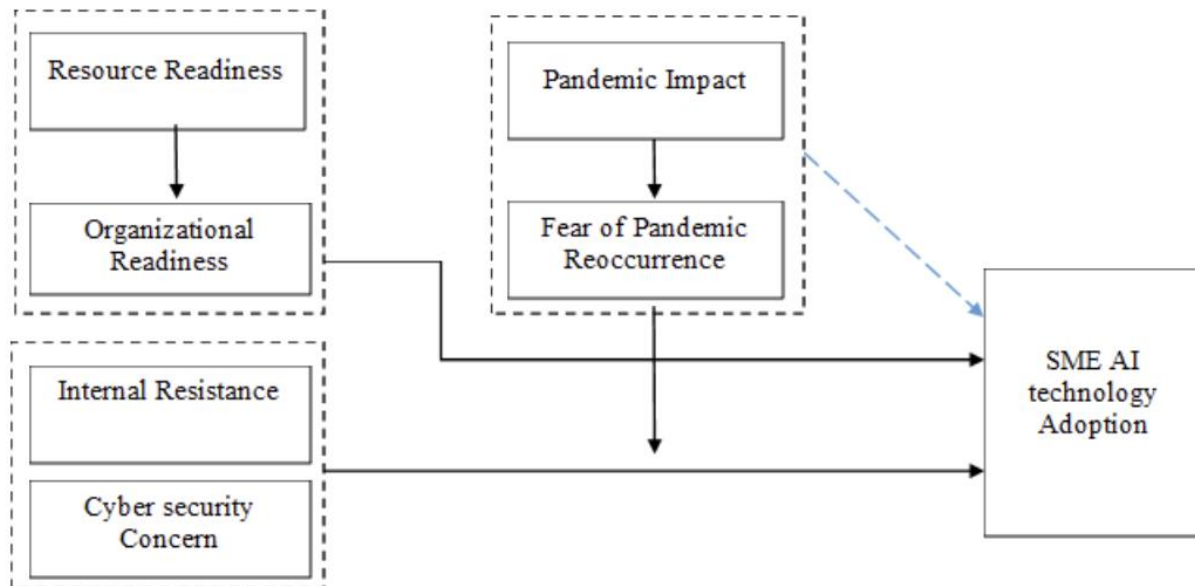
Fear of Pandemic Reoccurrence and AI Adoption

The ongoing fear of future pandemics serves as a motivator for SMEs to invest in AI solutions to build resilience and ensure continuity (Rawashdeh et al. 2023). This fear acts as a moderating factor that influences the relationship between inhibiting factors (internal resistance and cybersecurity concerns) and AI adoption. Research suggests that the anticipation of future disruptions can drive proactive AI adoption, as businesses seek to prepare for potential crises by integrating AI technologies that enhance their agility and resilience (Nambisan et al., 2019). The continuous threat of pandemics and other global crises emphasizes the need for SMEs to adopt AI-driven strategies to mitigate risks and maintain operational stability (Jara & Mayayise, 2024). Moreover, the ability to swiftly respond to environmental uncertainties by leveraging AI technologies can significantly improve an SME's capacity to navigate future disruptions (Papadopoulos et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2022; Martins, 2023). Hence, we hypothesize:

H6: The fear of pandemic reoccurrence moderates the relationship between inhibiting factors and SMEs' adoption of AI technologies.

Figure 1: Stimuli Used in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Contingent factors



Source: Own

Methodology

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design to collect quantitative data from SMEs in the UK, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. A cross-sectional design is suitable for examining the relationships between enabling and inhibiting factors, contingent factors, and AI adoption at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design allows us to capture a snapshot of current practices and perceptions among SMEs regarding digital transformation.

The target population for this study comprises SME owner-managers in the UK, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. SMEs are defined according to the European Union's criteria, which include enterprises with fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million (European Commission, 2020). To ensure representativeness across different sectors and sizes of SMEs, a stratified random sampling technique is employed. This technique helps to ensure that various subgroups within the population are adequately represented, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. The sample size is determined using Cochran's formula for adequate representation, aiming for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% (Cochran, 1977), resulting in a minimum sample size of 384 respondents per country.

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through online and paper-based surveys. The questionnaire is designed to capture information on resource readiness, organizational readiness, internal resistance, cybersecurity concerns, the impact of the pandemic, and the fear of pandemic recurrence. The questionnaire items are adapted from validated scales in existing literature, ensuring reliability and validity. Pre-testing is conducted with a small group of SME managers to refine the survey instrument. The use of both online and paper-based surveys ensures that responses can be collected from a wide range of participants, including those who may have limited access to digital platforms.

Data analysis will be conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA). These methods are chosen for their ability to test complex relationships between variables and identify configurations of factors leading to SME AI adoption.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is used to test the hypothesized relationships between enabling factors, inhibiting factors, contingent factors, and SME AI adoption. This technique allows for the examination of direct and indirect effects, mediation, and moderation (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis is conducted using software

such as AMOS or SmartPLS. SEM helps in understanding the structural relationships between the variables and provides insights into the pathways through which various factors influence AI adoption.

Moreover, fsQCA is employed to identify combinations of factors that lead to high levels of AI adoption in SMEs. This method is particularly useful for understanding the configurational nature of causal relationships and provides a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing digital technologies adoption (Ragin, 2008). The use of fsQCA allows for the identification of multiple pathways to successful digitalization, acknowledging that different combinations of factors can lead to similar outcomes. This is particularly relevant in the context of SMEs, where diverse business models and operating environments can influence AI adoption.

The analysis begins with descriptive statistics to summarize the characteristics of the sample and key variables. This initial analysis helps to provide a clear picture of the demographic and organizational profiles of the respondents. Following this, the reliability of the constructs is assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while construct validity is evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). These steps ensure that the measurement instruments are both reliable and valid.

Hypothesis testing is conducted using SEM to examine the relationships between variables. Fit indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are used to assess model fit (Hair et al., 2019). Finally, fsQCA is used to identify different configurations of enabling, inhibiting, and contingent factors that lead to high levels of AI adoption in SMEs. This method helps in understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of AI adoption, recognizing that multiple combinations of factors can drive successful outcomes.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes substantial theoretical contributions to the literature on SME AI adoption by integrating and extending the Dual Factor Theory and Contingency Theory.

Firstly, by applying Herzberg's Dual Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) beyond its traditional context of job satisfaction, this research elucidates the critical role of enabling factors, such as resource readiness and organizational readiness, alongside inhibiting factors like internal resistance and cybersecurity concerns, in driving or impeding AI adoption within SMEs. This nuanced application demonstrates how SMEs navigate internal capabilities and barriers, providing a deeper understanding of organizational change processes in the digital age (Cenfetelli, 2004; Cenfetelli & Schwarz, 2011).

Secondly, this study contributes to Contingency Theory by underscoring the significant impact of external environmental factors, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, on SME AI adoption strategies. The research highlights how external shocks like pandemics necessitate rapid adaptation and strategic pivots within SMEs, contributing to the theoretical discourse on organizational resilience and adaptive capabilities in crisis contexts.

Thirdly, by integrating the Dual Factor Theory and Contingency Theory, this study provides a comprehensive framework that captures both internal and external determinants of AI adoption. This combined approach not only identifies the drivers and barriers within SMEs but also contextualizes these factors within the broader external environment, offering a holistic understanding of the AI adoption process.

Furthermore, this research addresses the gap in existing literature by focusing on the specific context of SMEs, which have been relatively underexplored compared to larger organizations. By examining the unique challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in AI adoption, this study enriches the theoretical landscape and provides a foundation for future research on digital transformation in smaller enterprises.

Practical/Managerial Contributions

The findings of this study offer profound practical and managerial insights, providing a strategic roadmap for SME managers and policymakers to effectively navigate AI adoption.

Firstly, by dissecting the enabling and inhibiting factors affecting SME AI adoption, this research equips SME managers with actionable strategies to enhance their resource and organizational readiness. This includes leveraging financial resources, technological infrastructure, and skilled personnel while fostering an organizational culture that supports innovation and adaptability (Warner & Wäger, 2019; Berghaus & Back, 2016). Effective change management practices are essential to address internal resistance, while robust cybersecurity measures are critical to mitigate data breaches and privacy concerns (Oreg, 2003; Jara & Mayayise, 2024).

Secondly, the study emphasizes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fear of its recurrence, highlighting the necessity for SMEs to build resilience and ensure continuity through proactive AI adoption and strategic foresight. Policymakers can use these insights to formulate supportive policies and initiatives that facilitate SMEs' access to essential resources, enhance their digital capabilities, and provide necessary cybersecurity support, fostering a conducive environment for SME growth and innovation in a post-pandemic world.

Thirdly, by providing a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing AI adoption, this study serves as a practical guide for enhancing the digital maturity and competitive edge of SMEs globally. The comprehensive framework developed in this research can assist managers in identifying and addressing the specific enablers and inhibitors within their organizations, enabling them to formulate more effective AI adoption strategies.

Conclusion

This research proposes an innovative framework by integrating the Dual Factor Theory and Contingency Theory to enhance our understanding of AI adoption within SMEs. By acknowledging both enabling and inhibiting factors and their interaction with external contingencies, this study transcends traditional perspectives and offers profound insights into the multifaceted nature of digital adoption in SMEs.

The application of Dual Factor Theory elucidates how resource readiness and organizational readiness serve as critical enablers, while internal resistance and cybersecurity concerns emerge as significant barriers to digitalization. This dual perspective underscores the necessity of bolstering internal capabilities and readiness to effectively navigate the digital transformation landscape, particularly in response to external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Incorporating Contingency Theory further emphasizes the role of external environmental factors in shaping digitalization strategies, highlighting the pandemic as a pivotal catalyst for AI adoption. This integration underscores the critical need for SMEs to be adaptable and responsive to external disruptions, demonstrating that contextual factors can significantly influence digital transformation efforts. By exploring the mediating role of the pandemic's impact and the moderating effect of the fear of its recurrence, this research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding AI adoption dynamics.

Ultimately, this study advances theoretical discourse by contextualizing established theories within the SME sector and offers valuable practical insights for practitioners and policymakers. By addressing both internal and external factors influencing AI adoption, this research provides a strategic roadmap for enhancing the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The findings underscore the importance of a balanced approach to digitalization, where resource allocation, organizational culture, and preparedness for future disruptions are harmonized to achieve sustainable growth and innovation.

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Summary Brief

Exploring the Impact of Generative AI on Higher Education – A Longitudinal Study

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The increasing use of new technologies is transforming how service users and providers interact with different servicescapes. To this end, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in higher education settings is transformative and disruptive, with limited evidence regarding this phenomenon. Artificial Intelligence provides benefits such as enhanced teaching methods and research processes alongside challenges like ethical considerations and digital disparities. Scholars stress the need to bridge negative perceptions with the potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence in improving students' academic journey. In response, we conducted a 6-month longitudinal case study with undergraduate students in Brazil to understand the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on the students' learning journey in higher education. Preliminary findings suggest that Generative Artificial Intelligence enhances learning, but concerns about accuracy and ethical use persist.

Introduction

New technologies are changing how we use and interact with traditional services, affecting providers and users alike (Huang and Rust, 2018). In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, some scholars believe we have advanced a decade of technology development to respond to this critical event (Viardot et al., 2023). Some of the main advancements were made in online education, videoconferencing (i.e., remote working, telemedicine), internet streaming, cashless payment, and e-commerce (including home delivery) (Viardot et al., 2023). However, nothing seems to compare to the impact that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and, in particular, Generative AI (GenAI) can have on higher education (HE) settings (e.g., Hermann et al., 2023). GenAI refers to AI technologies that generate new content, such as text, images, music, or code. Common GenAIs used in HE include ChatGPT, Gemini and Llama 3 (Ooi et al., 2023). The use of GenAI might present a dramatic change in the educational environment, where the adoption of AI tools promises to revolutionize teaching, research, and student experiences (Cooper, 2023). Although adopting this disruptive technology seems inevitable and perhaps compared to, on a lower scale, the implementation of the internet in the universities in the 90s, college officials express apprehension and concerns about GenAI's potential impact on academic integrity and traditional values (Anft, 2023). Due to the contemporality of GenAI in HE settings, little is known about the effects of this technology on the students' learning experiences (Yilmaz and Yilmaz, 2023). In this vein, it became crucial to address the students' viewpoints on GenAI adoption regarding its benefits, challenges, and possible threats to the traditional learning process. Therefore, our study aims to delve deep into the lives of undergraduate students to understand the impact of generative AI on the students' learning journey in HE. To achieve the study objective, we conducted a 6-month longitudinal study with undergraduate students in Brazil to understand their experiences interacting with GenAI. We applied a qualitative study, triangulating the results from semi-structured interviews ($n=30$) and private diary entries ($n=78$), providing themes that illustrate the impact of GenAI on students. To ensure that students would have close contact with GenAI, we asked a group of students to work on a project (i.e., group assignment) during the semester, using up to 80% of AI to create and develop this project. At the end of the semester, the students had to present their work for assessment.

Background

In HE, GenAI has been cautiously addressed by academics and university administrators and with hype among the students. The latter uses GenAI to conduct searches, find new content, create images and videos, and primarily support academic assignments without much concern about its implications and academic boundaries (Yilmaz and Yilmaz, 2023). On the other hand, academics and university administrators are concerned about the negative impact of GenAI on education from a holistic perspective, especially with academic misconduct and the lack of detection tools (Farrelly and Baker, 2023). Despite the fear of disruption and dramatic changes in the servicescapes, such as HE, AI constitutes a significant source of innovation (Huang and Rust, 2018). For instance, some of the benefits of GenAI in HE identified so far are enhancing teaching methods, streamlining research processes, and

fostering student creativity. Conversely, some perceived challenges also emerged, such as ethical considerations, digital disparities, and the need for comprehensive AI literacy in HE (Anft, 2023). The ethical considerations of GenAI are the most significant for HE, with fears of academic misconduct proliferating.

Furthermore, the lack of regulations and biased views of AI (i.e., trained algorithms) prompting students to adhere to one view or another without critically considering the most suitable option is another element that raises concerns in HE (Cooper, 2023; Ooi et al., 2023). In response, researchers are conducting studies with HE actors and AI organizations to provide more empirical evidence of the impact of GenAI and a possible need for regulation. Sevnarayan and Potter (2024) observe a need to bridge the gap between negative perceptions of GenAI's impact on academic integrity and positive views on its potential to boost student confidence in learning. Similarly, Farrelly and Baker (2023) recognize the disruptive capacity of GenAI in HE and advocate for a well-rounded strategy that tackles both the challenges and opportunities it presents by emphasizing the importance of AI proficiency and ethical deliberations in integrating AI technologies to guarantee equitable access and positive results for all students. Finally, it is crucial to prepare students for a future where AI technologies play a central role in shaping learning environments and career pathways (Anft, 2023). Therefore, based on the growing need to investigate this phenomenon in HE and the scarcity of the literature that shows empirical results based on the experiences of the students as key actors in the HE, we provide a study that aims to understand the impact of generative AI on the students' learning journey in HE.

Key Findings

We used thematic analysis to find illustrative themes that explain the students' experiences using GenAI and the impact this technology might have on their learning process. The key themes found were: Theme 1 - "*Adaptation and Learning Curve*": students initially experience fear and curiosity when introduced to GenAI but gradually become familiar and comfortable with the technology, exploring its various applications. Theme 2 - "*Productivity and Efficiency*": GenAI is perceived as a tool that significantly enhances productivity and efficiency in academic tasks, helping students complete work faster and with greater ease. Theme 3 - "*Accuracy and Reliability Issues*". Students express concerns about the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated content, highlighting the need for human oversight to verify information and ensure precision. Theme 4 - "*Impact on Skill Development and Employment*": AI is seen as influencing future employment prospects, requiring students to adapt their skills to integrate GenAI tools into their careers effectively. Theme 5 - "*Ethical and Responsible Use*": ethical considerations are crucial in the use of GenAI, with students emphasizing the importance of responsible use to avoid misinformation and uphold academic integrity. Theme 6 - "*Enhanced Learning and Understanding*": GenAI tools aid in comprehension and support learning by providing insights and helping students understand complex concepts more easily. These are preliminary results based on one round of interviews with students.

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Summary Brief

The Moderating Effect of Religiosity on the Relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Service Sabotage in the LGBTQ+ Community

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Drawing on the Affect theory of social exchange and Pargament's theory of religious coping, this research examines the impact of workplace ostracism against frontline LGBTQ+ service employees on service sabotage through a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. Additionally, it tests the moderating effects of an employee's intrinsic religiosity on this relationship using Split Group Moderation analysis. Results provide support for the relationship between workplace ostracism and service sabotage, an increased likelihood of frontline LGBTQ+ service employees engaging in service sabotage behaviors than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts, and the moderating effects of the respondent's intrinsic religiosity. As such, practitioners should develop strategies to prevent workplace ostracism against frontline LGBTQ+ service employees by rephrasing their discrimination-related policy documents to include ostracism, redesigning their hiring and recruitment processes to foster inclusivity and diversity, thereby promoting a truly inclusive environment that encourages them to contribute toward the company's financial performance positively.

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ employees is commonplace and has been rampant for a long time. However, such discrimination is not always blatantly apparent in an organizational setting and can be deemed an act of ostracism against the group. Workplace ostracism occurs when employees feel ignored or excluded by their work colleagues, irrespective of whether they identify as LGBTQ+ or non-LGBTQ+. Research indicates that up to 46% of LGBTQ+ employees have reported being marginalized at work. Except for Mueller et al. (2018), whose study reveals the development of mental health problems due to ostracism (in general and not specific to workplace ostracism), no research has studied the adverse outcomes of workplace ostracism linked to LGBTQ+ employees. One such outcome is the engagement of frontline LGBTQ+ service employees in the act of service sabotage, which is defined as deliberate, vindictive, aberrant, and anti-service behavior toward customers. The purpose of this paper is to study the effects of workplace ostracism on the service-sabotaging behaviors exhibited by frontline LGBTQ+ service employees.

This research significantly advances the service literature by establishing a critical link between workplace ostracism and service sabotage, while shedding light on the nuanced dynamics that influence the behaviors of marginalized service employees. Drawing on the Affect theory of social exchange that focuses on the emotional aspects of social interactions, we develop and test a conceptual model that elucidates the relationship between these constructs. Furthermore, our model examines whether an employee's intrinsic religiosity moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and service sabotage, while revealing a new dimension to this interaction. In this vein, Pargament's theory of religious coping helps to understand how frontline LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ service employees can use their religious beliefs and practices to cope with the stress and adversity they experience because of workplace ostracism. The research gap is investigated through studies including frontline LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ service employees. These studies confirm the relationship between workplace ostracism and service sabotage, and our analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM) shows that religiosity moderates it.

This paper provides an overview of the existing literature on workplace ostracism and service sabotage and how the Affect theory of social exchange can help to explain the potential relationship between these two constructs. It then discusses Pargament's theory of religious coping and the possibility that religiosity might act as a moderator in this relationship. The paper goes on to describe the studies that we conducted to examine these relationships and presents the findings. We then contextualize these results and suggest avenues for future research. We also offer recommendations for practitioners on preventing workplace ostracism against frontline LGBTQ+ service employees and, thereby, its related outcome of service sabotage. These include revising discrimination-related policy documents to explicitly address ostracism, restructuring hiring, and recruitment procedures to cultivate an environment of inclusivity and diversity, among others.

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SESSION 8.2: JOURNAL OF CONSUMER MARKETING SYMPOSIUM II

Moderator:

Pia Albinsson

Summary Brief

Exploring the Untapped Potential: How Do Driver Perceptions Influence Peer-to-Peer Digital Brand Equity in the Ride-Hailing Industry?

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The ride-hailing industry has experienced significant growth since its inception. This peer-to-peer service operates on a dual-stakeholder model comprising riders and drivers. In the United States, brands like Uber and Lyft maintain their brand equity by offering substantial benefits and advantages to their customers. However, the effect of drivers' perceptions on brand equity has been underexplored in the existing literature. Evidence shows that drivers often feel neglected by ride-hailing brand management. Drivers are the operational resources of ride-hailing brands, and their involvement and motivation can significantly increase brand equity.

Through qualitative research, this study examines the impact of drivers' brand and service perceptions on ride-hailing brand equity. By conducting semi-structured interviews with twenty drivers from various cities across the United States, the research analyzes drivers' complex "love-hate" relationship with the industry. Despite widespread dissatisfaction among drivers, their continued participation in the service is expected to play a pivotal role in the industry's sustainability. Ride-hailing brand management should respond to drivers' expectations to leverage their motivating brand associations, thereby significantly improving brand equity.

Keywords: ride-hailing, brand equity, sharing economy, Uber, driver perceptions

SESSION 8.3: CONSUMER HAPPINESS

Moderator

Jen Riley

Full Paper

Customer Identification and Expectations of Responsiveness: The Moderating Role of Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance

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This research examines the impact of customer identification with online peer groups on expectations of responsiveness, integrating the moderating roles of attachment anxiety and avoidance. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for service firms in today's digital environment, where rapid responses are expected. The study extends the consumer socialization perspective, highlighting how digital interactions influence consumer expectations. It presents empirical evidence that online peer group identification significantly elevates service expectations. Additionally, attachment anxiety and avoidance modify these effects, revealing complex interplays between social and psychological factors. The findings indicate that consumers with high online peer group identification expect more prompt service, but individual attachment styles moderate this relationship. Specifically, high attachment anxiety strengthens the positive effect, while high attachment avoidance weakens it. These insights offer theoretical contributions by merging socialization and attachment theories and practical implications for service firms to tailor their strategies considering digital engagement and psychological traits. Firms should enhance responsiveness and personalize services to meet diverse consumer expectations, promoting mental well-being and balancing technology use. This research underscores the importance of addressing both the benefits and risks of digital interactions in consumer well-being and service expectations.

Introduction

In the current fast-paced digital environment, where everyone is one click or post away, customers expect prompt responses and customer service from firms. Responsiveness—the service firm's willingness to help customers promptly (Parasuraman et al., 1991)—thus, plays a crucial role in the firm's ability to keep customers. A recent industry report shows that 80% of customers expect firms to respond to their requests within 24 hours (CNBC, 2019). Additionally, customers between the ages 18 and 24 expect a response within one hour. Given these figures, it seems reasonable to advance that a failure to understand customer expectations of responsiveness in the digital sphere can harm service firms. Service firms are in dire need to understand how customers form their expectations of responsiveness in today's fast-paced digital environments.

Over the last three decades, research has attributed the formation of customers' expectations to different factors. Important research argues that customer expectations are shaped by enduring service intensifiers, perceived service alternatives, customer self-perceived service roles, word-of-mouth communication, service promises, and personal features (Nadiri & Hussain, 2005; Sharma et al., 2012; Zeithaml et al., 1993). Studies show that consumer past experience influences expectations by affecting predictions and desires (Lin & Lekhawipat, 2016; Prakash & Lounsbury, 1984). Research argues that the macro environment, such as cultural dimensions, plays an important role in understanding customer expectations in general (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Mattila, 1999; Winsted, 1997). The reasoning is that the cultural environment influences the determinants of customer expectations (Furer et al., 2002).

Prior research has significantly contributed to our understanding of customer expectations. However, there is no research on how today's digital environment drives expectations of responsiveness through customer identification with their peer group, such as social media (for short: customer identification). Customer identification is defined as the conception of one's self on social media in terms of "the defining features of a self-inclusive social category that renders self stereotypically interchangeable with other in-group members" (Hogg, 1992, p. 90; Wang et al., 2012). Grounded in the consumer socialization perspective, this article argues that customer identification offers a rich perspective on the formation of expectations of responsiveness. It begins with the argument that customers who strongly identify with online peer groups have higher expectations of responsiveness from service firms, built on the assumption that consumer interactions affect their attitudes (Grønhoj & Gram, 2020; Ward, 1974).

The current paper contributes to the literature and practice by investigating an online social factor unexplored as an antecedent of expectations of responsiveness. Online socialization has become more and more common. As of

2022, the average time consumers spend on social media is around 147 minutes per day^[1]. As consumers increasingly identify themselves with their online peer groups, it is worthwhile to investigate whether such identification drives expectations of responsiveness. Although prior research has called for more debate on socialization in service (e.g., Koskela-Huotari & Siltaloppi, 2020), there remains a lack of research in this area.

Theoretical Background

Consumer Socialization and Social Media

The current investigation is based on the perspective of consumer socialization and social media. Consumer socialization originates from the work of Ward (1974). This perspective seeks to explain consumer behaviors and attitudes, as well as their underlying drivers. One of the key assumptions made by the consumer socialization perspective is that consumers learn—during the socialization process—consumption-related knowledge and skills, which drives their behaviors and attitudes (De Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Marchant & Harrison, 2020; Sigirci et al., 2022). This assumption is built on learning theory emphasizing that socialization agents (i.e., peers) transmit motivations and behaviors to the learners (Moschis & Churchill Jr, 1978; Shim, 1996).

Social media, through online groups and communities, provides a rich consumer socialization perspective (Naeem, 2021; Thaichon, 2017). The research found that social media significantly contributes to consumption-related knowledge (Batat, 2008). The author explains that consumers use social media to gather information about products or services they intend to buy. Social media also provides knowledge of central issues like consumer rights and obligations (Ahluwalia & Sanan, 2016). Research in this tradition emphasizes the role of peers in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Prior studies show that peers exert informative influences by advising in purchasing decisions and normative influences by shaping attitudes toward products or services (Thaichon, 2017; Wang et al., 2012). Based on the consumer socialization perspective and social media, the current research establishes a conceptual model wherein customer identification with the peer group positively influences attitudes such as expectations of responsiveness—See Figure 1 later in the paper.

Expectations of Responsiveness

Customer expectations is a key factor in service research (Chih et al., 2012; Park & Yi, 2017) and has been underexplored in research on consumer socialization. Seminal research states that expectations of responsiveness are the customers' desires or wants regarding the firm's willingness to help customers promptly (Parasuraman et al., 1991; Zeithaml et al., 1988). To illustrate, individuals with high expectations of responsiveness expect a high level of service performance when delivering prompt service to customers and readiness to help them. Ekinci (2001) shows that consumers expect services to be timely and efficient. Research shows firms must meet customer expectations to enhance customer satisfaction (Tam, 2005). Understanding expectations of responsiveness is a prerequisite for firms to deliver superior service, especially in today's fast-paced digital environments.

To understand the drivers of expectations of responsiveness, it is essential to review the literature on the antecedents of expectations in general. The formation of customer expectations is complex and can be explained by several factors (Fullerton & Taylor, 2015; Vollero et al., 2021). Prior research argues that customer expectations are a function of enduring service intensifiers (Kim & Mattila, 2013; Zeithaml et al., 1993). Enduring service intensifiers refer to individual and stable factors that heighten customers' sensitivity to the service quality (Zeithaml et al., 1993). This argument is supported by Dion et al. (1998), who show that enduring service intensifiers influence customer expectations by elevating their desired service. In addition to enduring service intensifiers, researchers argue that personal needs have the potential to influence customer expectations (Oliver, 1977; Zeithaml et al., 1993). A relatively large area of the literature has examined the impact of word-of-mouth communication on customer expectations. Studies call word-of-mouth communication one of the most influential information sources in the formation process of customer service expectations (Prugsamatz et al., 2006; Robledo, 2001; Webster, 1991). Research in this tradition also argues that explicit and implicit promises significantly influence customer expectations. Service promises are personal and nonpersonal statements that service firms communicate to customers. These statements can be advertising or personal selling via sales agents. Traditional marketing activities and formal recommendations such as field selling and quality assessments in consumer magazines or recommendations by agents were also found to influence customer expectations (Grönroos, 1984; Robledo, 2001).

Research argues that customers' perception of service alternatives has the potential to drive their expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1991). The reasoning is that customers with no perceived service alternatives settle for the current service while those with alternatives have higher minimum expectations from service firms. Still, these expectations may be a function of customers' past experiences (Parasuraman et al., 1991; Parasuraman et al., 1985). In this context, past-experience refers to a customer's previous exposure to the focal or similar services (Zeithaml et al., 1993). The

reasoning behind the impact of past experience is that it influences customers' predictions and desires, leading to higher expectations (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Prakash & Lounsbury, 1984).

In addition to past experience, an emerging part of the literature views culture as a significant driver of customer expectations (Ford et al., 2016; Furer et al., 2002; Smith & Reynolds, 2002). Building on the assumption that cultures shape attitudes and behaviors, Donthu and Yoo (1998) reckon that customers with different cultural backgrounds have different levels of service expectations. For example, customers from low power distance cultures have higher expectations for responsiveness and service reliability (Donthu & Yoo, 1998). Research in this tradition views social interactions as helping form customer expectations (Furer et al., 2002).

Although the studies above have significantly contributed to our understanding of the formation of customer expectations, there is no research on customer identification with the peer group as a key driver of their expectations of responsiveness. The following section describes the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) wherein such identification drives customer expectations and the role of information availability and firm involvement as boundary conditions.

Customer Identification and Expectations of Responsiveness

To build a consumer socialization-based view account of the link between customer identification and expectations of responsiveness, this paper first explains why customer identification pertains to the consumer socialization perspective and then how this perspective explains expectations of responsiveness. The theoretical arguments follow the conceptualization of customer identification with the peer group proposed by Wang et al. (2012). Customer identification with the peer group "refers to the conception of the self, in terms of the defining features of a self-inclusive social category that renders self stereotypically interchangeable with other ingroup members" (Wang et al., 2012, p. 201). High customer identification implies that the customers consider the peer group as an extension of themselves on social media such that each group member can effectively substitute another in the group (Hogg, 1992; Wang et al., 2012). Through social media, identification with the peer group shapes the opinions and attitudes of the group members on diverse issues, including their interactions with marketers (see Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Sridhar Balasubramanian, 2001). It should be noted that, unlike identification with traditional communities (i.e., based on birth, proximity of residence, social class, national culture, etc.), identification with online peer groups occurs in digital environments (Wilde & Swatman, 1997) that foster "hyper-personal" communications (Moon et al., 2013; Walther, 1996, p. 33), creating a strong we-intentions and sense of empowerment among the in-group members. In sum, customer identification with the peer group reflects their online socialization which has the potential to drive consumers' attitudes.

Next, it is essential to describe how the consumer socialization perspective can explain expectations of responsiveness. The theoretical argument developed in this article is that consumer socialization gives customers key knowledge and a sense of empowerment. One key assumption of the consumer socialization perspective is that consumers learn consumption-related skills and knowledge that drive their attitudes (Moschis & Churchill Jr, 1978; Zhang et al., 2022). More precisely, Moschis and Churchill Jr (1978) explain that consumer socialization contributes to consumer affairs knowledge, including knowledge of consumer rights and remedies available to consumers. This knowledge enables consumers to form an opinion on what the service should be in the marketplace. Peers are a credible source of information on which consumers rely (Tan & Chen, 2012). This argument follows prior research hinting that socialization agents can influence customers' views of products and services (Grönroos, 1984; Robledo, 2001). Another key assumption made by research in this tradition is that socialization empowers individuals by giving them a sense of common self-interest (Turner, 2005). Identification creates we-intentions and a sense of empowerment, which resembles referent power (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; French & Raven, 1959).

Customers who identify with peer groups may perceive their identification or membership in the group as a source of power. The categorization process serves as the causal driver of power and influence (Hornsey, 2008; Turner, 2005). This argument aligns with marketing and management research suggesting that powerful customers influence firms' activities and processes (Boyd et al., 2010; Christensen & Bower, 1996; Gaski & Nevin, 1985). The empowerment argument is relevant to marketing and management research (see Wathieu et al., 2002). Group identification produces empowerment, and empowerment enables customers who are group members to act unifiedly and organizedly. Customers with high levels of identification feel empowered, and individuals with a sense of empowerment set higher expectations of others (Paul et al., 2000). See the conceptual model in Figure 1. Taking all together, we expect that:

H₁: Customer identification positively influences the expectation of responsiveness

The Moderating Role of Attachment Anxiety

Here, we argue that the impact of customer identification on expectation of responsiveness is contingent upon the customer's attachment anxiety. Attachment anxiety is the extent to which customers worry that a firm might abandon them in the future (Mende & Bolton, 2011). Customers with high attachment anxiety often have an inherent need for reassurance and validation, which drives them to gather extensive information or knowledge. This need stems from their underlying fear of abandonment and insecurity, prompting them to seek out details that can help alleviate their anxieties. By becoming more informed, they can reduce their uncertainty and gain a sense of control over their purchasing decisions. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) discuss how anxious attachment can lead individuals to seek out information as a coping mechanism to manage their fears and insecurities. These customers are likely to invest significant time and effort into researching products or services, comparing different options, and understanding all available features and benefits. This thorough approach to information gathering can ultimately empower them. Consequently, the positive impact of customer identity on expectation of responsiveness should be positive among customers with high attachment anxiety. Hence, we anticipate that:

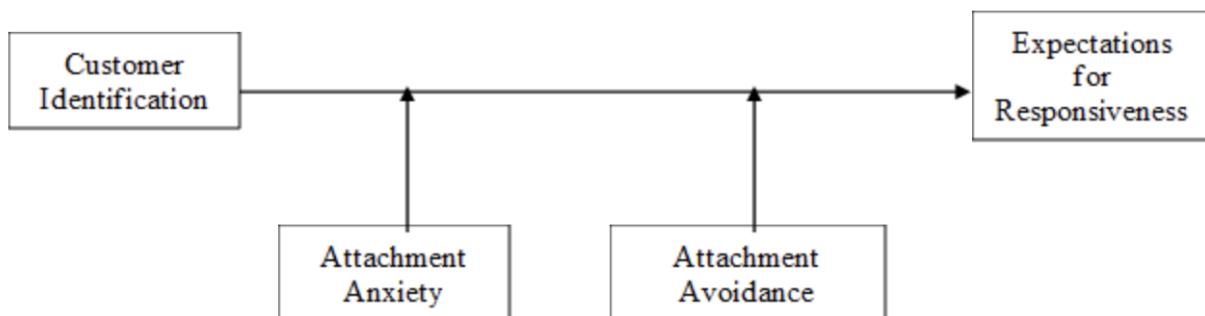
H₂: The effect of customer identification on expectation of responsiveness is positive when attachment anxiety is high.

The Moderating Role of Attachment Avoidance

In addition to attachment anxiety, customer attachment avoidance constitutes a boundary condition for the effect of customer identification on expectation of responsiveness. Customer attachment avoidance, as defined by Mende & Bolton (2011), refers to a tendency to maintain emotional distance and self-reliance, avoiding closeness and dependency on service providers. This attachment style is characterized by a preference for independence and a reluctance to seek support or build close relationships. Drawing on this definition, we can argue that attachment avoidance negatively moderates the impact of customer identification on expectation of responsiveness. Attachment-avoidant customers are inherently inclined to minimize their engagement with service providers, driven by their desire to remain self-reliant and avoid dependency. This inclination leads them to refrain from seeking additional information or support, as doing so would require interacting more closely with the provider. Mende & Bolton (2011) highlight that attachment-avoidant customers prefer to handle issues independently rather than seeking assistance, resulting in a lower propensity to gather detailed information about products or services. This behavior aligns with their overarching goal of maintaining emotional and functional distance. As a results, customers with high attachment avoidance unlikely seek key knowledge, which explains the positive effect of customer identification on the expectation of responsiveness. Therefore, we anticipate that:

H₃: The positive effect of customer identification on expectation of responsiveness turns negative when attachment avoidance is high.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Empirical Studies

Two studies were conducted to probe the impact of customer identification on expectations of responsiveness and the role of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in this impact. Study 1 established the main effect of customer identification with online peer groups and expectations of responsiveness. Study 2 tested the moderating factors.

Study 1

Method and Procedure. An online sample of 179 consumers (30.70% identified as female) was used to test the baseline model (i.e., H₁). The average age of the participants was 39. *Responsiveness* was measured with three items (see Kettinger & Lee, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 1993), and customer identification with five items confirmed by Wang et al. (2012). The constructs' items are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Data Description

Construct	Definition	Items	Descriptive Statistics	
			Study 1	Study 2
Identification with the peer group	Customer identification is defined as the conception of one's self on social media, in terms of "the defining features of a self-inclusive social category that renders self stereotypically interchangeable with other in-group members" (Hogg 1992, p. 90; Wang, Yu, and Wei 2012).	- I am very attached to the peer group on social media. - My peers on social media and I share the same objectives. - The friendships I have with my peers mean a lot to me. - If my peers planned something, I'd think of it as something "we" would do rather than "they" would do. - I see myself as a part of the peer group on social media.	Mean = 4.61 Reliability = .91	Mean = 4.08 Reliability = .81
Expectations for responsiveness	Expectations of responsiveness is the customers' desires or wants in terms of the firm's willingness to help customers promptly (Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml 1991; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1988).	Please indicate your minimum expected level of service performance you consider adequate, when it comes to: - Readiness to help customers - Willingness to help customers - Prompt service to customers	Mean = 5.85 Reliability = .85	Mean = 5.26 Reliability = .84
Age	Age of the participant	Numeric	Mean = 39	Mean = 25
Gender	Gender of the participant	Male, Female	Female = 30.7%	Female = 57.2%
Attachment anxiety	The extent to which customers worry that a firm might abandon them in the future, attachment avoidance (Mende & Bolton, 2011)	- I worry about being abandoned by my service/product providers as a customer. - My service/product providers change how it treats me for no apparent reason.		Mean = 3.96 Reliability = .75

		• I worry that my service/product providers do not really like me as a customer. • I worry that my service/product providers do not care about me as much as I care about them.	
Attachment avoidance	The extent to which customers have an excessive need for self-reliance (Mende & Bolton, 2011)	• It is comfortable feeling to depend on my service/product providers (R) • I am comfortable having a close relationship with my service/product providers (R) • It's easy for me to feel warm and friendly toward my service/product providers (R) • It helps to turn to my service/product providers in times of need. (R)	Mean =4.38 Reliability = .65

As in Strizhakova et al. (2012), Study 1 used a scenario of a service failure to activate and trigger customer attitudes. Using scenarios in service failure research avoids ethical issues related to creating and observing failures in an actual service setting (Park & Ha, 2016; Strizhakova et al., 2012). The context was a financial service failure. After reading the scenario, the participants completed the assessment for their identification with online peer groups ($\alpha = .91$) and responsiveness ($\alpha = .85$).

Results. Controlling for age and gender, the findings indicated a significant impact of customers' identification with online peer groups on their expectation for responsiveness ($b = .20$, $se = .06$, $p < .001$)—supporting H_1 . The estimates are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients

	Study 1	Study 2
	Effect of Customer Identification Coef. (se)	Moderating Role of Attachment Styles Coef. (se)
Constant	4.09(.45)***	4.91(.35)***
Customer identification	.20(.06)***	.04(.07)
Attachment anxiety		-.11(.07)
Attachment avoidance		.46(.08)***
Customer identification × Attachment anxiety		.19(.06)**
Customer identification × Attachment avoidance		-.21(.08)**
Age	.02(.01)**	.01(.01)
Gender	-.02(.11)	.23(.14)

R-square	.11	.21
Note: *** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05, † p<.10		

Study 2

Method and Procedure. Study 2 put the previous results into the context of information availability and firm involvement. A financial service failure scenario was applied to trigger the expectation for responsiveness. A new dataset of 215 consumers (57.2% identified as female) was used to test the boundary condition for the impact of customer identification on expectations of responsiveness. The average age of the participants was 25. Study 2 used a scenario that simulates a failure in a hotel service context. Participants were asked about their expectations of responsiveness ($\alpha = .84$) and their identification with online peer groups ($\alpha = .81$). The measures for attachment anxiety ($\alpha = .75$) and attachment avoidance ($\alpha = .65$) were adopted from Mende and Bolton (2011). The analysis controlled for age and gender.

Results. Hypotheses 2 and 3 posited that the positive effect of customer identification on expectation of responsiveness is moderated by attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, respectively. The findings in Table 2 indicated a significant interaction between customer identification and attachment anxiety ($b = .19$, $se = .06$, $p < .01$) and attachment avoidance ($b = -.21$, $se = .08$, $p < .01$). A spotlight analysis was conducted to probe the conditional effects of customer identification on the expectation of responsiveness as attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance increase. As illustrated in Tables 3 and 4, customer identification with peer groups harm expectations of responsiveness among customers with low attachment anxiety. Such impact turns positive among those with higher attachment anxiety—supporting H₂. Among customers with lower attachment avoidance, customer identification has a positive effect on expectations of responsiveness, but this effect turns negative among customers who scored higher on attachment avoidance, confirming H₃.

Table 3: Conditional effect of customer identification on expectations of responsiveness at different levels of attachment anxiety

Values of Attachment Anxiety	Average Marginal Effects	se	p-value
-2.95	-.53	.18	.002
-1.95	-.34	.12	.006
-.95	-.15	.08	.07
.05	.05	.07	.523
1.05	.24	.10	.02
2.05	.43	.15	.004

Table 4: Conditional effect of customer identification on expectations of responsiveness at different levels of attachment avoidance

Values of Attachment Avoidance	Average Marginal Effects	se	p-value
-3.37	.76	.27	.004
-2.37	.54	.20	.005
-1.37	.33	.13	.010
-.37	.11	.08	.138
.63	-.09	.08	.229
1.63	-.31	.14	.023

Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretical Implications

This research enhances the consumer socialization perspective by integrating the impact of digital environments and online peer group identification on consumer expectations. It shows how interactions within social media communities significantly shape consumer behaviors, particularly regarding service responsiveness. This addition highlights the evolving dynamics of consumer socialization, emphasizing that virtual interactions are now as impactful as traditional, physical ones.

The study provides strong empirical evidence showcasing the substantial influence of online peer group identification on consumers' expectations regarding service responsiveness. This insight broadens our understanding of digital community dynamics, suggesting that online peer interactions play an important role in molding consumer expectations and behaviors in modern marketplaces. By incorporating attachment anxiety and avoidance as moderating factors, this research digs deeper into the complexities of consumer expectations. It reveals that individual psychological traits can significantly change the influence of online social interactions, thus offering a more nuanced perspective on consumer behavior. This integration of attachment theory enriches the existing knowledge, presenting new avenues for understanding how psychological factors intersect with socialization processes.

The dual nature of technology's impact on consumer well-being is another critical implication of this study. While technology facilitates easy access to services and information, it also poses risks, such as increased anxiety and depression among consumers. This finding underscores the need for a balanced approach when studying technology's role in consumer behavior, acknowledging its benefits and potential harms. The conceptual framework developed through this research is a valuable foundation for future studies. It encourages further exploration of various moderating variables and diverse contexts, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer expectations in the digital age. This framework invites scholars to investigate additional dimensions and refine the theoretical model.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that service firms must be more responsive to consumers engaged in online peer groups. These consumers have heightened expectations for prompt and efficient customer service. To meet these demands, companies should invest in advanced technologies and employee training programs, using tools such as AI and chatbots to enhance service delivery and responsiveness.

Personalization in customer service is another significant practical implication. By considering psychological traits, such as attachment anxiety and avoidance, firms can develop more tailored customer service strategies. This personalization can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, as consumers feel more understood and valued by the service provider. Mental health and well-being considerations are also paramount. Companies need to be aware of the mental health implications of their digital marketing strategies. By promoting healthier online interactions and offering resources that support mental well-being, firms can enhance consumer well-being and foster a positive brand image. This approach benefits consumers and strengthens the company's reputation as a socially responsible entity.

Balancing the use of technology in service delivery is important. While technology can greatly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of customer service, companies also should encourage consumers to maintain a healthy balance. Initiatives that promote digital well-being, such as digital detox programs or campaigns advocating mindful technology use, can help mitigate the negative psychological impacts of constant digital engagement. Lastly, companies can leverage the power of online communities to foster positive consumer experiences. By creating and supporting online spaces where customers can share their experiences and advice, firms can build stronger consumer loyalty and improve the overall customer experience. These community engagement initiatives can serve as powerful tools for enhancing customer relationships and driving business success.

Declarations

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Summary Brief

Initiating Robot Public Policy: A Consumer-Centric Approach

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Robots are playing an increasingly visible role in consumer-facing environments. While robots present many benefits for consumers, they also have the potential to negatively impact consumer well-being. Unfortunately, societal concerns related to robots have not been empirically studied, thus hindering policymakers' ability to effectively regulate these emerging technologies. This research seeks to identify problems and set agendas through an exploratory, multi-method, consumer-centric investigation of robot concerns. First, we qualitatively analyze survey responses to identify distinct robot concerns. We then use text and quantitative analyses to explore, compare, and prioritize these robot concerns. We conclude by presenting empirically grounded recommendations to specific policymakers.

Introduction

Robots are playing an increasingly visible role in the lives of consumers. These AI-powered machines have been moving from behind-the-scenes work in factories and warehouses to occupying roles as front-end service providers that interact directly with consumers (Davenport et. al. 2020; Mende et al. 2019). Robots are currently embedded in 20% of businesses across all industries (Stanford University 2023) and are now being sold directly to consumers for home use (Gurman 2021).

While robots present many benefits to consumers, they also pose unanswered questions pertaining to well-being and society. On the positive side, both conceptual (Henkel et. al. 2020) and empirical (Kipnis et. al. 2022) research has shown that robots can improve consumer well-being in certain contexts, such as long-term care. However, the unintended consequences of robots may also negatively impact consumers, suggesting that companies and societies may need to implement policies to safeguard consumer well-being (Nobel and Mende 2023).

Due to the emerging nature of these technologies, societal concerns represent an important indicator of how robots could harm consumer well-being as they become more ubiquitous in the marketplace. While marketing and public policy scholars have examined consumers' concerns related to other important topics, consumers' specific concerns about robots have not been identified. Moreover, the majority of marketing studies on robots have been conceptual (Nobel and Mende 2023), have been situated in either the retail or service domains (e.g., Noble et al. 2022), and have focused on humanoid robots (e.g., Mende et al. 2019). The literature's focus on humanoid service robots may fail to account for broader systemic consequences, thereby limiting its relevance (Hill and Martin 2014). This lack of empirical, consumer-centric research on robots across industries and robot types makes it difficult for firms and policymakers to (self) regulate robots in the marketplace (Block et al. 2022).

In this research, we adopt Andrews et al.'s (2022) view that public policy is a course of action that typically governments take to address societal problems and concerns. Our goal is to begin the six-stage public policy process by exploring consumer concerns about robots and proposing policy alternatives to address the negative impact that these technologies may have on consumer well-being. To achieve this goal, we seek to answer the following two research questions: (1) What problems are consumers concerned about regarding robots? and (2) What policy alternatives could be used in congressional, agency, and organizational agendas to address these problems?

Conceptual Background

Robots

In this research, we follow Pettinico and Milne's (2020) conceptualization of robots and define them as intelligent physical devices that have a degree of self-direction. We consider a wide range of technologies operating in various contexts as robots and purposefully use this broad conceptualization to reflect the increasing diversity of robots (Noble and Mende, 2023) and enhance the exploratory nature of our studies, thereby leading to policy recommendations that can address the various risks that robots pose to consumer well-being.

Public Policy and Robots

Public policy refers to a course of action that typically governments take to address societal problems and concerns (Andrews et al., 2022). As such, the goal of public policy is to balance the well-being of consumers, firms, and the government. Various government agencies, legislative bodies, and self-regulatory organizations can implement public policy initiatives. A common framework lists six stages to develop and implement policies, namely (1) problem identification, (2) agenda setting, (3) policy formation, (4) budgeting, (5) implementation, and (6) evaluation (Andrews et al., 2022). Given the potential and actual risks associated with robot use, public policy is needed to safeguard consumer well-being. However, public policy on robots in the US is in its infancy. As compared to the European Union which has introduced comprehensive legislation to regulate robots (EU Artificial Intelligence Act 2024), the United States has relegated robot regulations to various federal agencies.

Research Questions

The goal of this research is to begin the public policy process as it relates to robots by identifying potential problems from a consumer viewpoint and proposing empirically grounded policy alternatives for consideration in congressional, agency, and organizational agendas. To do so, we seek to answer the following two research questions: (1) What problems are consumers concerned about regarding robots? and (2) What policy alternatives could be used in congressional, agency, and organizational agendas to address these problems?

METHODOLOGY

Study 1: Problem Identification

The purpose of this study was to investigate consumer concerns related to the growing role of robots in society and thus identify potential threats to their well-being. We collected data from a national sample of adult Americans through Amazon MTurk, with a usable sample size of 476 after data cleaning. Respondents were asked the following open-ended question: *“If robots did become a more commonplace part of everyday life in the near future, what do you think would be the worst things about this, if any?”* Two of the authors performed a three-stage coding process, adhering to the standards of qualitative data analysis (Denzin and Lincoln 2012; Spiggle 1994). Step one was inductive in nature and involved open coding, in which each open-ended response was given one or more labels. Step two involved axial coding, in which larger themes were created based on the open codes. Step three involved selective coding, in which categories and themes were related to the central category of robot concerns.

The results indicate that consumers’ concerns regarding robots are heterogeneous, spanning across robot types and across marketplaces. Specifically, consumers expressed concerns related to: (1) autonomy, (2), captivity, (3) economics, (4) employment, (5) intelligence, (6) lethality, (7) malfunctions, and (8) privacy. The most common concerns were those related to employment and the economy. Various technologies were mentioned in these responses, including autonomous vehicles, drones, robotic soldiers, and weaponized robots. Moreover, many of the concerns identified in this study are either exacerbated by robot physicality or only applicable to robots due to their physicality, including employment, economic, privacy, malfunction, and lethal concerns. Additionally, respondents discussed robot concerns across a variety of contexts, including retail, domestic, work, public spaces, and war.

Study 2: Agenda Setting

In our second study, we again collected data from a national sample via MTurk, with a usable sample size of 482 after data cleaning. We first asked eight open-ended survey questions corresponding to the eight robot concerns identified in Study 1. We then asked respondents to indicate how worried they were for each of the eight concern areas on a 7-point scale and concluded with demographic questions. We conducted three analyses on this data. First, we used topic modeling (Blei et al. 2003) to identify dimensions embedded in the discussions of the eight concern areas. Second, we used linguistic dictionaries (Boyd et al. 2022) to directly compare how consumers discuss each concern area. Third, we used *t*-tests to assess how worried consumers are about each of the eight robot concerns. We then use the data and results of these analyses to craft empirically grounded policy alternatives to compete for space on agency, congressional, and organizational agendas.

Our LDA solutions identified between 2 and 5 topics per question. The results show the various thoughts consumers have regarding each of the eight robot concerns, including the realism of these concerns, their degree of severity, and the technologies associated with them. As with Study 1, respondents discussed several types of robots, including personal robots, autonomous vehicles, drones, manufacturing robots, and AI-powered military equipment. Moreover, while most topics were specific to one robot concern, three general topics were discussed similarly across multiple concern areas, namely (1) inevitability, (2) the role of programming, and (3) large-scale social issues.

We then used the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) (Boyd et al. 2022) to measure the level of positive emotion, negative emotion, present focus, future focus, certainty, and tentativeness embedded in the responses. Consumers expressed varying degrees of positive and negative emotions across robot concerns. For example, while most of the discussion related to the lethal concern was negative, respondents also used a relatively high level of positive words, reflecting the idea of robotic soldiers reducing the number of fatalities among human soldiers. Interestingly, consumers expressed similar levels of positive and negative affect when discussing the economic concern, which may reflect the disagreement about whether robots will increase or decrease wealth inequality. In terms of temporality, consumers used a higher percentage of present-focused words when discussing robot intelligence compared to the other concerns, which reflects the fact that modern robots are powered by sophisticated machine learning AI. Interestingly, despite robots already causing unemployment in some sectors, consumers used future-focused words to discuss employment concerns more than any other robot concern, reflecting their anxiety over future societal consequences of robot job replacement. Lastly, consumers were the most confident about robots becoming fully autonomous but were tentative about malfunction and privacy concerns, which many respondents argued could be prevented with proper programming.

We concluded by examining the means levels of each concern and found that consumers are the most worried about employment concerns ($M=4.78$, $SD=1.92$), followed by lethal ($M=4.61$, $SD=1.90$), privacy ($M=4.43$, $SD=1.92$), economic ($M=4.35$, $SD=2.02$), malfunction ($M=4.17$, $SD=1.79$), autonomous ($M=3.86$, $SD=2.10$), intelligence ($M=3.68$, $SD=2.19$), and captivity concerns ($M=2.90$, $SD=2.04$). A series of one-sample t -tests (test value = 4) show that employment ($p < 0.01$), lethal ($p < 0.01$), privacy ($p < 0.01$), economic ($p < 0.01$), and malfunction concerns ($p < 0.05$) are high, suggesting these concerns should be prioritized by policymakers.

General Discussion

Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, it identified eight specific concerns that consumers have regarding robots, which may negatively impact their well-being in various ways. While some of the concerns identified in this research can also be attributed to completely virtual AI, others are heightened by or only applicable to physical robots. Second, this research found that concerns related to robots extend past interactions between consumers and firms. For instance, robotic soldiers and military applications of robots reflect a business-to-government (B2G) (Josephson et al. 2019) concern harbored by consumers. Furthermore, our results show that consumers are worried about large-scale social consequences associated with robots, including threats to employment, the economy, and privacy. Third, this research shows that consumers' concerns are not limited to humanoid robots. Consumers discussed concerns related to a variety of robotic technologies, most notably autonomous vehicles, drones, and AI-powered military equipment. We thus encourage future research on these other types of robotic devices to ensure the relevancy of marketing and public policy research on robots.

Public Policy Implications

In addition to identifying problems, we also propose several policy alternatives to compete for space on agency, congressional, and organizational agendas, thereby completing the first and second stages of the public policy process (see Table 1). Given consumers' mean concern levels, we provide recommendations addressing employment, lethal, privacy, economic, and malfunction concerns. These recommendations can be implemented by: departments such as the DOD and DOL and agencies such as CPSC, FCC, FIO, FTC, NIST, and OSHA; legislatures such as Congress, state legislatures, and city councils; and self-regulatory organizations such as the RIA and AAAI.

Table 1. Proposed Policy Recommendations

Concern Area	Policy Recommendation	Empirical Support
Employment	Whenever feasible, companies should be required to hire capable and willing humans over robots	<i>Humans should take priority when companies are thinking about what type of workforce to employ.</i>
	Companies must hire a human for every robot employee	<i>...if more jobs become automated, there needs to be some balance. For example, making new opportunities for people to work.</i>

	Companies pay for retraining for former employees who lost their jobs to a robot	<i>I feel that we as humans are smart enough to not let this happen. Not without a plan anyway, like possibly retraining people</i>
	Employees who lost their job to a robot get preferential hiring treatment in other sectors	<i>...if by using robots to replace humans in one sector [companies] are able to expand and hire more people in other sectors and lower prices then it could be beneficial.</i>
Lethal	Robots must never carry or incorporate lethal weaponry of any kind	<i>Robots being used as killer robots or weapons is one of my biggest fears...A weapon should just be a weapon and not be able to think on its own. That is putting way too many people in danger including the makers.</i>
	Robots designed to kill should not be autonomous	<i>There should always be a human somewhere in the command chain, to override...the current iterations of this technology leave room for human intervention so that any damage is done as it is intended...</i>
Privacy	Robots should minimize the data they collect so that they only collect task-specific information	<i>Robots should only be given information that is relevant to their tasks...Data should always be encrypted and robots should only have information they need.</i>
	Robots must be forbidden from listening to and recording private conversations	<i>Even now, many people feel that Alexa and other smart speakers are listening to them and gathering information about them...Special checks and balances would need to be in place to prevent this from happening.</i>
Economic	Establish a "robot tax" to support individuals who lose their jobs to robots	<i>There has to be some sort of tax on job-replacing tech, not so much that it dissuades people from research and development, but we owe it to the people whose jobs are replaced to not sentence them to a life of poverty</i>
	Establish a universal minimal income if robots ever assume a large portion of jobs	<i>This is why something like Universal Income needs to seriously be sought out. We need to make sure that all humans are having some type of money in their pocket so they don't starve.</i>
Malfunction	Robots that interact with humans must go through a rigorous safety testing process	<i>Tools of any kind can malfunction...The solution is to have safety protocols and quality control tests, and to test each new tool (whether it's as sophisticated as a robot or as simple as a new brand of duct tape) before using it.</i>
	Everyone who owns a robot must have "robot insurance policy"	<i>Hopefully insurance companies and lawyers figure out the right way to manage that risk and liability of robotics back to the manufacturers and users in an appropriate way.</i>

Note: Table sorted according to concern level. Quotes taken from Study 2.

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SESSION 8.4: #AI @BRANDING

Moderators:

R Wixel Barnwell and Todd Haderlie

Summary Brief

Downtown Life: A Brand Experience in the Heart of the City

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As conversations surrounding place branding shed light on the importance of the consumer's perspective, the brand experience and its dimensions have emerged as a powerful tool for downtown districts to create meaningful experiences among their consumers. The brand experience offers a holistic view of the consumer perspective and thus should be considered when creating downtown branding experiences. Therefore, this paper aims to replicate and extend Beckman et al.'s (2013) study for a deeper understanding of the four dimensions of brand experience on outcomes such as satisfaction, word of mouth, and revisit intentions. This study will capture residents' and tourists' perceptions and behaviors of downtown in the south of the United States and examine its impact on branding outcomes. The results of this study hope to provide implications for hospitality and tourism planners and suggestions for building a more holistic, positive brand experience downtown.

Introduction

Downtowns are the “heart” of cities across America. For many years, downtowns were considered a facilitator of business and not a business entity in and of themselves. This view of the downtown has since been changed with Runyan and Huddleston's application of the theory of the firm to place branding concepts. The research-based theory of the firm (RBV) treats downtowns as their own “firms” that are then comprised of the smaller businesses, cultures, and components within (Runyan & Huddleston, 2006). As such, downtowns can form their brand images, personalities, and identities to differentiate themselves from their competition (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008). Downtowns can use these images to develop the brand identity further and better market to their consumers to create a sense of belonging among residents, tourists, and locals (Aitken & Campelo, 2011). The power of branding in downtown districts emphasizes the importance of a strong branding strategy among downtowns, as the image of the downtown is often woven into the workings and image of the more expansive city it belongs to (Runyan & Huddleston, 2006).

Brand experience has emerged as a critical component of place marketing, vital for the success of many types of places, namely downtown districts within cities (Beckman et al., 2013; Chen & Chou, 2019). The brand experience conceptualization developed by Brakus et al. (2009) provides a holistic view of how consumers experience a brand through sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses. It has four dimensions (sensory, affective, behavioral, and emotional), and each impacts various outcomes, such as word-of-mouth, revisit intentions, loyalty, and customer satisfaction (Beckman et al., 2013; Brakus et al., 2009; Khan & Fatma, 2017). The relevance of Brakus et al.'s (2009) framework in the *Journal of Marketing* is underscored by over 7,400 citations of their paper on Google Scholar as of July 2024. Despite the high number of citations, to our knowledge, only Beckman et al. (2013) have attempted to validate their scale with an application to a downtown brand. It has been over a decade since Beckman et al. (2013) adapted the brand experience scale, and they only considered downtowns in Tennessee.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, we aim to contribute to the literature by corroborating scientific knowledge (Tsang & Kwan, 1999) by replicating and extending Beckman et al.'s (2013) study. Second, we strive to understand the types of brand experiences locals and tourists experience with downtowns in southeastern cities in the United States. Thus, this study explores the consumer perspective to determine how locals and tourists experience downtowns through the sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual dimensions of brand experience. Our research aims to expand on the branding and tourism literature and further explore the impact of visitor type on downtown brand experience and its outcomes.

Background

Downtowns play a crucial role in their cities, turning them into significant “places” that can be promoted through place branding concepts. Place branding - defined as the sociocultural, economic, and cultural development of cities, regions, and countries through branding strategy - is crucial to successful development (Hanna et al., 2021). Though place branding has often been explored from the company's perspective (Bjorner & Aronsson, 2022),

emerging marketing literature has taken to emphasizing the extensive impact of consumers on the place being branded. For instance, Bjorner and Aronsson (2022) aim to identify key “authors” in the stories told by place branding through interviews, observation, and research. By taking a sociocultural approach to building a place brand, the study allows for a “grassroots” analysis of stakeholders in place branding, expanding prior research to include residents of the place being branded (Bjorner & Aronsson, 2022). The sociocultural importance of the place is likewise defined by Stokols & Schumaker, who more widely situate the place in a sociocultural context as they define “place” by the collective meaning created by those experiencing it (1981). As such, there is an overall emphasis in place branding literature on the importance of the culture and context in which the brand is being created (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Bjorner & Aronsson, 2022; Stokols & Schumaker, 1981).

Brand Experience

Coined the “Experience Economy” by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, the 1990s marked a pivotal time in marketing practices as it became clear that the value of marketing for consumers was beginning to lie in experiences (Schmitt, 1999). As the marketing literature moved to encompass the hedonic needs of the consumer, Schmitt’s experiential marketing framework presented a new wave of marketing techniques (Brakus et al., 2009). These techniques, unique to other branding constructs, offered a holistic view of the customer interactions with a brand and, thus, created an encompassing picture of the feelings, attitudes, and thoughts of customers as they pertain to the brand they are experiencing (Kumar & Kaushik, 2020; Schmitt, 1999; Singh & Mehraj, 2018). As the consumer emerges as the crux of branding literature, brand experience - comprising sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual properties - has been found to have a particularly strong impact on downtown districts and their overall success of revisiting intentions and positive word-of-mouth (Beckman et al., 2013; Brakus et al., 2009).

As shown in Figure 1, we argue that the brand experience dimensions affect outcomes, such as visitors’ satisfaction, word-of-mouth, and revisit intentions. In addition, the type of visitors may impact this relationship.

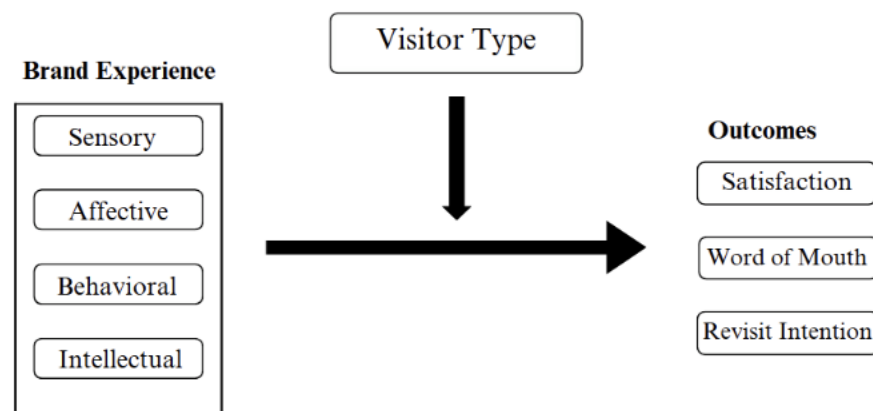


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Sensory Dimension

Brands can be experienced through our senses. Sensory experiences refer to those experiences outside of the body, initiated through taste, smell, touch, sense, and sight, with sight (namely, color) being cited as the primary effector of sensory experience (Beckman et al., 2013; Schmitt, 1999). Crafted stimuli can alter such experiences through a multi-sensory marketing approach that comprises an appeal to multiple senses and subconscious sensory effects, such as smell, sight, atmospheric conditions, images, textures, and events (Hepola et al., 2017; Moreira & Santiago, 2017). Restaurants and vendors downtown play a role in the smell and taste senses through the customer intake of food and passerby smells. Sound can be experienced through the general bustle of street life as well as with street musicians and cover bands. Touch can be used when trying on clothing from vendors or testing certain products at downtown markets. Central to sensory marketing is the ability to use new ways to evoke the same underlying ideas (Schmitt, 1999). For example, downtown districts must find new and exciting ways to use music, murals, and food to relay the common theme of place and welcoming amongst its visitors. Coined “cognitive consistency/sensory variety,” this dual concept of the known and unknown allows for evoking familiar principles in unfamiliar ways, keeping consumers engaged with the brand (Schmitt, 1999).

Affective Dimension

The affective dimension of brand experience refers to brands' emotional and feelings-based experiences (Beckman et al., 2013; Brakus et al., 2009). Customers seek experiences more actively than information, suggesting they rely on emotional connections for said brand experiences (Saari & Mäkinen, 2017). Thus, appealing to emotions can be a strong marketing tactic, with consumer emotions ranging from positive to negative (Bapat & Thanagin, 2016; Schmitt, 1999; Saari & Mäkinen, 2017). One such example of an emotion that can be targeted through the affective brand experience dimension is happiness (Schmitt, 1999). Techniques such as upbeat songs, positive imagery, and vibrant packaging can each create a sense of happiness in consumers (Schmitt, 1999). Consumers can also emotionally engage with a brand through slogans and characters and can likewise effectively experience brands with loved ones on a meaningful, personal level (Beckman et al., 2013; Brakus et al., 2009; Moreira & Santiago, 2017). Downtowns can play off emotions through heartfelt imagery in murals, upbeat music, and personal stories of city life to better create an effective relationship between the consumer and the downtown.

Behavioral Dimension

Brands can also be experienced through physical movements and activities. The behavioral dimension relates to such experiences, including brands that are known to revolve around physical activities (Brakus et al., 2009). Behavioral brands are thought of most often with brands such as Nike and their "Just Do It" campaign (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 1999). Brands can provoke action by introducing new lifestyles and modes of interaction and inspiration for changes in behavior (Schmitt, 1999). For downtowns, the behavioral dimension can also be utilized through physical activities (Beckman et al., 2013), such as walking tours, scenic pathways/sidewalks, and a general sense of walkability. They can also create displays, slogans, or paths that urge them to explore habits and lifestyles (Moreira & Santiago, 2017; Schmitt, 1999). Other behavioral experiences include dancing, getting tattoos, and walking in parks (Beckman et al., 2013).

Intellectual Dimension

The fourth and final dimension of brand experience is the intellectual dimension, which encompasses those aspects of brand experience that stimulate a level of thinking, curiosity, and thought provocation among consumers (Brakus, 2009; Schmitt, 1999). Brands can appeal to the intellectual dimension by facilitating discussion, using complex patterns or ideas in their marketing, and presenting opportunities for deeper thought and reflection (Brakus, 2009; Moreira & Santiago, 2017). Considering downtown districts, the intellectual dimension is best encompassed through museums, historical markings, and complex murals and paintings. Downtowns can play off the intellectual dimension by exploring the new or untapped, like how a product launches a brand based on trying new things and expanding horizons (Schmitt, 1999).

Type of Visitors

The type of visitors may also play a key role in the brand experience downtown. Locals perceive their downtown as a familiar place, while tourists see it as a visiting spot or attraction (Hanna et al., 2021). In other words, tourists may visit a place once, thus relying on simple, quick-firing techniques for memorable experiences, whereas long-term branding efforts would impact locals more (Hanna et al., 2021). Such long-term branding efforts are important as residents' attitudes toward a brand are not based on singular elements nor stable over time, as their complex understanding of the place can create an aversion to oversimplified brands (Hanna et al., 2021; Zenker et al., 2017). As such, there is a juxtaposition of the reactions of residents to a brand and the reactions of tourists, who are more likely to base their attitude on one brand component (Hanna et al., 2021; Zenker et al., 2017). Each dimension of brand experience plays a critical role in shaping visitors' experiences downtown, though to varying extents depending on the type of visitor. Overall, the type of visitors can greatly impact consumers' experiences as no two people experience brands similarly (Beckman et al., 2013). Places are complex entities with a wide range of brand targets, creating the necessity for a nuanced understanding of visitor type when creating brand strategies (Hanna et al., 2021; Zenker et al., 2017).

Proposed Methodology

A cross-sectional survey study will be conducted to replicate and extend Beckman et al.'s (2013) study. The study will survey residents and tourists by collaborating with the downtown associations to recruit participants. Known as the "Hospitality State," the sample will include visitors to downtown Hattiesburg, Mississippi. According to the Mississippi Tourism Association (2023), Mississippi has outpaced the Southeast and much of the nation as it is ranked

11th in the country for year-over-year visitor spending. In addition, as of October 2022, Hattiesburg is the third most visited city in Mississippi (WDAM, 2022). Live music, large murals, small businesses, and countless pieces of history make downtown Hattiesburg a center of art and culture. The people, food, and entertainment thrive and combine to paint a picture of a city rich in love and tradition.

The downtown area of Hattiesburg is currently undergoing revitalization, and therefore, it offers visitors an opportunity to have a positive experience. Participants will be asked about their recent experience in downtown Hattiesburg and provide their attitudes and behaviors from their experience. Established scales in the literature will be adapted for the study, and demographic questions will be asked. Three drawings to win a \$100 gift card will be provided to encourage participation. The results will be analyzed using IBM SPSS and SmartPLS.

Possible Contributions and Implications

By comparing the findings from Beckman et al. (2013), this study could highlight the similarities and differences, providing a benchmark for other small to mid-sized cities. In addition, insights into how Hattiesburg's cultural and historical background could impact the intellectual dimension of brand experience which is scant in the literature. The findings of this study could also provide city planners and officials with policy recommendations to enhance the downtown area, such as improving infrastructure, enhancing public spaces, or supporting cultural initiatives. The implications for the hospitality and tourism industries may include enhanced visitor experiences, targeted marketing and promotions, and sustainability efforts. Overall, the results of this project would not only provide valuable insights specific to Hattiesburg but may also contribute holistically to the broader academic and practical understanding of branding and marketing strategies for the heart of cities everywhere.

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Summary Brief

Artificial Intelligence Usage: The Moderating Role of Privacy Cynicism

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The proliferation of AI has given rise to a new wave of concerns over data privacy, yet a paucity of research currently exists in this emerging area. Accordingly, the goal of this investigation is to examine the moderating role of data privacy cynicism on AI platform usage. Grounded in two theoretical frameworks, the protection motivation theory and the uses and gratifications theory approach, we propose that AI platform characteristics (i.e. cost, level of intelligence, etc) and perceived usefulness are positively associated with AI platform usage, although this positive association is ameliorated by data privacy cynicism.

Introduction

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has captivated millions of users around the world (Haan & Watts, 2024) as they navigate the era of big data and strive to obtain competitive advantages such as improving efficiency and increasing productivity. The benefits conferred by AI stand in stark contrast to concerns over data privacy and the potential exploitation of personal or sensitive information (Cisco, 2024). Many people believe that there are advantages of utilizing AI, including generative AI, particularly to receive personalized responses they can then implement (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022). However, some individuals are not quite prepared to upload their private data to AI platforms for analysis and content generation (Cisco, 2024; Khan et al., 2023). Therefore, it appears that the immovable object of data privacy is meeting the unstoppable force of AI.

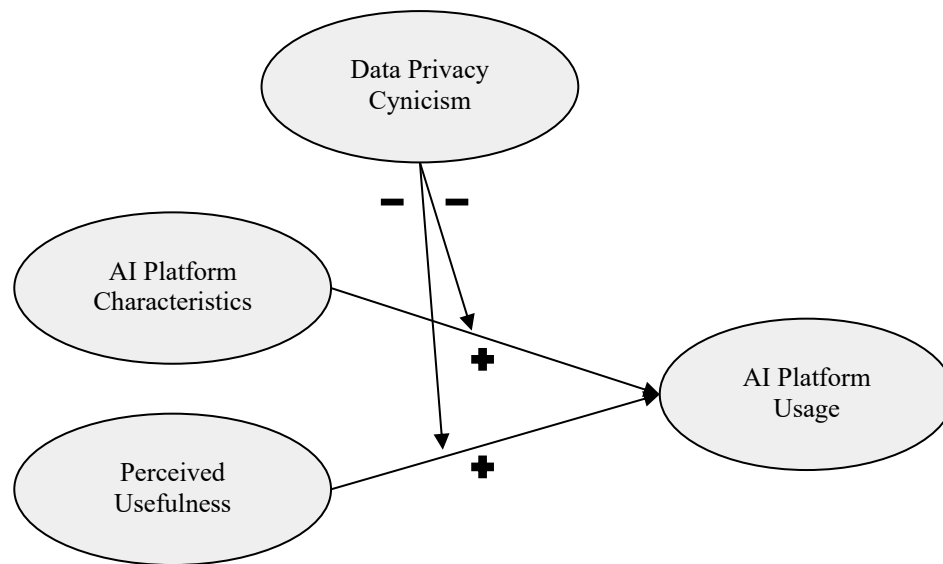
This study provides clear theoretical and managerial contributions related to AI and data privacy. First, we examine the relationship between AI platform characteristics and utilization. Much of the extant literature concerning AI focuses on the potential implementations (Lee, et al., 2023) or perceptions of AI (Mheta, et al., 2022) rather than specific platform characteristics. As such, we make a theoretical contribution by exploring this dynamic through the lens of protection motivation theory (Davis, 1989), which has received newfound attention in AI-related literature. Second, while prior research in the domain of privacy cynicism has focused primarily on social media (Hoffman et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2023) and digital advertising (Boerman & Smit, 2023), we contribute by extending the literature on privacy cynicism by applying the concept to AI. Lastly, we shed light on cynicism regarding the security of data and how these sentiments could be exacerbated by the expansion of AI. Consequently, this paper offers a managerial contribution by identifying issues of concern among potential users, which could then be used to facilitate meaningful change on the part of AI organizations.

Background

The characteristics of AI platforms represent their competitive differences and value, which attract users to leverage the platforms for various purposes (IBM, 2023). These characteristics potentially include costs, the level of the intelligence of the AI, and the reputation of the AI platform. Perceived usefulness can be defined as the perception of the benefits of utilization (Davis, 1989), which is particularly salient in the context of AI platform usage, as individuals tend to avoid utilizing platforms that they do not find beneficial. Moreover, uses and gratifications theory provides an ample lens to evaluate users' perceptions of AI platform usefulness, as it allows us to examine the varying motivations and expectations of users (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000). We posit the characteristics of an AI platform and its perceived usefulness will be positively associated with the usage of the AI platform. Data privacy cynicism is defined as an "attitude of uncertainty, powerlessness and mistrust towards the handling of personal data by online services rendering privacy protection behavior subjectively futile" (Hoffman et al., 2016, p. 2). Moreover, we contend that data privacy cynicism will mitigate the positive relationships between AI platform characteristics, the perceived usefulness of the AI platform, and AI platform usage. This is due to the privacy protection behaviors of users who constantly evaluate risks associated with sharing information online (van Ooijen et al., 2024). The protection

motivation theory describes the process of evaluating threats to privacy and determining the efficacy of privacy protection responses and the corresponding behaviors of individuals to protect their privacy based on users' evaluations (Rogers, 1975). This relationship can be visualized below in Figure 1.

Figure 1



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Summary Brief

The AI Chatbot Anthropomorphism Impasse

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AI chatbots are being increasingly adopted by marketers. While AI chatbots serve as initial consumer touchpoints, facilitating human-like interactions and enhancing sales, there are concerns about their effectiveness. A prevalent strategy to enhance their effectiveness is anthropomorphism—embedding AI chatbots with human-like features. Using data collected from consumers who have interacted with AI chatbots recently we find that that a U-shaped effect of anthropomorphism on privacy concerns is significant. We also find support was also identified for the mediated effect of anthropomorphism on disclosure intentions via privacy concerns.

Introduction

The recent growth of generative AI has led to its increasing use on multiple retailers' websites, such as Casper, Pizza Hut, Instacart, and Uber. AI chatbots often serve as the initial customer touchpoint as they comprehend human language and can hold intelligible conversations (Myin and Watchravesringkan, 2024). AI chatbots tend to be cost-efficient, offer continuous availability, and provide a level of consistency that is hard to match by human frontline sales agents, especially in an online retail context. Currently, retailers use several strategies to make AI chatbots more relatable and effective in servicing customers. One of the most important strategies is to anthropomorphize (embedding human-like characteristics, communication styles, and intentions or emotions) the AI chatbot to resemble a customer/sales representative. Anthropomorphized AI chatbots' ability to hold complex social interactions, simulate human emotions/display empathy, and adaptively respond to customers makes them particularly useful to marketers (Mehmood, Kautish and Shah, 2024). Given that anthropomorphizing AI chatbots is a nascent field within the marketing and information systems (IS) literature and can be studied at different levels, there is a need to better understand the impact of the various levels on downstream retail consequences. Given the increasing academic interest and managerial impact of anthropomorphizing AI chatbots, identifying the circumstances where anthropomorphizing is beneficial becomes even more critical. Towards this end, this study contends that anthropomorphizing AI chatbots can have differential effects on customer intentions to use such tools and their intentions to disclose (willingness to share information) and requires a more nuanced approach. Specifically, we argue that a U-shape relationship exists between anthropomorphism and privacy concerns in the context of online retailing. This study also draws on the privacy calculus theory and examines the moderating effects of personalization (the level to which the AI chatbot personalizes the communication) in affecting anthropomorphism, customers' intentions to use, and disclosure intentions relationships.

Background

When it comes to understanding comprehensive new technology usage by customers, the privacy calculus framework is appropriate as it can explain both the positive and negative effects of technology usage by consumers. The privacy calculus theory posits that customers weigh the perceived benefits against the associated risks (Fernandes and Costa, 2023) when using new technology. Consumers engage with a sentient AI chatbot only if they expect the outcome to be positive. The level of comfort that consumers perceive with an AI chatbot may be directly associated with the ratio of perceived benefits to the risks. Thus, the calculus explains why different levels of privacy concerns exist in relation to the adoption of new technology.

Anthropomorphism is the extent to which a machine possesses human-like characteristics in terms of visual appearance, gestures, relational style, communication abilities, personality traits, intelligence, behavior, etc. (Janson, 2023). Research also indicates that anthropomorphism can enhance engagement, collaboration, and interaction. A study by Ha et al. (2021) found that human-like virtual assistants significantly increase users' privacy concerns. This is because a human-like chatbot is perceived as more personal and less anonymous, leading to greater privacy concerns compared to a machine-like chatbot or a website. We theorize that as the anthropomorphism of AI chatbots increases, users' privacy concerns reduce because chatbots' human-like qualities help them gather more trust compared to non-humanoid chatbots and hence win over the consumer's privacy concerns. However, after a certain limit, a higher level of anthropomorphism may increase privacy concerns.

When an anthropomorphic AI chatbot provides personalized services, consumers will be more willing to accept its anthropomorphism (as both are based on consumers' interests) and have lower privacy concerns. However, if the anthropomorphism levels are not optimal (too high or too low), personalization may backfire.

Prior research suggests that privacy concerns negatively affect consumers' evaluations of digital assistants and negatively influence consumer intentions toward information disclosure to the digital assistant. Privacy concerns and information disclosure are related. Furthermore, privacy concerns are an important antecedent for accepting AI chatbots. Hence, we argue for the mediating role of privacy concerns between (a) anthropomorphism and intentions to use and (b) anthropomorphism and disclosure intentions.

Key Findings

We first tested the curvilinear association between Anthropomorphism (ANTH) and Privacy concern (PC). Regression analysis shows that the estimate for the coefficient of X2 term is positive and significant (effect; $b_2 = .076$; $p = .011$). This indicates that there is a curvilinear effect of ANTH on PC. Next, we test if Personalization (PERS) moderates the curvilinear association between Anthropomorphism (ANTH) and Privacy concern (PC). In this model, we see that the effect ($b_5 = .0363$) is significant ($p = .0368$). This indicates that PERS moderates the curvilinear association between ANTH and PC, thus supporting H2. Next, we probe the interaction effect and test the conditional quadratic effect of ANTH on PC at different values of PERS. PERS was conditioned at high (mean+1SD) and low (mean-1SD) values to generate the conditional quadratic effects. Results of the test of the conditional effects show that when PERS is low, the curvilinear effect is positive and not significant (effect = $.0572$; $P = .2558$). However, when the PERS is high, the curvilinear effect is positive and significant (effect = $.1744$; $P = .0011$). Thus, we observe that when PERS is low, the curve becomes flatter. Thus, we see that PERS moderates the quadratic association between ANTH and PC.

Next, we test whether Anthropomorphism (ANTH) has an indirect effect on Intention to disclose (DISC) and intention to use (USE) via Privacy concern (PC). We do not find support for the mediating role of PC between ANTH and USE. For DISC as an outcome mediation model, results show that when ANTH is low, the indirect effect of ANTH on DISC via PC is not significant. Also, when ANTH is medium, there is a negative and significant indirect effect of ANTH (effect = $-.0198$; BootCI = $-.0552, -.0005$). Similarly, when ANTH is high, there is a negative and significant indirect effect of ANTH (effect = $-.0626$; BootCI = $-.1468, -.0125$). However, the direct quadratic effect of ANTH on DISC is not significant. Taken together, we find support for the mediating role of PC between ANTH and DISC.

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**SESSION 8.5 PANEL: AI TO THE RESCUE: A
TEACHING ASSISTANT TO HELP WITH
SCALIBILITY, QUALITY, AND ENHANCED STUDENT
LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Moderators:

**Cindy Rippé, G, Shannon Cummins, Stefan Sleep, Andy Smith, and
Michael Burke**

SESSION 8.6: THE STATE OF AI IN 2024

Moderator:

Terry Motley

Summary Brief

Examining the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Warehouse Operations, Supplier Effort, and Supply Chain Performance

Terry Motley, University of South Alabama, USA

Warehouse operations are essential for supply chain performance. Warehouse operations can also cause lost materials, rebuys, and late payments to suppliers. Prior research has focused on artificial intelligence in supply chain areas such as supplier selection. Little research has been conducted on examining artificial intelligence's impact on managing warehouse operations. This study aims to examine artificial intelligence's effect on managing warehouse operations, supplier effort, and supply chain performance. Social exchange theory implies artificial intelligence integration in the supply chain will moderate the relationships between warehouse operations and supplier effort, ultimately influencing supply chain performance. Data will be collected using a random sample of 500 warehouse managers and suppliers from professional supply chain/logistics organizations. Structural equation modeling will be used to confirm the measurement models and test the structural relationships. Implications of the research will clarify how warehouse operations, supplier effort, and supply chain performance can be improved by applying AI.

Introduction

Supply chain organizations are facing a variety of challenges in today's landscape. Some of the challenges are supply chain disruptions, workforce shortages, and managing multiple suppliers. Warehouse operation is another critical challenge for supply chain organizations. Supply chain organizations need efficient warehouse operations to support supply chain performance. A growing trend for supply chain organizations is to increase their investments in technology to optimize their warehouse operations (Forbes, 2024, pgs. 4-5). Artificial intelligence is leading the way in this optimization effort (Dash et al., 2019). While the focus is on the optimization component, artificial intelligence also factors into the supplier's efforts so warehouses can receive and log material promptly. This equates to the supplier being paid sooner rather than later. Social exchanges influence the supplier's efforts in future transactions. Thus, this study aims to examine the impact of artificial intelligence on warehouse operations, supplier effort, and supply chain performance.

Background

Research on warehouse operations has been studied extensively from the supply chain perspective (Staudt et al., 2015). However, little research has been conducted on this topic in the context of the moderating role of artificial intelligence and the mediating effect of supplier effort. Prior research on warehouse operations and supply chain performance has examined the use of information systems to lower costs and improve accuracy (Staudt et al., 2015). Artificial intelligence use in supplier selection is receiving substantial attention but its effect on influencing supplier efforts has not received much attention (Sahoo et al., 2024). This gap in understanding how artificial intelligence impacts the relationship between warehouse operations and supplier effort is important because it will advance our knowledge of artificial intelligence's impact on warehouse operations, supplier efforts, and ultimately supply chain performance. Moreover, the findings will shed light on how artificial intelligence can impact warehouse operations to influence supplier efforts in supply chain organizations. The specific focus will be on the following research question: How does artificial intelligence impact warehouse operations, supplier effort, and supply chain performance?

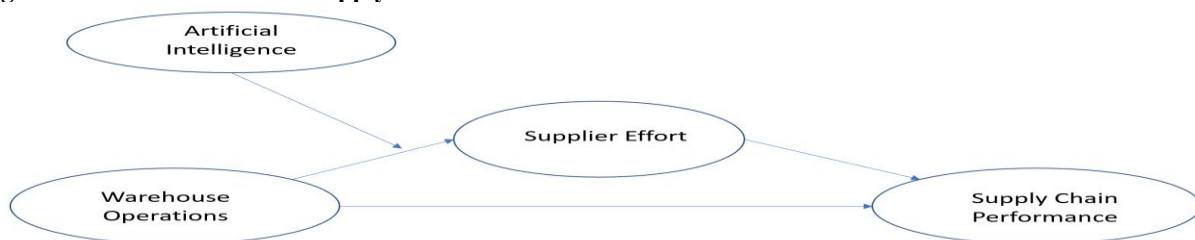
Social exchange theory will be applied to examine how warehouse operations influence supplier efforts in supply chain performance. Social exchange theory focuses on a "series of interactions that generate obligations" (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and is useful in developing hypotheses. A random sample of 500 chain warehouse distribution managers and suppliers from various professional supply chain/logistics organizations and networks will be obtained from the following organizations using surveys: Warehouse Management Professionals; Warehouse and Transportation Management; SAP Extended Warehouse Management; Institute for Supply Chain Management; and Purchasing and Global Supply.

Several contributions will emerge from this research. The first contribution will be to provide perspective on the impact of artificial intelligence on warehouse operations and supply chain performance. The second contribution is to provide insight into how warehouse operations influence supplier efforts. The third contribution will be to advance the literature on artificial intelligence in the supply chain management domain. The final contribution will be to guide warehouse managers on how warehouse operations affect current and future relationships between suppliers and buyers which impacts overall supply chain performance.

Theoretical Model and Hypotheses

Social exchange theory provides a foundation for proposing the theoretical model to be tested in this study (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022) will be executed to examine the relationships between the four constructs. The two-step confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) procedure will be used to confirm the measurement models and evaluate the structural relationships (Hair et al., 2020). One construct, artificial intelligence, is hypothesized as a moderator of the relationships between warehouse operations and supply chain performance and the supplier effort mediator (see Figure 1). Supplier effort ultimately influences supply chain performance for the firm in this moderated mediation model (Cheah et. al., 2021).

Fig. 1: Theoretical Model of Supply Chain Performance



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SESSION 8.7: MEET THE EDITORS

Moderator:

Christopher Hopkins

Raj Agnihotri, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Iowa State University

Dip Biswas, *Journal of Business Research*, University of South Florida

Victoria Crittenden, *Journal of Marketing Education*, Babson College

Neel Das, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Appalachian State University

Mark Lee, *Marketing Education Review*, Toronto Metropolitan University

Greg Marshall, *European Journal of Marketing*, Rollins College

Linda Price, *Journal of Consumer Research*, University of Wyoming

Maria Petrescu, *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Brian Rutherford, *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, Kennesaw State University

Ray Taylor, *International Journal of Advertising*, Villanova University

Kevin Shanahan, *Journal of Global Scholars in Marketing Research*, Mississippi State University

David Wooten, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, University of Michigan

SESSION 8.8: REIMAGING MARKETING EDUCATION

Moderator:

Joyce Zhou

Summary Brief

Understanding Consumer Behavior Through Film

Joyce Zhou, University of Louisiana Monroe

Jun Yu, University of Louisiana Monroe

This learning exercise explores the use of film appreciation to reflect on cross-cultural consumer behavior. It will present key findings on how this approach reinforces consumer behavior concepts. Additionally, the exercise will address AACSB assurance of learning.

Summary Brief

Enhancing Global Marketing Education: Utilizing ITA and WITS Databases to Explore International Trade Dynamics

K.B. Martin, Miami University

This presentation highlights the critical role of global trade data in enhancing international marketing education. By leveraging the International Trade Administration (ITA) and World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) databases, educators and students gain deep insights into global trade flows and their implications for international marketing strategies. The session covers practical methods for using these databases to identify primary trading partners, analyze export and import trends, and understand key marketing factors such as political and economic climates, as well as consumer and supplier trends. Attendees will learn to investigate global trade trends, analyze top importers and exporters, and predict future trade patterns. Student results on the use of each database will be discussed, along with best practices for integration into the curriculum. By incorporating ITA and WITS data, educators can provide students with a comprehensive understanding of global trade dynamics, preparing them for the complexities of international marketing and business.

Presentation Description

This session aims to integrate real-world trade data into the study of global marketing, providing practical methods for utilizing the International Trade Administration (ITA) and World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) databases to enhance the understanding of global trade dynamics and their impact on international marketing strategies.

The session will commence with an exploration of the ITA database, focusing on identifying primary trading partners for each state, analyzing state-specific export and import destinations and trends, and understanding key marketing factors such as major industries, geographic advantages, and market accessibility. Insights will be provided into the nuances of state-level trade data and its application in informing marketing strategies.

Following this, the session will delve into the WITS database to investigate global trade trends across multiple countries. This segment will include an analysis of top importers and exporters by country and product category, as well as an examination of historical shifts and predictions for future trends in international trade and marketing. Practical demonstrations on accessing and interpreting data from both databases will be conducted, coupled with hands-on exercises in data analysis and visualization techniques, all tailored to a marketing focus.

An integral part of the presentation will be the integration of database analysis into the curriculum. Strategies for incorporating ITA and WITS data into courses on global marketing, international business, and trade management will be discussed. This will include pedagogical approaches and expected learning outcomes, ensuring that educators can effectively teach these complex topics.

Additionally, key findings from a student survey on their experiences using the ITA and WITS databases will be presented. This analysis will highlight how these tools have enhanced students' understanding of trade trends and their impacts. Best practices for using these databases in the classroom will be discussed, offering tips on helping students grasp the complexities of global trade, including political, economic, consumer, and supplier trends. Methods for enabling students to develop a comprehensive understanding of how these trends impact marketing strategies will also be covered.

By the end of this presentation, attendees will be equipped to integrate ITA and WITS databases effectively into their teaching practices, thereby enhancing their students' understanding of global trade dynamics and preparing them for the complexities of international marketing and business.

Summary Brief

Marketing Mondays: An Experiential Classroom Activity Enhancing Soft Skills and Strategic Marketing Principles

Gary R. Johnson, University of Montevallo, USA
Amiee Mellon, University of Montevallo, USA

Employers have identified a growing lack of soft skills among recent college graduates they feel are needed in order to be successful in today's marketplace. The deficit of these skills has increased since the Covid-19 pandemic due to students altering their social experiences, including during their college career. The college classroom can be a place where students regain or enhance these critical skills that will support their future career.

Introduction

The marketplace has identified a growing gap in career readiness and soft skills among recent college graduates entering the workforce. Employers have expressed a concerning trend among current college graduates with a deficit of critical soft skills required to be successful working in today's competitive marketplace (Succi & Canovi, 2020). The most noted soft skills college graduates lack are those involving communication skills, being committed to work, and teamwork collaboration (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Communication skills, including public speaking, critical thinking, and teamwork collaboration, can be included in the marketing curriculum to ensure successful employment with any organization.

Students in the classroom succeed when they utilize a variety of soft and hard skills developed from their curriculum acumen and engage in experiential assignments in the classroom. The marketing classroom allows an educator an environment where they can create a setting where students develop, practice, and enhance their critical reasoning skills, presentation skills, and collaborative teamwork skills.

Experiential Learning

The academic community has reported the value experiential learning has on student learning outcomes. The scholarly research has demonstrated experiential learning increases student engagement when the student is challenged and feels supported by the professor (Kolb & Kolb, 2016). Recent research reports a need to continue to evolve to include new methods of experiential learning to grow and expand this research and possible enhanced student learning outcomes (Roberts, 2018).

This proposed marketing pedagogy research created experiential marketing education modules that required students to collaborate in a team setting over a multi-week assignment. The focus of this pedagogy was to create unique weekly collaborations that focused on a thematic product category each week. A benefit of this pedagogical approach was creating an assignment structure that created a sense of urgency to the assignment that allowed students to focus on and refine each week the ability to think creatively and strategically, apply marketing principles as a group, and meet a quick turnaround with a formal presentation to the class. This weekly repetition created an opportunity for students to conduct deeper learning where they felt they not only learned, but also enjoyed the learning experience more (Young, et al., 2008).

Assessment Method

The assignment was a six-week assignment built into the learning modules for an in-person strategic marketing management capstone course that met three days a week. Each Monday over a six-week period, students participated in an in-class experiential learning assignment titled, "Marketing Mondays." The objective of the assignment was to randomly assign students to groups each week where the group selected a product item at random, collaborated and created a marketing strategy for that product, and then presented their recommendations to the class within a 30-minute time limit.

The marketing pedagogy research includes a pre-assignment and post-assignment survey, along with qualitative data collected at the end of the semester from students enrolled in the course to measure their overall student learning. The assignment outlined for students a summary of the assignment objective, the rubric for grading

the assignment, and a conceptual idea of the roles to be assigned to all group members. The group structure provides leadership and organizational management experience also as an outcome for the assignment. The professor used the assignment rubric to review each group's presentation and announced the winner of that week's assignment. Students received feedback from the professor about the winning team and to better understand the learning outcomes achieved by that group. This also provided the professor with an opportunity to evaluate the learning process and to find ways to make any needed improvements in the classroom (Young, et al., 2008).

Project Concept

The professor visited local Dollar Tree retail stores in advance of each *Marketing Mondays* assignment. The goal was to find product items that could be grouped together around a theme. The weekly items varied from widely used products to unique items that might have a limited consumer base. The goal each week was to have one product item that offered some humor or a challenge to the students in creating a marketing strategy for that item.

The *Marketing Mondays* assignment commenced with students entering the classroom and drawing a random number. This number corresponded to a group for that session and aligned with the total classroom enrollment in each class. Each group sent one representative to the front of the room to select from a bag a products the professor selected for that week. Once all groups selected their product item, then the professor started the timer. The class had 30 minutes to complete the assignment. This fast strategy concept required students to build on their creative and critical thinking skills and develop extemporaneous speaking skills.

Learning Outcomes

The pedagogy for this assignment supported these student learning outcomes (SLO) outlined in the syllabus.

- SLO(1): Analyze marketing problems and use strategic methods to identify market opportunities.
- SLO(2): Evaluate how strategic planning supports the overall marketing mix.
- SLO(3): Employ target marketing to reach customers using critical thinking and decision making.
- SLO(4): Demonstrate with oral and written assignments how to communicate strategic marketing plans, outcomes, and analysis review.

Value to Marketing Education

The *Marketing Mondays* assignment allowed a marketing capstone course to create an in-class experiential learning experience where students used their marketing acumen to conduct a marketing strategy analysis and developed and enhanced soft skills college graduate needs to be competitive in the marketplace. This assignment builds on marketing pedagogy that integrates soft skills development with marketing coursework. Students were able to work and enhance their soft skills including public speaking, teamwork, and group collaboration.

The assignment can be applied to other marketing curriculum beyond a strategy course and can even be expanded to other business or curriculum on campus. This pedagogy research has the potential to help academic units across a campus help develop soft skills for college students across the curriculum (Anthony & Garner, 2016).

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SESSION 8.9: TRIPADVISOR

Moderator:

Sarah Lefebvre

Summary Brief

The Gendered Glass: How Stemmed Versus Stemless Glassware Alters Beverage Perceptions and Influences Order Intentions

Sarah Lefebvre, Murray State University, USA
Marissa Orlowski, MV Hospitality Solutions, USA
Laura Boman, Kennesaw State University, USA

Cocktails are served in all kinds of vessels from martini and collins to margarita and coupe glasses, the options are abundant. This research examines how an attribute of cocktail vessels, stemmed as compared to stemless, influences how customers perceive the gender of the cocktail, which in turn influences order intentions. Through two online studies we find that cocktails served in stemmed vessels are perceived as more feminine, which lowers order intentions. However, this effect holds only for male customers and is attenuated for female customers. The findings provide insight into the importance of understanding how attributes of beverage vessels influence the customer experience and decision making.

Introduction

From the classic martini to the sophisticated coupe and popular margarita glass, a wide variety of vessels are available to house cocktails. The consumption of cocktails and the prevalence of craft cocktail bars continue to increase into 2024, demonstrating the importance of understanding the factors that influence consumer decision making and consumption of cocktails. Cocktails can be considered an experiential product that must be consumed in order for a customer to gain full information about the product. This further highlights the importance of understanding the factors that influence whether a customer will order a cocktail that is available. Attributes of beverage vessels have been shown to influence customer perceptions and behaviors (Spence & Wan, 2015; Lefebvre & Orlowski, 2019; Langfield et al., 2020). However, most research that has examined beverage attributes and customer perceptions and associations has focused on non-alcoholic beverages, wine, or beer. Little research has examined alcoholic beverages in the form of cocktails (an alcoholic spirit combined with at least one non-alcoholic ingredient). In this research we attempt to attenuate this gap by examining how the presence of a stem on a cocktail beverage vessel influences customer order intentions.

Background

Marketing research has explored how product attributes have the ability to act as heuristic cues, providing product information to consumers that is not directly visible. This information is then typically used to form perceptions of the product and inform decision making. For instance, the association between price and quality has long been established where the higher the price of a product, the higher the expected and perceived quality. Food products have received much attention in this area of research, likely due to the fact that food products are ingested and have the potential to have detrimental effects on customer well-being, thus product information is essential prior to consumption. Furthermore, food products cannot be experienced prior to consumption so there is a reliance on product attributes to act as sources of information.

Beverage vessels introduce a unique aspect into this fruitful area of research since the product package (i.e., the vessel) comes into direct contact with the customers hands and mouth, providing haptic information (e.g., texture, temperature etc.) from sensory inputs. Beverage attributes that have received attention include durability (i.e., firm vs. flimsy; Krishna & Morrin, 2008) and shape (Wan et al., 2015). Furthermore, the information provided through these cues has downstream behavioral consequences. An attribute of beverage vessels that has not received attention is the presence of a stem.

A stemmed vessel can be defined as “a glass with a foot, stem, and bowl” (Katisigris, C., & Thomas, C., 2012). Traditionally, stemmed vessels are used for cocktails such as martinis and margaritas, however stemless versions of these beverage vessels are increasingly available and being used in the marketplace. This creates endless presentation options for beverage providers raising the question of is a stemmed or stemless version of a cocktail vessel best? We propose that a consumer’s direct and indirect experience has led to an association between beverage

vessels and gender, where vessels with a stem will be perceived as more feminine than those without a stem. In turn, given the stereotypes of products being for males or females, it is hypothesized that the gender perception of the beverage will impact order intentions. Furthermore, we examine how a customer gender alters the indirect effect. Taken together, we hypothesize the following:

- H1:** The presence (vs. absence) of a stem on a cocktail vessel will lead to the perceptions of the cocktail being feminine (vs. masculine).
- H2:** The effect of a stemmed cocktail vessel on order intentions through gender perceptions will be conditional on customer gender. Specifically, when the customer is male, gender perception of the beverage will influence order intentions, yet when the customer is female the effect will be attenuated.

Our hypotheses are examined across two online studies. Study 1 examined the existence of gender perceptions towards various stemmed versus stemless glassware. Study 2 demonstrated the effect of glassware stem on order intentions through gender perceptions and the relevant boundary condition of customer gender.

Key Findings

In an exploratory study with five conditions (vessel: collins, coupe, double/tall, martini, rocks) we examined customers perceived gender of a cocktail beverage. We find support for our primary hypothesis where stemmed beverage vessels were perceived as more feminine than stemless vessels (1 = masculine, 7 = feminine; $M_{\text{coupe/stemmed}} = 4.47$, $M_{\text{martini/stemmed}} = 5.40$, $M_{\text{collins/stemless}} = 4.47$, $M_{\text{double/stemless}} = 3.63$, $M_{\text{rocks}} = 3.18$). The findings establish the existence of a gender perception related to the vessel and support the use of rocks and martini vessels for future studies.

Study 2 found a significant indirect effect of beverage vessel (stemmed vs. stemless) on order intentions through perceived gender of the cocktail, conditional on customer gender (index of moderated mediation = 1.14, 95% CI from .48 to 1.82). Stemmed vessels were perceived as significantly more feminine than stemless vessels ($a = 1.66$, $p < .001$), in turn the more feminine the beverage was perceived, the less likely customers were to order the cocktail ($b = -.31$, $p < .01$). The indirect effect was found to be significant for male customers (effect = - 1.02, 95% CI from - 1.51 to - .59), but not for female customers (effect = .12, 95% CI from - .47 to .65). The interaction of perceived gender of the beverage and customer gender on order intentions suggests that gender perceptions of the beverage influence order intentions only for men, where the more feminine the beverage, the less likely they are to order.

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SESSION 10.1: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO SALES

Moderator:

Cindy Rippé

Summary Brief

Do You Have What It Takes to be Ambidextrous?

Salesperson Personality Trait Antecedents of Sales/Service Ambidexterity with Environmental Conditions as Moderators

Benjamin Britton, College of Business, University of Central Arkansas

This essay presents a theoretical framework for antecedents of Sales/Service Ambidexterity (SSA) at the individual-level. Specifically, I propose a conceptual model that categorizes antecedents of SSA into the three categories from the organizational ambidexterity literature (i.e., structure, context, and leadership) and subsequently test this model using a structural equation modeling approach on a sample of 328 salespeople. Drawing from trait activation theory, I describe how the context and leadership constructs “activate” the traits in unique ways, thereby moderating the relationships that “structure” has with individual-level SSA performance and these traits are further activated based on contextual factors. The results demonstrate that the salesperson traits of creativity and empathy both positively affect SSA, and the effects of the other model relationships are explored herein. The manuscript concludes with a discussion of these findings, along with the important implications they have for sales managers and scholars alike.

Introduction

The impact of salesperson personality traits on work outcomes has been a key interest for both scholars and industry stakeholders (Vinchur et al., 1998; Dugan et al., 2019). This interest is heightened by the modern sales environment's demand for expanded customer service behaviors (Rapp et al., 2017), emphasizing the need to understand how these traits affect performance, particularly in sales/service ambidexterity (SSA). The current study aims to explore personality traits that drive SSA and how workplace conditions interact with these traits.

To investigate this, the study extends a framework for organizational ambidexterity (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008) to the individual level, focusing on sales versus service behaviors. Three traits were selected: competitiveness (a predictor of sales performance), empathy (a predictor of customer service), and creativity (necessary for engaging in dual tasks, a hallmark of ambidexterity). These traits represent core aspects of SSA.

The framework for organizational ambidexterity includes structure, context, and leadership-based antecedents. Structure pertains to organizational hierarchy, context involves discrete aspects of the organizational environment, and leadership refers to managerial empowerment for ambidexterity. In the context of SSA, these categories are reframed at the individual level. The structure category describes psychological characteristics (personality traits), and the context and leadership categories serve as moderators that activate these traits in.

Conceptual Background

I used the aforementioned organizational ambidexterity framework to create the conceptual model below. This framework is made up of three core attributes: Structure, Context and Leadership.

Structure

Organizations often achieve conflicting goals by creating separate divisions for each task, known as “structural ambidexterity.” Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) describe this as developing mechanisms to balance alignment (efficiency) and adaptability (response to market changes). For example, one division focuses on internal process alignment, while another adapts to external changes. This approach allows organizational ambidexterity without requiring individual employees to be ambidextrous. The current study uses this concept to explain individual ambidexterity, framing it as part of an individual’s psychographic profile.

Context

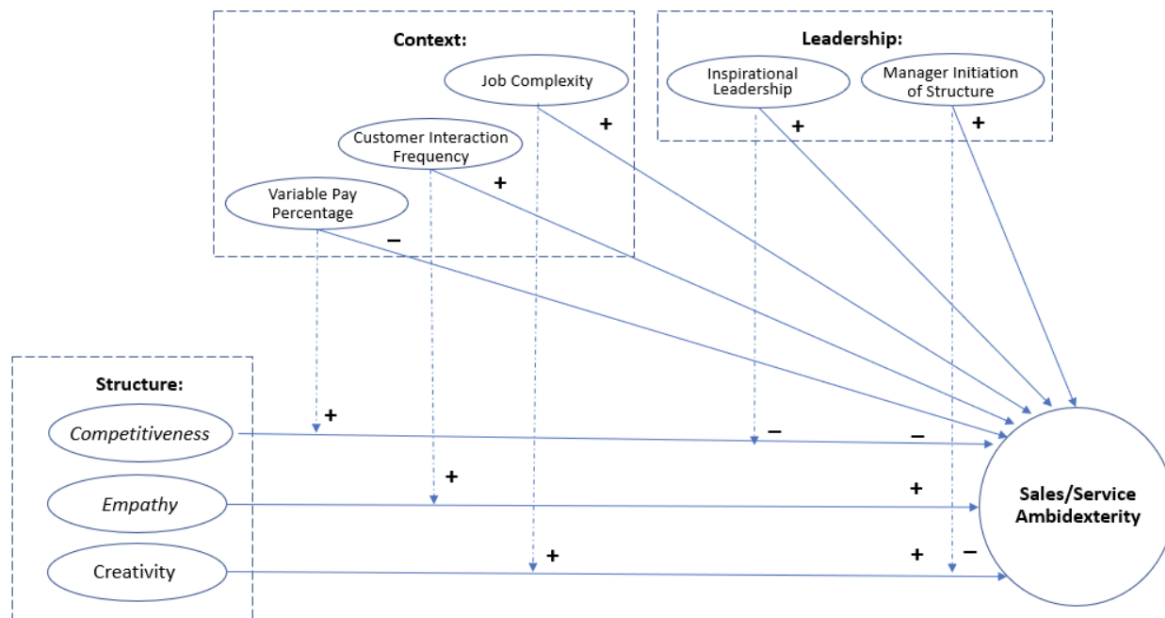
Contextual ambidexterity is defined as the capacity to simultaneously demonstrate alignment and adaptability within a business unit (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). Ghoshal & Bartlett (1994) explained an organization’s context as the various intra-organizational aspects (e.g., procedures, systems, processes, and cultures) shaping employees' work behaviors. This concept focuses on individual behaviors that contribute to ambidexterity at

the organizational level. Employees should be empowered to balance exploitation and exploration demands (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). The systems, processes, and beliefs required for contextual ambidexterity vary depending on organizational and role contexts.

Leadership

In addition to structural and contextual methods, corporate leadership is crucial for achieving organizational ambidexterity. Senior management's dynamic capabilities significantly impact the firm's ability to realize ambidexterity despite structural or contextual changes. Leadership acts as an ancillary factor supporting ambidexterity alongside structural and contextual methods. However, it is also seen as an independent predictor of organizational ambidexterity (Lubatkin et al., 2006; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Managerial actions can enable or disable the potential for ambidexterity in employees.

Conceptual Model



Measures

- **Personality Traits (i.e., “Structure”):** Assessed using validated scales for trait competitiveness, empathy, and creativity.
- **Sales/Service Ambidexterity (SSA):** Measured through a self-reported scale capturing the ability to balance sales and service tasks.
- **Workplace Environmental Conditions:** The Context category includes variable pay percentage, customer interaction frequency, and job complexity. The Leadership category includes inspirational leadership, and manager initiation of structure.

I used a covariance-based SEM approach to analyze the panel data I collected. Due to the complexity of the model, I did a multi-staged SEM approach where I ran four different models in succession where I gradually added more paths to estimate each time, in the table below I highlight the results. The data came from a panel of B2B and B2C salespeople gathered via the survey company Centiment, and the final sample had 328 respondents who worked across a variety of industries.

Key Findings

Unfortunately, many of the hypotheses did not reach statistical significance. Two of the three hypothesized direct effects from the “structure” category were significant (i.e., empathy and creativity). One of the “Context” direct effects were significant (i.e., customer interaction frequency). And lastly, two of the five moderating effects were only marginally significant (i.e., customer interaction frequency and inspirational leadership). see the table below for the results.

Table 1.

<i>Hypothesis Test</i>	Model 1.		Model 2.		Model 3.		Model 4.	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
H1: Salesperson competitiveness will have a negative effect on SSA.	0.022	0.73	0.017	0.79	0.009	0.99	-0.01	0.88
H2: Salesperson empathy will have a positive effect on SSA.	0.375	<0.001	0.350	<0.001	0.303	<0.001	0.310	<0.001
H3: Salesperson creativity will have a positive effect on SSA.	0.348	<0.001	0.320	<0.001	0.352	<0.001	0.351	<0.001
H4: Variable pay percentage will have a negative direct effect on SSA.	-	-	0.042	0.37	0.044	0.34	-	-
H5: Customer interaction frequency will have a positive direct effect on SSA	-	-	0.134	0.005	0.121	0.012	0.133	0.003
H6: Job complexity will have a positive direct effect on SSA.	-	-	0.077	0.004	0.088	0.001	0.089	0.001
H7: Inspirational leadership will have a positive direct effect on SSA.	-	-	0.025	0.007	0.008	0.906	0.013	0.026
H8: Manager initiation of structure will have a positive direct effect on SSA.	-	-	0.034	0.061	0.049	0.044	-	-
H9: Salesperson variable pay will positively moderate the negative relationship between trait competitiveness and SSA	-	-	-	-	0.017	0.077	-	-

						0 3			
H10: Salesperson customer interaction frequency positively moderates the positive relationship between trait empathy and SSA	-	-	-	-	-	0. 08 3	0. 2 7	- 0. 9 1	0. 0 6 2
H11: Salesperson job complexity positively moderates the positive relationship between trait creativity and SSA	-	-	-	-	-	0. 06 9	0. 2 7 1	0. 0 6 3	0. 2 3 9
H12: Sales managers' inspirational leadership negatively moderates the negative relationship between salesperson trait competitiveness and SSA	-	-	-	-	-	0. 04 1	0. 5 4 6	- 0. 0 8 8	0. 0 9 5
H13: Manager initiation of structure negatively moderates the positive relationship between trait creativity and SSA	-	-	-	-	-	0. 02 5	7 3 8	-	-

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Summary Brief

Evaluating Body Language to Predict Sales Success: A National Competitive Sample Using AI

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This study investigates the impact of preparatory body language on sales outcomes using AI tools. Building on Cuddy et al. (2015), we considered how university students' body language and emotional states before sales encounters influenced their performance in a national sales competition held via video conference during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using iMotions facial recognition software, we analyzed the emotions of 189 students prior to and during their presentations. We also examined student body language to judge's competition scores and found that specific facial expressions and emotions, particularly contempt and lip pursing (AU20), significantly predict sales performance scored by judges. Contempt was positively correlated with higher performance scores, while AU20, indicative of nervousness, was negatively correlated. These results suggest that preparatory poses affecting emotional displays can influence sales outcomes, emphasizing the value of managing body language before sales interactions. This research highlights the potential of AI in predicting performance and encourages further study on emotional displays in sales contexts.

Introduction

Body language is known to impact presentation perceptions and influence sales encounters. Most research understandably focuses on the impact of seen body language—that is, body language viewed by the customer, prospect, or audience. What is less studied is the impact of salesperson's body language and emotional state prior to engaging in the sales encounter. Seminal research in the preparatory posing (Cuddy et al 2015) showed that individuals self-talk and mindset preparation before a socially stressful encounter such as a presentation or job interview was impactful in their audience's perception of the performance. Simply taking up more physical space, acting large and powerful in private, before interacting with the audience, could drive performance.

This paper presents an extension of this research using AI tools to assess the impact of pre-performance posing to sales outcomes among a national sample of university students. Specifically, a collegiate national sales competition was used as the sample. Because the competition took place via video conferences during the Covid 19 pandemic, the sample includes all students who competed in the opening round completing a 12-minute sales meeting with a professional prospect. Unique to this sample is the ability to analyze student salespeople's private self-preparation—their preparatory posing prior to the prospect/judge joining the recording. Also unique to this sample is the lack of priming. No students were instructed to engage in self-talk or preparatory posing. Thus, this is a type of natural experiment where students' videos were analyzed to assess what, if any, preparatory posing took place before the sales encounter. Most pre-encounter videos, where a student had joined the video link but was by themselves awaiting their prospect/judge to join, were only a few minutes—and the result of being told to join 5-minutes before their allotted time.

Also unique to this sample is the existence of the full sales presentation video—the longer 12-minute portion of the video where the student acting as seller engaged in a sales role-play with the professional acting as a buyer. We analyzed the presentation as well, looking to see if AI could predict human-judged sales performance. Finally, as the dependent variable, the sample uses the professionally assigned scores for each student in the opening role-play round on a scale of 1 to 100. This scoring tool included standard sales competition items such as: ability to build rapport, needs discovery, response to objections, and closing. Thus, the outcome performance variable is a human-judged performance measure of salesperson competence and success.

Background

Impression management is well studied in the literature and both verbal and non-verbal aspects are shown to be directly managed to influence the perception of performance in high-stress social interactions (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi). Much research in this area has been conducted in the realm of interviews. While a sales meeting is distinct from a hiring interview, we argue both share similar aspects of presentation

(interviewee/salesperson) and judgement (interviewer/buyer) and thus we extend this literature bases' learning to the sales context.

Comprehensive investigation into different impression management tactics during an interview encounter by Gilmore & Ferris, 1989 and Stevens & Kristof, 1995 found a positive impact of verbal (e.g., self-promotion through tales of success) on verbal impression management tactics, but not for non-verbal tactics (e.g., eye-contact and smiling). Yet, even this positive impact is vulnerable if interviews were longer in format (Tsai, Chen, & Chui, 2005), structured (Barrick et al., 2009), or with experienced interviewers (Howard & Ferris, 1996). Most concerning, perhaps, is research that shows that as candidates (salespeople) increase their use of nonverbal impression management tactics, interviewers (buyers) begin to perceive the interactions as inauthentic and manipulative, leading to negative evaluations and hiring (buying) decisions (Baron, 1986). Thus, managing these non-verbal interactions can be risky and lead to the opposite outcome as intended.

In addition to assessing impression management during the encounter, there is a body of research that looks at nonverbal characteristics as related to presence. These variables (e.g., enthusiasm/passion/energy level, confidence, pitch, and amplitude variability) are not assumed to be calculated in their adoption (Degroot and Motowidlo 1999; McGovern & Tinsley, 1978); but are found to result in better outcomes when shown. Often termed non-verbal cues, these displays are predictive not only in-person, but also via video tape in the context of funding for venture capital pitches (Balachandra et al 2019). In contrast, job candidates who are judged as having low-verbal cues (low enthusiasm) are viewed as anxious (Levine & Feldman, 2002), and anxious candidates are viewed as lacking in confidence, less effective communicators, and less likely to perform well (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; McCarthy & Goffin, 2004).

Does AI Find Differences Between Salesperson Preparatory Posing?

This study used iMotions, an automatic facial recognition and coding software to assess student salesperson emotions both prior to and during a sales role-play. Each role-play video, both prior to a potential customer joining the Zoom room and during the sales meeting, was assessed using post-processing on the facial action coding system (FACS). This system uses AI to assess 64 different facial movements across eyes, lips, cheeks, chin, nose, and eye brows. As an example, the eye movements are Action Units (AUs): lid droop, closed, blink, squint, wink, eye left, eye right, eye up, and eye down. In this study, AU 20 was found to be particularly impactful in the regression analysis. AU 20 is a lip stretcher movement, where the subject turns the corner of the lips down and purses as if nervous. In turn, these 64 facial actions are grouped into 7 emotion categories that collectively are indicative of a recognizable emotion. These seven emotions are surprise, fear, contempt, anger, disgust, sadness, and happiness/joy. Again, for example, in this study, the emotion of contempt was found to be particularly impactful and correlated with human-rated performance. "Contempt" is a combination of AU 12 and 14 (lip corner puller and dimplier).

H1: iMotions AI software can distinguish facial actions and emotions of student salespeople prior to their role-play encounter.

Is Preparatory Posing Predictive of Salesperson Performance?

High power preparatory poses (e.g., pumping oneself up, demonstrating confidence, or power prior to an encounter) is expected to have an impact on nonverbal presence by reducing stress and anxiety and improving the perception of confidence, captivation, and enthusiasm (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson & Galinsky 2006; von Honk et al., 1999). Research by Nair et al., (2014) showed just this for participants delivering impromptu speeches. Those sitting in an expansive, upright posture were happier, less fearful, and viewed as more positive than those seated in a closed, slouched posture (Nair et al., 2014). Research by Cuddy et al (2015) shows that pre-performance power posing (expansive, open, and high-power poses) by subjects positively impacted their evaluations in mock job interviews. Power posing was found in this study to have no effect on actual body posture (via video recorded evaluation by humans), thus highlighting the relationship between preparatory nonverbal behavior and subsequent performance evaluation.

H2: Student salesperson facial actions showing power and confidence (pre-performance power posing) will predict human-judged sales performance.

Data and Results

The pre-performance videos of 189 student role plays across three rounds of competition were analyzed using iMotions facial recognition and coding software. After Round 1, only the top two students in each room advanced to Round 2. After Round 2, only the top-scoring student in the room moved on. While some students

progressed through multiple rounds, each round featured different judges and scenarios, resulting in new video data for each stage. Consequently, some students appear multiple times in the sample. Descriptive statistics of each emotional category (as a percentage of emotional frames identified) are shown below in Table 1. The most common emotional display by students prior to their sales role-play was a neutral expression. This finding makes sense as even when preparing for a sales call, students will spend at least some of their time waiting for the call to start. The next most common emotions displayed during the pre-call videos were Confusion (7.15% of emotional display) and Contempt (7.09% of emotional display). These were followed by Joy (3.5%), Sadness (1.75%), and Anger (1.22%).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Emotion Category	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Anger Time Percentage	189	0	54.26	1.2274	5.62596
Sadness Time Percentage	189	0	75.41	1.7531	7.59794
Disgust Time Percentage	189	0	21.73	0.4499	2.08978
Joy Time Percentage	189	0	77.51	3.5074	9.55911
Surprise Time Percentage	189	0	12.42	0.4561	1.42382
Contempt Time Percentage	189	0	71.38	7.0958	12.10541
Confusion Time Percentage	189	0	87.08	7.1543	17.33226
Positive Time Percentage	189	0	57.53	0.8812	4.75829
Negative Time Percentage	189	0	8.61	0.3999	1.30384
Neutral Time Percentage	189	0	99.42	51.4822	35.34775

These results provide preliminary support for Hypothesis 1 – the facial recognition software was able to adequately identify different emotions in the students in their pre-role play videos – and these emotions do make sense for the activity the students were engaged in – waiting for a sales competition to commence.

Using the sample size of 189 students, the next analysis conducted was a regression to see if the pre-role play video emotions could be used to predict the students' performance in the competition based upon the average score of the judges' evaluations. In addition to the facial recognition results, each judges' scores for students during each round of the competition was included in the analysis. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted utilizing both the emotional categories from the facial recognition and the AU facial movements to see if any of the emotions or facial movements were predictive of student performance in the role play.

The regression equation was significant, with a R of .270, an R-Square of .073. While a significant number of emotions and AU items were tested in the sample, only Contempt (B = .189), and AU20 – lips pursing (B = -2.204) showed significant prediction for the student's competition score.

Model Summary	R = .270	R² = .073	Anova F = 7.288 (p <.001)
Coefficients	B	Sig.	
Contempt Time %	.176	<.001	
AU 20 Time %	-2.204	.020	

Hypothesis 2 is not directly supported, but there is evidence that, rather than positive emotions increasing scores, negative emotional displays can decrease scores (AU20).

Discussion

This study is an initial exploration into the use of artificial intelligence to assess the impact of emotional displays – especially those done prior to a sales call (as suggested by the power posing literature). In this case, we

find strong support for the ability of the iMotions software to code and assess student emotional displays, and subsequent analysis suggests that these emotions are predictive of student performance in their subsequent sales role-plays. The results of the regression analysis show that a student's emotional display prior to their performance can be predictive. In this case, as students showed an increase in contempt prior to the performance, we see a small, but significant, increase in their overall score. In this case, contempt may show that the student is well prepared and psyching themselves up for the call before the role play. A contemptuous facial expression gives off a feeling of superiority and may well be expressing "Bring it on" or "I've got this." In contrast, the more they displayed the specific facial expression (AU20) - which is a downturning of the lips, the more their overall performance dropped. In this case, a single percentage of this emotional display led to a 2.2 point reduction in their role-play score. Down turned lips may well indicate a state of emotional nervousness by the student, and this shows a significant, negative effect on their performance.

While this research stream is in its infancy, it does suggest multiple potential opportunities to investigate the role of emotional displays. First, the emotions of students and salespeople can be measured using video recordings of their interactions with clients or judges. Second, for students, these scores show a predictive relationship with their overall performance as scored by the human judges. While these findings did not confirm Hypotheses 2, they do suggest an exciting possibility. Perhaps the mechanism that drives power posing is not the display of positive emotions prior to performance but rather the interruption of a negative emotional display. That is, by power posing, a person overwrites negative emotional displays, which leads to better performance.

Further work in this area could expand the sample size, and an experimental manipulation of pre-call emotions would be vital to teasing out the impact of both positive and negative emotional displays on performance.

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SESSION 10.2: FACT SHEET: PROMOTIONS

Moderator:

Katharine Howie

Summary Brief

Promotions on Product Packaging Across Consumer Goods

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Packaging has been explored extensively from the standpoint of design elements that encourage the sale of the product the packaging contains, but little attention has been paid to the promotional aspect of packaging with ads for other products on them. An exploratory field study of 37 popular consumer goods brands and 726 product packages gives insight into how prominent the trend of product promotions on product packaging is and the types of products that are generally promoted. Findings and managerial implications are discussed that open the door to further research on the promotional aspects of product packaging.

Introduction

Advertising and product packaging has been researched from numerous standpoints (e.g., Ampuero and Vila, 2006; Bloch 1995; Esmark Jones, Barney, and Farmer 2018); however, these popular topics have been studied independently from one another. There has not been any attention given to a product package as a canvas, or as a mechanism, for displaying advertisements. Understanding how brand managers currently utilize advertisements on product packaging for other products of the brand's product line could be offer a great deal of value. Therefore, a preliminary field study is conducted to analyze approaches currently taken by brand managers; findings and implications are discussed.

Background

Product packaging can have a great deal of influence on consumers, from increasing perceptions of anonymity when purchasing embarrassing products (Esmark et al. 2018) to helping to position a brand (Ampuero and Vila 2006). Design elements including color, shape, images, and typology may all influence the ways in which consumers perceive a product (Bloch 1995). Some research suggests that visual aesthetics may be most important to consumers in terms of consumer goods packaging, though a portion of consumers may focus more on product details in the labels (Silayoi and Speece 2007). In regard to details about the product, product packages and advertisements have been compared directly, and research has shown that claims made on a package are more believable than claims made in advertisements (Fajardo and Townsend 2016). While product packages and advertisements have been compared, there has not been research devoted to advertisements for other products in a brand's product line displayed on different product packages. This could serve as an effective and efficient form of advertising, especially if consumers are already purchasing products from this brand. It could create awareness for more options in the brand's product line.

To better understand how consumer packaged goods companies are currently using product packaging to promote other products, the researchers conducted a preliminary field study examining the product packaging of popular consumer packaged goods. Brands were selected based on 50 of the Most Popular Brands from YouGov (YouGov, 2024). Brands that were not consumer packaged goods brands (ex. Amazon and UPS) were excluded, resulting in 37 brands. The researchers then went to a big box retail establishment and examined the packaging for every product available in store for each of the brands. A total of 726 packages were included in the study. A methodical approach was taken to ensure consistency across data collections. Data was exclusively collected from the predominant aisles for a product. For example, the Dove Chocolate product packages that were analyzed were located on the candy aisle. Each product was searched individually and records were kept to analyze the findings.

Key Findings and Future Research

Of the 37 brands studied, 20 (54.05%) had at least one product with packaging containing a promotion for another product. Of the 20 brands that had promotions on their packaging, 17 (85%) had promotions on more than one product package, indicating that brands who use promotions on product packaging may be more likely to promote products on more than one product package.

Certain product lines also appeared to influence likelihood of promotion. For example, while most Oreo (33 package varieties) packaging did not include a promotion for another product, all of the packages of Golden Oreos (ex. Double Stuf, Family Size, Gluten-free; 5 package varieties) included product promotions on their packaging, ranging from Golden Oreo Thins to Fudge Covered Oreos as well as other flavors of Gluten-free Oreos.

Additionally, some brands using packaging promotions appeared to promote multiple products. In regard to multiple promotions, brands ranged from 2-6 products advertised on packaging. For example, Quaker promotes 6 other grits flavors on different grits packaging, encouraging consumers to try different flavors. However, other brands focused on promoting individual products rather than multiple. Of the individual products being promoted, most appeared to be a spin-off rather than a flagship product.

Product packaging ads ranged across product categories, from appliances (ex. KitchenAide Mixer), to cleaning supplies (ex. Hefty Trash Bags), to snacks (Ex. Ritz). There was little consistency across the categories of whether product packaging was used for promoting other products. For example, while Doritos had ads on 6 (total n = 9) packages, no promotions appeared on the packaging of Pringles (n=22) or Cheetos (n = 19), highlighting that brand approach product advertisements in consistent, yet different manners.

Promotions on product packaging contained both complimentary products (ex. Betty Crocker cake promotion on Betty Crocker frosting containers) and competitive products (ex. Lindt promoting white chocolate and dark chocolate truffles on their milk chocolate truffles packaging). Overall, brand managers are strategically utilizing product packages as a means of advertising; however, research has yet to devote attention to the untapped potential of product packages as a canvas to advertise other products in a brand's product line.

Conclusion

This preliminary study provides the first step on our way to better understanding the promotional properties of product packaging in the consumer goods category. While very far from definitive, this study raises many questions for further exploration. More specifically, future research could analyze the effectiveness of advertisements on product packaging for new products and seasonal products. Additionally, researchers could compare the effectiveness of complementary as opposed to substitute products advertised on product packaging. Such efforts will shed light on advertising on product packages.

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Summary Brief

Audience Motivations to Watch Commercials: Effects of Genre and Connectedness

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With streaming services increasingly incorporating advertising sales in their revenue models, it is important to identify what motivates viewers to watch ads embedded in programming. This research offers insight into the effect of the programming genre (comedy, drama, or reality). We find differences in viewer motivations by genre. For each programming genre, we further find different motivations among viewers with high vs. low connectedness. Our findings provide actionable recommendations to advertisers for the more effective targeting of specific consumer segments.

Background

Over the past decade, television and streaming viewing behaviors have undergone significant transformations. The domain once dominated by broadcast and cable companies such as ABC and Comcast is now shared with streaming services (e.g., Netflix and Hulu). These streaming services traditionally rely on a subscription revenue model that ensures a consistent income base, whereas broadcast companies sell commercial time to advertisers in programming, and cable companies utilize a combination of both models. Currently, the proliferation of streaming platform options has prompted streaming services to reconsider their revenue models and adopt a modified cable strategy, incorporating both subscription revenue and advertising sales (Huston 2024).

Since streaming services have not traditionally engaged in selling advertising, they must present a compelling case to media buyers regarding why viewers will watch commercials during a program (Huston 2024). Instead of focusing solely on the overall number of viewers, media buyers are increasingly interested in understanding how various factors (e.g., genre—comedy, drama, or reality) influence viewers' motivations to watch ads embedded in programming. Several studies have demonstrated that programming genre impacts advertising (Du, Xu, & Wilbur 2019; Yang et al. 2022), but these studies have not explored the different genres in depth or revealed how programming genre may influence media buying decisions. Patino, Kaltcheva, and Pitta (2019) explored television programming connectedness (Russell, Norman, & Heckler 2004) by genre but did not examine its effect on advertising. This research offers more insight into genre impact on advertising by studying audiences' motivations to view commercials by genre and connectedness level.

Method

Our sample included 875 residents of the United States, ranging from 18 to 86 years of age. The average age of the study participants was 37.3 years, similar to that of the United States population, which was 38.5 years (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020). Prospective respondents were asked to complete a paper survey while at a community fair. An opportunity to enter their name into a drawing for prizes was offered as an incentive for participation. Survey responses were completely anonymous. Participants' names and contact information were submitted on a separate card for inclusion in the prizes drawing. Study participants were asked to think of their favorite program/show and complete an 18-item Television Connectedness Scale adapted from Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004). Respondents then explained in their own words their motivation(s) to view commercials by responding to an open-ended survey question, "What would make you watch the commercials?"

Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004) developed the Television Connectedness Scale before consumers' widespread use of the Internet and social media to connect with their favorite shows. We developed two items to measure these behaviors: "I frequently search the internet for information on my favorite program/show," and "I use social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to find information and/or make postings about my favorite program/show." A series of EFAs conducted in SAS 9.4 validated the six-factor structure identified by Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004). We found that both new items consistently loaded on the *Paraphernalia* connectedness factor.

Results and Implications

A bootstrap procedure involving 5,000 samples with replacement and 20 random starts was implemented to estimate a multi-group multi-level CFA in Mplus 8.9. We evaluated a two-level factor model such that the 18 Connectedness Scale items were set to load on their respective connectedness factor (*Aspiration, Escape, Fashion, Imitation, Modeling, and Paraphernalia*) and these six factors in turn were set to load on a higher-order *Connectedness* latent variable. This two-level factor model was evaluated for three groups defined by programming genre: reality, comedy, and drama.

The multi-level factor model was evaluated for metric invariance (factor loading equivalence) and scalar invariance (equality of intercepts) across programming genre groups by comparing a series of factor models with increasingly restrictive constraints (Hair et al. 2018). Chi-square difference tests demonstrated metric invariance but revealed absence of scalar invariance. An inspection of the modification indices identified three intercepts as significantly different among genres. We estimated a modified model by setting free the identified intercept parameters. This revised model was not significantly different from a completely unconstrained model.

Presence of metric invariance implies meaning equivalence across groups—namely, the Connectedness factor and its six dimensions do not differ in meaning across programming genres. The absence of scalar invariance however precluded us from estimating one connectedness mean across all programming genres. We therefore calculated connectedness means separately by genre. We then defined six groups based on survey respondents' connectedness level (high vs. low) and the genre of their selected favorite program: Drama/High Connectedness, Drama/Low Connectedness, Comedy/High Connectedness, Comedy/Low Connectedness, Reality/High Connectedness, and Reality/Low Connectedness. Respondents' motivations to view commercials were classified into content categories by two independent coders, one male and one female. To find a possible relationship among viewers' connectedness (by programming genre) and their motivations for watching commercials, we conducted a multiple correspondence analysis—a technique that identifies associations in nominal data. Multiple correspondence analysis generates two-dimensional maps where nominal data categories are represented by points. The distance among points measures their level of association, with closer proximity representing a stronger correlation. As such, categories represented by points located closer together are more likely to represent co-occurring phenomena or attributes.

We found differences in viewers' motivations across programming genres. For each programming genre, we further found different motivations among viewers with high vs. low connectedness. Our findings provide actionable insights to advertisers who will be able to tailor their campaigns based on programming genre and the audience connectedness level, to more effectively target specific consumer segments.

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SESSION 10.3: CHANGING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Moderator:

Sam Fullerton

Summary Brief

How Do Green Customer Citizenship Attitudes and Behaviors Among Consumers in South Korea and the United States Compare?

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Independent samples of 292 consumers in South Korea and 938 consumers in the United States responded to an invitation-only, Internet-based questionnaire that focused on attitudinal and behavioral data germane to five constructs related to customer citizenship within the context of green purchasing and consumption. The five constructs were green mindset, anti-consumption behavior, consumer coaching, green advocacy, and customer helping behavior. Multi-item scales for all five constructs previously shown to produce a high degree of reliability in prior research were gleaned from the literature. Results from South Korea and the United States were compared. High degrees of reliability were in evidence for each scale in each country. A comparison of the mean scores documented statistically significant differences between the two countries on each of the five scales. For four of the five constructs, the results from South Korea produced a significantly higher mean than what was in evidence in the sample of United States residents. These results imply that South Korean consumers tend to possess a stronger green disposition (attitude) while also embracing and engaging in green advocacy, consumer coaching, and customer helping (behaviors) – all in a green context – more so do than do their American counterparts. One contradictory result was that US consumers indicated that they are more prone to engage in anti-consumption behavior. The conclusion is that South Korean consumers possess a greener mindset while also being more likely to engage in green behavior.

Keywords: green, customer citizenship, behavior, attitudes, anti-consumption, South Korea, United States

Introduction

Green consumption has been a popular topic of conversation and research for the past fifty years. From a practical perspective, green consumption has been defined as the “practice of using eco-friendly products that are harmless to consumers, the eco-system, and the environment” (Geetha & Laxman, 2017, p. 2). It has been further stated that this practice addresses potential harm from three perspectives. First are the negative consequences emanating from less desirable approaches germane to the sourcing of raw materials and the manufacturing of finished products for use by the buyers; for example, deforestation and carbon emissions are often criticized by consumers, consumer watchdog groups, politicians, the media, and governmental entities. Second are the ways in which products are used; microbeads in facewash products that pollute the aquatic environment and consumers driving high-horsepower cars that are viewed as gas guzzlers are but two examples of this phenomenon. Finally, there has been a growing emphasis on the methods by which products that have fulfilled their usefulness to the original buyer are disposed of; are they simply discarded in the weekly trash collection and dumped in a nearby landfill; is food waste composted; are durable goods with a remaining useful life donated to causes that help less fortunate citizens? Based on these examples, it is evident that the critics have a broad array of concerns that they deem to be potentially problematic for the health of Planet Earth and the well-being of future generations.

Inherent to this green initiative are two broad considerations: *attitudes and behaviors*. First, from an attitudinal perspective, individuals must possess a *green mindset* that leads them to make the decision to personally engage in green consumption so that they themselves can contribute to help protect the environment. The second set of considerations involves overt behavior on the part of the individual who is seeking to play a direct role in sustainability while concurrently seeking to influence another individual’s purchase behavior. Included within this realm of overt behavior is *anti-consumption*; this facet of consumer decision making involves the decision to avoid products and brands that are viewed as detrimental to our environment by intentionally omitting them from their own consideration set. Lastly, individuals with a green mindset need to engage other consumers in an effort to induce them to behave in a more environmentally responsible manner. These efforts include *green advocacy*, *consumer coaching*, and *customer helping behavior*; collectively, these behaviors have been characterized as

customer citizenship behavior (Huang, Wei, & Ang, 2022). Each of these constructs represents behavior whereby an individual provides guidance and insight in an effort to dissuade another consumer from purchasing a product that the influencer deems to be detrimental to the green cause. These vocal consumers may have significant influence within their own affiliative reference groups. There have been calls for more research to close the gap towards a deeper understanding of the antecedents of green consumption. One issue of particular interest is the effort by individual consumers to influence the behavior of other consumers (Cavazos-Arroyo, & Sánchez-Lezama, 2022). The five constructs identified earlier in this paragraph (green mindset, anti-consumption behavior, green advocacy, consumer coaching, and customer helping behavior) represent the five considerations under scrutiny in the current study.

In addition to research on green behavior by consumers (and green behavior by business enterprises), it has become apparent that today's successful marketers are often engaged in a broader international reach. No longer are firms relegated to a single domestic economy. While large multinational corporations have long sought to be competitive in a multitude of foreign markets, even the smallest mom-and-pop stores have used e-tailing to reach the broader global market. The dilemma for these marketers is that consumers in different countries often behave quite differently when confronted by problems that marketers seek to resolve. There are myriad differences, even among countries that, at face value, seem to have much in common. But in reality, consumers within any single country are far from homogeneous. Research has long documented differences in behavior while acknowledging that these behavioral differences may well be traced to differences in attitudes in regard to their specific purchase-related decisions. One of those attitudes that has been subjected to scrutiny is a nation's overall mindset regarding the environment and the appropriateness of behaving in ways that assist in efforts to protect the planet. Consequently, there has been an effort to document those differences across multiple countries. Yet, that documentation is far from complete. The current study is meant to address this deficiency, in part, by comparing the results from two countries on each of the five aforementioned constructs. As such, South Korea and the United States are compared on the bases of their green mindset, anti-consumption behavior, green advocacy, consumer coaching behavior, and customer helping behavior.

Literature Review

This review of the literature comprises two distinct sections. First is that of green attitudes that are precursors to customer citizenship behaviors. As such, the focus is on the identification of those constructs that can represent a form of customer citizenship behavior. This component of the literature review was essential in the task of developing the questionnaire that was used for data collection in multiple countries – including South Korea and the United States. Second is an overview of research that potentially identifies differences between residents of South Korea and residents of the United States in regard to green attitudes and green behaviors that fall within the realm of customer citizenship. This component of the literature review also facilitated a detailed look at the cultural characteristics – as delineated by Hofstede – that can contribute to a theoretical basis for differences between the two countries.

Customer Citizenship Considerations

A rapidly growing topic for research on the B2C market is that of customer citizenship. It has been stated that in an increasingly competitive environment, customer citizenship behavior has become increasingly important in terms of the performance of firms (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), the competitive position of an organization (Van Tonder & Petzer, 2018), and the sustainability of a customer-brand relationship (Liu, et al, 2020). So, this literature review begins with an examination of the broader concept of customer citizenship.

Customer citizenship has been defined as “a bundle of customers’ positive, voluntary, helpful, and constructive behaviors that are beneficial for the organization” (Chiu, et al., 2022, p. 415). The concept has been defined as behavior that involves voluntary and discretionary behaviors that are not required for the successful production and/or delivery of the marketer's goods and services (Xie & Zhang, 2017). These advocates have even been referred to as partial employees (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). According to Groth (2005) there are three subdimensions inherent to the customer citizenship behavior construct. Specifically, these three subdimensions are the provision of feedback to the firms, the act of helping other customers, and the dissemination of advice to others regarding a marketer's goods and services that are being offered for sale. More recently Sarioglu (2020) proposed a customer citizenship scale; it incorporated 34 items that was comprised of seven distinct subdimensions. The broad nature of the aforementioned definitions implies that customer citizenship comprises a broad array of behaviors on the part of the consumer. What is apparent from the literature is that there is no universal agreement as to how many, or even which, subdimensions should be incorporated within a viable scale that measures customer citizenship behavior.

While individual consumers who choose to engage in customer citizenship behaviors may focus on a multitude of criteria (i.e., country-of-origin, consumer safety, and health), perhaps nowhere in marketing is this phenomenon more evident than it is with green consumption. And a number of these studies support the premise that consumers who possess a green mindset not only purchase green products, but that they are also prone to engage in behaviors designed to influence other consumers' decisions to likewise engage in those same behaviors. Further supporting this premise was a study in the United States that surmised that “*cultural values influence sustainable consumption*, and then sustainable consumption positively influences consumer well-being” (Minton, et al., 2022, p. 167). Given this relationship, the question of interest is what customer citizenship behaviors might a green mindset induce.

Green Mindset

A green mindset, otherwise characterized as a green *attitude*, has been referred to as a tendency by consumers to refrain from the purchase of products that they deem to be harmful to the environment. As such, it has been posited that consumers with a stronger green attitude will exhibit a greater tendency to purchase green products that foster sustainability while concurrently avoiding brown products that are seen as harmful to the environment (Kautish & Sharma, 2019). There are numerous studies that support this premise. Among the most recent are Jose, Biju, and Vincent (2022) in their study of the purchase of organic foods; Amoako, Dzogbenuku, and Abubakari, (2020) who explored the purchase of organic foods by university students within the realm of the Theory of Planned Behavior; and van Tonder, Fullerton, and DeBeer (2020) who examined the interactions among green attitude, green purchase behavior, and customer citizenship. It is this last study that made the greatest contribution to the current study; the authors created and tested a multi-item scale for determining the green mindset of a consumer. In their study, that scale produced a metric of .902 for coefficient alpha, thus it was shown to be highly reliable. The decision was made to use that scale for green mindset in the current study.

Anti-Consumption Behavior

Anti-consumption *behavior* is predicated upon the desire to avoid purchasing products that the consumer views as unacceptable alternatives for a particular reason. These reasons include country-of-origin (refusal to buy Russian products), political considerations (refusal to play golf on a Trump-branded golf course), and perceived bias against the LGBTQ+ community (refuse to eat at Chick-fil-A) among many others (McCullough, et al., 2022). One of the most prominent in that “many others” category is that of environmental concerns. Recent studies that have documented anti-consumption behavior because of environmental concerns include efforts by young consumers to help preserve the planet (Ziesemer, Hüttel, & Balderjahn, 2021); a study addressing anti-consumption and consumption decisions within the “organic community” (Saraiva, Fernandes, & von Schwedler, (2020); and one that looked at the decline in per capita meat consumption in Australia (Malek, Umberger, & Goddard, 2019). An additional and somewhat earlier study incorporated a multi-item scale designed to measure the anti-consumption construct (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012); their scale was based upon four reasons against purchasing a particular product, and it exhibited a high degree of reliability. It was that scale that was deemed appropriate for the current study.

Consumer Coaching Behavior

Much of the literature addressing the broader concept of coaching is focused on employees of the firm either coaching other employees or coaching customers of the firm. While there has been little research on the subject of consumer coaching, it has been noted that consumer coaching *behavior* occurs when “customers act as productive resources by creating suggestions for service development, purchasing other services, giving suggestions to others, attending brand-centered events, and participating in brand communities” (Johnson & Rapp 2010, p. 787). Referring to consumer coaching as *personal initiative taking*, Frese et al. (1997) developed a multi-item scale designed to measure the construct. The alpha metric of .88 documented a high level of internal reliability. Furthermore, the authors characterized personal initiative as behavior that “can be driven by traits such as a self-starting personality, proactivity, and the objective of overcoming difficulties” (*ibid.*, p. 139). Despite the dearth of information on the topic, it has emerged as a key proactive behavior designed to influence consumer purchase decisions, particularly within the realm of customer citizenship. Based on available information, a decision was made to use the scale developed by Frese, et al. (1997) in the current study.

Customer Helping Behavior

At first blush, one might consider customer helping behavior to be synonymous with consumer coaching. Yet multiple definitions for customer helping behavior serve to differentiate between the two behavioral constructs.

For example, it has been inferred that the pertinent actions associated with helping behavior involve behavioral patterns such as helping other customers, submitting proposals, and providing feedback; these behaviors are examples of customer helping behavior as delineated by van Tonder, et al. (2022). Bettencourt (1997), when referring to customers' voluntary behavior, suggested that such activities comprise three dimensions: participation, loyalty, and cooperation. It was Groth (2005) who some eight years later posited that the *act of helping other customers* was one (of three) dimensions that fall within the sphere of customer citizenship behavior. Perhaps the greatest distinction between the two constructs lies in the basic premise that it is always the customer that is providing help to another customer. Yi & Gong (2013, p. 1279) captured this distinction in their definition of customer helping behavior when stating that "*customer* behavior aimed at assisting *other* customers in making informed decisions" is a basic characteristic of customer helping behavior. From the broadest perspective within the services arena, it has been stated that customer "helping behaviors represent the act of assisting other customers in using the services properly" by "helping consumers to match needs to attributes" (Groth, 2005, p. 34). So, while there are many definitions of customer helping behavior, they can be seen as addressing the concept from a common perspective. Perhaps this common perspective was best articulated by Roy, et al. (2020, p. 195) who stated that this form of customer engagement behavior is best characterized as an "aggregation of multiple ways through which customers, outside of core economic transactions, influence value co-creation and firm performance." This characterization is also evident in the assertion that helping other customers is an important dimension of customer citizenship behavior; that input from the customer represents behavior that is helpful, constructive, and designed to help other customers make better green decisions (Gruen, 1995). Furthermore, these behaviors comprise voluntary, positive, constructive and helpful actions toward other customers via the sharing of information about a service, product, or a firm. Therefore, firms and other customers potentially benefit from this voluntary behavior; from the green firm's standpoint, the helper's contribution is a bump in the marketer's bottom line (Bove, Pervan, Beatty, & Shiu, 2009).

Among the scales that included customer helping behavior as a sub-component of customer citizenship behavior was that of Yi and Gong (2013); their scale incorporated four sub-dimensions: feedback, advocacy, tolerance, and helping behavior. Johnson and Rapp (2010) developed and tested a scale that included seven sub-dimensions with each producing an alpha value exceeding .7. Furthermore, each sub-dimension was subjected to construct validity evaluation. Sarioglu (2020) included 32 items comprising seven sub-scales in an effort to model customer citizenship behavior; one of the seven sub-scales was the act of "helping others" (or HelpOth). Finally, another scale of this ilk was labeled "customers helping customers" (CHC); it produced a measure of reliability of .97 (Bartikowski & Walsh, 2011). While there were several scales from which to choose, the scale by Yi and Gong (2013) was deemed to be the most appropriate for the current research project.

Green Advocacy

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines advocacy as "publicly speaking on behalf of someone or in support of someone;" thus, it has been characterized as the act "of representing someone's interests underpinned by the belief in someone or something." (Wilk, et al., 2020. p. 416). From a broader B2C perspective, advocacy refers to the act of recommending a business to others such as friends or family (Groth, et al., 2004). Such advocacy could be for a brand (Apple), a country (Japan), or a cause (sustainability). For example, in a study of online financial service companies, it was surmised that a brand testimonial (brand advocacy) that featured visual cues would be a strong inducement for those exposed to the testimonial, especially if it were initiated by someone within the individual consumer's sphere of influence such as an affiliative or aspiratory reference group (Harrigan, Roy & Chen, 2021). From a more narrow perspective, brand advocacy has been conceptualized as a form of positive word-of-mouth that is of great value to the targeted brand (Libai, et al., 2009). Hence the reason for extending this line of reasoning into green advocacy comes to the forefront. Earlier discussion of the scale developed by Groth, et al. (2004) noted that their scale comprised three distinct dimensions; one of those dimensions is described as "advising the goods or services of the firm to other consumers." Using this premise as a basis, advocacy in a green marketing context relates to customers saying positive things about the green firm, being willing to recommend the green service, and encouraging others to use green products (Hwang & Lyu, 2020). Two scales that address, or can be adapted to address, green advocacy were developed and subjected to empirical scrutiny by Yi and Gong (2013) and van Tonder, et al. (2020). Because of its recent application and a documented high alpha coefficient, the adaptation by van Tonder, et al (2020) was selected for the current study.

Separating South Korea and the United States

Initial insight into the aforementioned green attitudes and behaviors of consumers in the United States was provided in a study that compared the green mindset of South Africans to that of American consumers. Those results

were not very favorable in regard to consumers in the United States; in fact, South African consumers scored higher on each green phenomenon under scrutiny than did the Americans (Bisschoff et al., 2023). Perhaps those results do not bode well for the American consumers when compared to their South Korean peers. So, what other clues does the extant literature provide in an effort to differentiate the green mindsets of consumers in the two countries?

A search of the literature (using ProQuest) that focused on customer citizenship behavior, green advocacy, customer helping, and consumer coaching yielded very little research of substance. There is, however, significant research on consumers' green mindsets, anti-consumption behavior, and sustainability-related behavior. But, when further narrowing the focus to the United States and South Korea, research of this ilk was again virtually nonexistent. Most of the recent research with an eye on South Korea has not been comparative in nature, and it offers somewhat contradictory conclusions. A look at the green initiatives undertaken in the United States and South Korea provides a cursory overview of the two countries being examined in the current study.

Research that focused on the role that *mindful consumption*, *caring for nature* and *caring for the community* play in an effort to encourage sustainability has been documented (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011). The literature also identifies proactive green initiatives that have been undertaken in the two countries under scrutiny in the current study. For instance, in South Korea, there is a proposal for a multifaceted education and training program to be implemented in a concerted effort to introduce more sustainability-based initiatives in commerce and to establish a knowledge-based institution to promote sustainability within the South Korean community (Farhart, 2021). In this regard, it has been reported that "South Korea has become a leader in the development of the latest technologies, microelectronics, biotechnology and optics aimed at protecting the environment" (Sutbayeva, et al., 2021, p. 691). At the same time, South Korea is shifting away from fossil fuels and nuclear power and rapidly moving towards renewable energy resources. The country is also witnessing a transformation in its industries with a transition towards decarbonization, digitization, and automation. Furthermore, South Korea is moving towards a sustainable circular economy and achieving greater resource security (Lee & Cha, 2020). The country's push towards sustainability has also seen an uptick in urban farming with residents signing up for farming lessons as well as RFID-equipped garbage cans that measure waste, then bill residents accordingly (Cho, 2019). While some countries, including the United States, have taken steps to encourage recycling and composting, South Korea has essentially required its citizens to compost organic waste as a way of enhancing sustainability. It is estimated that when the law took effect in 2006, South Korea composted about 2% of its food waste; now that number is close to 100%, and it is discarded in mandated biodegradable bags. (Kim, 2022; Ho, 2021; Broom, 2019). So, in regard to the composting of organic waste, South Koreans are at the forefront of the countries that have enacted laws mandating that consumers engage in this form of green behavior. *So, round one goes to the South Koreans.*

Since the current study is comparative in design, a sound starting point is an array of indices that facilitate a comparison of the two countries. These indices have been designed to assess a country's green mindset and/or its green practices.

All 193 countries that are members of the United Nations are rated based upon their ability to achieve 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that focus on protecting the environment. The most recent report places South Korea 28th with an index score of 78.59; with a score of 76.01, the United States is slightly behind the South Koreans in 32nd place (Sachs, et al., 2022). A second metric is an environmental index that ostensibly measures a country's propensity to engage in green behaviors. This Environmental Performance Index (EPI) places the United States (with an index value of 51.1) 43rd whereas South Korea, with an index value of 46.6 is ranked 69th (Anonymous, 2022a). This comparison clearly conveys the idea that the South Koreans are seen as possessing a somewhat browner mindset. A third index reported on a measure of a country's ecological footprint; the measure was 8.04 for the United States while 0.17 for South Korea (Anonymous, 2022b). These measures imply that South Korea produces **far** less harm to the ecosystem than does the United States. In this regard, the United States stands as one of the worst countries regarding its ecological footprint whereas South Korea is among the world's best; this disparity provides fundamental credence to the belief that the South Koreans are far more inclined to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors which may well include actions such as consumer coaching and customer helping. A fourth index is published by *U.S. News & World Report*; it provides an overview of the best countries for green living (a.k.a. most sustainable countries). The most recent report placed the United States 20th while South Korea was ranked 14th (Anonymous 2023). So, this measure indicates that the United States tends to be more somewhat less focused on sustainability. These four unbiased measures imply, though not unanimously, that consumers in South Korea possess a greener focus than do their American peers. *Therefore, despite mixed results, South Korea wins round two.*

The third phase of the literature review was designed to provide insight as to how a country's cultural traits may well explain differences in consumer citizenship behaviors from a green perspective. It begins with an overview

of the measures that reflect Hofstede’s ratings on six key cultural dimensions that are characteristic of many populations in countries across the globe.

From a broad cross-cultural perspective, additional evidence that the two countries vary significantly when compared to each other comes from Hofstede’s six cultural dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2024). There was a large difference between the two countries on the individualism scale with consumers in the South Korea exhibiting a much lower score (18 vs 91). The implication is that South Korea falls deep within the realm of collectivism whereas the score for the American consumers places them at an extreme point for individualism. A basic premise of individualism, as exhibited by consumers in the United States, is predicated upon independence rather than interdependence. Therefore, individualism is not likely to correspond to a tendency to engage in green behavior that is influenced by a desire to benefit the population of the consumers’ home country. Conversely, by virtue of falling on the collectivist side of the spectrum, South Koreans would be anticipated to engage in green behaviors that protect society-at-large whereas the American consumers tend to adopt more of a mindset of providing maximum benefit to each individual as he or she contemplates their own course of action. Along with being part of a collectivist society, South Koreans scored far lower on the indulgence trait (29 vs 68). Restraint is the antithesis of indulgence. Restraint represents a society, such as South Korea, which suppresses the gratification of personal needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms. In South Korea, one of these traits is a green mindset as evidenced by their governmental mandate that requires composting of organic waste (Fullerton et al., 2023). The South Koreans also scored markedly higher on the uncertainty avoidance index (85 vs 46) which would likely coincide with a greener mindset because of the uncertainty as to how brown behaviors might negatively impact society in the present, but particularly in the future. Consistent with this logic is the fact that South Korea scored much higher (75 vs 29) on the long-term orientation construct while concurrently exhibiting less of a masculine mindset (39 vs 62). An overview of these index values is provided in Table 1, and a brief synopsis of the implications of the Hofstede indices follows.

Table 1. Index Values for the 6 Cultural Dimensions Delineated by Minkov and Hofstede

<u>Country</u>	<u>PDI</u>	<u>IDV</u>	<u>MAS</u>	<u>UAI</u>	<u>LTO</u>	<u>IVR</u>
South Korea	60	18	39	85	75	29
<u>United States</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>68</u>

PDI=Power Distance; IDV=Individualism; MAS=Masculinity; UAI=Uncertainty Avoidance; LTO=Long-Term Orientation; IVR=Indulgence

These values indicate that the cultures of the two countries vary in a meaningful manner, perhaps one difference being the propensity for the South Koreans to possess greener attitudes while concurrently engaging in greener behaviors. Why might this be so? By having a (slightly) more collectivist mindset along with a greater propensity to emphasize long-term solutions, it is a logical to presume that they are more likely – as a society – to embrace green solutions. Furthermore, given that previous research has documented that women tend to be more strongly oriented towards sustainability, South Korea’s lean towards the feminine side of Hofstede’s masculinity index would also support the premise that the South Koreans possess a greener mindset as measured by the five constructs under scrutiny in the current study. Therefore, it is logical to surmise that South Koreans are more open to green solutions. *So round three unquestionably goes to the South Koreans.*

Focus now shifts to the empirical studies, including some comparative studies, which included both countries. One recent study that included both countries that are under scrutiny in the current study was on the anti-consumption dimension where it was reported that South Koreans were more inclined to engage in anti-consumption behavior than were Americans; however, that study on anti-consumption decisions focused solely upon country-of-origin (CoI) considerations (Fullerton, et al., 2022). From a comparative perspective, two studies that included the United States and South Korea incorporated *Hofstede’s cultural dimensions*. Each study concluded that these dimensions could play a role in the task of addressing issues and concerns germane to a multitude of issues – including anti-consumption attitudes, anticonsumption behavior, and sustainability (Fullerton, van Tonder & Lee, 2023; Rodriguez & Brown, 2014). A third study likewise invoked Hofstede’s cultural characteristics when stating that “South Korea, a *collectivist* country, exhibited motivation patterns for sustainable behaviors that differed from those in the United States and Germany, which are *individualistic* cultures” (Minton, et al., 2012, p. 80). *So round four goes to the South Koreans.*

Research of this ilk provides both a practical and a theoretical perspective by leading one to believe that a country with a greener mindset is more likely to engage in green behavior such as green advocacy and consumer coaching. The literature leads one to believe that South Korea is the greener country, but those results are not unanimous. So, does one country have a greener cultural mindset; if so, to what extent does this green attitude lead

to green behavior? Since South Korea won the literature review – four rounds to zero – it seems logical to believe that they will come out ahead in the current empirical study. So, as this project moves forward, the question at hand is a simple one. *Which country will win rounds five and six?*

Research Objectives

There are two primary objectives and three secondary objectives associated with the current study. The initial primary objective is that of verifying the reliability of the five scales that form the foundation for the current project: green mindset, anti-consumption behavior, green advocacy, consumer coaching, and customer helping behavior. This objective involves three secondary objectives: verify the reliability of each of the five scales for the aggregate sample, the South Korean sample, and the sample drawn in the United States. The second primary objective is that of determining the extent to which attitudes and behaviors germane to customer citizenship from a green perspective differ when comparing the results from South Korea to those from the United States.

Methodology

The project began with a review of the customer citizenship phenomenon. The review identified a set of constructs that were plausibly associated with attitudes or behaviors specific to customer citizenship from a green perspective. The review was expanded in order to find a multi-item scale that had been empirically tested for reliability and validity in previous research projects for each of the five identified constructs. Based on this insight, a questionnaire was developed. The final five scales that were selected for this survey and their original source were as follow:

- Green Mindset (van Tonder, et al., 2020),
- Anti-Consumption (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012),
- Consumer Coaching Behavior (Frese, et al., 1997),
- Customer Helping Behavior (Yi & Gong, 2013), and
- Green Advocacy (van Tonder, et al., 2020).

The instrument was pretested using a sample of 175 university students in the United States. The reliability of the scales was confirmed, and a small number of modifications in wording were incorporated. The questionnaire was done in English in the United States and Korean in South Korea. Multiple quality control checks were used in the data collection process in an effort to assure that the final dataset comprised a sample of attentive respondents. With these tasks completed, the questionnaire was deemed to be ready for distribution to select members of the two target populations.

The *South Korean* data were collected using an Internet-based approach. The questionnaire was loaded onto South Korea's most popular social network service, KakaoTalk. A team of five researchers was employed to recruit respondents using a purposive sample in an effort to assure that the prospective respondent met established demographic requirements. The initial wave of respondents was determined to be too heavily composed of younger respondents. To address this deficiency, the second wave of data collection focused on an effort to recruit older respondents to complete the questionnaire in order to create a demographic balance in the final dataset. This step used one researcher to solicit feedback from older respondents; again, the researcher's judgement was used in the selection process. Both waves of the South Korean data collection process were completed entirely online. In the *United States*, invitations to participate in the study were sent via email to select prospects from a consumer panel maintained by Dynata, a commercial supplier of research services. Prospects who opted to accept the invitation clicked on a link that directed them to the questionnaire. There was no backdoor to the survey; participation was based upon an invitation and a direct action on the part of the invited prospect. The second and third waves of invitations were directed more towards the demographic groups that were underrepresented after the initial wave (younger and less educated). There were also four quality control checks that identified inattentive respondents. Because they likely adversely impacted the quality of the data; these inattentive respondents were dropped from the final database. The data were directly recorded in the American database upon completion of the survey by each respondent. The databases from the two countries were combined upon the completion of the data collection process.

The reliability of the five scales was evaluated using the Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Each scale was subjected to three measurements: one for the aggregate sample, one for the South Korean sample, and one for the American sample. The mean score for each of the five scales for each country was then calculated. Next, standard t-tests were used to determine whether the responses from the two countries were significantly different. A probability of .05 served as the benchmark for confirming that the difference between the two countries was statistically significant thereby rejecting the commonly presumed null hypothesis of equal group means.

Results

With the data in hand, a cleansing process was undertaken. This procedure was accomplished by virtue of the use of multiple quality control checks imbedded within the survey. For example, the version of the questionnaire used in the United States had four quality control checks: a time check, a ReCAPTCHA question, an instructional manipulation check, and a uniform identifier. The result was that 514, or 35.54%, of the respondents were dropped from the database leaving a net usable sample of 938 respondents who reside in the United States. Similar procedures in South Korea resulted in a final sample of 292 respondents. The cleansing of the data using multiple quality control checks resulted in the elimination of inattentive respondents thereby undoubtedly improving the integrity of the data (Fullerton & McCullough, 2023). With the data cleansing process completed, the analyses of the dataset could then proceed.

The initial analytical procedure was the assessment of the reliability for each of the five scales under scrutiny. This procedure involved three separate evaluations of the reliability of each of the five scales as determined by the calculation of Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Specifically, coefficient alpha was calculated for the aggregate sample of 1,230 respondents from the two countries, the 292 respondents from South Korea, and the 938 respondents from the United States. The alpha coefficient for the anti-consumption construct created a minor problem in that the initial metric for coefficient alpha for South Korea was .563 which falls below the generally accepted threshold for inclusion in additional analyses. Given this shortcoming, and based upon information using the SPSS reliability assessment, one item from the original scale by Chatzidakis and Lee (2012), was deleted. The resultant three-item scale resulted in an increase in the alpha statistic to a more acceptable .669. Taking that adjustment into account, the results of the reliability testing can now be summarized. When looking at the aggregate sample, the metric for the reliability of the five scales ranged from an acceptable low of .714 to a robust high of .949. Looking solely at the South Korean sample, coefficient alpha for the five scales ranged from the disappointing .669 for anti-consumption to a high of .939. The American sample produced the strongest overall results with coefficient alpha ranging from a low of .732 to a high of .948 (with four of the five values exceeding .9). For each of the three groups of consumers (Aggregate, South Korea, and the United States), the highest measure of reliability was for the customer helping scale (.949, .939 and .948 respectively). The lowest values for coefficient alpha were all associated with the anti-consumption scale (.714, .669 and .732 respectively). In total, 14 of the 15 metrics exceeded the .7 value deemed appropriate for this type of assessment (Nunnally, 1978). In fact, 11 of the 15 measures exceeded .900. For each scale, the South Korean sample produced the lowest metric for reliability; however, all but one exceeded the .7 guideline for the continuation of the planned analytical procedures. The decision to retain it was partially based upon conclusions by other researchers who have indicated that a level of reliability of .6 is acceptable for the type of analysis being undertaken in the current study (Wim, et al., 2008).

Furthermore, despite the fact that the internal consistency of the anti-consumption scale for the South Korean data was marginally suspect, given the acceptable level of reliability for the aggregate sample, a decision was made to include anti-consumption in the analyses. Despite this decision, caution should be exercised when attempting to measure the anti-consumption construct in future research endeavors. The completion of the reliability assessment leads to the next step of the analytical process. Table 2 provides an overview of the reliability analyses.

Table 2. Results of Reliability Testing for the Five Scales Under Scrutiny

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Coefficient alpha</u>		
	<u>Aggregate</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>USA</u>
Green Mindset	.896	.760	.901
Anti-Consumption	.714	.669	.732
Green Advocacy	.919	.931	.916
Customer Helping	.949	.939	.948
Consumer Coaching	.929	.911	.931

The next step was to compare the results from the two countries by calculating the means for each of the five scales. The scales were additive in nature with each scale comprised of either three or four items. In each case, a higher value of the mean is associated with stronger support of the behavior or attitude under scrutiny. This analysis begins with an examination of green mindset as reflected by the mean scores of the two independent samples. This scale incorporated three items, so the range of potential scores (using a balanced, forced, six-point itemized rating scale) was from 3.0 to 18.0. The mean score for the South Korean sample was a moderately high 14.72 while the

mean for the American sample was a more modest 14.20. So, both countries can be characterized as possessing a moderately strong green mindset. A t-test was then used to determine whether or not the difference between the two countries was statistically significant. With a t-value of 2.761 and 1,228 degrees of freedom, the calculated probability associated with the difference was .006. Therefore, the difference in the mean scores for the two countries has been determined to be statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that South Korea does possess a greener mindset – or *attitude*. So, *South Korea also wins round five*.

For round six, the focus now shifts to the four scales that represent overt *behavior*. In this regard, the initial assessment is of the anti-consumption behavior scale. The anti-consumption scale comprised three items, thus the range of potential scores was also from 3.0 to 18.0. The actual means were 11.55 for the South Korean sample and 12.02 for the sample from the United States. The negative difference in the two means was the only outcome across the five scales that resulted in a conclusion that residents of the United States were the greener of the two populations. The comparison produced a t-value of -2.233; with 1,228 degrees of freedom; that difference is significant at a level of .026. Given these metrics, it can be stated that consumers in the United States are slightly more prone to overtly engage in anti-consumption behavior.

Green advocacy is the second behavioral construct under scrutiny. This three-item scale exhibited the weakest support, especially from the American sample. The mean for South Korea was 11.16 whereas the mean for the United States was 10.61. The difference of 0.58 resulted in a t-score of 2.328; this difference is statistically significant at the .002 level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the South Koreans are more likely to engage in green advocacy behavior though consumers in neither country could be characterized as actively participating within this realm of customer citizenship. The US score actually fell only slightly above the scale's midpoint of 10.5.

Attention is now shifted to the third behavioral construct, that of customer helping behavior. The difference between the means of the two countries on the customer helping scale was the largest observed difference among the five scales under scrutiny. For the South Korean sample, the mean score for this four-item scale was 15.64. By comparison, the mean score for the American sample was 13.17. Thus, the observed difference was a sizable 2.47. This difference resulted in a t-score of 8.114 which is significant at the level of <.001. These results indicate that South Koreans are far more likely than are consumers in the United States to engage in customer helping behavior. In fact, the mean for the United States fell below the scale's midpoint of 14.0.

The final scale under scrutiny is consumer coaching, or what Frese, et al, (1997) referred to as personal initiative taking. The four-item scale also exhibited means whereby the observed difference between the two countries was statistically significant at a level of <.001. As with the previous four comparisons, the South Korean sample produced a higher mean score. The South Korean mean was 14.91 while the US mean was 12.51 (which is well below above the scale's midpoint of 14.0). This difference of 2.40 between the two samples produced a t-score of 7.992. So, once again the South Koreans are shown to be more engaged in consumer coaching behavior. The results of the five t-tests are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of t-tests for Differences Between the Means on the Five Scales

<u>Scale</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>USA</u>	<u>dif.</u>	<u>t-value</u>	<u>sig.*</u>
Green Mindset (3)	14.72	14.20	0.52	2.761	.007
Anti-Consumption (3)	11.55	12.02	-0.47	-2.233	.026
Green Advocacy (3)	11.16	10.61	0.58	2.328	.002
Customer Helping (4)	15.64	13.17	2.47	8.114	<.001
<u>Consumer Coaching (4)</u>	<u>14.91</u>	<u>12.51</u>	<u>2.40</u>	<u>7.992</u>	<u><.001</u>

* Significance based on 1,228 degrees of freedom for each calculation

(*) Number within parentheses represents the number of items comprising each scale

As can be seen in Table 3, not only did the South Korean sample produce a higher mean score on the single attitudinal scale, but they also scored higher on three of the four behavioral constructs that comprise customer citizenship. Despite not coming out ahead on all four behavioral constructs, it can still be stated that the interpretation of these results indicate that the South Koreans are more prone to engage in green behavior than are consumers in the United States. Therefore, *the South Koreans also win the sixth round*.

Discussion

The cleansing of the dataset resulted in the decision to drop a large percentage of the respondents from the data analysis process – almost 36% of the initial sample from the United States alone. The respondents who were dropped failed one or more of the four quality control checks in the data collection process (with many failing all

four). The inattentiveness of these dropped respondents was deemed to be detrimental to the integrity of the data, thus their responses were not incorporated within the final dataset. This cleansing process is strongly recommended for future research efforts that involve survey research, particularly Internet-based surveys where the respondents are compensated for each completed questionnaire.

When engaging in research that is based upon the evaluation of constructs by calculating a single coefficient from a multi-item additive scale, it is imperative that each scale be internally consistent. In essence, the researcher needs to ensure that each item in the scale is measuring the same phenomenon. In this study, reliability for each scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha. Coefficient alpha was calculated three times for each of the five scales by assessing the aggregate sample and each country individually. Of the 15 metrics, 14 exceeded the .7 standard established by Nunnally (1978), one which remains a common benchmark in today's research efforts in order to assure meaningful measurements when using a multi-item scale to measure phenomena such as an individual's green mindset. Even though the anti-consumption scale had been modified with the result being an increase in reliability, the 15th measure was still moderately lower than the .7 standard, but it still exceeded the .6 guideline as delineated by Wim, et al. (2008). The anti-consumption construct was the scale that produced the lowest alpha score for all three iterations. So, while the scale used to measure anti-consumption behavior is marginally adequate, it is suggested that an alternative scale be identified or developed for future research of this ilk, especially in cross-cultural research. The other four scales used in this study (green mindset, green advocacy, customer helping, and consumer coaching) all withstood empirical scrutiny and are deemed appropriate for future research endeavors that feature customer citizenship in general.

The primary focus of this project was to identify differences between South Korean residents and residents of the United States when comparing attitudes and behaviors germane to customer citizenship. The observed differences between the five pairs of means were all statistically significant at a level of .026 or lower. This outcome indicates that the differences are likely not due to random error, rather there are true differences between the two population parameters. Four of the five assessments of the pertinent pairs of group means produced a positive t-score. These positive outcomes indicate that the South Korean respondents had a stronger green inclination on four of the five constructs under scrutiny. From an attitudinal perspective, they exhibited a considerably stronger green mindset. From a behavioral perspective, they had higher scores in regard to participation in green advocacy behavior, engaging in behavior intended to help other customers make green decisions, and the coaching of individual consumers so that they might learn the underlying logic for engaging in green behavior. The only departure from this trend is that consumers in the United States were found to be far more likely to engage in overt, planned anti-consumption behavior that is based upon a perceived breach of ethical standards by the targeted marketer/organization regarding conduct deemed to be detrimental to the environment.

The results of this study are fairly consistent with the majority of the limited research on the two countries as well as some of the more noteworthy global indices on each country's green behavior. Despite the single departure, it can be stated that South Koreans appear to have a significantly greener mindset than do their American peers. So, from an attitudinal perspective, South Korean residents embrace the movement towards green consumption, production, and disposal more so than do consumers residing in the United States. Thus, there is substantial evidence that a stronger green mindset does indeed contribute to greener actions on the part of the consumer. Based on the results emanating from the current study, the South Korean residents more openly embrace and engage in the three behaviors deemed to be related to customer citizenship behavior: green advocacy, consumer coaching behavior, and customer helping behavior. And while the statistical significance of the observed differences indicates that South Korea scored significantly higher on four of the five scales, it is worth noting that differences of the magnitude observed in the current study are managerially significant based on the corresponding measures of effect. So, South Korean consumers are more prone to engage in both formal and informal communications designed to influence their peers as to the perceived wisdom of engaging in green behavior. This behavior includes purchase, consumption, and disposal of products in ways that do not adversely impact the eco-system. Perhaps the South Koreans view their country as more pristine today, or perhaps they have paid more attention to the warnings being articulated by those who openly elucidate their concerns. Despite this awareness, they are not strongly embracing green advocacy, nor could their behavior be typified by strong anti-consumption behavior. So, while they are concerned about South Korea's green future, from a collective perspective, they are not what has been referred to as Green Warriors (Fullerton, et al., 2021). Also, though not being strong green advocates, they are far more inclined to engage in customer helping and consumer coaching behaviors. Perhaps South Koreans view their peers as being in need of information and assistance in the decision-making process, and they are simply more willing to provide it. Perhaps surprisingly, South Korean consumers are less likely to actively embrace anti-consumption behavior based upon green concerns. Perhaps future research could gain an understanding of why that is the case.

A final commentary on green advocacy is appropriate at this point in the discussion. Both countries scored low, albeit on the positive side of the green advocacy scale. The results for the United States (10.61) fell slightly above the scale's midpoint (of 10.50) whereas the South Korean mean of 11.16 placed them slightly further to the positive side of the scale. So, one area that apparently needs to be addressed by green advocates in both countries is the need to get consumers more involved, more proactive, and more vocal in their support of green initiatives – especially in the United States.

Concluding Overview

This project focused on five key outcomes. First, the literature review led to the identification of five scales that have been used in previous research on customer citizenship that are commonly used within the realm of sustainability-oriented initiatives. Second was the task of using the literature in an effort to determine which country possessed a greener mindset and engaged in green activities pursuant to green customer citizenship. Third was the task of empirically verifying the reliability of each of the five identified scales. Fourth was the need to produce a snapshot of the current perceptions and behaviors of consumers regarding customer citizenship within a green context in the two countries under scrutiny. Finally, the results provided empirical evidence as to the differences between consumers in South Korea and those in the United States on each of the five constructs.

Prior to data analyses being conducted, the databases from the two countries were cleansed. This process allowed for the elimination of *systematic noise* resulting from inattentive respondents such as speeders, straightliners, and satisficers. Based on the sheer magnitude of the number of respondents who were dropped from the database, thus not included in the subsequent analyses, this cleansing process was instrumental in the task of acquiring quality data. Thus, the use of quality control checks such as instructional manipulation checks is strongly encouraged for all forms of survey research, especially when data collection is via an Internet platform.

Empirical scrutiny documented significant differences between South Korea and the United States. In four of the five assessments, the mean for the scale under examination for the South Korean sample was higher than was the corresponding mean for the American sample. These results indicate that consumers in South Korea have a stronger green mindset (attitude) while concurrently being more likely to engage in three of the four customer citizenship behaviors, namely green advocacy, consumer coaching behavior (personal initiative taking), and customer helping behavior as they relate to green initiatives. Yet consumers in the United States were found to be more actively engaged in anti-consumption behavior. Combined with the results of the literature review where South Korea came out ahead in all four rounds of the evaluation process and in both rounds of empirical scrutiny (attitude and behavior), it can be stated that the South Koreans tend to possess a greener mindset that leads to greener behavior. However strong this evidence is, and the South Koreans did win all six rounds, it is not devoid of doubt.

Given the differences in both attitudes and behaviors that were documented in the comparison of South Korea and the United States, it is apparent that marketers cannot treat the global market as a homogeneous entity. Standardized marketing strategies are inferior to those strategies that are customized for each market. This reality further documents the need for researchers – academicians and practitioners alike – to continue to engage in cross-national studies designed to not only identify differences, but to suggest how those differences can best be addressed by a marketer. Without such insight, a marketer might be headed for an embarrassing and expensive demise.

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Summary Brief

Lessons From The COVID-19 Pandemic: A Meta-Analysis of Consumption Patterns During COVID-19

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While the COVID-19 pandemic has ended, its effects on consumer behaviours and patterns remain evident today. This study uses a meta-analytical approach to examine shifts in consumer attitudes, behavioural intentions, and actual purchases during the pandemic. We also explore the influence of gender and cultural factors through a moderator analysis. Key findings highlight the roles of perceived severity, convenience, social influences, trust, perceived control, and pandemic-related fears. Additionally, we observe significant differences between Western and non-Western societies and between genders in their responses to the pandemic.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions in consumers' daily activities and consumption behaviours (Timotius & Octavius, 2021). While several studies have examined these pandemic-induced changes, findings are dispersed across individual studies, making it challenging to draw comprehensive conclusions (Lindenmeier et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2023; Srivastava et al., 2022). This study aims to provide a holistic assessment of the pandemic's impact on consumption behaviours through an exploratory meta-analytical review (Fares et al., 2024). The insights derived will aid in formulating strategies for retailers and policymakers to better respond to future crises and understand the pandemic's long-term implications.

Background

The study specifically examines the drivers of attitude, behavioural intention, and actual purchase behaviour during the pandemic. It also investigates the moderating role of cultural differences observed within Western versus non-Western contexts and the role of gender differences in consumption pattern disruptions. This approach aligns with established frameworks such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989). The research objectives include highlighting primary drivers of consumer behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic, examining the role of culture and gender in moderating these relationships and proposing future research directions.

Key Findings

Our meta-analysis revealed several significant drivers of consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. The perceived severity of COVID-19 significantly influences consumer attitudes toward consumption (effect size = 0.157, P-value = 0.000) (Alhaimer, 2022; Youn et al., 2022). Perceived usefulness of products or services enhances consumer attitudes (effect size = 0.325, P-value = 0.000) (Al Amin et al., 2022; Lavuri et al., 2023). Social influence also significantly shapes consumer attitudes (effect size = 0.285, P-value = 0.000) (Chetoui & Lebdaoui, 2022).

The relationship between attitude and behavioural intention is significant (effect size = 0.387, P-value = 0.000) (Alam et al., 2022), as is the influence of perceived trust in products and services on behavioural intention (effect size = 0.337, P-value = 0.000) (Faqih, 2022; Habib & Hamadneh, 2021; Kumari & Bhateja, 2022). Notably, the relationship between behavioural intention and actual purchase behaviour is particularly strong (effect size = 0.530, P-value = 0.000) (Sajid et al., 2022; Srivastava & Bag, 2022).

Our analysis also uncovered important moderating effects. Gender differences were observed in the relationship between attitude and purchase behaviour, with females showing a stronger relationship (0.305) compared to males (0.136) (Loureiro et al., 2012). Cultural differences were found in the relationship between behavioural intention and purchase behaviour, with non-Western countries showing a stronger relationship (0.587) than Western countries (0.392) (Hofstede, 1984).

These findings provide valuable insights for retailers and policymakers in understanding and responding to consumer behaviour during crises while also highlighting areas for future research in consumer psychology and marketing strategy.

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Full Paper

Understanding the Motivations Behind Global Identity and Contemporary Consumption Patterns of Global Citizens – A Qualitative Analysis

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The authors reconceptualize global identity from a local cultural identity perspective and explore consumer behavior that is related to it. Via conducting 14 focus groups across 6 different countries, the motivations, values, and consumption behaviors of individuals are examined. The analysis defined three major themes that characterized global citizens (consumers that have a global identity): sense of oneness with others, belief in equality, and stewardship of the world. The authors also defined some consumption patterns that arose from these characterizations, such as fear of misinformation, anti-consumption and circular consumption behavior of global citizens, boycotting behavior of the inhumane treatment of workers in the supply chain, and consumption behavior of local products.

Introduction

“I collect water after washing my hands, and after rinsing vegetables, like spinach, and I use that to flush the toilet. I try to use as little water as I can... Today’s newspapers encourage us not to use water. Our dams are empty. In 20-30 years, another World War will start because of limited access to freshwater. We will see growing instability and escalating conflicts.” says Nadia, a 63-year-old consumer from Turkey, as she is explaining her opinions on the need for conscious use of resources. Nadia states she belongs with the broader global community and participates in several activist movements to address global challenges.

Understanding the concept of *global identity* is crucial in today’s world, where nationalism and separatism are on the rise. Today, individuals’ willingness to differentiate has activated national, ethnic, and communal identities (Ger 1999). For example, in 2020, the United Kingdom officially left the European Union following the Brexit referendum in 2016. The decision to exit the EU was driven by nationalist sentiments emphasizing national sovereignty, control over borders, and a desire to reclaim decision-making power from supranational institutions. The 2020s have seen the rise of populist leaders across different countries, often promoting nationalist agendas. Examples include Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Narendra Modi in India, and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. These leaders have emphasized national interests, protectionism, and immigration control, resonating with segments of their respective populations.

Scholars have defined global identity as the sense of interconnectedness and belongingness to the broader, geographically distant, global community beyond individual cultural, national, or regional identities (Arnett 2002, Tu et al. 2012, Strizhakova & Coulter 2013). Having a global identity means that consumers “identify with a global lifestyle” (Tu et al. 2012, p. 35). In the psychology literature, global identity has been conceptualized with its affective and cognitive dimensions: it involves a deep sense of empathy, compassion, and concern for the well-being of all people, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality (McFarland et al. 2019).

Marketing scholars have looked at global identity within the context of consumption and researched the behavioral aspect of global identity from an acute angle. Focusing on the behavioral dimension of global identity, they found that consumers with global identity have an affinity towards global brands (Tu et al. 2012).

Amidst the current divisions, there's an increasing need to gain a deeper understanding of global identity. This concept, serving as the perspective through which individuals perceive themselves—how they define their present, envision their future, and take action to realize their aspirations—is a potent force shaping and guiding behavior. We believe and hypothesize that global identity manifests itself in more ways than purchasing global brands or engaging with environmental sustainability initiatives. Specifically, global identity, in contrast to national, local, or ethnic identity, influences consumer behavior that prioritizes the well-being of oneself, communities, and the planet. In essence, embracing a global identity must contribute significantly to the collective efforts to improve our world. Those who identify strongly with humanity at large may exhibit tendencies toward promoting equality, increased charitable giving, and conserving resources.

Global Identity and Consumption

Global identity has been defined as a construct that grows from the increasing interconnectedness of markets. Increasing ease of exchange of individuals, information, goods, and services across national borders has enabled the emergence of a global consumer culture, where consumers were motivated to participate in globally observed trends and globally shared rituals (Arnett 2002, Ger 1999). Consumers' exposure to similar mediascapes and brandscapes leads to the evolution of global identity (Arnett 2002).

Marketing scholars state that global identity is a construct that encompasses an individual's sense of belonging and connection to humanity at a global scale (Arnett 2002, Tu et al. 2012, Strizhakova & Coulter 2013). It goes beyond national, local, or ethnic affiliations, emphasizing a broader identification with the global community.

Scholars have discovered that consumers with a strong global identity behave in certain ways in the marketplace: they are more likely to engage in behaviors such as purchasing global products, sharing positive brand experiences on social media, advocating for the brand, and participating in brand communities (Alden et al. 1999, Alden et al. 2006, Tu et al. 2012). More recently, Salnikova, Strizhakova, and Coulter (2020) discovered that consumers with global identities engage more with global brands' environmental sustainability initiatives. Those with global identity also recognize the interdependence of human beings on the planet and recognize the importance of collective action in addressing global challenges. For example, individuals with global identity are found to donate more to global causes (McFarland et al. 2019).

Methodology and Research Design

We conducted semistructured focus groups with 76 (30 males and 46 females) informants recruited from informant pools and using snowball methodology. Student participants were awarded course credit for participation, others volunteered to participate. Respondents were screened only for age ensuring they were 18 years old or older. There was no other screening involved to ensure diversity of opinions. Respondents were also selected from diverse backgrounds and the focus groups were conducted in 5 separate countries. In total, the focus groups included four groups of American students studying at a large Midwestern public university, one group of American adults, two groups of Turkish students studying at a large private university in Istanbul, two groups of Turkish professional adults, two groups of professional Indian adults, one group of Chinese adults, two groups of students studying in Austria, and one group of students studying in France. Participants were students, or young and middle-aged adult consumers who are regularly exposed to social media. A focus group consisted of 3-8 participants and the discussions took place online over Zoom. The respondents were required to turn their video on and participate from quiet and non-distracting environments to be able to mimic an in-person interaction. Focus groups ranged between 90 to 120 minutes in total, were conducted in English, and were recorded on the moderator's computer which was then stored in an encrypted folder until they were transcribed.

We began our interviews by delving into broad inquiries regarding participants' cultural affiliations, family history, immigration history, and global engagements. During the interviews we did not present a uniform definition of global identity, rather we elicited the participants' understanding of this concept. The rest of the conversation unfolded gradually as individuals reflected on their perceptions of the world and their identification as global citizens. We structured our discussion to explore whether consumers considered themselves part of a global community, prompting them to share their experiences, beliefs, and engagement with global issues. We aimed to uncover the depth of their connection or disconnection to the concept of global citizenship, whether they felt fully engaged, partially involved, or uncertain about their role within this global framework. Throughout the conversations, we encouraged respondents to elaborate on their thoughts, emotions, and actions concerning their perceived global identity. We reiterated their statements, seeking clarity, and posed follow-up questions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives on being a part of the global community.

Qualitative methodology was employed as an exploratory tool for understanding global identity for its unique ability to delve into the intricate realms of human emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and inner motivations. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic research, offer an open-ended approach, allowing consumers to articulate their narratives freely. This methodology values context, allowing for a deeper comprehension of the multifaceted aspects of identity across diverse cultures, and enabling a richer understanding of how individuals perceive themselves within the global landscape. By adopting this methodology, we aimed to capture the nuanced, subjective experiences that individuals worldwide associate with their identities.

Data Analysis

Following the completion of focus groups, data was transcribed verbatim, yielding over 240 pages of double-spaced text. The author team analyzed the transcribed interview data. We adopted a grounded theory-inspired data analysis approach, aimed to enhance our conceptual understanding of global identity (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). To enable a dynamic relationship between raw data, emerging concepts, and theory building, we employed tools developed as part of the Gioia methodology (Corley & Gioia, 2004, Gehman et al., 2018; Gioia, 2017), as follows. We began with detailed readings of all interview transcripts and introspections. At this stage, we also started developing first-order (e.g., in-vivo) codes representing participants' voices in the transcribed data. Continuing the analysis, we refined, as well as (where relevant) derived further, first-order codes from the data by looking for similarities and differences among emerging categories in the data (interviews and introspective accounts). Constellations of first-order codes were grouped into second-order themes (theory-centric themes – see Corley & Gioia, 2004). Themes' development was facilitated via searching for relationships between in-vivo codes (Corley & Gioia, 2004). We then used axial coding to interpret and relate these themes to the theoretical underpinnings of our inquiry and to derive aggregate dimensions that served as basis for emergent conceptual framework (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Following Strauss and Corbin (1998), we assessed these dimensions by returning to each transcript and comparing our final data structure against raw data. Throughout our analysis, empirical data and literature were reviewed simultaneously. Consistent with this approach, some of the themes were grounded in prior theoretical knowledge, and others emerged freely and were theorized as we iterated between data and literature (Saldaña, 2021). We now discuss our findings.

Discussion of Findings

Our analysis defined three major themes that characterized global citizens (consumers that have global identity): *sense of oneness with others*, *belief in equality*, and *stewardship of the world*. We also defined some consumption patterns that arose from these characterizations, such as fear of misinformation, anti-consumption and circular consumption behavior of global citizens, boycotting behavior of the inhumane treatment of workers in the supply chain, and consumption behavior of local products.

Sense of Oneness with Others

In parallel with the past work on this construct (Tu et al. 2012, Strizhakova & Coulter 2013), the most common theme that arises is the belonging within the wider community of humans, and connectedness with others living on the planet without meeting them. Those respondents who feel a belonging in a community of global citizens frequently express that they feel a unity with everyone who lives on this planet. An individual who identifies as having a global identity also feels a kind of attachment or a bond with all humans in the world.

As an extension to the previous literature, our work highlights that this sense of connectedness manifests itself in sense of oneness with the rest of the world. Several participants mentioned that they connect with others at a very human level, have increased empathy for others, and find themselves in others' shoes very frequently. Sylvia (18) mentions “*when I read a book about somebody and their life isn't amazing, I feel bad for them. Or hear something on the news, you just feel so like bad and you want to do something*”. These individuals have compassion for others, they care for anyone that they interact with no matter who they are and what their background is. They express selflessness, being able to act for the good of the community, and passion for others. Carter adds, “*Transcending cultures, I think there's an emotion to boil it down to as the common denominator between global citizens. It's what we can all relate to. Because if we hear of a horrible murder in one country, we're going to feel the same about it, even if we have nothing to do with that culture or that country. Same thing with good things. I think it's something that we can all relate to on a human level.*”

Our study also shows that across cultures and continents, humans are bound by a tapestry of shared worries, emotions, and daily rituals. Regardless of geographical location or societal context, the spectrum of human experience intertwines in remarkably similar threads. The worries that tug at the heartstrings, the surge of joy in moments of triumph, and the pangs of sorrow in times of loss—all resonate universally. Daily rituals, from the simple morning routines to the expressions of gratitude before meals, echo in different forms but carry the same essence of human connection. Whether in bustling cities or serene villages, the essence of humanity reveals itself through the shared emotions of love, fear, hope, and the mosaic of routines that shape our lives. This commonality, the intricate web of emotions and rituals, unites us, transcending boundaries and speaking to the fundamental unity that binds us as a global community. Carter (19) says “*if you exist, you're a part of the human race, that kind of, by default, would make you a [global] citizen*”. Maya adds “*if nobody had emotion, and no one really cared about what went on in the world, and everyone just kind of did their own thing, there wouldn't be a world and there wouldn't be humanity*”.

Moreover, our work discloses that consumers embracing a global identity perceive the world as an intricately interconnected web where every occurrence holds the potential to influence another. Their perspective transcends geographical boundaries, recognizing that events in one corner of the world can reverberate and impact various facets elsewhere. They comprehend the butterfly effect of actions, acknowledging how economic shifts,

political decisions, environmental changes, or cultural movements can trigger a chain reaction across continents. This global worldview prompts a heightened awareness of interdependence, fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy toward diverse communities, cultures, and environments worldwide. For them, the tapestry of our world is woven together by threads of interconnectivity, emphasizing the profound impact of each action and event on the larger global fabric. Nadia (63) says *"I think the idea of global citizenship began to become widespread. First of all, we are now worried about the melting of glaciers because of global warming. If it had been 30-40 years ago, I would have said 'It's too far away, it can melt if it wants', but now we understand that the melting of those glaciers will touch us here and elsewhere"*.

Finally, our study uncovers that an individual with a global identity is invested in the broader welfare of humanity. Carter (19) states, *"I think a global citizen is engaged and connected, on some level, to thinking about someone on the other side of the world and caring about them more, just wanting them to be okay"*. This concept revolves around acknowledging shared values, concerns, and responsibilities towards people worldwide. Global identity involves recognizing the interconnectedness of cultures, societies, and environments, fostering empathy, and promoting a sense of collective responsibility for addressing global challenges. It's a mindset that transcends geographical boundaries, encouraging individuals to consider the well-being of not just their immediate surroundings but also communities and ecosystems across the planet.

Belief in Equality

Another common theme that arises in our focus groups is the belief in the equality of all humans. This indicates that individuals with a global identity believe in equality, justice, and fairness for all individuals who are a part of the global community. Global citizens believe that all individuals should have access to basic universal human needs. Respondents who have global identities state that they advocate equality on Earth among members of their community. These individuals intrinsically demand that every human being is given equal opportunity and is treated the same. They believe that humans have more things in common than things that make them different. These respondents also state feeling a responsibility to learn about and educate others about equality, global issues, and human rights.

Our work unveils those individuals with global identity articulate appreciation of diversity, and they cherish people from all backgrounds. Emma (18) says one with a global identity is one *"who sees most cultures on the same level and they give them equal respect and not believe one is superior to another"*. Global citizens also take pride in respecting differing ideas, and in advocating for all people to have equal chances in life. Individuals who advocate for dignity of others also appreciate differences between individuals and believe that these differences make us human. They also vouch for the longevity and the preservation of local cultures. These individuals care for those who have less in the world and are concerned about world issues (such as poverty, and access to basic human rights across the globe). They express activism for equality and justice.

Global citizens also want to learn about global issues, as shown with past work (Tu et al. 2012). Liam (20) says *"it's important to me that I know what's going on about global issues as far as like, unfair wages, child labor and, in Palestine. I just feel like that's stuff I care about, and I want to educate myself on."* Our focus groups suggest that their interest in global affairs do not end with knowing, as a majority of participants indicate that they advocate for positive change in the global community. For example, Maya (20) says she would like to *"make a difference in improving the occupational safety of immigrants that come here [to the United States] and work in factories because they're exposed to so many trash conditions like a middle-class, white person would not be exposed to. I feel like there are so many East Asians that come here and end up in factories and can get seriously injured, but there's no recognition for that. And they come here thinking that this is a better place for them to be, and a better place for their children to be. But then they still end up at the bottom of the food chain, which is super unfair. So, I would think that being a better global citizen is improving the conditions for them."*

Furthermore, our focus groups disclose that global citizens condemn racism and all other separatist notions. Liam (20) states, *"Although racism and colorism are common all around the world, after the killing of George Floyd, there were protests [in] the Netherlands and Paris and London, places that didn't directly have exposure to this event. I feel like this is an example of global citizenship, where people care about and demonstrate for something that doesn't affect them directly, but they're using their voice to spread awareness and amplifying their voices to say [racism] is a problem."* Marissa (21) also comments on the Black Lives Matter activism and expresses her support for the online amplification of activist voices: *"Two weeks ago, there was kind of a civil war going on in our country. So we created a hashtag because we wanted to let other people know what was going on. We made the hashtag go viral, we wanted to keep the world updated on what was going on, get it known internationally. So other people were bringing support, I think those people were actually concerned about us"*.

Lastly, our study uncovers that consumers embracing a global citizenship perspective often grapple with a profound fear of misinformation, born from the belief in equality and the concern for fairness. Especially prevalent in the vast expanse of the internet, their concern stems from a genuine worry about perpetuating injustice or harm towards specific individuals or communities due to the spread of false or biased information. As global citizens, they understand the impact of misinformation on shaping opinions, beliefs, and actions across borders. This fear of contributing to the dissemination of inaccurate or partial information reflects their commitment to fairness, equity, and a deep-seated desire to uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals, regardless of cultural backgrounds or geographical boundaries. For them, combating misinformation is not just about personal credibility but is deeply intertwined with their ethical responsibility towards a global society built on truth, understanding, and respect. Henry (18) brings this up by stating *“if someone talks to me about [global issues], I keep a really neutral stance on everything. So I try not to agree or disagree with everything until I learned about all the information”*. Ryan (43) says *“I’ve always had an interest in just getting to know other perspectives. I think one of the most valuable experiences I had was traveling to Israel and learning the Palestinian perspective that I knew very little about. Just having a lot of compassion and understanding for how poorly people were treated was very, very eye-opening, in a lot of ways, something that I otherwise wouldn’t have experienced”*. Ryan (43) adds *“but I cannot say all perspectives always get heard”*, which highlights the fact that he goes above and beyond to get information.

Stewardship of the World

The last dimension that emerges from the focus group interviews is stewardship of the world. Individuals who identify as global citizens disclose consciousness in the way that they use the world’s resources. Aligned with the oneness dimension, these individuals believe in the equal rights of access to the world’s resources by everyone on this planet. Likewise, these individuals do not waste food, water, and energy. They use and consume products conscientiously, reduce their consumption when feasible, and buy from ethical and sustainable sources when they can. These individuals also desire to fix the world’s issues enabling all individuals equal access to the world’s resources and give back to help whenever they can. They believe in the redistribution of natural resources across all human beings, and their preservation for future generations. Lastly, they educate others on world issues as they believe this can lead to a positive change in the way that everyone is more conscientious in their actions.

In addition, the focus groups reveal that consumers embracing a global citizen mindset exhibit a growing reluctance to further consume, driven by a profound awareness of the pressing need to safeguard and sustain the world’s finite resources. Their conscientious stance refrains from excessive consumption to mitigate contamination and depletion of natural resources. Mindful of the environmental consequences, they prioritize sustainable practices, opting for products and services that align with ethical production, minimal waste, and renewable sourcing, or better yet, opting not to buy. Their conscious choice to limit consumption echoes a commitment to reduce their ecological footprint and contribute positively to global sustainability efforts, underscoring their dedication to preserving the planet for current and future generations. Maya (20) says *“Buying things that I actually need is definitely in the definition of global identity. There are so many material things, we live in such a materialistic world. Everybody wants Gucci, Prada, and we all want to indulge in luxury items, but I want to make sure those things are produced ethically.”*

The focus groups uncover that consumers embodying the ethos of global citizenship also champion a culture of recycling and reuse as a means to curtail contamination and the excessive depletion of the Earth’s resources. Their commitment goes beyond mere consumption; it extends to conscientious actions aimed at minimizing waste and environmental impact. Embracing the principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle, they actively seek out opportunities to repurpose materials, minimize waste generation, and support initiatives focused on sustainable practices. Their dedication to recycling and reusing materials stems from a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of global ecosystems and the imperative to preserve resources for future generations. Through their daily actions, they contribute significantly to the collective effort to safeguard the planet and build a more sustainable world like Nadia (63) in the opening quote, who reuses the water that she collects while rinsing vegetables. Maya (20) says *“I [prefer] donating things so that other people can use them as well. Rather than just throwing my clothes away after I’ve gotten a couple wears out of them. Even purchasing from thrift stores like Goodwill to reduce how much trash we’re putting into the world”*.

Moreover, the focus groups also discover that consumers with a global identity exhibit a heightened awareness and concern regarding the intricate supply chains of companies, particularly focusing on ethical considerations such as the humane treatment of workers. Their conscientious stance goes beyond the product itself; they prioritize understanding and advocating for fair labor practices throughout the supply chain. They actively seek transparency and accountability from companies, aiming to ensure that workers involved in production are treated ethically and provided with fair wages, safe working conditions, and dignity. This conscientious approach reflects

their commitment to social justice, recognizing the interconnectedness of their consumption choices with the well-being of individuals across the globe. By demanding ethical treatment in supply chains, they actively contribute to fostering a more equitable and humane global marketplace. They are comfortable with boycotting brands that are not aligned with this vision. Layla (40) explains why she is boycotting Starbucks, a global brand, *"For me, how [a product] is produced is relevant and important. How do the people who are involved in that production benefit from this, if any? I have never been, nor will I ever be, someone who goes to Starbucks and buys a product. Maybe I could use their toilet sometimes. They exploit their workers. Why should I pay for the exploitation of a person? Frankly, I wouldn't put my own money into it."*

Lastly, we can observe in our focus groups that consumers with a global identity, driven by a deep concern for resources and the environmental footprint, increasingly gravitate towards consuming locally sourced products. Their deliberate choice to prioritize local goods stems from a desire to minimize the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation and excessive resource usage. By embracing locally sourced items, they actively support regional economies, reduce greenhouse gas emissions linked to transportation, and endorse sustainable production practices. This intentional shift in consumption patterns underscores their commitment to mitigating environmental impact while fostering a sense of connection to their immediate community and its resources. Through this mindful choice, they contribute to the global movement towards sustainable living and responsible consumption, valuing the preservation of resources for a more environmentally conscious future. Clara (22) states *"I think that the global person supports local, even though they're called a global person, just because their mission is to do good, you know?"* Layla (40) says *"For example, I buy my milk from an uncle in Çatalca and make my yoghurt with it. I make my own bread and my flour comes from Kastamonu. A friend of mine produces the olives I buy, I always buy them from him. I know who the producer is, my main concern is not that they are healthy. I know where and how they are made, I know that no one is exploited in the production, I know that those people do it with their own labor"*.

Conclusion

Global identity has been treated as an important concept in the humanities for its drive of individuals' actions and reactions. This thinking has spawned research on different conceptualization attempts of global identity as a driver of human behavior in various settings. Globalization creates a need for a better understanding of global identity when compared to its previous counterparts, especially in international consumption contexts. For example, Batra and Wu (2019) called for the development of a more nuanced, more comprehensive, conceptualization of global identity.

We contribute to the literature by exploring different dimensions and manifestations of global identity, that have been discovered before. Through our extensive study, we unearth a tapestry of diverse motivations inherent within global identity. At its core lies a profound sense of interconnectedness, a feeling of unity that transcends borders and unites individuals with the world at large. Moreover, we've witnessed a passionate commitment to championing the equality of all individuals, a relentless pursuit of justice that knows no boundaries. This identity fosters an unwavering dedication to dismantling barriers, advocating for inclusivity, and ensuring that every voice is heard and valued. Simultaneously, our research underscores a deep-rooted stewardship ethic—a collective responsibility to safeguard and sustain the finite resources of our planet. This holistic approach to global identity unveils a multifaceted commitment, weaving together threads of unity, equality, and stewardship in a tapestry that embraces the richness and complexities of our shared human experience.

Overall, our research shows that global identity is a complex construct with many individual characteristics and motivations. Unlike previous research suggested, multiple concepts make up global identity. We attempt to better understand this construct, and explore the behaviors such as anti-consumption, boycotting, and circular consumption that it relates to. Understanding this construct comprehensively aids in future research as our research indicates that global identity and connectedness are highly related to community well-being and planetary well-being. These themes arise even when individuals explain how and why they feel connected to the rest of the world. Hence, thoroughly comprehending global identity guides consumer behavior research.

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Summary Brief

Beyond the Surface: Tackling Food Waste with Background Stories of Ugly Produce

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In a world grappling with food insecurity and significant food waste—where 800 million people face hunger while nearly 30% of global food is wasted from farms to consumers—the rejection of aesthetically imperfect produce emerges as a key issue. Addressing this food waste challenge is essential for sustainable food consumption and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Although marketing research has explored ways to reduce bias against unattractive produce, the potential of storytelling remains under-discussed. This study examines the impact of storytelling on tackling food waste. Through two experiments, we demonstrate that storytelling effectively alters consumer perceptions and reduces food waste by increasing purchase intention and coupon usage for ugly produce. Our findings contribute to unattractive produce and storytelling literature by showing the effectiveness of storytelling in encouraging the consumption of aesthetically unappealing produce and addressing food waste issues.

Introduction

Promoting sustainable food consumption and reducing food insecurity are critical goals of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda. Despite these efforts, around 800 million individuals still face food insecurity, and about 30% of food worldwide is wasted at different stages, including farms, retail, and households (UNICEF, 2021). In the U.S., 30-40% of food produced by farmers goes uneaten, leading to substantial environmental challenges from disposing of 80 million tons of food in landfills and other methods, heightening greenhouse gas emissions (Recycle Track Systems, 2022). A significant factor in this waste is the rejection of produce based on USDA aesthetic standards, resulting in the annual discarding of 10 million tons of edible yet cosmetically imperfect produce (CBS NEWS, 2019). Consumer preferences for visually attractive produce, driven by taste, safety, and contamination perceptions, further intensify this problem (Hagen, 2021; Schifferstein et al., 2019; Spielmann et al., 2023).

Background

While existing literature highlights various marketing strategies to promote the consumption of unattractive produce, the potential of storytelling in this context remains unexplored. Our research aims to introduce storytelling as a novel method to enhance consumers' valuation of cosmetically imperfect produce, utilizing narrative transportation theory and its proven effectiveness in promoting prosocial behavior (Brechman & Purvis, 2015; De Meyer et al., 2021). In contrast to straightforward information dissemination, storytelling incorporates characters, plots, and meaningful narratives, which can profoundly influence consumer perceptions and behaviors toward unattractive produce (Green & Brock, 2000; van Laer et al., 2014).

Key Findings

Our two experimental studies demonstrated that storytelling effectively changes attitudes and evaluations toward unattractive produce, increasing purchase intention and coupon usage for such items. This approach deepens the understanding of consumer behavior toward unattractive produce and provides practical insights for marketers on employing narrative elements to boost consumer engagement and reduce food waste. In summary, integrating storytelling into marketing strategies for unattractive produce can address critical food waste and sustainability challenges. This method benefits the environment by reducing waste and supports social good by enhancing the market for unattractive produce, thereby contributing to broader efforts toward achieving food security and sustainability goals.

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SESSION 10.4: CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: BUYING, HAVING, AND BEING

Moderators:

Siddhartha Sarkar and Jen Riley

Summary Brief

Leveraging Eco-Friendliness in Non-Plant-Based Products: The Intersection of Product Quality, Certification, and Purchase Intentions

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More and more consumers are seeking products that are not only effective but also environmentally friendly. Understanding this trend, this research utilizes signaling theory to demonstrate that certification labels in non-food products indicate eco-friendliness, thereby influencing purchase intentions.

Research Background

With the sustainability trend gaining rapid momentum (Hive, 2022; Ruiz, 2023), businesses are aligning their practices to show that their products are environmentally friendly. This is easier for products made from plants but more challenging for those made from non-plant-based materials. We demonstrate that the perceived quality of non-plant-based products leads to perceptions of eco-friendliness, which in turn influences purchase intentions. This effect is more pronounced for non-plant-based products that have certification labels. Certification is the process of obtaining an authentication mark from an authorized body, stating that the product meets essential quality standards for consumption (Crespi & Marette, 2001). Certification can be a way to demonstrate perceptions of eco-friendliness in the minds of consumers. Using signaling theory, we show that the interaction of perceived quality and certification labels signals eco-friendliness to consumers, leading to purchase intentions for non-plant-based products. By effectively utilizing certification labels, manufacturers of non-plant-based products can gain a competitive edge and compete head-to-head with plant-based products, which are naturally perceived as eco-friendly.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the quality of non-plant-based products leads to perceptions of eco-friendliness, influencing purchase intentions. This effect is stronger for non-plant-based products with certification labels. This finding should encourage companies that use synthetic ingredients and face challenges in showcasing eco-friendliness. However, synthetic ingredients need not be harmful. By using effective third-party and independent certifications, non-plant-based businesses can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability.

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Summary Brief

Sharing Less and Trading More: The Role of Image and Value Transparency in Consumer-to-Consumer Bartering

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Despite its growth, academic marketing literature has not thoroughly explored the trend of C2C bartering. In C2C bartering, the website plays a crucial role in providing user information, which may be incomplete or misleading. This study examines the transparency of value and image in trade decisions. Through a comprehensive field study of online behavior, we found that users can be less transparent about the value of their trade when they provide more transparency in their image profile.

Introduction

The rise of online consumer-to-consumer (C2C) resale platforms such as Depop, Poshmark, and ThredUP has led to new forms of "social shopping," where goods are exchanged without monetary transactions. While bartering has gained popularity, little academic attention has been given to how users present themselves and their items during trades. This study examines the role of image and value transparency in influencing trade decisions and the perceived trustworthiness of traders. It builds on prior research that highlights how platform-provided information and user-provided details affect consumer decision-making in online transactions.

Background

In online bartering, transparency plays a critical role in trade outcomes. Image transparency, defined as the extent to which a profile image accurately represents the user, and value transparency, the clarity of information regarding an item's value, both influence user behavior. Past research suggests that consumers rely on visual cues when value information is lacking, leading to biased perceptions based on profile images (Duarte et al., 2012; Luca & Svirsky, 2020). This study investigates whether increased image transparency compensates for reduced value transparency, and how these factors influence trust in trade partners.

Key Findings

The field study was conducted on a C2C platform specializing in subscription box trades. The following are the main findings:

1. Users with high image transparency (e.g., profile pictures showing candid photos) were more likely to include items with missing value information in their trades. This suggests that traders compensated for lower value transparency by providing more personal image details.
2. Consumers were more willing to engage in trades with users who had high image transparency, even when the item value was unclear. This indicates that visual cues may override concerns about incomplete product information in some trade contexts.
3. A significant interaction between image and value transparency was observed. Users with non-transparent images (e.g., avatars or no image) were more likely to provide complete value information, while those with highly transparent images omitted more value details.

These findings offer insights into how C2C platforms can better manage transparency to ensure fairness and trust in online bartering.

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SESSION 10.5: CONSUMER MINDSET

Moderator:

Prachi Gala

Summary Brief

Not Your Grandparent's Nostalgia: Buying Physical Media to Relive or Replace Old Memories

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The current research proposes a conceptual understanding of consumer motivations for purchasing physical media through the second-hand market. The research on motivations that drive purchases in the second-hand market and the use of nostalgic appeals in modern marketing provides a useful backdrop for research on consumers' motivations for nostalgic buying in the second-hand market. The current research proposes that purchases in the physical media market motivated by personal nostalgia may be subdivided into two categories: relive and replace.

Introduction

There has been a long history of nostalgia in advertising and marketing both in practice and in literature (Davis 1979; Holbrook & Schindler 1991; Srivastava, Sivakumaran, Maheswarappa, & Paul 2023). There continues to be current marketing interest in using nostalgia to influence consumer behavior and attitudes (Fisher-Price 2019, 2021; Coca-Cola 2020; Disney 2020; Fan, Jiang, & Hu 2020). This paper seeks to propose two reasons consumers may seek out the purchase of nostalgic items from a second-hand market. In today's second-hand market, the emotional motivator of nostalgia is one of the driving forces behind purchases made in the secondhand market. This research proposes that consumers who purchase second-hand items in the physical media market are either attempting to 1) relive or 2) replace memories associated with a nostalgic time or product from their past.

Nostalgia

Defining Nostalgia

Holbrook and Schindler (1991) define nostalgia in the marketing context, as "A preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) toward experiences associated with objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)." Nostalgia is influenced by social, internal, and external factors. Factors such as boredom, a need to belong, yearning for the past, sensory stimuli can increase feelings of nostalgia (Srivastava et al. 2023). Nostalgia has a positive effect on mood, social connectedness, brand and advertising outcomes, and purchase behaviors (Srivastava et al. 2023)

Types of Nostalgia

Stern (1992) proposed two types of nostalgia, personal and historical. According to Stern (1992), historical nostalgia refers to a "desire to retreat from contemporary life by returning to a time in the distant past viewed as superior to the present." Examples of historical nostalgia in marketing may appeal to a consumer's "desire to identify with a past era" that possesses desirable traits. Historical nostalgia appeals to a past era or culture that one has experienced themselves or want to experience vicariously (Wang, Tian, Sarigollu, & Xu 2020; Stern 1992; Srivastava et al. 2023). Personal nostalgia refers more to an idealized version of a personally remembered past. Experiencing personal nostalgia in response to stimuli from one's past could allow one to, mentally and emotionally, revisit a time and place in their past (Sweeny 2020). For example, recalling a sentimentalized version of one's childhood home (Stern 1992). Examples of personal nostalgia in marketing include bringing back packaging or a discontinued product from the consumers' childhood.

Nostalgia in Modern Marketing

Modern marketers attempt to harness the power of nostalgia to promote items that are available in today's market. A feeling of nostalgia in today's modern market may drive the consumer to purchase modern product has been designed to evoke nostalgia due to a retro packaging style, re-release of a product that was discontinued, or throwback design elements in a modern product (Shields 2012). Recent examples of modern brands that pull on consumers' heart strings through nostalgia include video productions and throwback products from Coca-Cola (Lucas 2019, Coca-Cola 2020), re-releases from the Disney vault until the 21 Century Fox acquisition in 2019

(Alexander 2019) and nostalgic video shorts (Disney 2020), and the re-release of classic Fisher-Price toys through a licensing partnership with Basic Fun! (Basic Fun, 2024) and ads that feature parents playing with their children and buying them toys they had as children (Fisher-Price 2019, 2022). Basic Fun! has licensing partnerships with several brands to bring consumers the toys they played with as children (e.g. View-Master, Lite Brite, Pound Puppies, Lincoln Logs, Tinkertoy, etc.).

Therefore, marketers have acknowledged that consumers have a desire to re-experience or pass on the experiences from their childhood and have found ways to meet that need through the continued production of classic products. Brands can appeal to both personal and historical nostalgia through their marketing and product line decisions. A release of a film set in a past time with product placement paired with licensing deals that promote products depicted in the films may exploit both types of nostalgia. For example, an adult watching *Stranger Things* may experience historical nostalgia for the 1980s while simultaneously experiencing personal nostalgia for New Coke and the Kate Bush song *Running Up That Hill*. Similarly, a teenager who never experienced the 1980s could experience vicarious nostalgia for the period and is experiencing New Coke and Kate Bush for the first time.

The Second-Hand Market

Some of the motivations driving purchases from the second-hand market can be financial, social, ecological, and/or emotional (Hristova 2019; Raka & Chankov 2024). Economic motivations are driven by bounded rationality and limited processing capacity (Simon 1990). Consumers seek to optimize their return for their expenditure of resources (Bettman, Luce, & Payne 1998). Therefore, consumers may purchase from the second-hand market because they can get quality goods at a lower price than buying them new. Some examples may include used cars, apparel, furniture, jewelry, etc.

Social reasons for purchasing from the second-hand market may be motivated by a shift in the markets favor toward buying products second-hand (Raka & Chankov 2024). Second-hand or rental fashion retailers have become popular in the past decade, growing three times faster than the overall global apparel market (ThreadUp 2024). There has also been a reframing of viewing second-hand goods as “preloved” or “pre-owned” rather than something that has been *used* (Vedantam, Demirezen, & Kumar 2021; Yeap, Ooi, Yapp, & Ramesh 2022). In short, purchasing from the second-hand market has become more socially acceptable, if not socially preferable. In 2023, brands who acknowledge the growth in the resale market and launched their own resale programs include H&M, TOMS, Kate Spade, and American Eagle (ThreadUp 2024).

Ecological concerns such as pollution, waste, and use of natural resources are also a factor driving the growth of the second-hand market (Hristova 2019; ThreadUp 2024; Tari & Trudel 2024; Vedantam et al. 2021). According to the survey administered by ThreadUp (2024) to 50 U.S. fashion retailers, 62% of retail executives report that their customers care about their brand being sustainable and 77% are considering getting into resale to advance sustainability goals. Social and environmental motivations have led to the emergence of what is referred to as the circular economy (Hristova 2019), which is defined as a “‘closed-loop’ system designed so that products flow back into the production cycle after use” (Tari & Trudel 2024, p. 110). Out of concern for the environment, sustainability, and use of resources, consumers engage in behaviors that lengthen the lifecycle of products (Hristova 2019, Tari & Trudel 2024).

Emotional motivators may involve goals such as owning something rare or unique (Hristova 2019). Second-hand goods may be viewed as treasures that possess their own historical value or may be unavailable in the current market. Some examples include antiques, rare jewels or cars, or products that are no longer being manufactured. Consumers may also experience nostalgia for these types of products (Hristova 2019). This research will focus on the emotional reasons for purchasing from the second-hand market and how the different forms of nostalgia may lead to differing consumer outcomes.

Nostalgia in the Second-Hand Market

Much of the recent research on second-hand consumer behavior has been conducted in the context apparel and fashion (Hristova 2019; Raka & Chankov 2024; Vedantam et al. 2021). Purchases in the apparel second-hand market have been largely driven by economic, social, and ecological motivators (Hristova 2019; Raka & Chankov 2024). This research proposes differences in consumer behavior that may be driven by the product category of physical media. Physical Media refers media that is not digitized, but is stored in physical form such as CDs, LPs (vinyl), DVDs, and VHS tapes (Procell 2012). Because of digital rights management and the impermanence of digital media, there are still consumers who demand or collect physical versions of video games (Geigner 2024; Capcom 2023; O’Connor 2023), music, television shows, and movies (Back to the Past, 2024). Even with the availability and convenience of digital media, there are still drawbacks. Digital media is subject to digital rights management and the users do not own the content but are subject to the permissions of the providers (Scharf 2022;

Back to the Past 2024). Access to the content can be revoked for failing to abide by the provider's restrictions or because the media has been removed from the library for licensing reasons (Scharf 2022; Back to the Past 2024). To avoid this, some consumers prefer to purchase and consume their favorite media using physical media formats. There is also a market for collectors of older video game consoles, vinyl records, and DVDs. Some firms have recognized these trends as significant enough to continue producing physical media of their new products. (Capcom 2023; O'Connor 2023; Geigner 2024).

Reconsolidation of Episodic Memories

When individuals store memories, they do so through associations and they can retrieve past episodes in the form of memories based on cues they receive in the present (Kim, Vallesi, Picton, & Tulving 2009). Imagine the following, you are walking down the cereal aisle. You don't usually give this type of purchase much thought, but as you walk down the colorful aisle, your eye snags on a cereal packaging you haven't seen in 20 years. You remember eating this cereal as a child. Just seeing the packaging takes your mind back to that time—to the friends you had and the things you enjoyed doing. Imagine another scenario. You decide to enter an antique store and browse through the store's vinyl records. As you flip through, you find the first album you ever owned. Finding the record transports you back to a specific memory and you can picture exactly what you were doing as you listened to a song on the album. According to research on episodic memories, a memory cue can reactivate an original memory which is then prone to the memory stage of reconsolidation. Reconsolidation theory (Capelo, Albuquerque, & Cadavid 2019; Hupbach, Gomez, Hardt, & Nadel 2007; Antypa, Kagialis, Tsirlis, Tsepenka & Simos 2021) states that memories that have been stored in Long Term Memory can be reactivated and become susceptible to modification.

Proposition: Personal Nostalgia Motivations for Purchasing Physical Media

This research focuses on the buying of physical media that is no longer being produced in physical form. Consumers may only purchase physical copies from the second-hand market. It is possible that the media can be obtained in digital form, but for nostalgic reasons, the consumer would like to have a physical, tangible copy of the media. They may be doing so to experience either historical or personal nostalgia. In the case of historical nostalgia, the consumer may be attempting to transport themselves to a past era or culture for the sake of their own enjoyment. Or they may be purchasing out of a personal nostalgic motive to re-experience a time or place from their past. We propose when purchasing second-hand media for with a motive to engage in personal nostalgia, they are attempting to either 1) relive a memory associated with a pleasant past experience or 2) replace a memory associated with an unpleasant past experience.

If the experience was positive, one may enjoy reliving the experience and reinforcing the memory. By taking an object that you once had an encounter with in the past and have a connection with, in some way, you can play out your past. If the experience was unpleasant, one may want to relive a different version of that memory and replace it with a more pleasant experience either through a new experience or through a reconsolidation of episodic memories (Hupbach et al 2007; Antypa et al. 2021; Capelo et al. 2019). If there was an unpleasant experience or a disappointing circumstance such as a lost or broken object, a replacement may allow one to let go of those lingering memories and begin to over-write them. Therefore, we propose the following:

P1: For a pleasant episodic memory that is triggered by an associated piece of physical media, the consumer's nostalgic motivation will be to relive the pleasant episodic memory.

P2: For an unpleasant episodic memory that is triggered by an associated piece of physical media, the consumer's motivation will be to replace the unpleasant episodic memory.

Discussion and Implications

If consumers are indeed trying to relive or replace their old memories by re-experiencing the physical media from their past, second-hand retailers would benefit from knowing which media is most likely to have impacted consumers in a way that would have been memorable enough in their past to create a strong enough memory association with a piece of physical media. One way to predict consumer demand for older physical media is to keep track of pop culture resurgences of old media brought about by their use in current television shows, movies, or popular social media trends (e.g. Running Up the Hill by Kate Bush in Stranger Things). If second-hand retailers already have a large stock of video games, vinyl, cassette tapes, and movies, featuring the stock that is likely to trigger retrieval of memories associated with those items may result in engagement once consumers have started to reminisce on their past experiences and memories.

While media giants and brands have already been benefitting from the nostalgic purchases of consumers for years (e.g. Coca-Cola, Fisher Price, Disney) by releasing new versions of old products, second-hand retailers have an additional edge when it comes to the economic, ecological, and social buying motivations of modern consumers.

Consumers who want to take a walk through their past or share a bit of their childhood experiences with others, can do so in a sustainable way while literally preserving a piece of history.

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Full Paper

Mindsets Shape Preference for Experiential Consumption

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This study explores how consumer mindsets influence preferences for experiential versus material purchases. Specifically, it examines whether priming individuals with a growth mindset (the belief that personal traits are malleable) increases preference for experiential products and how this effect varies with financial security. Two experimental studies were conducted with participants from different income levels. Study 1 demonstrated that growth mindset priming significantly increased preference for experiential products among high-income participants. Study 2 replicated these findings and further identified that the effect of growth mindset on experiential preferences is moderated by expected future financial security and current money management stress. The research contributes to the understanding of implicit theories in consumer behavior, linking growth mindset to the experiential advantage and highlighting the role of financial security in shaping these preferences. These findings provide valuable insights for marketers of experiential products and policymakers aiming to enhance consumer well-being by encouraging experiential consumption.

Introduction

For decades, consumer research has explored methods to enhance consumer happiness (Weingarten and Goodman, 2021). A recommendation for improving happiness that has consistently gained agreement among researchers is to spend money on experiential rather than material purchases (Nicolao et al., 2009).

Researchers describe experiential purchases as activities or sequences of activities that consumers engage in, such as traveling, watching a movie, or having a gym membership, which typically lead to gaining experiences or creating memories (Gilovich and Gallo, 2019; Mittal et al., 2019). In contrast, material purchases refer to obtaining tangible items that are kept in one's possession, such as gadgets, jewelry, or furniture (Gilovich et al., 2015). Experimental studies corroborate the benefits of buying an experience, demonstrating that consumers indeed derive more happiness from experiential purchases compared to material ones (e.g., Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003; Gilovich et al., 2015). This phenomenon, referred to as the "experience recommendation" or "experiential advantage" (Nicolao et al., 2009; Weingarten and Goodman, 2021), has prompted researchers to delve deeper into understanding the underlying mechanisms that make experiences more beneficial than possessions (Weingarten and Goodman, 2021).

However, few researchers have questioned how to effectively encourage consumers to choose experiential over material products in the first place. Some studies have revealed that certain psychological states and personality traits can influence this preference. For example, feelings of high (vs. low) power, stress, and self-escape motivation have been shown to increase consumer preference for experiential, but not material, purchases (Han et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2023). Additionally, non-materialistic values, higher extraversion, openness, empathic concern, and reward-seeking are associated with a preference for experiential purchasing (Howell and Pchelin, 2012). To best of our knowledge, however, no research has examined the relationship between consumer implicit theories or mindsets and the preference for experiential versus material purchases, despite the critical role mindsets play in influencing human behavior and motivation. This is a critical gap in knowledge for marketers of experiential products and policymakers aiming to improve consumer well-being.

Research on mindsets has traditionally distinguished between two implicit theories: entity theory, also known as a fixed mindset, and incremental theory, also known as a growth mindset (Papadopoulou et al., 2023). Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that human traits are static and unchangeable, whereas those with a growth mindset view these traits as flexible and capable of development (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Murphy and Dweck, 2016). To gain insights into the aforementioned research gap, this study investigates how growth versus fixed mindsets affect the preference for experiential purchases. Specifically, we assess whether priming individuals with growth-mindset increase preference for experiential purchase among people with different income levels. To test this relationship, we conducted two experimental studies in which we manipulate mindset. In Study 1, we found a significant effect of mindset among high income participants. In Study 2, we replicated Study 1 and tested for the

moderating effect of expected future financial security and current money management stress, confirming that the effect of mindset on the preference of experiential purchase is contingent upon the financial security.

This study makes several contributions to research. First, it links the implicit theory of fixed and growth mindsets to the experiential advantage. Second, it examines boundary conditions associated with the effect of mindset on the preference for experiential purchases. Third, the study offers experimental evidence to a research stream that was predominantly limited to correlational studies (Han et al., 2023).

In the next section, we briefly outline existing literature on the experiential advantage and implicit theory. Subsequently, we introduce our methodology, experimental research design, discuss the results, and provide a conclusion.

Experiential versus Material Purchases

The fact that experiential purchases yield greater happiness compared to material possessions has been tested and replicated by research multiple times (Gilovich and Gallo, 2019). Experiential and material purchases are distinguished based on the motivation to acquire them (Han et al., 2023). According to seminal definition by Van Boven and Gilovich (2003), experiential purchases are made with “the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or series of events that one lives through,” while material purchases are made with “the primary intention of acquiring a material good: a tangible object that is kept in one’s possession” (p. 1194). Prior research has explored the mechanisms underlying the greater happiness derived from purchasing experiences. For example, experiences contribute to one’s sense of self (Carter and Gilovich, 2012), foster social connection (Kumar et al., 2024), and are more challenging to directly compare against other purchases (Carter and Gilovich, 2010). Additionally, relevant literature has proposed that experiential (vs. material) purchases have a slower hedonic adaptation rate (Nicolao et al., 2009) and generally are reinterpreted through positive lens (Van Boven, 2005). Although the benefits of experiential purchases are well recognized, consumers continue to buy material goods in large quantities (Weingarten and Goodman, 2020). This trend raises an important question: how can marketers influence consumer preference for experiential products?

Research highlighted certain features that differentiate experiential from material consumption. Specifically, consumers tend to engage in feature-by-feature comparisons when evaluating material purchases, while experiences are evaluated more intuitively (Gilovich and Gallo, 2019). In other words, consumers choose material goods based on analytical processing and experiential goods based on holistic processing (Gallo et al., 2017). Furthermore, consumers face more uncertainty, exhibit less risk aversion, and tend to rely on close (e.g., family) rather than distant (e.g., online reviews) sources of information, when acquiring experiential purchases (Gilovich and Gallo, 2019). The finding that consumers engage in different forms of information processing and exhibit varying levels of tolerance for uncertainty when dealing with experiences (vs. material possessions) hints toward a consumer variable that may influence preferences for experiential purchases: consumer implicit mindsets (e.g., Bullard et al., 2019; Rai and Lin, 2019; Cantu et al., 2024). In the next section, we discuss literature on consumer implicit theories and propose that consumers that hold incremental (i.e., growth) (vs.) entity (i.e., fixed) mindset may find experiential purchases more appealing.

Implicit Theories and Experiential Purchase

Individuals develop lay theories, also known as knowledge structures, to interpret, predict, and navigate their social worlds (Lickel et al., 2001). Among the most studied lay theories are implicit theories that focus on individual’s belief about the malleability of personal abilities and intelligence (Park and John, 2010). Two primary implicit theories are incremental theory and entity theory (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). Incremental theorists believe that personal qualities are dynamic and can change and develop over time with due effort. In contrast, entity theorists do not believe in malleability of personal qualities, viewing them as fixed and stable throughout life (Dweck, 2000). After decades of research on implicit theory, researchers introduced the terms “growth mindset” and “fixed mindset” to categorize people who align with incremental and entity theorists, respectively (Papadopoulou et al., 2023). Importantly, fixed and growth mindsets can be chronic predispositions or can be temporarily induced (Park and John, 2010). For instance, exposing consumers to scientific articles pointing to malleability (static nature) of personal qualities can induce growth (fixed) mindset (Chiu et al., 1997).

Research investigating the behavioral intentions and outcomes of mindsets has found that individuals with a growth mindset tend to embrace effort and engage in challenging tasks (Mrazek et al., 2018). Their decisions are driven by a desire for growth and challenge (Park and John, 2010). In contrast, individuals with a fixed mindset tend to avoid challenging situations, seeking credence and security in their decisions (Roy and Naidoo, 2021). Furthermore, those with a growth mindset view self-improvement opportunities as a way to reinforce a positive self-perception, while fixed mindset individuals seek to secure favorable judgments about themselves through opportunities to signal positive qualities to themselves or others (Dweck, 2000; Park and John, 2010). Thus, we predict that mindsets can

also shape preferences for experiential and material purchases. Specifically, given that growth mindset individuals engage in activities that provide self-improvement, self-development, and growth, and are more comfortable with risk and uncertainty, we expect that they will prefer experiential purchases more compared to those with a fixed mindset. If this is the case, it will be possible to improve consumer well-being by priming them with growth mindset and positively influencing their preference for experiential purchases. However, research suggests that consumer generally consider making experiential purchases when their basic needs are satisfied (Gilovich and Gallo, 2019). Therefore, we expect that the effect of growth mindset on experiential purchases is more pronounced for financially secure consumers.

Across two studies, we experimentally test the relationship between mindset and purchase preference by manipulating the growth and fixed mindsets and using consumer-generated options for experiences and material products.

Study 1

We recruited 252 Prolific panelists to take part in our first study for financial compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to read and summarize one of two mindset primes (Chui et al., 1997):

- **Fixed Mindset Condition:** In his talk at the American Psychological Association's annual convention, Dr. George Medin argued that "in most of us, by the age of ten, our character has set like plaster and will never soften again." He also reported research findings showing that people's personality characteristics are fixed and cannot be changed.
- **Growth Mindset Condition:** In his talk at the American Psychological Association's annual convention, Dr. George Medin argued that "no one's character is as 'hard as a rock' so that it cannot be changed." He also reported research findings showing that people's personality characteristics can change, even in their late sixties.

To measure preference for experiential goods, participants wrote down one experiential product and one material product they wanted and indicated which one they would purchase if they could only choose one (1 = material product, 7 = experiential product; Tully et al., 2015). Additionally, participants reported the approximate cost of each product and their household income.

We excluded 3 participants who failed attention checks and 18 who entered non-words (numbers or symbols) instead of product names, leaving 231 participants in the analysis.

Results

We categorized participants into income groups (Netemeyer et al., 2018): low income (<40k; N=89), middle income (40-90k; N=80), and high income (>90k; N=62). We also controlled for the cost of material and experiential products (Tully et al., 2015). There was a marginal Mindset x Income interaction ($F(2, 229) = 2.31, p = .10$). However, the pairwise comparison suggests an effect for high-income participants. Specifically, there were no effect of mindset for low-income ($p = .79$) and middle-income participants ($p = .69$). However, there was a significant effect of mindset for high-income participants ($p = .02$) (see Figure 1). To replicate Study 1 and to capture financial security with more precise measures, we conducted Study 2.

Study 2

A total of 401 Prolific panelists completed the study in exchange for financial compensation. We excluded 31 participants who failed the attention check and twenty participants who entered non-words (numbers, symbols) instead of product names, leaving a final sample of 350 participants. Study 2 utilized the same method as Study 1 except that participants also reported expected future financial security and current money management stress (Perceived Financial Well-Being Scale; Netemeyer, Warmath, Fernandes, and Lynch, 2018). These additional measures allowed us to better understand the moderating effects of financial security on consumer preferences for experiential (vs. material) purchases.

Results

Participants in the growth mindset condition preferred the experiential product significantly more than participants in the fixed mindset condition ($\beta = .32, p = .01$) (see Figure 2). We employed the Johnson-Neyman technique to identify the region of significance for the interaction between mindset and Expected Future Financial Security (EFFF). The Johnson-Neyman region of significance indicated that the effect of mindset on the preference for experiential purchases is significant when EFFF is greater than 4.4 (see Figure 3). The results of the analysis are

presented in Table 1. The Johnson-Neyman technique was also applied to identify the region of significance for the interaction between mindset and Current Money Management Stress (CMMS). The Johnson-Neyman region of significance indicated that the effect of mindset on the preference for experiential purchases is significant when CMMS is less than 3.8 (see Figure 4). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2. These findings suggest that a growth mindset increases the preference for experiential products, particularly among those with future higher perceived financial security and current lower money management stress.

Figure 1. Preference for experiential products based on household income (Study 1).

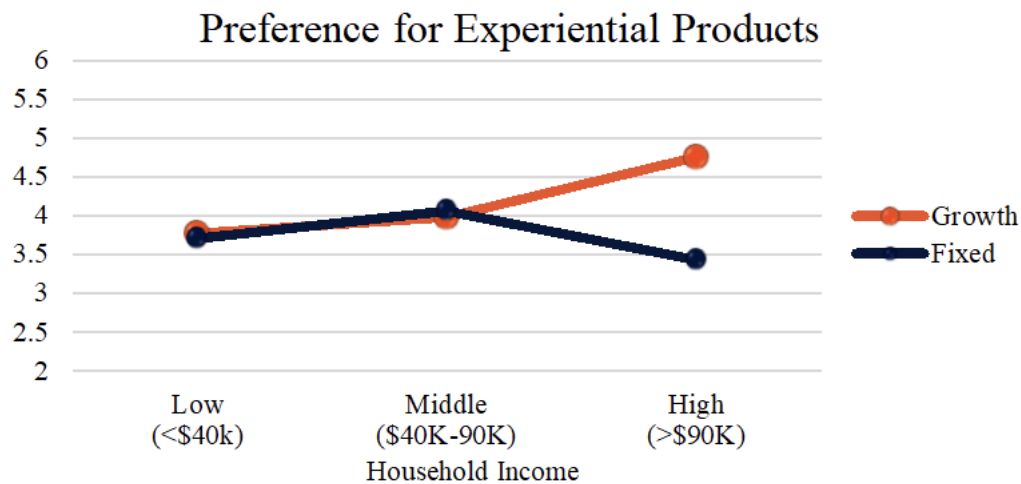


Figure 2. Preference for experiential products (Study 2).

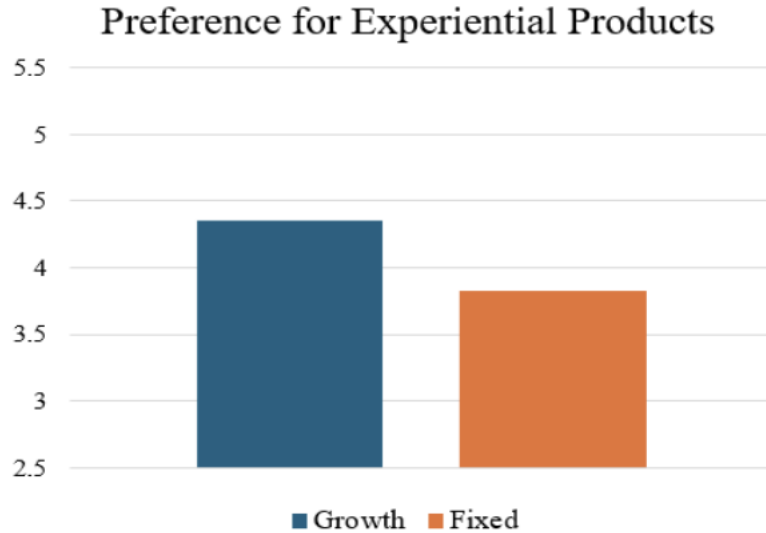
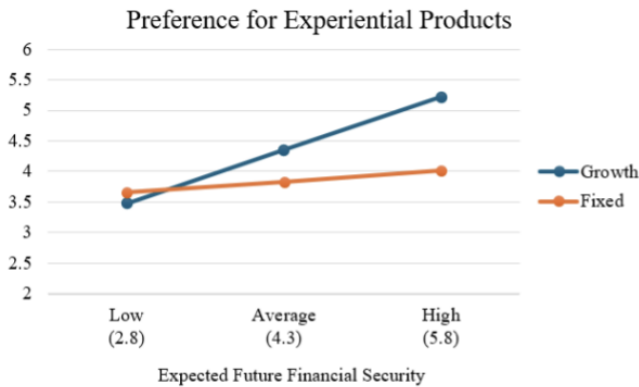
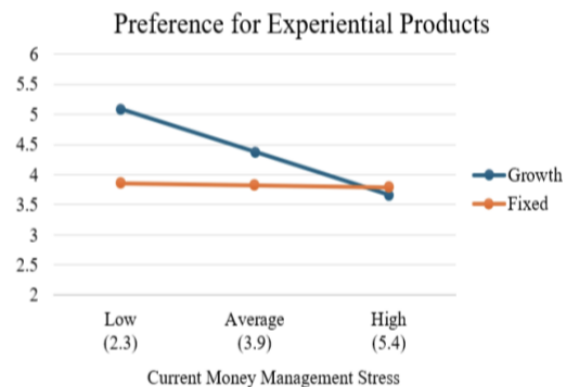


Table 1. The Moderation of EFFS

	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Intercept	4.085	0.125	32.588	<.001
Mat. cost	-.001	.000	-2.166	.031
Exp. cost	.002	.000	4.318	<.001
EFFS (mean-centered)	.303	.085	4.021	<.001
Mindset (-1=fixed, 1=growth)	.303	.126	2.403	.017
EFFS X Mindset	.221	.085	2.606	.010

Figure 3. Moderation of EFFS.**Table 2. The Moderation of CMMS**

	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Intercept	4.099	0.127	32.331	<.001
Mat. cost	-.001	.001	-2.297	.022
Exp. cost	.002	.000	4.498	<.001
CMMS (mean-centered)	-.252	.083	-3.035	.003
Mindset (-1=fixed, 1=growth)	.323	.128	2.530	.012
CMMS X Mindset	-0.211	.083	-2.550	.011

Figure 4. Moderation of CMMS.

General Discussion

Around two decades ago, Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) presented evidence that individuals can derive more happiness from experiential purchases (things consumers do) than material purchases (things consumers own) once they cover their basic needs (Gilovich and Gallo, 2019). However, consumers still acquire material possessions in larger quantities (Weingarten and Goodman, 2021). This study examines the ways to influence the preference for experiential purchases. Specifically, since mindsets affect a broad range of consumer behaviors (John and Park, 2016), we link consumer implicit theories to preference for experiential vs. material purchases. The findings from two experimental studies suggest that a growth mindset, which views personal qualities as malleable, increases the preference for experiential purchases. Additionally, our results show that financial security represents a robust boundary condition for the effect.

Our study offers significant theoretical contributions to the fields of consumer behavior and well-being. It bridges the gap between research on consumer implicit theories and the experiential advantage, demonstrating empirically that a growth mindset can enhance consumers' preferences for experiences. Additionally, it supports findings that financial constraints may reduce the preference for experiential purchases (e.g., Tully et al., 2015). These results have important practical implications for both marketers and policymakers. Extensive research shows that growth or fixed mindsets can be evoked situationally by priming individuals with specific information. Consequently, policymakers aiming to boost consumer well-being and marketers looking to increase experiential purchases can strategically prime consumers to adopt a growth mindset. This is particularly important for chronic fixed mindset individuals, as fixed mindsets are associated with negative and unfortunate outcomes (John and Park, 2016). Priming these individuals with a growth mindset can contribute to their well-being. After all, human life is essentially a sum of experiences (Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003).

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Summary Brief

Consumer Behavior in Wearable Health Devices: A Systematic Literature Review

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Introduction

Wearables refer to various technologies or devices worn on the body, such as smartwatches, fitness trackers, and sensors. The market for wearable healthcare devices is substantial, with a significant portion consisting of smartwatches. These devices are used to monitor physical activity and conditions such as heart rate and blood glucose levels in patients. The global market for wearable healthcare devices is projected to reach a substantial value, with the sports and fitness wearables market estimated to reach nearly US\$29.5 billion by 2029.^[1] Despite the growing demand and numerous benefits of these devices, the industry is still in a stage of growth, and people are not fully prepared to adopt health wearable devices. Previous studies have focused mainly on smartwatches, and there is a need for more research to cover the progress of quality articles produced in the past 10 years. Our study aims to address consumer behavior for health wearable technology devices by systematically consolidating and categorizing the literature, bringing attention to current research trends related to consumer behavior and preferences.

Review Methodology

We conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) to analyze consumer behavior in health wearable technology devices. Our search strategy involved identifying relevant keywords and using the PRISMA protocol. We searched the Scopus database using relevant keywords and found 1272 articles, ultimately selecting 32 for our final review. We considered the PRISMA protocol (Moher et al., 2009) for screening the articles selected between 2015 and 2024. Table 1 indicates the list of articles considered for the study.

Findings and Discussion

The publication trends in consumer behavior for health wearable devices showed fluctuation between 2015 and 2024, with a growing trend from 2020 to 2024. The journals 'Computers in Human Behavior' and 'Behaviour and Information Technology' published the most articles on this topic. The most cited articles were by Gao et al. (2015) and Kim & Shin (2015). Eleven different countries were the source of data for research, with the USA being the most common location. Most articles were based on online surveys, followed by offline surveys and semi-structured interviews. The partial least squares method was the most frequently used analysis technique. The technology acceptance model, unified theory of acceptance and use of technology, and self-determination theory were among the theories used in the articles. Further, we developed a conceptual model covering the antecedents, mediators and moderators and how it influence the outcome variables such as consumers adoption intention and the continuation intention (see Figure 1).

Conclusion

The study aims to propose a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between different variables related to consumer behavior and health wearable technology. It also suggests potential future research areas, including theory, context, characteristics, and methodology. The study recommends future researchers to consider incorporating the theory of reasoned action and the task-technology fit theory in empirical studies. It also suggests conducting research in other countries and exploring different types of wearable technology devices. Additionally, the study highlights the need for more emphasis on the challenges related to technology acceptance and the mediating role of consumer health wellbeing. Lastly, it recommends the consideration of mixed methods and experimental research in future studies.

Table1: Articles studied for SLR

Authors	Article title	Journal name
Kumar et al. (2024)	Cognitive engagement with AI-enabled technologies and value creation in healthcare	<i>Journal of Consumer Behaviour</i>
Tikkanen et al. (2023)	Smart Wearable Technologies as Resources for Consumer Agency in Well-Being	<i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>
Bianchi et al. (2023)	Investigating the drivers of wearable technology adoption for healthcare in South America	<i>Information Technology and People</i>
Tsai et al. (2022)	Continued usage of smart wearable devices (SWDs): cross-level analysis of gamification and network externality	<i>Electronic Markets</i>
Liu & Han (2022)	Determining the Key Factors of Wearable Devices Consumers' Adoption Behavior Based on an MADM Model for Product Improvement	<i>IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management</i>
Lee (2022)	Do tech products have a beauty premium? The effect of visual aesthetics of wearables on willingness-to-pay premium and the role of product category involvement	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>
Gerhart & Ogbanufe (2022)	Disidentity and nonconsumption of smartwatches	<i>International Journal of Consumer Studies</i>
Zhou et al. (2022)	Examining user engagement and use of fitness tracking technology through the lens of technology affordances	<i>Behaviour and Information Technology</i>
Beh et al. (2021)	Using smartwatches for fitness and health monitoring: the UTAUT2 combined with threat appraisal as moderators	<i>Behaviour and Information Technology</i>
Siepmann & Kowalczyk (2021)	Understanding continued smartwatch usage: the role of emotional as well as health and fitness factors	<i>Electronic Markets</i>
Lee (2021)	Impact of visual typicality on the adoption of wearables	<i>Journal of Consumer Behaviour</i>
Magni et al. (2021)	Employees' acceptance of wearable devices: Towards a predictive model	<i>Technological Forecasting and Social Change</i>
Morozova & Gurova (2021)	Being like others vs. being different: Wearable technology and daily practices of 50+ consumers in Russia and Finland	<i>International Journal of Consumer Studies</i>
Wang et al. (2020)	Understanding consumer acceptance of healthcare wearable devices: An integrated model of UTAUT and TTF	<i>International Journal of Medical Informatics</i>
Attig & Franke (2020)	Abandonment of personal quantification: A review and empirical study investigating reasons for wearable activity tracking attrition	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>
Ehrari et al. (2020)	Concerns and trade-offs in information technology acceptance: the balance between the requirement for privacy and the desire for safety	<i>Communications of the Association for Information Systems</i>
Mettler & Wulf (2019)	Physiolitics at the workplace: Affordances and constraints of wearables use from an employee's perspective	<i>Information Systems Journal</i>

Jarrahi et al. (2018)	Activity trackers, prior motivation, and perceived informational and motivational affordances	<i>Personal and Ubiquitous Computing</i>
Dehghani (2018)	Exploring the motivational factors on continuous usage intention of smartwatches among actual users	<i>Behaviour and Information Technology</i>
Lee & Lee (2018)	Factors that influence an individual's intention to adopt a wearable healthcare device: The case of a wearable fitness tracker	<i>Technological Forecasting and Social Change</i>
Canhoto & Arp (2017)	Exploring the factors that support adoption and sustained use of health and fitness wearables	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>
Marakhimov & Joo (2017)	Consumer adaptation and infusion of wearable devices for healthcare	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>
Zhang et al. (2017)	Technical attributes, health attribute, consumer attributes and their roles in adoption intention of healthcare wearable technology	<i>International Journal of Medical Informatics</i>
Wu et al. (2016)	Exploring consumers' intention to accept smartwatch	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>
Fang & Chang (2016)	Users' psychological perception and perceived readability of wearable devices for elderly people	<i>Behaviour & Information Technology</i>
Jung et al. (2016)	Consumer valuation of the wearables: The case of smartwatches	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>
Lunney et al. (2016)	Wearable fitness technology: A structural investigation into acceptance and perceived fitness outcomes	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>
Park et al. (2016)	Understanding the emergence of wearable devices as next-generation tools for health communication	<i>Information Technology and People</i>
Jee & Sohn (2015)	Patent network based conjoint analysis for wearable device	<i>Technological Forecasting and Social Change</i>
Gao et al. (2015)	An empirical study of wearable technology acceptance in healthcare	<i>Industrial Management and Data Systems</i>
Kim & Shin (2015)	An acceptance model for smart watches: Implications for the adoption of future wearable technology	<i>Internet Research</i>
Rauschnabel et al. (2015)	Who will buy smart glasses? Empirical results of two pre-market-entry studies on the role of personality in individual awareness and intended adoption of Google Glass wearables	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>

Source: Authors compiled, based on Scopus database.

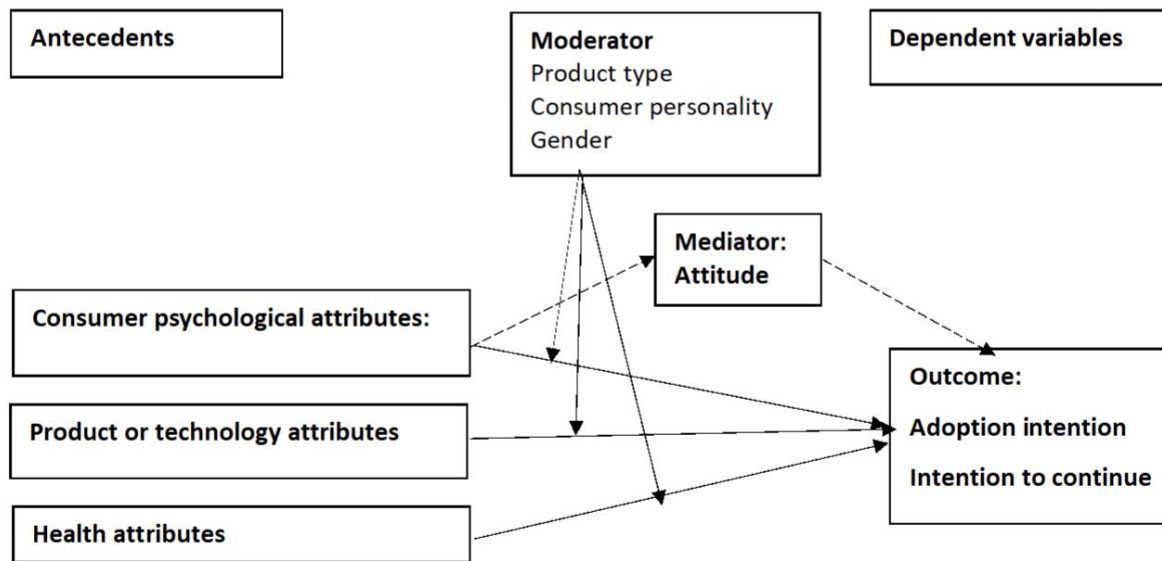


Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Authors creation

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- ^[1]<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1461249/wearable-healthcare-devices-market-worldwide-by-application/>

SESSION 10.6 PANEL: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUTURE OF MARKETING EDUCATION

Moderators:

**Victoria Crittenden, Dhruv Grewal, Abhijit Guha, Anjala Krishen,
Adam Mills, Maria Petrescu, and Amy Quon**

SESSION 10.7: TEACHING MOMENTS

Teaching Moments

A Modification of the Standard Early Semester Introductions

Gregory McAmis, GA, Middle Georgia State University

A modified approach to student introductions to the rest of the class is presented that can open up possibilities for early-semester discussion of marketing concepts.

Teaching Moments

Encouraging Marketing Students to Become AI Power Users

Mary Harrison, Samford University

This teaching moment proposes a structured approach for marketing educators to empower students in mastering AI tools effectively, positioning them competitively in an evolving job market that increasingly values AI proficiency and innovation.

Teaching Moments

Padlet - Powered Promotion: Engaging Students with the Promotional Mix.

Michelle Woodhouse, Flagler College

Innovative teaching methods are essential in marketing education to engage students and deepen their understanding of core concepts. One successful approach in my classroom focuses on the elements of the promotional mix, utilizing Padlet to create a collaborative, research-driven experience. I curate and post a diverse collection of magazine ads on Padlet. Students form groups, select an ad, and conduct further research to identify elements of the promotional mix utilized by the company. They critique the effectiveness of these elements, discuss what worked well, and suggest improvements. The exercise culminates in group presentations, promoting public speaking skills and collaborative learning. This Padlet-powered exercise makes the promotional mix more relatable, encouraging participation and critical thinking. By engaging students in a hands-on, research-oriented project, they are better equipped to understand and apply marketing principles in real-world scenarios. An example of how to implement this will be presented.

Teaching Moments

The Prism of Intersectionality: A Playlist Assignment

Janée Burkhalter, Saint Joseph's University

Aisha Lockridge, Saint Joseph's University

Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, 1991) is a key framework which addresses how axes of identity interact on multiple levels to propagate social inequality. Developed to address gaps in civil rights law, this framework has grown to have interdisciplinary applications in a wide range of fields including marketing and communications.

Teaching Moments

Using the Teaching Moment Bell for Student Presentations

James Blair, Eastern Kentucky University

Public speaking and good communications skills continue to be some of the top skills employers seek from our program graduates. Many employers seek students that can convey critical information during a short period of time. During business meetings, professionals do not always have a large amount of time to convey critical information. Implementing the Teaching Moment Bell, allows students to obtain experience presenting information with a small time allotment, gain confidence in their communication skills, and build a positive classroom environment by receiving a "thunderous applause" at the conclusion of their presentation.

Teaching Moments

Utilizing an Icebreaker to Illustrate Market Segmentation in a Principles of Marketing Course

K.B. Martin, Miami University

On the first day of an 80-minute Principles of Marketing course, an icebreaker is employed to introduce students and illustrate the concept of market segmentation. This activity not only facilitates student interaction but also sets the foundation for understanding segmentation, which will be revisited throughout the semester. With approximately 75 to 100 students, predominantly business majors, the objective is to create personal connections and demonstrate key segmentation principles through an engaging exercise. Students answer questions about their backgrounds and preferences, categorizing themselves into different areas of the classroom. This visual representation helps them discuss how personal traits align with market segments, linking real-life experience with marketing theory. The exercise significantly enhances their understanding of segmentation, promotes engagement, and serves as a practical reference throughout the course.

Teaching Moments

Data-Driven Market Analysis and Sizing Projects – A Collaboration with a Local Bee Farm

Hamid Abbassi, Fayetteville State University

This teaching moment showcases a collaboration between Secret Garden Bees and myself, an assistant professor of marketing, to integrate real-world data analysis into the curriculum. Through this partnership, we developed projects that provided students with hands-on experience in market research, data analysis, and strategic planning. These initiatives enhanced students' skills and understanding of sustainable business practices while supporting underrepresented businesses in North Carolina, preparing them for complex business environments.

Teaching Moments

Adding an Artificial Intelligence Assignment to a Digital Marketing Class

Joie Hain, Clayton State
Anita Whiting, Clayton State University

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a hot topic. Universities and faculty struggle with handling AI usage on assignments, papers, projects, etc., Faculty also struggle with incorporating AI into their classes. This AI assignment is designed to uncover student perspectives on AI while providing an example of utilizing ChatGPT4o to summarize the assignment results.

Students in a digital marketing class completed the assignment below after studying AI and while completing an industry certification in AI.

Assignment: Please write 3-4 paragraphs about the use of AI in higher education and the classroom. Topics to consider: Should AI be included in the classroom? If AI is not in the classroom, how do students graduate with the needed skills for employment? How do you maintain and manage ethical behavior?

We will present the students' thoughts using ChatGPT4o. This presentation will provide faculty with student perspectives and recommendations on using AI in the classroom.

Teaching Moments

Teaching Coding in Business Schools in the Generative AI Era

Stephen France, Mississippi State University

In this Teaching Moment, I outline some lessons and experiences in teaching coding in a business school. I give a brief discussion of the importance of developing coding skills for business students and I describe some of the challenges of teaching coding skills in business school settings and some strategies for ensuring student learning and success. I pay particular attention to issues introduced by new LLM (large language model)-based systems and discuss how instructors can balance rigor with the need for students to learn LLM-related skills.

Teaching Moments

Enhancing the Learning Journey: Leveraging genAI Feedback Tools

Kelley Cours Anderson, College of Charleston

This teaching moment will share the transformative potential of genAI feedback tools in higher education, focusing on TimelyGrader. Prior research has indicated substantial benefits of giving students feedback, such as offering clarity on a good performance; yet, many faculty lack the time and resources to give stellar feedback to students. Despite the early entry and recognized risks of leveraging AI, skill in using AI to create efficiency is not only anticipated but expected in today's marketing workplace. Forrester (2024) argues AI can enhance convenience, creativity, and professionalism in business. As the education landscape continues to evolve, integrating AI tools like TimelyGrader becomes essential in enhancing student outcomes. I will highlight how I used the tool in my Spring 2024 Advertising course, along with insights from students on their experiences with the tool. The presentation will culminate in best practices for maximizing the potential of the tool.

Teaching Moments

Meta Business Suite is in your Classroom

Tserennyam Sukhbaatar, Brigham Young University - Hawaii

Practicing how to manage social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) is an effective way of teaching. Meta's Facebook and Instagram are popular social media channels that many companies use. After getting approval from a local business, students can manage the local business's Facebook and Instagram pages on Meta Business Suite by getting content creators' access. Students are divided into different groups and create photo and video posts. Also, students develop captions, add emojis, hashtags, and landing pages, and schedule their posts on Meta Business Suite. Every group takes specific dates to post. Students can learn more about how to use Meta Business Suite, analytics, and other features.

Teaching Moments

Using Whole Brain Teaching to Reinforce Marketing Concepts

Karen Hopkins, Auburn University

In active learning, assigning background reading or viewing to students before an active learning exercise is common practice. The idea is for students to come to class prepared with the basic knowledge needed to perform the exercise. Often, students arrive to class unprepared, defeating the exercise's purpose. With no prior knowledge to activate, students waste time trying to catch up; instructors waste time revisiting basic concepts, and it's difficult to realize the desired results of an in-class exercise. Whole Brain Teaching (Biffle 2015), often used in K-12 classrooms, helps students learn basic concepts rather quickly by engaging different parts of their brains and focusing their learning efforts in fairly short order. Whole Brain Teaching tactics offer a way to enhance active learning exercises by providing a fun, fairly quick, and effective way to teach basic concepts.

Teaching Moments

Unlocking Success: The Crucial Role of Digital Marketing Portfolios and How to Perfect Yours

Courtney Peters, Samford University
Breanne Mertz, University Of Tampa

Many marketing employers expect job candidates to be able to showcase their abilities beyond simply being knowledgeable of the marketing world. Providing students with the opportunity to develop optimized digital marketing portfolios or personal websites helps set marketing students apart and prepares them for success. New graduates must be strong marketers – being able to market (and sell) yourself is paramount in the competitive landscape. Thus, as educators, we desired to create a project where students can apply their marketing, branding, and digital knowledge to leverage their online presence – where marketing yourself provides an opportunity to join marketing theory with practice while simultaneously building digital assets. Therefore, we developed a three-stage approach to creating a stand-out digital marketing portfolio (DMP).

Teaching Moments

Instructor Feedback: Three Approaches that Save Time and Add Value

Ream Shoreibah, University of Alabama

Marketing students expect feedback on exams, team projects, and other assignments, but providing this feedback in the form of written comments can be time consuming and often leaves instructors wondering whether students will truly make use of the feedback (Ackerman & Gross 2010). Each of the alternatives provided here is suitable for a specific situation and saves the instructor time while providing the student with distinct advantages.

SESSION 10.8: WHY WE BUY

Moderator:

Sona Klucarova

Summary Brief

Long Live the King and Luxury Shopping! The Change of Monarch and Consumer Desire for Luxury Products

Sona Klucarova, University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA

For countries with a monarch as head of state, a change on the throne is an occasion of historic significance. This research examines how such an event impacts consumers' propensity to engage in luxury shopping. Study 1, conducted in the aftermath of Queen Margrethe II's abdication, shows that Danes had a greater desire to buy luxury products after (vs. before) their monarch's abdication announcement. Study 2, conducted during the official period of mourning following Queen Elizabeth II's death, demonstrates that residents of the United Kingdom were more likely to purchase luxury items during (vs. before) this period. This increase in luxury shopping propensity in the aftermath of Queen Elizabeth II's passing was driven by consumers' heightened desire for impulsive buying (Study 3). Framing this event as King Charles III's accession (instead of Queen Elizabeth II's passing) led to the same results (Study 4), demonstrating the robustness of the predicted effects.

Introduction

Although monarchy is perceived by some as an archaic institution (Clancy, 2021), about 22% of the world's countries have a monarch as their head of state in 2024. Unlike elected heads of state who hold office for a predetermined amount of time, monarchs, whose position is secured through the hereditary line of succession, remain on the throne until their death or abdication (Bogdanor, 1995).

Despite the passing or abdication of a monarch—and the immediate accession of a new monarch—being a unique historic event, little is known about how such an event might impact shopping preferences of the affected country's residents. This research attempts to fill this gap by examining the shopping preferences of Danish and UK residents in the days following their respective monarch's abdication and passing, respectively.

Theoretical Background

"The Sovereign . . . gives a sense of stability and continuity" (Royal.uk, 2024) to the country. The monarch's abdication or passing can thus bring feelings of disruption to the affected country's residents. Such feelings of disruption can result in consumers' elevated urge to engage in impulsive buying (Gupta et al., 2021; Naeem, 2021; Sneath et al., 2009), which is often linked to purchases of luxury items (Cao et al., 2024). Taken together, a change of monarch might result in an elevated desire for impulse buying, which could in turn lead to a greater propensity to engage in luxury shopping.

Findings

The predictions were tested in four studies. The findings demonstrate that Danes had a greater desire to engage in luxury shopping after (vs. before) Queen Margrethe II's abdication announcement. In a similar vein, the passing of Queen Elizabeth II increased the UK residents' appetite for luxury shopping, and this effect was driven by these consumers' elevated desire to engage in impulsive buying following the historic change on the throne. Framing this event as the accession of a new monarch (instead of the passing of an old monarch) led to the same results.

Together, the current research demonstrates the positive effect a change of monarch can have on consumer desire for luxury products. This research has practical implications for luxury retailers operating in monarchies.

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Summary Brief

Unbundling Bundles: How Temporal Distance Affects Cruiser's Bundling Decisions

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Customers worldwide purchase package deals that offer both the main package and ancillaries. With that being said, companies continue to observe that many customers opt out of this option, even when faced with a fundamentally better deal. These customers prefer to unbundle their packages despite being informed of potential fees and loss of savings. To understand this phenomenon, the authors have developed a conceptual framework based on previously collected secondary information from a cruise company that offers bundles to its customers. The study investigates the temporal distance between the day customers book their cruise and how the cruise increases: customers' tendency to unbundle when the time difference increases. These findings will provide companies with insights on when to launch bundles to decrease unbundling behavior.

Introduction

The cruise industry is one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors, producing approximately \$138 billion in total economic output worldwide and projected to increase 10% by 2028 (CLIA, 2023). Cruise lines rely significantly on bundling as a strategic tool to maintain their consumer base, increasing sales and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, airlines can increase net revenue by 2.6% and pricing by 12% through bundling action (Wang, 2020). As a result, bundling has become a sophisticated marketing strategy across various industries, more notably in the tourism sector. However, while bundling is still an extremely prominent selling tactic that generates higher revenues, companies continue to observe customers opt out of this option, even when the service provider offers a better deal. These customers prefer to partially customize the additional services within their bundle despite being informed that they will be charged a fee for breaking it. Understanding the nuisances of unbundling behavior among customers will help practitioners tailor their offerings more effectively and add to the current bundling literature, which has not directly explored unbundling or hybrid bundling behavior.

Our study hypotheses concern how time between consumer books increases their willingness to unbundle. Using control-effort theory as our theoretical basis, the authors study how temporal distance affects consumers' willingness to unbundle. The authors observed how additional fees play a part in this process. The following sections provide the topics related to the case we examine, specifically an overview of the current bundling literature, control-effort theory, and temporal distance. Next, we describe the methods, current and planned data analysis, and some preliminary results. The authors end with a short discussion of this study's potential theoretical contributions and managerial implications.

Literature Review

Throughout the literature, bundling has been a topic of great discussion. With a primary focus on the effects of bundling on consumer behavior, numerous researchers have investigated how consumers perceive prices (Harlam et al., 1995; Soman & Gourville, 2001), savings, and discounts (Bonev & Alexandrov, 1993; Yadav & Monroe, 1993) or the presentation of the bundles (Yadav, 1994). Using theories such as anchoring and adjustment heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), and mental accounting principles (Thaler, 1985), research finds that consumers tend to disassociate the costs and benefits of bundles, resulting in contradictory consumer behavior. For instance, research finds that consumers examine bundles in decreasing order of perceived importance, with many putting the most weight on the most important item (Yadav, 1995; Harris & Blair, 2006) or by averaging the individual items' evaluation (Gaeth et al., 1991). Other studies find that consumers who purchase bundles consume less of their purchase than those who purchase the product separately (Prelec & Loewenstein, 1998; Soman & Gourville, 2001). Additionally, consumers are more sensitive to bundles overall, having difficulty evaluating bundles with dissimilar items (Agarwal & Chatterjee, 2003), even when the bundles' products are complementary (Simonin & Ruth, 1995).

Despite this, firms continue offering consumers bundle packages to increase consumers' intention to purchase. They find bundling packages the most effective method of reducing marginal costs by exploiting the economies of scope (Stremersch & Tellis, 2006). For consumers, bundled purchases reduce buyers' heterogeneity

(Guiltinan, 1987; Schmalensee, 1984), result in higher perceived satisfaction (Johnson et al., 1999), are perceived as more convenient (Stremersch & Tellis, 2006; Zhou et al., 2020), providing more value (Soman & Gourville, 2001), seen as less risky (Harris & Blair, 2006), and in some cases be perceived as having enhanced performance (Stremersch & Tellis, 2006).

While not preferred by firms, consumers opt for the unbundled option, even when it makes more economic sense than its counterpart. When this occurs, it indicates that the bundled systems or products produce less value than the products separately (Wilson et al., 1990). In order to dissuade consumers from unbundling, firms have developed numerous forms of bundling packaging. The purest sense of the word for bundle is the “sale of two or more separate products in one package” (Stremersch & Tellis, 2006). Since its conceptualization, the term bundling has been adapted into various ones, such as price bundling, packages bundling products to offer consumers a special price, or price bundling (Guiltinan, 1987). Another would be product bundling, which refers to integrating and selling two or more separate products at a specific price, for instance, multimedia PCs (Stremersch & Tellis, 2006).

While the bundle can be manipulated to project customer value, so can the options available. Firms have implemented pure and mixed bundling strategies to prevent consumers from unbundling or ensuring a purchase regardless of whether they choose a bundle, respectfully. Pure bundling is a strategy in which only bundles are sold by a firm without the option to purchase products separately. A prime example would be software suites like Microsoft Office, where individual components are often not sold separately to customers. Mix bundling, on the other hand, refers to a strategy in which a firm makes available to consumers both the bundled and unbundled products to consumers (Stremersch & Tellis, 2006), such as fast food retailers that sell both combo meals and components of the meal separately. Overall, mixed bundling has become a strategy with a high degree of success. Guiltinan (1987) finds that mixed bundling reduces effective buyer heterogeneity, similar to pure bundling, while leading to higher sales than a pure or unbundled strategy (Wilson et al., 1990).

Conceptual Frameworks

Using the control-effort framework, also called the Control-effort tradeoff, the authors investigate the effects of temporal distance on consumers’ mix bundling habits. In essence, the control-effort tradeoff refers to how consumers altered their mental level of control and effort regarding price determination. Pricing effort refers to the “psychological feeling of mental exertion associated with the price determination” (Wang et al., 2021). Consumers, in essence, try to minimize their pricing effort as much as possible by paying the lowest price possible while simultaneously considering several other psychological and social factors (Gerpott & Schneider, 2016), such as perceptions of wasting money or appearing cheap (Kunter, 2015). Regarding bundling, consumers pricing efforts are generally low, choosing bundles as they are perceived as providing more added value, enhancing performance, and increasing convenience (Guiltinan, 1987; Harris & Blair, 2006; Stremersch & Tellis, 2006).

Pricing control, on the other hand, refers to the “perceived level of personal influence over the process of determining the final price paid for a good or service” (Wang et al., 2021) of which consumers try to gain as much control as possible while paying the lowest price possible (Strotz, 1973). In other words, pricing control involves the consumers to situationally evaluated their situation in order to save money (Wang et al., 2021). While there is not much within the literature regarding unbundling or mixed bundling, the present information suggests that unbundling efforts result in higher perceptions of satisfaction, specifically towards price discount information (Johnson et al., 1999). Suggesting that consumers, when focused on saving money, attempt to unbundle offered packages to increase their pricing control (see Figure 1). Thus, the authors hypothesize the following:

H1: Temporal distance affects perceived control, influencing willingness to unbundle. Specifically, low temporal distance decreases perceived customer control, leading to lower possibilities of unbundling behavior, whereas high temporal distance increases perceived control, leading to higher possibilities of unbundling behavior.

H2: The presence of a fee increases a customer’s willingness to unbundle.

H3: Consumers’ willingness to unbundle positively affects customer satisfaction and revenue.

Methodology

This study investigates various factors influencing customer behavior and unbundling behavior. The authors will conduct a study in two stages. The first stage is a series of field study experiments, each designed to build on the findings of the previous one. The first study explores the primary effects of temporal distance on consumers’ preferences for bundled services. Participants are exposed to scenarios with different temporal distances

(low vs. high) and asked to choose between the bundled or the mixed bundle pricing option. The scenario context focuses on choosing cruise line packages, including the cruise line, board and food, and flights. The second study will replicate the main effects found in the first study and introduce a mediating variable further to explore the relationship between temporal distance and pricing control. The mediation effect of effort and control will be examined.

In the second stage, the authors will test their hypothetical model (see Figure 1) using a secondary data set encompassing 64,000 cruise book entries from 2014. This data incorporates cruise and flight details, financial transactions, and customer satisfaction ratings. The data will be analyzed using various statistical methods to examine the hypothetical relationship between temporal distance, customer control, pricing, discounts and additional fees, and satisfaction and revenue. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will validate the findings through multiple models and provide a thorough understanding of the relationships between these variables.

Contributions

The results of these empirical studies will make several theoretical and managerial contributions. First, it expands the control-effort theory and temporal distance literature by applying it to the service industry context. It provides a much deeper understanding of price control and price effort and its influence on consumer behavior of high-involvement service purchases (i.e., cruises). Secondly, it offers a platform to verify current bundling literature and contributes to the limited literature on mixed or unbundling behavior. Lastly, it explores the theoretical implications of other service aspects, such as additional amenities, fees, and discounts.

Regarding its managerial contributions, this study will improve the firm's understanding of the unbundling behavior of consumers, providing practical insights for the tourism industry aiming at optimizing their bundle strategies. Specifically, this study's potential results suggest a specific time frame for firms to introduce their bundle packages to ensure consumers are less likely to exhibit unbundling behavior. Furthermore, this research will help managers design more appealing packages to meet customer needs better or maximize revenue.

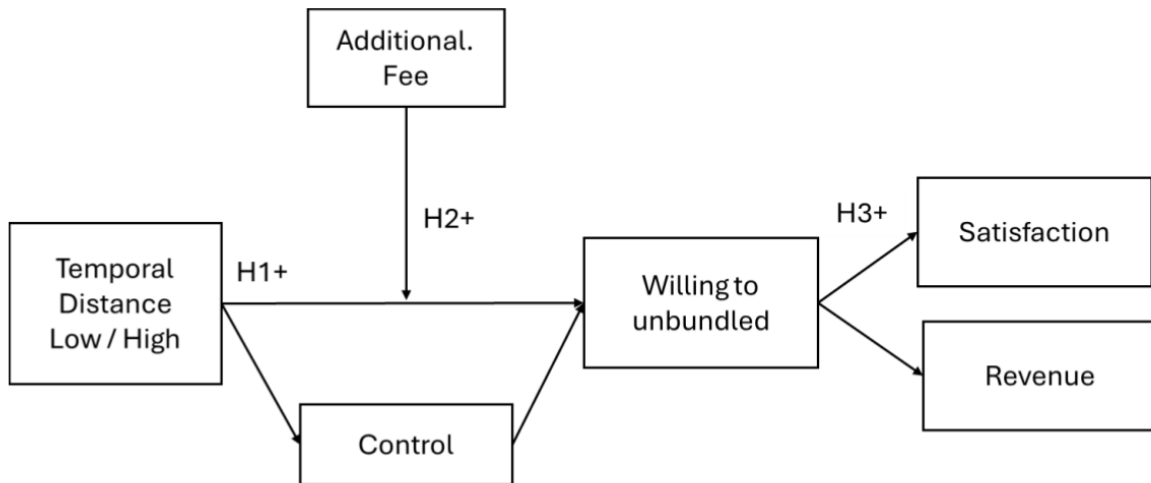
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Figures

Figure 1. Hypothetical Model



Summary Brief

Consumer Ethical Orientations in Medical and Recreational Marijuana Consumption

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Introduction

Over the past few years, many states in the United States of America have begun the process of legalizing both medical and recreational marijuana use. California, Nevada, Colorado, Ohio, and many other states, have legalized recreational and medical marijuana. Kentucky, West Virginia, New Hampshire, and Utah, among others, have only legalized medical marijuana (Chapekis and Shah, 2024). Although many states have legalized marijuana for both recreational and medical uses, important consumer ethical concerns remain. For example, many private companies have a “drug-free workplace” for their employees which can impact personal marijuana use. The purpose of our research is to examine how recreational and medical marijuana consumers evaluate their marijuana consumption considering non-governmental regulations. Using the Hunt-Vitell theory of marketing ethics, we anticipate that both teleological and deontological considerations impact both medical and recreational marijuana consumers' decision-making.

Conceptual Development

The legalization of Marijuana spurs heated public debate in the United States once thirty-eight and the District of Columbia approved Marijuana consumption for medical purposes, while another fifteen states approved it for recreational purposes (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2024). Hence state laws protect individuals from possession and consumption of medical Marijuana. Inconsistencies exist when state laws and corporate laws conflict with each other. Sometimes employers have the discretion to form a policy on whether they accept medical marijuana use or adopt a drug-free policy in the workplace. Some employers (e.g., transportation) maintain a drug-free policy in the workplace and conduct random drug testing (A.J. Mello, 2012). The purpose of such company policy is to promote workplace safety and maintain worker's productivity (A. J. Mello, 2012). Employees must, therefore, strike a balance on how to maintain productivity while taking care of their health. Hence, employee productivity becomes an ethical issue here.

Theoretical Background

Many factors contribute to the employee's decision of whether to consume Marijuana or not. Employees must maintain a proper balance between self-interest and company guidelines. To do that, employees should consider their personal norms (e.g., self-control; Emery et al., 2020) and the consequences (i.e., rewards as well as punishments) for their behavior. Other factors (e.g., demographic characteristics) may also contribute to shaping a person's attitude toward Marijuana consumption.

Extant research on Marijuana consumption covers various topics, for instance, demographic characteristics (adolescents and youths; Johnston et al., 2018), self-control (Hasin et al., 2006), peer influences (Treloar-Padovano and Miranda, 2018), availability of substances-related cues and substances (Marhe et al., 2013; Shrier et al, 2018). However, the problems associated with the impact of Marijuana use in the workplace still exist, and limited research examined the underlying moral decision-making mechanisms that guide substance use and its impact on the workplace. We want to address this by using the H-V theory of ethics to evaluate employees' substance-related moral decision-making.

Hunt-Vitell (H-V) Theory of Ethics

Organizations form an ethical culture within organizations through their policies and codes of conduct. Most organizations (e.g., public as well as private) often organize ethics training programs to inform employees about the behaviors expected of them (Ferrell and Ferrell, 2021). Therefore, employees have their personal values and organizations set ethics codes and

compliance requirements that employees must follow to conform. Drawing from the H-V theory of ethics, individuals make decisions following two routes: (a) deontological evaluation and (b) teleological evaluation. The deontological evaluation highlights an individual's moral norms, indicating whether the decision is morally right or wrong. These moral norms are generally instilled in personal values and belief systems. On the contrary, teleological evaluation is associated with the consequences of a behavioral action. Teleological evaluation deals with the consequences, either good or bad, that may ensue. These two assessment factors (deontological and teleological) contribute to forming an ethical judgment, which later guides to making of ethical decisions. From the discussion above, we propose the following hypotheses.

H1: Customer's deontological evaluation is positively associated with ethical judgment.

H2: Customer's teleological evaluation is positively associated with ethical judgment.

H3: Teleological evaluation is positively associated with their ethical intention.

H4: Ethical judgment is positively associated with a customer's ethical intention.

Methodology

To examine the assertions above, we plan to conduct multiple studies. In study 1, we will investigate the core relationship of the H-V theory of ethics in the context of medical marijuana consumption. We plan to collect around 150 responses from undergrad students from a mid-western university in the United States. Since Marijuana consumption is a sensitive topic, we will assure our participants that we will maintain confidentiality. We will utilize a 2 (deontology: moral vs immoral) x 2 (teleology: positive vs negative) experimental design. Each scenario is crafted in the context of medical marijuana with a different balance between deontological and teleological evaluation. Next, we plan to conduct our second experiment in the context of recreational marijuana. In study 2, we will again investigate the core relationship of the H-V theory of ethics. We will collect responses from MTurk in exchange for monetary compensation. We expect that more than 200 data will be collected. Like study 1, we will use a 2 (deontology: ethical vs unethical) x 2 (teleology: positive vs negative) experimental design again. Each scenario will be crafted in a different balance between deontological and teleological evaluation in the context of recreational marijuana. In both studies, we expect that customers mainly depend on deontological evaluation and then teleological evaluation in forming an ethical judgment, which later predicts ethical intention. Our conceptual model is summarized below in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Derived from H-V theory of ethics

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Summary Brief

Trust, Like, and Purchase: The Role of Disclosure in Consumer Perceptions of Human and Virtual Influencers

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This research examines the comparative impact of human Social Media Influencers (SMIs) and Virtual Influencers (VIs) on consumer perceptions in digital marketing, with a particular focus on how these perceptions influence purchase intentions. Through a series of four proposed studies, the research aims to explore the effects of disclosing an influencer's virtual nature on consumer trust and likeability, and how these effects subsequently impact purchase intentions. Additionally, it investigates whether these impacts differ based on the type of product being promoted. The study underscores the significance of transparency and ethical considerations in influencer marketing strategies, highlighting the necessity for further research to navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of digital influence effectively.

Introduction

In today's digital marketing landscape, social media has become a crucial tool for brands. Platforms like Instagram present a challenging environment due to the sheer volume of content, making it difficult for brands to capture consumer attention. Amid this, both human social media influencers (SMIs) and Virtual Influencers (VIs) have emerged as important players. Human SMIs, who have substantial online followings, use their personal experiences and authenticity to influence consumer opinions and behaviors. Conversely, VIs are computer-generated characters with human-like characteristics, offering a unique dynamic to marketing strategies.

The rise of VIs is projected to propel the influencer marketing platform market to \$84.89 billion by 2028 (Research and Markets, 2021). VIs expand traditional influencer marketing boundaries (Feng et al. 2023) because they offer creative freedom and adapt quickly to trends, engaging diverse demographics across digital platforms.

Background

Research highlights three factors impacting the success of SMIs: perceived credibility, expertise, and likeability (Böhndel et al. 2023). Credibility involves how accurately influencers present information, with trustworthiness being key (Feng et al. 2023). Expertise is the influencer's knowledge and skill in a specific area, enhancing their influence (Feng et al. 2023). Likeability refers to the positive emotional bond audiences feel with an influencer, often leading to parasocial interactions. Both credibility and likeability affect brand trust and purchase intentions (Torres et al. 2019). Additionally, the disclosure of the use of VIs can negatively impact brand trust (Muniz et al. 2023).

The perceived fit between the product and the endorser is crucial for successful outcomes in celebrity advertising (Janssen et al. 2021). However, there is limited research on how product type affects the acceptance of VIs' endorsements. The implications of using VIs versus SMIs are multifaceted, particularly regarding their impact on consumer perceptions of likeability and credibility and, ultimately, on purchase intentions. Current research on how VIs influence consumer perceptions and their subsequent impact on purchase intentions is limited, especially regarding the timing of disclosing an influencer's VI nature. As VIs become increasingly realistic, convincingly mimicking human characteristics even in videos, the possibility of presenting VIs as real individuals grows. This trend necessitates further investigation to understand consumer responses upon discovering an influencer's true nature and raises ethical concerns about transparency and authenticity in marketing.

Understanding the distinction between VIs and SMIs is crucial for brands. While VIs offer novelty and creative storytelling opportunities, their artificial nature could lead to questions about their credibility and authenticity. SMIs, conversely, often form genuine connections with their audience, lending greater credibility to their endorsements (Feng et al. 2023). This difference is pivotal when considering consumer purchase intentions, as the perceived authenticity of an endorsement heavily influences consumer behavior. A VI's endorsement might be seen as innovative but less genuine, potentially affecting the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness of the brand.

Nonetheless, VIs can offer distinctive, creative collaborations that attract consumer interest differently than SMIs might.

Methods

This research comprises four studies focusing on the impact of VIs. The first study compares VIs with human influencers in terms of credibility, likeability, and consumer purchase intentions, without subjects knowing that one influencer is a VI. The remaining studies (experimental designs) analyze the boundaries of this impact given managerial factors such as time of disclosure and type of product.

Conclusions

Brands must understand how VIs and SMIs differently shape consumer perceptions and purchase intentions to craft effective marketing strategies. This is essential for developing impactful marketing strategies in a digital landscape where authenticity and innovation are valued. As AI technology advances, brands must consider the ethical implications of using AI in marketing, ensuring transparency and maintaining consumer trust. Understanding the nuances in consumer psychology related to virtual and human influencers will be crucial for brands navigating this transformative trend in digital influence effectively.

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SESSION 11.1: BIG DATA & AI- HOW DO THEY WORK TOGETHER?

Moderator:

Lei Huang

Summary Brief

The Intersection of Market Orientation and Capabilities in the Age of Big Data and Fierce Competition

Omar S. Itani, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA

Colin Gabler, Auburn University, USA

Ashish Kalra, University of Dayton, USA & Pai Management Institute, India

Samer Hajjar, National University of Singapore, Singapore

In the current business landscape, the abundance of data presents significant opportunities, yet the specific role of big data in driving organizational outcomes within a business-to-business context remains underexplored. By conceptualizing big data as a three-factor construct—comprising business, human, and technology resources—and drawing upon the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities theory, this study proposes a model illustrating how market orientation fosters the development of marketing and innovation capabilities through the effective utilization of big data. Furthermore, we demonstrate how the competitive intensity within a firm's industry enhances the potential for big data to translate into organizational capabilities. Finally, we assess the satisfaction levels of both employees and customers within these firms to comprehend the multifaceted impact of big data across various stakeholders. The insights gleaned from our study provide valuable guidance to firms seeking to strategically integrate big data into their business operations.

Introduction

Big data has emerged as a crucial resource in contemporary marketing, with its potential benefits widely recognized across industries. However, there is a notable gap in understanding how big data translates into capabilities and impacts business-to-business (B2B) firms' outcomes. While big data is seen as a vital component of growth strategies, there remains a lack of clarity regarding its actual business value and the contextual factors influencing its effectiveness. To address this gap, this research proposes a three-factor big data construct encompassing technology, business, and human resources. Market orientation is identified as a foundational component in developing big data capabilities. By effectively generating, disseminating, and responding to marketing intelligence, firms can better utilize big data resources. Market orientation, viewed as a strategic resource, influences firm-level capabilities and performance. Furthermore, we examine competitive intensity as a moderating variable in this model. In highly competitive industries, where differentiation is crucial, the ability to leverage big data resources becomes even more critical, influencing marketing and innovation capabilities significantly. Finally, this research explores the impact of these capabilities not only on firm-level performance but also on employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. By examining these multiple stakeholders, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the value-creating aspect of big data capabilities in B2B firms.

Background

The Resource-Based View (RBV) suggests that firms possess unique advantages based on their ability to acquire and bundle resources. These resources, when leveraged effectively, can be transformed into capabilities that provide firms with competitive advantages. The Dynamic Capabilities (DC) framework further elaborates on this concept, emphasizing the importance of continuously reconfiguring and adapting these capabilities to meet evolving market demands. Resources are static and need to be activated to become capabilities. This activation transforms tangible and intangible resources into strategic capabilities, which become deeply embedded within a firm's operations and strategy. Successful capabilities typically involve a combination of human, business, and technology resources, which, when aligned effectively, drive innovation and competitive advantage. Dynamic capabilities involve the continuous reconfiguration and transformation of a firm's resources to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing business environment. This continuous adaptation is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge. In a B2B context, understanding how big data resources can be transformed into dynamic capabilities is particularly important. Big data, as a resource, has the potential to enhance a firm's capabilities, provided it is effectively leveraged and integrated into the firm's strategic decision-making processes.

Key Findings

Our research makes three key contributions to the literature on big data in the B2B context: We operationalized big data by identifying its three essential components: human, technology, and business resources, allowing scholars to uncover latent benefits. We developed a model that examines how market-oriented firms can develop dual capabilities by integrating big data effectively, considering the role of the competitive environment. We responded to calls for research by investigating employee and customer-related outcomes, highlighting the significance of big data in B2B contexts. Our findings emphasize that big data is more than just a technological tool; it represents the alignment of business strategy with motivated employees leveraging technology for a competitive advantage.

**SESSION 11.2: @MarketingProfs
#ImproveYourMarketingStrategy**

Moderator:

Aniruddha Pangarkar

Summary Brief

Strategic Offensive Choices in Today's Hyper-competitive Business World

Somjit Barat, Pennsylvania State University

The author suggests an innovative approach to gaining competitive advantage by an incumbent firm. While different management gurus have diverse opinions on what course of action might be best for firms, most strategists agree that no off-the-shelf path is a panacea for every situation. Against this backdrop, the author offers an organic model that is as pragmatic as it is strategic. Specifically, the author scours extant strategic management literature and categorizes competitive strategies based on their emphasis on the suggested best course of action. The literature analysis reveals that the incumbent firm's best course of action is a function of its opponent's size (i.e. smaller, same size or larger than the incumbent) and its stage of advancement in the industry (i.e. early vs advanced stages). For example, if the competitor is larger than the incumbent, then it may not be in the best interest of the incumbent to take on its adversary head-on. Instead, the incumbent might 'sidestep' its adversary leading to annulment. A second course of action might be to improve its product or technology, leading to 'neutralization' of the adversary. The author believes that this novel model is a powerful tool in the firm's arsenal which can be used effectively to neutralize competitive threats, whether the competitor is larger or more advanced than the incumbent. In other words, there are several managerial and competitive implications of the author's model and hence, is likely to elicit considerable interest among the conference's audience.

Main Theme:

Given that firms come in all shapes and sizes, it is critical that there exist a taxonomy of strategic moves and maneuvers that firms can undertake to counter threats from existing and new competitors. For example, if the competitor (adversary) is smaller than the incumbent, then the incumbent can adopt a strategy of encirclement i.e. take on the competitor on multiple fronts simultaneously. Another strategic move might be constriction, where the incumbent indirectly forces its adversary to exhaust all its resources almost to the point of emaciation. In fact, that is how retailing giants like Walmart have virtually decimated smaller adversaries.

However, when the competitor is considerably larger than the incumbent, then a completely different set of strategies might be required, such as by competing in unrelated products or entering new markets where the competitor lacks presence. It may be noted that depending on how skilled the incumbent business is, it may be successful in disrupting the competitor's business position in the industry.

Finally, literature reveals that in addition to the size of the competitor relative to the incumbent, their respective competitive position in the industry also influences the chances of success i.e. whether the incumbent can dislodge or disrupt the competitor's position from its current standing. Specifically, the chances of success will depend on how far ahead the incumbent is placed strategically compared to its adversary. Please refer to the diagram, which illustrates the author's taxonomy of strategic offensives.

The author conducts an extensive literature review and identifies the major strategic alternatives that firms can adopt to counter their competitors. While management literature is replete with strategic alternatives, there appears to be a lack of a taxonomy where managers can get some guidance on which move or action might be the most effective under which circumstance. It is this specific gap that the author addresses by presenting a model of strategic offensives, that managers will find helpful, as businesses get more complex as well as competitive. The author, therefore, believes that the current research has both academic and managerial implications.

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Figure 1: Size based strategy

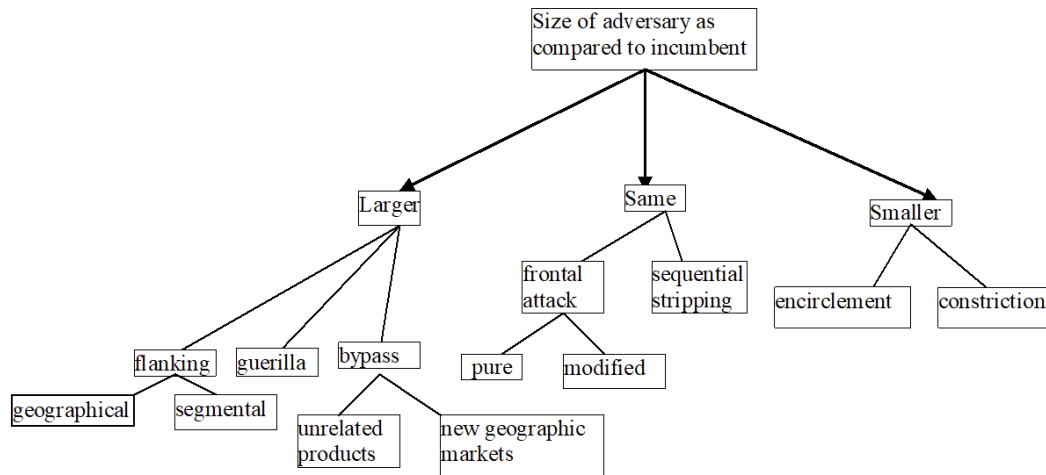
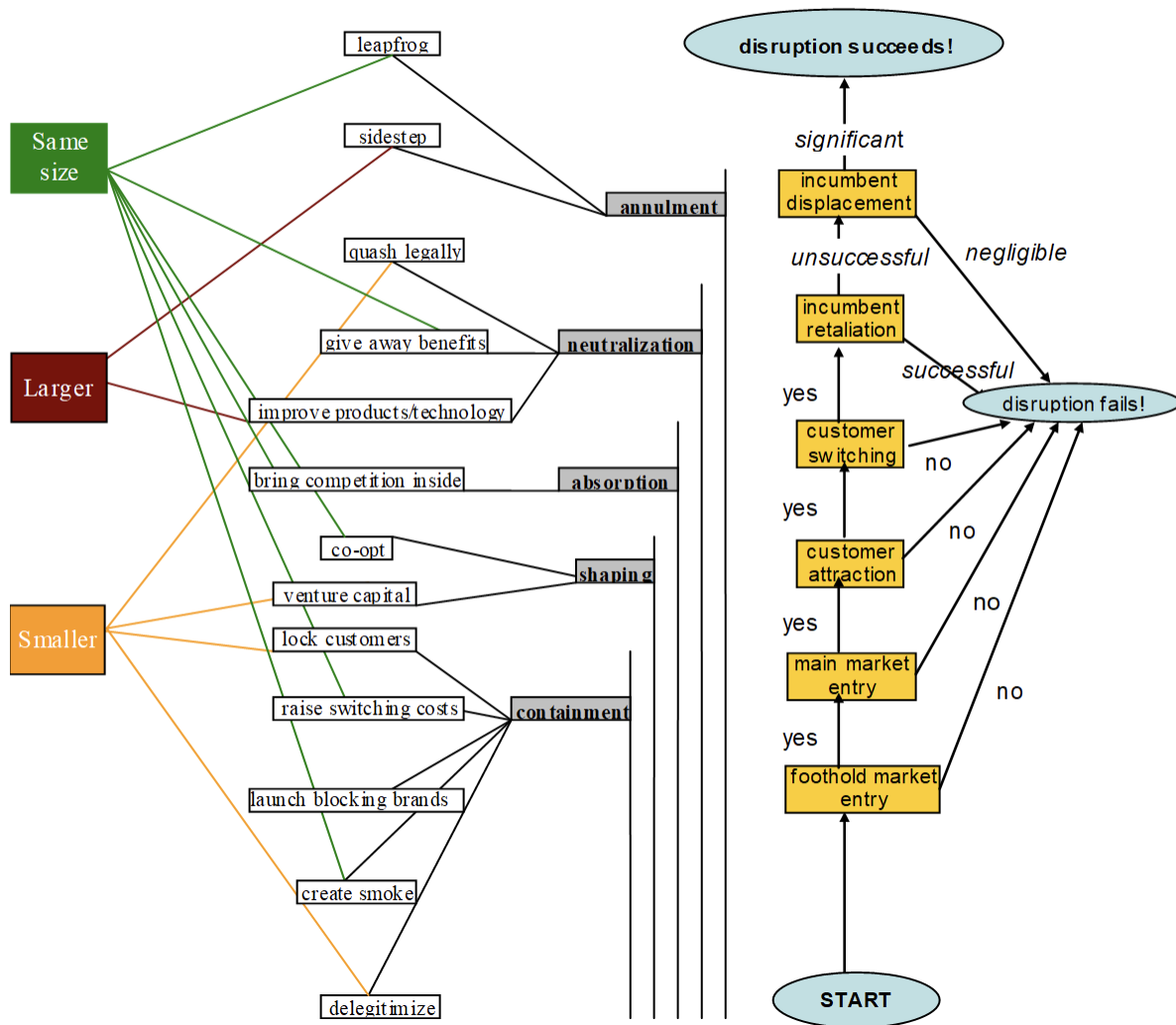


Figure 2: A Prescriptive Model of aggressive competitive strategies (based on Rafii et al. 2002)



Summary Brief

Investigating the Impact of Privacy Policy Changes on Retailer Shareholder Value

Aisha Ghimire, The University of Southern Mississippi, U.S.A

Cong Feng, The University of Mississippi, U.S.A

Saim Kashmiri, The University of Mississippi, U.S.A

Signaling theory proposes that not all signals are immediately apparent, so firms should pay attention to these less noticeable clues. Apple's recent privacy policy change is a prime example of such a signal. This research explores the reactions of shareholders of U.S. online retailers during Apple's App Tracking Transparency (ATT) announcement and specifically examines the empirical setting through an event study involving 134 publicly listed U.S. e-commerce firms. The results indicate that Apple's ATT announcement led, on average, to a decline in shareholder value for U.S. e-commerce retailers. The study offers insights for retailers on how to manage marketing crises effectively and what steps they can take to mitigate their impact.

Introduction

On April 20, 2021 Apple made a major announcement regarding the App Tracking Transparency (ATT) framework, which requires user's consent to monitor them or access their device's advertising identification. Apple has long been outspoken about the need to protect user privacy, but this is the first time they have made such a significant step by giving users more control over how their data is used (Apple, 2021). Apple further assured users that apps “can’t access the system advertising identifier (IDFA)” which restricts targeted advertisements based on user data collected from apps and websites owned by other companies.

As of March 2022, the global opt-out percentage of Apple preventing apps from getting their personal information and browsing activity was about 53% (Statistica, 2022). Not only advertisers but major social media channels have suffered from this privacy upgrade to Apple's IOS operating system. It cost Facebook \$10 billion in sales in 2022. Following Apple's adjustments to its privacy standards, not just Facebook but also other social media companies like Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube lost a total of \$9.85 billion in sales (Roth, 2021).

Shareholder Value of U.S. e-commerce retailers

Drawing from Behavioral Decision Theory and Signaling theory, contextual signals like the announcement of the ATT framework lead to uncertain decision-making for consumers such as whether to reveal information to a marketer or not (Kahneman, 2003). The option of data sharing restrictions to the consumers limits access to their personal information and thus gives the signals to the firm's shareholders that if the company is not prepared for the privacy aspect, they will suffer.

H1: The announcement of App Tracking Transparency (ATT) is likely to decrease the shareholder value of U.S. e-commerce retailers

CMO Presence

According to resource-based theory, if a company has valuable resources—in this case, the CMO—other companies find it difficult to duplicate those resources, the company that controls those resources is likely to be able to generate sustained competitive advantage (SCA), with a focus on their crisis management skills (Barney & Hesterly, 2012). They are more likely to pay attention to customer feedback, take consumer insights into account when developing strategic options, and incorporate the marketing concept into their strategic decisions (Kerin, 2005). Companies with such a great emphasis on their customers are therefore likely to show investors that their TMTs have established a trustworthy relationship with their clients and will be less likely to have issues while receiving data for personalized advertising (Kashmiri et al., 2017).

H2: The likelihood of the announcement of App Tracking Transparency (ATT) decreasing the shareholder value of U.S. e-commerce retailers is lower if the retailer has a CMO in their TMT.

Data and Results

This study includes 134 publicly listed U.S. e-commerce firms from COMPUSTAT (NAICS Code: 44-45). Further, the authors plan to look at whether Apple's privacy policy change announcement led to abnormal returns for U.S.-based e-commerce retailers, and if there was a link between those returns and (a) top management team factors, (b) internal contingencies, and (c) external contingencies.

Day Relative to Event	Number of Negative Abnormal Returns	Generalized Z	Patell Z	Average Abnormal Return
-5	80	-5.91***	-4.40***	-.01
-4	46	0.25	-0.59	-.002
-3	63	-0.81	-1.06	-.008
-2	50	0.86	0.70	-.01
-1	58	-2.30**	-2.20**	-.01
0	70	-4.42***	-3.81***	-.02
1	39	3.22***	1.47	.01
2	41	0.25	0.32	.001
3	56	0.46	0.32	.006
4	70	-4.42***	1.26***	-.01
5	33	3.65***	-5.10	.006

Table 1: Average daily abnormal return (AAR) – Market Model

*** 0.001 **0.01 *0.05

As shown in Table 1, we found support for H1, with our results indicating that the ATT announcement, on average, led to a shareholder value loss for U.S. e-commerce retailers. The average abnormal stock return for our sample retail firms on the day of the event was negative (AAR: Market Model = -0.02%). This average abnormal return was significant according to both the Patell Z-test, and the Generalized Z-test ($p < 0.001$).

Discussion

This research examines changes in shareholder value to understand how an industry adapts to major technological shifts. Specifically, it looks at the impact of the Apple's ATT announcement on U.S. e-commerce retailers. The results indicate that the announcement led to a decline in shareholder value for these companies, highlighting the challenges and financial risks associated with significant policy changes in the tech industry. Google recently updated its location data policy, a move that parallels Apple's ATT initiative. The findings from this study will offer valuable guidance for marketers and business leaders on how to prepare for and navigate such industry-wide events. Understanding the financial impacts of these shifts can help companies develop strategic responses, mitigate risks, and seize opportunities during periods of technological transformation.

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Summary Brief

Recurring Product-Harm Crises: Exploring Antecedents, Firm Resolution Strategies, and Managerial Implications

Aniruddha Pangarkar, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, USA
Sandipan Sen, Southeast Missouri State University, USA

Firms are vulnerable to product-harm crises that can occur because of potentially damaging situations, negative information, and informal grapevine which can jeopardize their brand equity through diminishing brand loyalty by stakeholders. Certain firms and industries are prone to recurring crises that can erode their reputation and credibility. Unfortunately, extant research has not addressed the issue of recurring product-harm crises. Through studying important factors such as organizational change capacity, organizational learning, organizational effectiveness, organizational innovation, organizational identification, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational responsiveness, the study uses an experimental design approach to provide actionable guidelines to managers at firms, along with providing future research directions to academicians and research scholars.

Introduction

Firms are vulnerable to product-harm crises that can occur because of potentially damaging situations, negative information, and informal grapevine which can jeopardize their brand equity through diminishing brand loyalty by stakeholders (Dawar and Lei 2009; Khamitov, Gregoire, and Suri 2020; Pangarkar, Fleischman, and Iacobucci 2022). Extant literature demonstrates that the negative effects of such crises are felt through loss of brand equity, reduction in marketing effectiveness, erosion in market share, loss of sustainable competitive advantage, diminishing reputation and credibility, stock market impact, and relationship marketing repercussions (van Heerde, Helsen, and Dekimpe 2007; Klein and Dawar 2004; Chen, Ganesan, and Liu 2009). While firms are able to recover and recoup from such crises as demonstrated by McDonald's (Roane 2010) and Samsung (Dholakia 2016), an immediate question that comes to mind is what if such a product-harm crisis occurs on a recurring basis with certain firms? What would be the impact on their operations and how can they recover from the damaging effects of such recurring crises?

Background

There are examples of several firms in different industries that have faced recurring product-harm crises. Consider the example of Blue Bell Creameries, a popular ice cream manufacturer in the United States and a Texas favorite, which has been mired in controversial product-harm crises. First, in 2015, Blue Bell faced a severe listeria crisis in its ice creams that caused deaths and hospitalization of consumers, resulting in product-recall across several different states (Elkind 2015). If that was not enough, another crisis loomed in 2016, when cookie dough made by a third-party supplier, Aspen Hills Inc. was found to contain listeria (Christensen 2016). In 2019, Blue Bell was again in the news for yet another product-harm crisis when videos of consumers opening and licking ice-cream cartons, and replacing it back in grocery shelves went viral on social media (Takahashi 2019). Extant research does not address this question. This study seeks to address and fill the research gap by reviewing several important factors such as organizational change capacity, organizational learning, organizational effectiveness, organizational innovation, organizational identification, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational responsiveness that can prevent recurring product-harm crises. In addition, it is posited that positive word of mouth, relationship quality, and CSR policies of the firm moderate these relationships. The study could prove very helpful to managers and practitioners in mitigating the damaging effects of recurring product-harm crises thus ensuring market share consolidation and operational stability.

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Session 11.3: AI FOR THE REST OF US

Moderator:

Sampath Kumar

Summary Brief

AI-Powered Fundraising: Connecting Development and Nonprofit Marketing Teams for Higher ROI

Memo Diriker, Salisbury University

Veronique Diriker, Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore

Irina Piatselchyts, Salisbury University

Judi Billups, Salisbury University

Today, Artificial Intelligence (AI), first conceived in 1956 as a way for machines to perform complex tasks, is everywhere. While AI underperformed for decades, it has grown in prevalence and capability exponentially in the last five years. Especially since the launch of ChatGPT by OpenAI in November 2022, the growth of AI based on Large Language Models has been nothing short of phenomenal (Marr, 2024).

ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot built on top of OpenAI's foundational large language models (LLMs). A large language model (LLM) is a computer program that has been fed enough examples to be able to recognize and interpret human language or other types of complex data. Many LLMs are trained on data that has been gathered from the Internet. The deep learning techniques used for training LLMs involve the probabilistic analysis of unstructured data, which eventually enables the deep learning model to recognize distinctions between pieces of content without human intervention (Cloudfare, 2024).

The LLMs, beginning with ChatGPT, followed by countless other AI platforms are beginning to transform fundraising as well as nonprofit marketing. The three key areas immediately impacted by these AI platforms are Task Completion, Quality Improvement, and Creativity Boost. (Song and Ng., 2023). In addition, new and emerging AI tools have the potential to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a variety of fundraising and nonprofit marketing activities. Some of these are:

Donor Segmentation:

Nonprofits can leverage artificial intelligence to enhance donor segmentation, leading to more effective fundraising strategies:

1. AI can analyze donor data to create better defined segments based on factors like geography, age, donation history, and preferences. By grouping donors with similar characteristics, nonprofits can tailor fundraising strategies to engage and retain them effectively. AI defined segments lead to improved targeting and better positioning (Paver, 2024).
2. AI-driven segmentation allows nonprofits to send hyper personalized emails, social media messages, and direct mail. By understanding donor interests and engagement levels, organizations can improve communication and retention (Nandeshwar, 2023).
3. AI continually predicts donor behavior, providing highly effective lists of potential actions (e.g., giving to a direct mail appeal). This helps nonprofits focus their efforts on donors most likely to take specific actions (Paris T. and Paver, C., 2024).

Design Assistance:

Nonprofits can harness the power of artificial intelligence to enhance various aspects of their work Lee, (Scheepers, M. C., Lui, A. K., & Ngai, E. W. 2023).

Some of these include:

- Improved Donor Analysis
- Optimized Social Media Engagement
- Content Generation
- Significantly Improved Chatbots
- Automated Administrative Tasks
- Event Planning
- Volunteer Management
- Fraud Detection

Chatbots and Natural Language Generation

Natural language processing and machine learning have been integrated into modern chatbots for more sophisticated conversational AI applications. The future potential of chatbots and related natural language generation does come with some caveats. Issues such as bias, workforce development impacts, and the risks of fraud need to be considered further (Al-Amin, et al, 2024).

Barriers to AI Adoption by Nonprofits

Many nonprofit leaders and staff are unsure about AI's history and capabilities. This knowledge gap leads to hesitation in adoption. Fear of the unknown and limited budgets for technology upgrades are significant additional barriers to AI implementation. Ethical considerations and concerns about cultural bias, as well as privacy issues make some nonprofits highly wary of embracing AI technologies. However, despite these differences, AI can be instrumental in enhancing the coordination between marketing and fundraising teams in nonprofit organizations. Figure 1 below shows the similarities and differences between these teams:



Figure 1: The Future Landscape for Optimal ROI

Different AI applications can be deployed to leverage these similarities and mitigate the differences. The five buckets of AI applications where such deployments can lead to increased fundraising and marketing returns are shown in Figure 2 below.

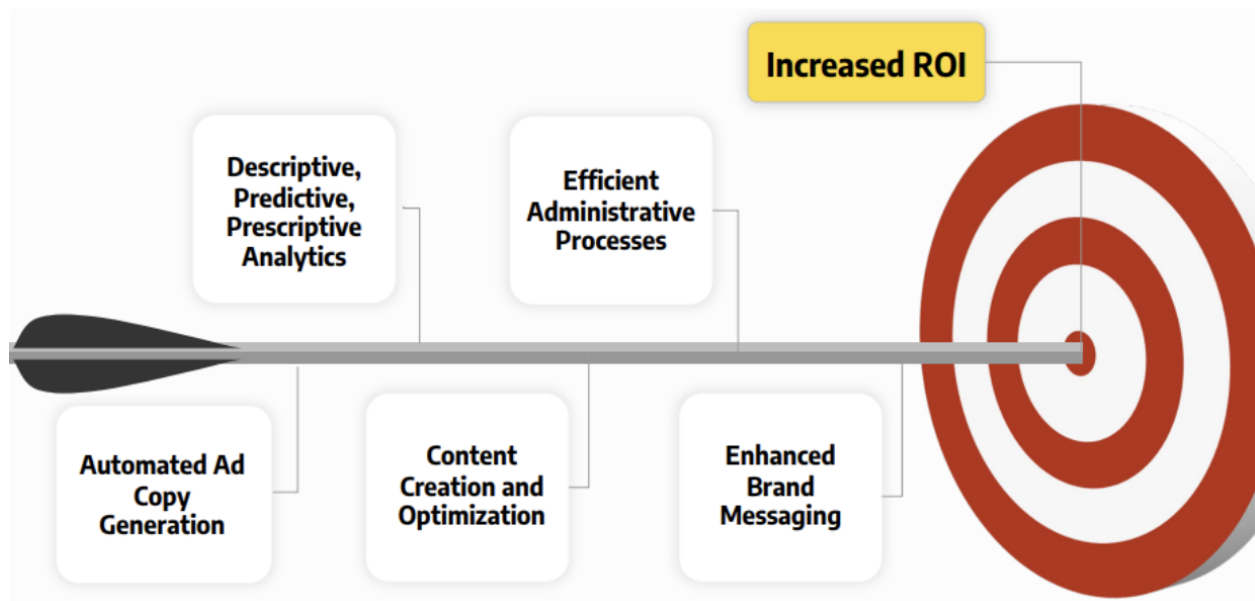


Figure 2: Leveraging AI to Enhance Marketing and Fundraising Teams Coordination

Figures 3 through 9 below show an AI generated model that illustrates the process through which AI-Powered Fundraising can connect Development Marketing Teams in nonprofit organizations for Higher ROI:

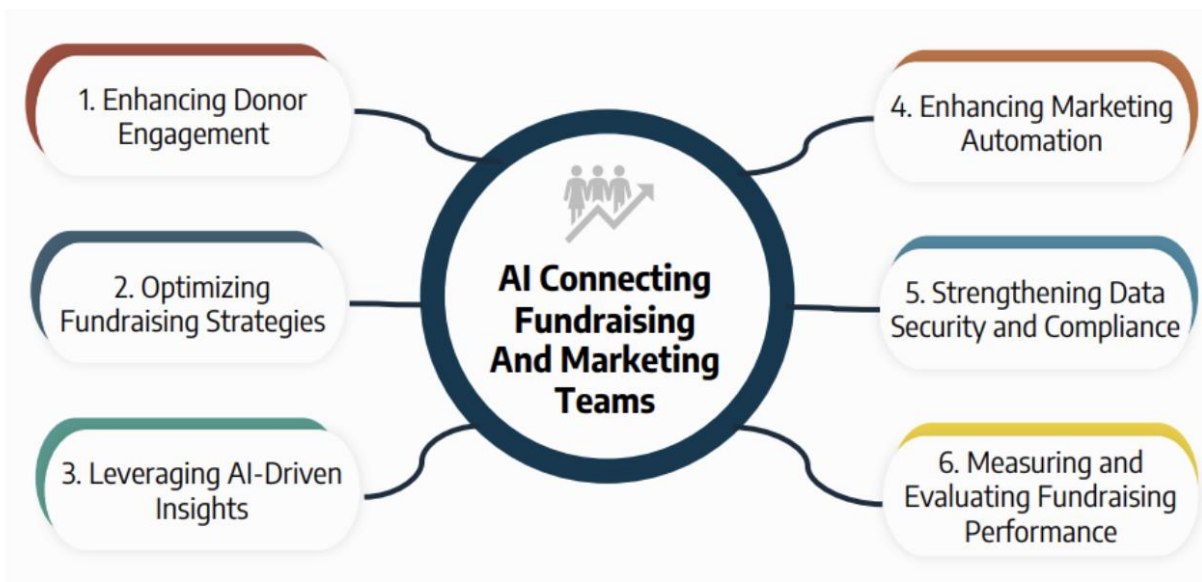


Figure 3: AI Connecting Fundraising and Marketing Teams

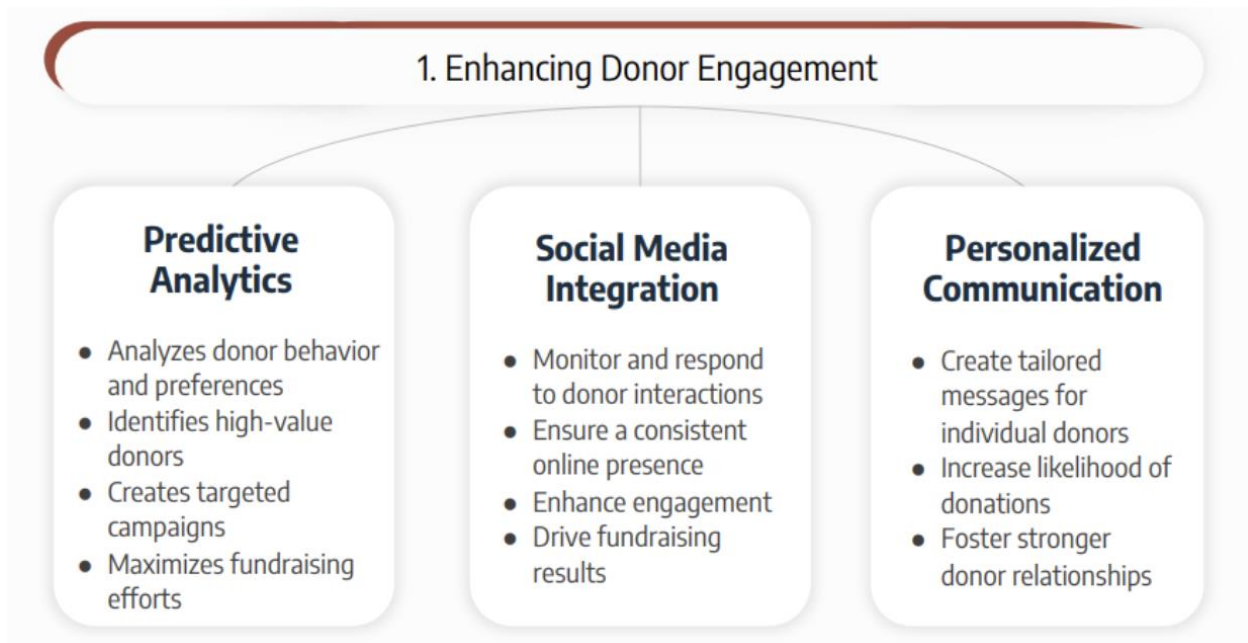


Figure 4: Enhancing Donor Engagement

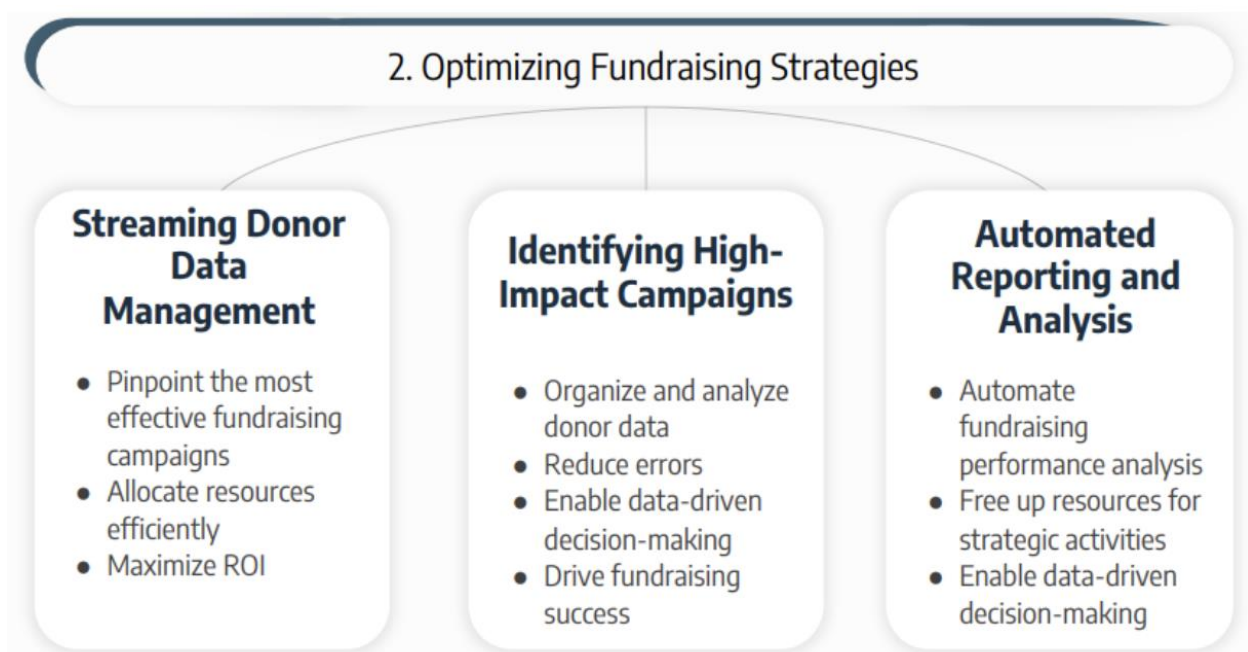


Figure 5: Optimizing Fundraising Strategies

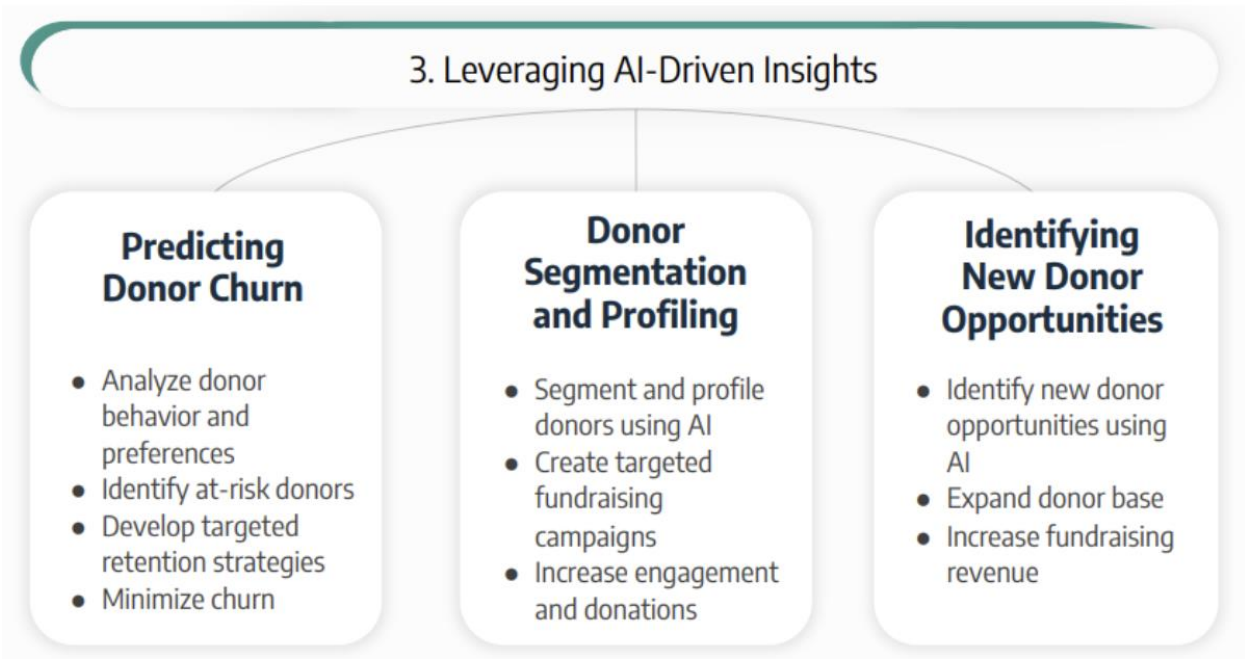


Figure 6: Leveraging AI-Driven Insights

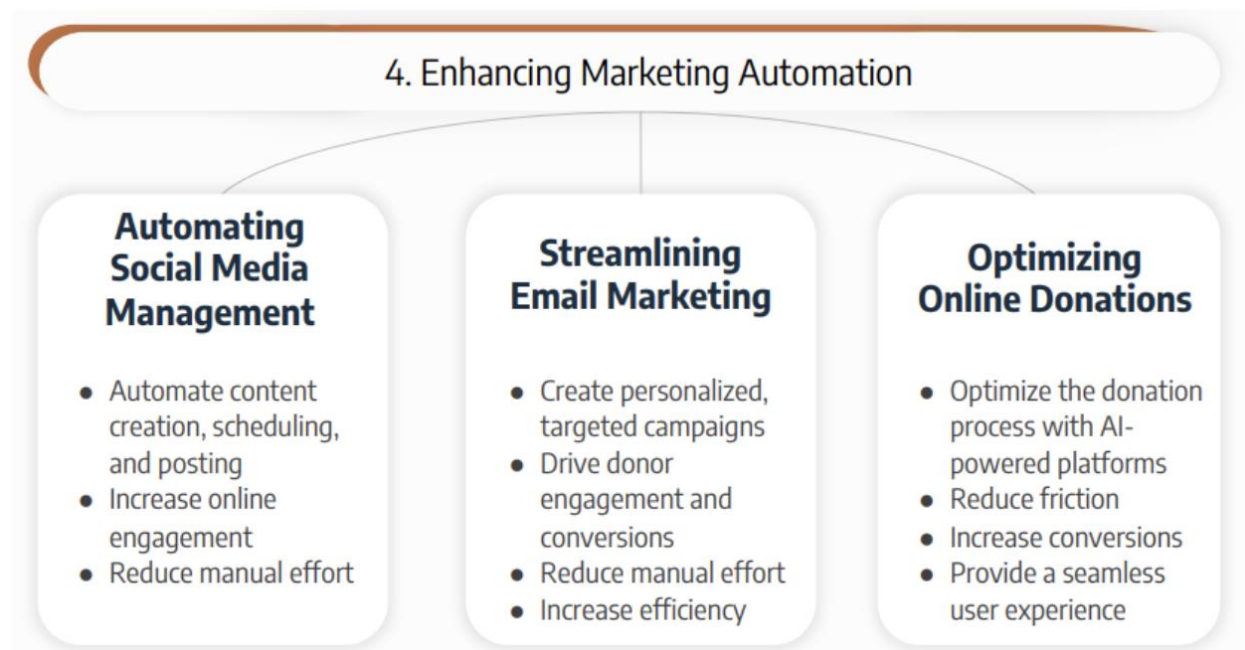


Figure 7: Enhancing Marketing Automation

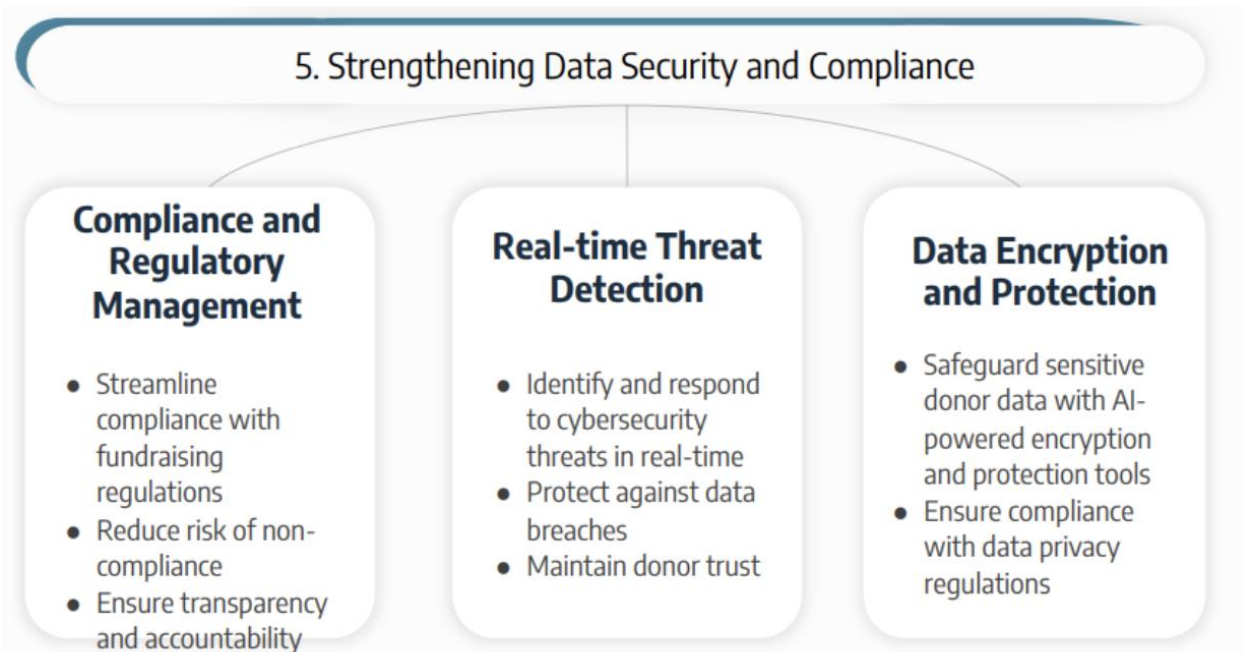


Figure 8: Strengthening Data Security and Compliance

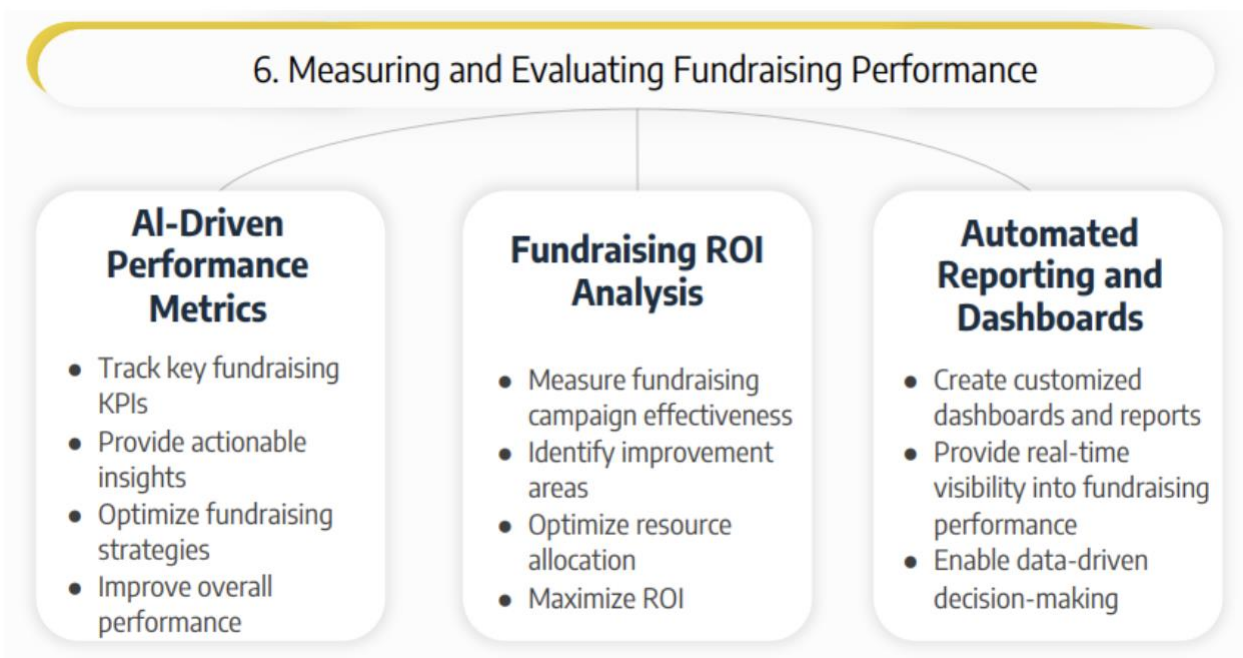


Figure 9: Measuring and Evaluating Fundraising Performance

Conclusion

AI is here to stay. It offers many potential benefits to nonprofit organizations. It can bring development teams focusing on fundraising and marketing teams that focus on the organizations' branding, communication, and

outreach activities closer together. However, as mentioned earlier, this comes with a series of caveats. Until nonprofits address these barriers, AI will not reach its full potential.

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Summary Brief

Roboto AltruMoto or Ashley? Comparing the Efficacy of Human and Anthropomorphized AI Solicitors in Checkout Charities

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Background

Charitable giving has evolved significantly over time, transitioning from direct philanthropic appeals to sophisticated cause-related marketing initiatives. This shift allows companies, including retailers, to blend commercial endeavors with social good, fostering a symbiotic relationship between commerce and philanthropy (Coleman et al., 2023). One notable strategy is checkout charity, which integrates purchasing with giving at the point of sale, thereby enhancing corporate social responsibility (CSR) and engaging customers in meaningful social causes (Hepworth et al., 2021; Guerreiro et al., 2015, 2016). It has emerged as a prominent strategy for raising funds in retail environments, reflecting a broader trend that consumers are increasingly encountering (Giebelhausen et al., 2020; Sadbury & Vossler, 2022). A report by Accelerist (2021) indicates that 86% of consumers have donated at an in-store or online checkout. Similarly, Engage and Good (2021) noted that retail checkouts in the US raised approximately \$605 million in 2020. While these figures are encouraging, they pale in comparison to the \$310 billion raised across all charitable channels in the US that same year. This disparity underscores the need for more effective strategies to enhance fundraising efforts during checkout.

In response, marketers are increasingly leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and its anthropomorphism alongside traditional human charity seekers (Baek et al., 2022) as AI tools are generally perceived as cost-efficient and convenient, allowing consumers to save time and avoid the persistent appeals of human solicitors (Davenport, 2018; Huang & Rust, 2021a, b). On the other hand, human solicitors are often perceived as more psychologically close and thus play a critical role in the sensitive context of charitable giving (Baek et al., 2022; Blut et al., 2021; Huang & Rust, 2018). Given the inherent differences between AI and human solicitors, consumer responses to these distinct sources of charitable appeals during checkout are likely to vary. However, the current literature has not adequately addressed this issue, resulting in a significant research gap in understanding these dynamics within the retail environment. Existing literature has largely examined the efficacy of AI tools in general across various consumption contexts (Crollic et al., 2022; Davenport et al., 2019; Hasan et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2024; Klaus & Zaichkowsky, 2020; Puntoni et al., 2021). These studies, while valuable, do not offer direct comparisons between AI and human solicitors, particularly in the specific context of checkout charity. A notable exception is Baek et al. (2022), who explored the effect of anthropomorphized AI characteristics, such as smiling, on charitable giving. However, this study did not delve into the nuanced differences between AI and human solicitors in checkout charity scenarios.

Understanding the conditions under which AI surpasses human solicitors in effectiveness is crucial for marketers aiming to optimize charitable giving strategies. By conducting a series of empirical investigations, this research aims to fill the existing void and provide a comprehensive understanding of how and when AI or human solicitors are more effective in driving charitable donations in retail settings. Thus, the objectives of the study are:

- To compare the impact of AI and human solicitors on consumers' intention to donate.
- To examine the influence of situational and chronic time pressure on donation intentions under AI and human solicitors.
- To investigate the role of persuasion knowledge in moderating the effects of appeal sources on donation intentions.
- To explore how access to a retailer's ulterior motives impacts consumer behavior in checkout charity under AI and human solicitors.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory suggests that under high time pressure, individuals aim to conserve cognitive resources by opting for more efficient and less mentally demanding interactions (Hobfoll, 1989). Anthropomorphized AI agents, with their perception to provide quick, streamlined and straightforward interactions, align well with this need, potentially leading to higher donation intentions in time-constrained scenarios (Baek et al., 2022; Huang & Rust, 2021a, b). Conversely, when time pressure is low, consumers have more cognitive bandwidth to engage in richer, more emotionally complex interactions, making human solicitors more effective in these situations due to their ability to foster psychological closeness and trust (Blut et al., 2021; Huang & Rust, 2018). Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H1a: Under high time pressure, anthropomorphized AI agents will result in higher donation intentions compared to human solicitors.

H1b: Under low time pressure, human solicitors will result in higher donation intentions compared to anthropomorphized AI agents.

The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) posits that consumers use their understanding of persuasive tactics to evaluate the credibility and intentions behind marketing appeals. Therefore, individuals with high persuasion knowledge are more likely to scrutinize the efficiency and transparency of charity solicitations. Anthropomorphized AI agents, perceived as cost-efficient and less likely to incur overhead expenses associated with human labor, can be seen as more credible and effective by these knowledgeable consumers (Davenport et al., 2019; Huang & Rust, 2021). This increased perception of efficiency and transparency can lead to higher donation intentions when persuasion knowledge is high as consumers like to donate to charities that have lower overhead expenses (Abraham et al., 2023; Caviola et al., 2020; Isaac & Grayson, 2017). In contrast, consumers with low persuasion knowledge may rely more on emotional and psychological cues, which are more effectively provided by human solicitors who can foster a sense of trust (Abraham et al., 2023; Caviola et al., 2020; Isaac & Grayson, 2017; Gino & Galinsky, 2012). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2a: When persuasion knowledge is high, anthropomorphized AI agents will result in higher donation intentions compared to human solicitors.

H2b: When persuasion knowledge is low, human solicitors will result in higher donation intentions compared to anthropomorphized AI agents.

In the preceding hypotheses, we proposed the variation in donation intention arising from the interaction between the source of charity appeal and consumers' persuasion knowledge and beliefs about the appeal. Persuasion knowledge encompasses not only an understanding of the advertisement but also the overarching ulterior motive of the marketer (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Access to a retailer's ulterior motive during checkout charity can increase persuasion knowledge, leading to higher skepticism and less favorable attitudes (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; De Carlo & Barone, 2013). However, high persuasion knowledge can also lead to increased credibility if consumers perceive the marketer's tactics as credible (Isaac & Grayson, 2017, 2020). We examine whether the source of the appeal (anthropomorphized AI agent versus human) influences these perceptions under varying degrees of access to ulterior motives, affecting consumers' patronage intentions. When consumers have high access to ulterior motives, their persuasion knowledge increases, leading them to evaluate the retailer's credibility more critically. Anthropomorphized AI agents, perceived as cost-efficient (Huang & Rust, 2021a, b) and favorably evaluated for optimal resource utilization (Caviola et al., 2020; Abraham et al., 2023), can enhance the retailer's credibility and patronage intention. Conversely, human solicitors, associated with higher overhead costs, can evoke skepticism and decrease patronage intention when ulterior motives are apparent. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3a: High access to the retailer's ulterior motive will result in higher store patronage intentions when the appeal is made by anthropomorphized AI agents.

H3b: High access to the retailer's ulterior motive will result in lower store patronage intentions when the appeal is made by human solicitors.

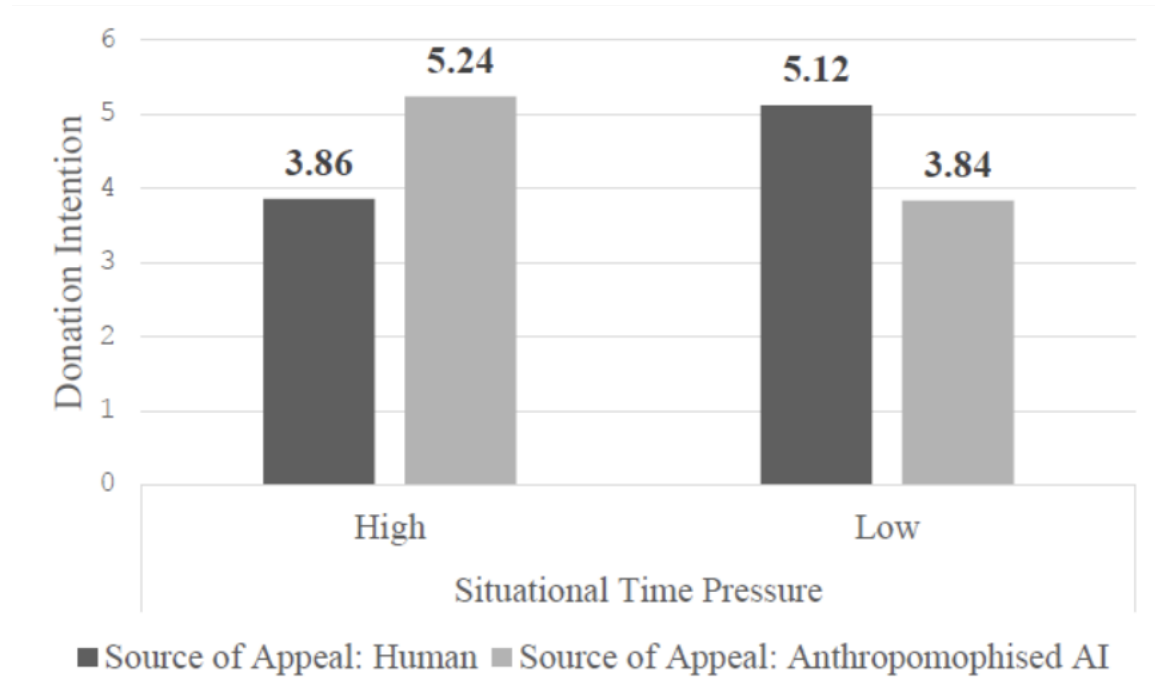
Data Analysis and Results

Study 1 tested whether the source of solicitation (human vs. anthropomorphized AI) can influence consumer donation intentions differently under conditions of situational time pressure (high vs. low). A total of 204 participants ($M_{\text{Age}} = 38.91$ years, $SD_{\text{Age}} = 11.05$ years, 65% male) were recruited through Prolific and randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Participants were presented with a shopping scenario that required high or

low situational time pressure and encountered a solicitation from either a human or an AI agent. After reading the scenario, participants' donation intentions were measured.

Results revealed that under high time pressure, AI agents led to higher donation intentions compared to human solicitors (M Anthropomorphized AI = 5.24, M Human = 3.86, $F(1, 196) = 158.94$, $p < 0.01$). Conversely, under low time pressure, human solicitors were more effective (M Human = 5.12, M Anthropomorphized AI = 3.84, $F(1, 196) = 139.60$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that AI agents are perceived as more efficient and less cognitively demanding under time constraints, aligning with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Responses to perceived cognitive load questions did not show significant differences, ruling out the possibility that perceived greater cognitive ease explains these results (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Interaction Effect of Source of Appeal and Time Pleasure (Situational) on Donation Intention (Study 1)



Study 2 examined whether chronic time pressure influences consumer donation intentions differently when solicited by humans versus anthropomorphized AI agents. A total of 169 participants were randomly asked to reflect on their general time management (high vs. low chronic time pressure) and then read a charitable solicitation scenario involving either a human or an AI agent. Following this, their donation intentions were measured.

Results indicated that under high chronic time pressure, AI agents again led to higher donation intentions compared to human solicitors (M Anthropomorphized AI = 5.31, M Human = 2.84; $F(1, 161) = 256.45$, $p < 0.01$). Conversely, under low chronic time pressure, human solicitors were more effective (M Human = 5.16, M Anthropomorphized AI = 3.12; $F(1, 161) = 180.54$, $p < 0.01$). These findings reinforce the results of Study 1, suggesting that AI agents are more effective under persistent time constraints due to perceived efficiency.

Study 3 tested whether consumers' persuasion knowledge (high vs. low) influences their donation intentions differently when solicited by humans versus anthropomorphized AI agents, with credibility of the charity appeal as a mediator. A total of 265 participants were categorized based on their level of persuasion knowledge and then exposed to a charity appeal from either a human or an AI agent. Following this, their donation intentions and perceived credibility of the appeal were measured.

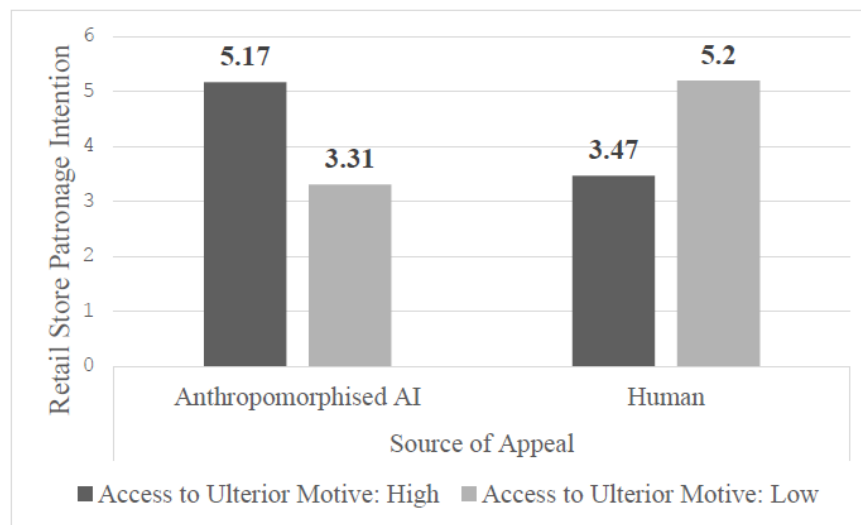
High persuasion knowledge increased donation intentions for AI appeals ($\beta = 1.310$, S.E. = 0.1183, $t = 11.07$, $p < 0.05$) due to perceived credibility. Conversely, low persuasion knowledge favored human appeals ($\beta = -1.44$, S.E. = 0.1239, $t = -11.62$, $p < 0.05$). Mediation analysis confirmed that credibility mediated the relationship between persuasion knowledge and donation intention ($\beta = 4.3174$, S.E. = 0.1167, $t = 36.99$, $p < 0.01$).

Study 4 explored the effect of access to the retailer's ulterior motive (high vs. low) on store patronage intentions, considering the source of solicitation. A total of 260 participants were randomly assigned to one of four

conditions in a 2 (source of solicitation: human vs. AI) $\times$ 2 (access to ulterior motives: high vs. low) between-subjects design. Participants read a scenario where the ulterior motives of the retailer were either highlighted or not, and encountered a charitable solicitation from either a human or an AI agent. Their store patronage intentions were then measured.

Results showed that high access to ulterior motives increased store patronage intentions for AI appeals (M High = 5.17, M Low = 3.31, $F(1, 252) = 299.60, p < 0.01$), while decreasing them for human solicitors (M High = 3.47, M Low = 5.20, $F(1, 252) = 260.97, p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that consumers perceive AI-driven appeals as more sincere and efficient when aware of the retailer's ulterior motives, while human solicitors are perceived negatively in such contexts (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Interaction Effect of Source of Appeal and Access to Retailer's Ulterior Motive on Retail Store Patronage Intention (Study 4)



Discussion and Implications

This research offers a comprehensive understanding of how anthropomorphized AI and human agents influence consumer donation intentions and retail store patronage under varying conditions. It identifies specific conditions where consumers prefer AI over human agents, enriching the literature on 'AI aversion' (Davenport, 2018). By examining situational and chronic time pressure, it highlights AI's role in donor engagement under time constraints, adding a novel dimension to donor behavior in high-pressure environments (Tinghög et al., 2016). Our findings challenge the conventional view that increased persuasion knowledge leads to skepticism, showing that AI-driven appeals can enhance credibility (Isaac & Grayson, 2017). Additionally, awareness of ulterior motives can enhance the credibility of AI-driven appeals, increasing consumer participation (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). From a managerial perspective, it provides strategic directions for deploying AI and human charity seekers, such as using time pressure indicators (Hepworth et al., 2021), understanding persuasion knowledge (Hibbert et al., 2007), and ensuring campaign transparency (De Carlo & Barone, 2013). AI agents are highly effective under high time pressure and high persuasion knowledge, while human solicitors are valuable in low-pressure environments. This understanding allows for strategic deployment to maximize contributions and engagement. Future research should explore additional factors like cultural differences, the nature of the cause, and long-term behavior to enhance fundraising strategies.

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Summary Brief

The Drivers of Conversational Bots Adoption: A Cluster Analysis

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The increasing public acceptance of conversational bots (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini) poses key challenges and opportunities among different consumer segments. This study explores the adoption of conversational bots through a cluster analysis within an extended Technology Acceptance Model 3 (TAM3) framework, incorporating variables such as word of mouth, privacy concerns, and trust in technology. By surveying a diverse sample of North American consumers, we identify three distinct user segments: Enthusiastic Adopters, Cautious Users, and Confident Explorers. Our findings contribute to the theoretical development of technology adoption models by highlighting the importance of considering user heterogeneity and providing practical implications for businesses and developers in tailoring strategies to meet the specific needs of each user segment. This study enhances our understanding of conversational bot adoption and offers insights for promoting their effective integration into various contexts.

Introduction

The rapid progress of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies has led to a significant change in the way humans interact with computers, particularly evident in the increasing discussions and research on conversational bots in different industries (Biswas, 2023; Kalla & Smith, 2023; Zhu et al., 2023). The emergence of ChatGPT developed by OpenAI has marked a significant shift in public interest, emphasizing the possibility for conversational bots to become essential agents of consumers' everyday technological interactions (Leiter et al., 2023; Zhang, 2023). While consumer adoption of conversational bots has captured considerable attention in the literature, the application of consumer segmentation studies to understand the different consumer groups and their acceptance of conversational bots remains underexplored (Cai et al., 2022; Dinh & Park, 2023; Fares et al., 2024; Ling et al., 2021).

Background

This study addresses the existing gap by exploring different factors influencing individuals' adoption of conversational bots through a segmentation approach. We extend the Technology Acceptance Model 3 (TAM3) by incorporating additional variables pertinent to adopting conversational bots, including word of mouth, privacy concerns, and trust in technology (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). The TAM3 framework focuses on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key determinants of users' attitudes toward using technology (Davis, 1989). We posit that word of mouth acts as a significant influencer by providing social proof and reducing uncertainties about the effectiveness and reliability of chatbots (Rajaobelina et al., 2021; Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2019). Conversely, privacy concerns present a significant barrier to adoption (Gurung & Raja, 2016; Khanra et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021). Trust in technology is another important factor in driving consumers to adopt conversational bots (Przegalinska et al., 2019; Yen & Chiang, 2020).

Key Findings

Our cluster analysis revealed three distinct user segments. The Enthusiastic Adopters group displays high scores across several variables, including perceived usefulness (mean = 6.29), perceived ease of use (mean = 6.11), and trust in technology (mean = 6.11). They find conversational bots beneficial, easy to use, and trustworthy. The Cautious Users segment showed lower scores in areas such as perceived usefulness (mean = 4.83) and perceived ease of use (mean = 4.77). They scored higher in computer anxiety (mean = 4.06) than the Enthusiastic Adopters, suggesting a more cautious and less tech-savvy segment. The Confident Explorers group demonstrated high scores in computer self-efficacy (mean = 6.09), perceptions of external control (mean = 6.17), and computer playfulness (mean = 6.28). They reflect confident users who strongly perceive external support for using conversational bots. These findings provide valuable insights for businesses and developers to tailor their strategies to meet the specific needs of each user segment, ultimately facilitating more widespread and effective adoption of conversational bots.

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SESSION 11.4: MAXIMIZING HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING WITH AI

Moderator:

Sphurti Sewak

Summary Brief

Sentiment Analysis of Students' Perceptions of AI in Marketing Education in Reddit Posts

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Most marketing education studies explore how AI tools, like ChatGPT, affect teaching practice (e.g., Shihab et al., 2023). However, more research has yet to investigate students' fears and concerns about a rapidly changing work environment. This study aims to fill the gap and examine college students' self-disclosed feelings toward AI by analyzing the sentiments of Reddit posts. TextBlob and VADER were used to analyze the post content and comments sentiment. The results reveal students' intense anxiety about AI's impact on the job market, frustrations about learning to use AI technologies in education, and interest in the potential of pursuing AI as a career. The study findings offer practical implications for educators to better prepare students for job market competitiveness without leaving them fearful of AI. Further research can expand on this study by monitoring students' perceptions and examining related demographics, such as high school students and early professionals.

Introduction

ChatGPT's launch and other advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have sparked a renewed interest in educators and industry professionals. In business, AI tools help improve workplace efficiency and affect knowledge transfer, like how companies process data in marketing, finance, and product development (Sollosy & McInerney, 2022) and force employees to keep up with the technology (Ransbotham et al., 2017). The education industry is deep in the center of the AI revolution as artificial intelligence in education (AIED) has provided various benefits to education, including plagiarism detection, e-proctoring, and game-based learning platforms, gradually permeating the industry without causing major disruptions (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022). However, educators feel unprepared to implement AI into their curriculum (Elhajjar et al., 2021), and a study by Zhai et al. (2021) found that teachers are concerned that they will be replaced by AI or face altered roles, which leads to excessive reliance on or resistance to AI. However, more research has yet to investigate students' fears and concerns about a rapidly changing work environment, especially studies that focus on understanding students' experiences and thoughts are relatively sparse. Thus, this study aims to examine how college students perceive AI through a sentiment analysis on Reddit posts and provide insights to assist educators.

Methodology

Sentiment Analysis, also called Opinion Mining, refers to a variety of lexicon-based natural language processing techniques that allow researchers and other interest parties to examine "opinions" from textual data, social media posts for example (Birjali, Kasri, & Beni-Hssane, 2021). This study follows the sentiment analysis techniques Xu et al. (2021) used in data collection and analysis.

Data collection and Data Cleaning. Reddit posts were scraped from various subreddits using the Python Reddit API Wrapper, commonly known as PRAW. Initially, the Pushshift API was to be utilized due to its superior capabilities in gathering large quantities of data. However, changes in Reddit's regulations restricted access to this tool (NCRI Reddit Access, n.d.). A total of 36 subreddits frequented by college students were scraped using queries relating to education and AI, resulting in 7042 fetched posts and their related comments. Due to the unique situation of targeting a specific demographic, further narrowing was necessary to remove posts in which individuals who were not college students mentioned the desired keywords. This step was done manually through Excel for the utmost accuracy, resulting in approximately one-third of the initially fetched posts remaining. After removing the irrelevant data, the remaining posts were preprocessed using a Python script to remove capitalization, punctuation, emojis, and stopwords, resulting in cleaned data easy to analyze (Haddi et al., 2013).

Data Analysis. Sentiment analysis was performed on the posts' content, titles, and comments via two popular unsupervised natural language processing techniques, TextBlob and VADER (Xu et al., 2024). The TextBlob analysis provided both a polarity score indicating positive, neutral, or negative feelings and a subjectivity score indicating the text's objective or subjective (Shah, 2020). In most cases, the more objective the text, the more neutral. VADER also provided a unique outlook thanks to its programming designed to handle social media data (Patil, 2023). Because it

can take into account things like word order, capitalization, and punctuation (e.g., the difference between "?" and "???"), both the cleaned and original data were run through it, giving a better understanding of the text's sentiment. An exciting discovery was that perhaps due to Reddit's lack of character limits resulting in lengthy posts, many posts were classified as positive when the sentiments conveyed were harmful. For example, one student's subtle concern over whether to drop out of school and take over his family's business was categorized as highly favorable by VADER and moderately positive by TextBlob, showcasing the limitations of the "bag of words" techniques. Overall, TextBlob tended to have more neutral results than the VADER method (approx. 19% negative, 24% neutral, and 57% positive). VADER's analysis of the original data resulted in a more significant percentage of negative values (approx. 23% negative, 21% neutral, and 56% positive). The VADER analysis on the cleaned data resulted in fewer neutral and negative returns.

Key Findings

Through sentiment analysis and thematic examination, this study found that while most posts carried a positive sentiment, there were many concerns. Some typical positive topics included curiosity about AI, interest in pursuing AI in education and career, and a desire to share and discover new tools. Negative topics include anxiety regarding AI's impact on their chosen careers and frustration about the use of AI and related technologies like AI plagiarism detectors in their courses. These findings can provide educators and professionals valuable insights in preparing the emerging workforce for coexisting with AI. Understanding students' perceptions can enable educators to adjust the information they provide, helping to combat the confusing messages students receive elsewhere and, in turn, reducing fears for the future. Industry professionals can also use these insights to create training strategies to help their employees stay ahead of the technology curve, providing new avenues for growth and reducing concerns about layoffs.

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Summary Brief

Overcoming Stumbling Blocks: Challenges and Perceived Outcomes of Promotions in Ontario Universities

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Universities in Ontario, especially in Greater Toronto Area (GTA) are facing competition from all over the Canada to recruit students. This leads them to engage in promotional activities which are full of challenges. The paper examines the challenges universities face in promoting themselves and the perceived outcome of engaging in promotional activities. Data was collected from universities within GTA, and analysis identified the challenges universities face in promoting themselves as well as the perceived outcome of promotional activities. Later findings are discussed in relevance to the published literature. Finally, conclusion and limitations to the research are provided.

Introduction

Ideally, a university education forecasts the changing future requirements of a society which equips its members with the necessary tools for different times (Chen, Rubin & Li, 1997). Hence, universities must have a clear vision of the future when engaging in promotional activities. While Ontario has maintained an extensive university education sector (Jones, 1997, p. 156), the number of students graduating from high schools in Ontario is apparently declining, except in the GTA (School Board Progress Report, 2020). To keep their enrollments steady, universities across the province have been recruiting inside the GTA. Hence, universities in the GTA are also now struggling to acquire adequate numbers of students to sustain themselves in today's competitive higher education market. The purpose of this research is to analyse the challenges universities within GTA face in promoting themselves as well as the perceived outcome of this promotional activities.

Background

Although publicly assisted, universities in Ontario are autonomous bodies with their own policies and regulations (Jones, 1997, p. 143). The precarious financial situation of universities induces them to engage in promotional activities to also attract funding from private sources to lessen the financial gap created by the diminishing financial support from the provincial government (Greer and Klien, 2010). Lessening this financial gap is of the utmost importance to meet the operational expenses of public universities and not to maximise their profits (Farhan, 2016). However, this is full of challenges and universities face huge challenges in promoting themselves, with only a perception of outcome which they may achieve. The study used qualitative methods as the purpose is to analyse the challenges and the perceived outcomes not the prediction. Those engaged in promotional activities of their universities were interviewed. Their pseudo names are used to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

Key Findings

Data identified shortage of funds, lack of support from administration, lack of professional staff, and differences in central and departmental level orientations to be the major challenges face by the universities. It is pertinent to mention that promotional activities of bigger universities also create challenges for the small universities as international students are generally more attracted towards bigger universities. Whereas, universities expect higher enrollment, more fundings, better branding and positioning of the university and departments to be the perceived outcome from engaging in promotional activities. To conclude, universities must identify the factors that may help in minimizing the challenges they face in promoting themselves as well as may help in improving the outcome of promotional activities.

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Summary Brief

Better Enrollment: The Dos and Don'ts in a Consortium-Based Study Abroad

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The rising cost of study abroad programs has led to very low enrollments that, in many incidents, prevent programs from "making". This paper reports on a case study of a four-year consortium composed of three US universities partnering to implement an effective study abroad in Scotland. It guides other faculty and universities to design similar experiences effectively.

Introduction

Developing global citizenship is one of the higher education institutional priorities and AACSB requirements that have gained strategic importance (Kurpis & Hunter, 2016). Therefore, study abroad programs have become a primary tactic for accomplishing this goal. With COVID, study abroad programs were on halt for at least two years, and institutions could witness the adverse effects the lack of these international programs has had on student development and understanding of globalization and interlinkages of the business world. After COVID, statistics show that international travel is on the rise, almost surpassing pre-COVID, and tourists even go into debt to experience a different culture (Richter, 2024). Nevertheless, US study abroad programs percentages are still among the lowest compared to other countries (Open Doors report 2021 -2022). Faculty-led short-term programs are becoming increasingly popular in comparison to semester-long or year-long programs as they offer a way for students to immerse themselves in a different culture with minimal fear, homesickness, and cost (Ramakrishna et al., 2016) and get out of their comfort zones (Carley et al., 2011). However, in a rising cost and limited resources economy, the main challenge is stimulating demand and reaching enough enrollments for the programs "to make," especially in small Universities (Mowreader, 2024). To exasperate the challenge is the fact that if programs do not make, faculty efforts are 1) wasted and faculty becomes 2) demotivated to create other future programs.

To solve this enrollment challenge, this paper reports on a case study where a private school in Florida partners with two schools (Florida & Utah) to create a study abroad consortium program in 2017-2019 and 2022. Compared to traditional study abroad, the paper provides prescriptive "do and don'ts" guidelines when partnering with other schools. These guidelines offer a solution for small schools, faculty, and institutions to increase participation in study abroad and implement effective learning experience study abroad programs.

Case Study Findings

1- Choose the right partner schools. While short-term programs are limited-term study abroad, the consortium represents a marriage. That is why it is critical to choose similar institutions with the same goals, values, and common culture regarding student orientation, focus, and complementary strength (Gonzalez, 2001; Sarkar et al., 2002). The current program involved schools of different sizes, two private schools, and a public school, yet both schools' focus on student learning was very similar. ***Avoid schools and instructors with different academic qualities, goals, values, and cultures.***

2-Set initial meetings where each school can discuss which courses can be of potential demand in their curriculum and which courses are accepted in all partner schools. Required courses or electives with international flavor tend to receive the highest demand and meet the case study needs (usually in management and marketing). Over the years, the program has offered international marketing, international business, management, and organizational behavior courses. Instructors, international office representatives, and parties should meet frequently to discuss the program's design. It is advisable to choose a team leader and agree on how decisions will be made (consensus, majority, equally divided decisions). Experience has shown that having the right people is key. The program had years where, because effective leaders treated schools equally and amicably, the program was successful, but the opposite was also unfortunately true. Likewise, having instructors with a passion and care for the program's success was key. While trust can be built with time and repetition of the program (Gonzalez, 2001), it is advisable to draw an agreement with the hosting school or provider abroad and with the consortium partners. This will avoid incidents where partners verbally agree on aspects that end up not getting implemented or change aspects without the

agreement of all members. Experience has also demonstrated a considerable value in having instructors teach and lead the program for several consecutive years so that the effects of the learning curve are maximized. ***Avoid tendencies to promote classes taught by one's institution and not the other consortium members. Also, avoid recruiting instructors with opportunistic tendencies interested more in traveling abroad than leading a successful study abroad program.***

3- Determine what should be consistent/streamlined among other schools and what each partner can set independently (Glazer, 1982). In this program, students can and are encouraged to enroll in two classes (taught by different institutions). Thus, instructors would get students from different institutions in their classes and in their case study projects (explained below). This has created a tremendous learning experience for the students, allowing them to interact and learn from students at other universities/states and study abroad. Experience has shown that a truly integrated program is thriving with consistent aspects that involve the service encounter (e.g., class format, online versus on-site class times, the number of classes, similar grade distribution structure, or at least grades involving standard experiential learning components). Aspects involved prior to the encounter can be determined individually by each partner. For instance, partner schools can set their tuition, scholarship opportunities, and course content, as it is very likely that different universities have different faculty remuneration, tuition rates, study abroad paperwork for students, student insurance, etc. While it is also very convenient to have schools with the exact Learning Management System (LMS), there are ways of using accessible technology like Dropbox and Zoom to allow different students to be taught by instructors from different schools. ***Avoid the two extremes when planning. Do not enter the agreement as two individual schools that will remain as two, and do not move to the other extreme of trying to standardize everything. After all, these schools have their own individual identity.***

4- Schools should consider a competitive advantage and distinctive competence for the consortium program compared to traditional study abroad programs (Charlebois & Giberson, 2014). The program at hand reported took place in Scotland, which allowed students to communicate easily in English. The program's distinctive competence is a case study for a Scottish business. Students received a business problem and case study brief about three to four weeks before arrival. They would meet with the client and work on collecting primary and secondary data, and at the end of the program, they would present to the client and work on a report. Faculty supervised the project with several deliverables prior to the final presentation. ***Avoid "copying and pasting" a class in a local setting to a study abroad program. A truly immersive experience has to offer much more than being carried out in a foreign country.***

5-Assess the program and use feedback to improve. The first year of a program is expected to have many imperfections. Assessing the program is necessary to improve. While some students' idea of studying abroad is to travel abroad without a study, we have found many students helpful feedback. The consortium members would meet after the program to review quantitative and qualitative assessments. Along with observations, the team sets changes for the program to be carried out the following year and an in-depth discussion of courses that are more likely to find demand. ***Avoid thinking the program ends on the last day and spend time discussing what could be done differently in the future to maximize learning effectiveness and positive student experiences, even if members are uncertain that the program will run the following year.***

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Summary Brief

Transforming Marketing Curriculum: Integrating Library Databases and Diversity Metrics for Enhanced Student Outcomes and AACSB Reporting

K.B. Martin, Miami University

This presentation examines the integration of library databases—such as IBISWorld, Statista, Mintel, DB Hoovers, and MRI Simmons—into the Principles of Marketing curriculum. Additionally, it explores the use of these databases to gather data for AACSB diversity goals. This dual-focused approach not only deepens students' understanding of marketing principles but also equips them with critical research skills for their academic and professional futures. Furthermore, the presentation will discuss how data collected over two years, including student performance and feedback, provides valuable evidence for AACSB diversity reporting.

Mastery of foundational concepts in a Principles of Marketing course is essential. While traditional case study methods enhance learning, students often lack crucial market research skills, particularly in introductory marketing courses. This presentation will explore how incorporating library databases into the curriculum can significantly elevate students' analytical abilities and comprehension.

The use of DB Hoovers will be highlighted, demonstrating its utility in exploring company information, SWOT analyses, and ownership structures, thus improving students' understanding of industry trends. It is noted that students often require guidance on effective keyword use to access relevant industry reports in DB Hoovers and other databases.

Training on Statista will also be discussed. Although students frequently reference Statista, they are often unaware of its full version, which offers extensive secondary data and market research across numerous industries. Instruction on utilizing Statista's comprehensive resources will be provided to facilitate a smoother learning experience.

The presentation will further address the use of IBISWorld, which offers detailed industry market research reports. IBISWorld helps students identify industry trends, competitive landscapes, and consumer behavior, making it a valuable tool for case analysis.

Additionally, Mintel's consumer research reports will be explored. Mintel focuses on the American and European markets, providing insights into competitive analysis, market share, and consumer demographics. Its consumer product surveys, graphs, and charts are instrumental in case studies.

Finally, the presentation will cover MRI Simmons Insights, a database offering a comprehensive view of American consumers, including attitudes, opinions, and lifestyle statements. Despite its complexity, MRI Simmons Insights provides students with advanced tools for creating Brand Catalyst and Social Media Activity Profiles, enhancing their analytical skills.

This dual approach to case analysis and database integration not only strengthens students' grasp of marketing concepts but also prepares them for future academic and professional endeavors. By incorporating these library databases, students develop essential research skills, critical thinking, and data analysis capabilities, thereby supporting their academic and career growth while meeting AACSB diversity objectives.

Session 11.5: MarketingStrategy.com

Moderator:

Allison Hess

Summary Brief

Gruen Redux: Exploring the Concept of Membership in Marketing

Allison Hess, University of Michigan, USA
Dr. John Branch, University of Michigan, USA

Thomas Gruen's 1994 article "Exploring Consumer Behavior with Respect to Memberships," ignited a call to action for researchers to explore the concept of membership. His article categorized membership types, explored consumer motivations for joining, and critiqued marketers' strategies. Gruen's article acknowledged the pervasive power of membership programs and shed light on the neglect this concept has endured within the field of marketing. In the decades since Gruen's article, membership programs have proliferated. Consumers can seldom make a purchase without being asked if they would like to enroll in a company's membership program. For example, American Express continues to use "member since" language in marketing materials. This article emphasizes the inconsistent definitions and typologies of membership and the lack of consensus on what constitutes a membership program. The Evolutionary Model of Concepts is employed to emphasize the conceptual immaturity and need for a concerted research effort on the concept of membership.

Introduction

The concept of membership in marketing is ill-defined as evidenced by the multitude of definitions. Indeed, there is no convergence on a single definition in the literature. The critical conclusion is that this lack of definitional convergence is perhaps symptomatic or, or maybe part and parcel of, of the notion that the concept of membership in marketing remains conceptually immature. This conceptual immaturity is well demonstrated by the Rogers Evolutionary Model of Concepts. This model suggests that concepts are not fixed. On the contrary, they are always subject to revision or replacement. Therefore, the development of a concept or theory is not immobile but is a continuously evolving process. As a result, the evolution of a concept is reflected in its application, employment, and significance. Application refers to the scope or breadth of contexts within which the concept is used. Employment refers to the extent of a concept's use. Lastly, the significance of a concept is indicated by its ability to resolve practical and theoretical problems.

Application of the Concept of Membership

Research on the application of the concept is heavily membership program design centric. When considering the literature on program design, a major issue arises related to the lack of a universal definition of membership. Leading to the core issue of, how can a marketer design an effective and profitable membership program, when marketers don't have a clear understanding of what membership truly means at its core.

In the case of the "true" definition of membership, researchers have failed to clearly mark out the boundary or limits of the definition of membership. The result is a wide breadth of definitions which essentially portray anything and everything as membership or as a membership program. Researchers have stepped far beyond the typical dictionary definitions of membership, therefore blurring the lines of its scope, and not getting to the crux of what membership truly is.

Moreover, the abundance of definitions, without clear boundaries or limits, are all based on Gruen's initial definition of membership and accompanying exploratory research. This definition chain is well documented as a myriad of researchers reference back to Gruen's original definition and build upon it with commentary of their own. This definition chain has led to a "snowball effect" in terms of membership's definition and further blurs the lines of its scope.

To continue, extrapolating on the profusion of definitions of membership, the literature is abundant with numerous typologies of membership programs. Without a universal typology incorporating relevant elements and objectives of membership programs, researchers are limited in their ability to effectively study the impact of different independent and dependent variables and the impact of these variables over time, across consumer segments, and sectors. As seen related to the definition of membership, researchers have also referenced back to Gruen's initial typologies of membership and either expanded the categories or narrowed them based on the focus of their article.

In summary, the lack of a clear definition of membership with well-established boundary lines and scope plagues the membership in marketing literature. Concepts are the building blocks of science, and if researchers do not

have well defined concepts, it is difficult, if not near impossible, to conduct more expansive and theoretical research to solve practical and theoretical problems.

Employment of the Concept of Membership

The employment of the concept of membership is well illustrated in literature publishing trends. There were numerous studies published in the early-2000s and research dwindled off over the course of a decade. Furthermore, of the ~40 marketing-centric studies published, over 50% were conducted with a nonprofit focus. Of these ~20 nonprofit marketing-centric studies, over half of them were conducted in the United Kingdom with a focus on heritage sites, zoos, museums, etc. Across the ~40 studies published, only a small subset of those ~40 are wholly membership concept based. These studies are focused on the definition of membership and attempt to draw boundary lines between what was a membership program and what was a loyalty program/scheme. This nominal number of studies published related to the concept of membership is indeed the precursor behind the lack of theoretical research.

Indeed, in the literature there is a significant lack of theoretical research related to the antecedents and consequences of membership programs. The literature on the concept has three core categories: design, consumer attitudes, and consumer behaviors. There are subcategories within these categories that are theoretical in nature about customer attitudes and behaviors, but these studies have been centered on one specific aspect of membership programs or are based on varying different definitions of membership or typologies of membership, resulting in a lack of universal applicability.

Significance of the Concept of Membership

The membership literature falls short of helping to resolve practical and theoretical marketing issues. As demonstrated by the limited number of applicable studies, there is a critically low employment of the concept of membership among marketers, and therefore, a lack of universally applicable theoretical studies. Much of the research conducted has been focused on the typologies and design of membership programs.

Furthermore, the employment of the concept has been minimal and highly delayed, therefore, marketers don't know much about how consumers think, feel, and behave because of membership programs, and therefore, marketers have an inability to predict how consumers will think, feel, and behave in membership contexts. As a result, marketers do not have the tools to solve practical and theoretical marketing problems.

Key Findings

It is evident that despite Gruen's seminal article 30 years ago calling for research on the concept of membership in marketing, little progress has been made. Therefore, the literature review conducted exposes the conceptual immaturity of the concept of membership as evidenced by Roger's Evolutionary Model of Concepts, thereby leading to limited application, employment, and significance.

The absence of a universal definition of membership has resulted in an abundance of definitions and interpretations. Therefore, rendering the membership conceptually immature and limiting its employment and applicability for marketers. Despite the modest number of studies (40+) published over the past 30 years, most of the research remains focused on program design rather than finding solutions to practical and theoretical problems related to consumer behavior. Therefore, hindering marketers' ability to effectively leverage membership programs to solve complex problems.

Indeed, it is time to reignite Gruen's call for more research on the concept grounded in a clear and universally accepted definition of membership and typology system. By addressing the definitional and typological ambiguity, future research has the potential to unlock valuable insights into consumer behavior, marketing strategy, and brand strategy. Only through a concerted effort by marketers and marketing researchers can we advance the understanding of membership and unlock its full potential.

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Summary Brief

Cultivating Customer Engagement: Unveiling the Virtual Co-creation of Corporate Social Responsibility and Its Influence on Customer Outcomes

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Since the late 1980s, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved to be an essential marketing strategy for driving sustainable business. The rise of digital technologies has supported new models of value co-creation between businesses and stakeholders. However, it remains unclear if virtual co-creation of CSR between businesses and customers is more effective than traditional CSR in improving customer outcomes and business performance. Previous research found that consistency in CSR communication and actions cultivates stakeholder participation, yet customers are often viewed solely as value consumers rather than co-creators. In the virtual online context, businesses hope co-creation of CSR can integrate customers through strategic, two-way dialogue. But whether fully involving customers in creating CSR effectively advances CSR goals requires more study. The current research examines the mechanism by which virtual CSR affects customer responses based on value co-creation theory, demonstrating its importance on customer outcomes.

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gradually developed into a cornerstone of corporate sustainability strategies. Yet, with changing stakeholder expectations, traditional CSR approaches that treat stakeholders as passive information recipients in a one-way value transmission model, such as releasing CSR reports, often result in imbalances between CSR policies and communication. Thus, how corporates respond to stakeholders and elucidate CSR through a collaborative meaning-making process is core to addressing the issues of low CSR effectiveness and communication imbalances. Meanwhile, the model of CSR is also evolving alongside the rapid development of information technology. For example, during the 2010 Super Bowl halftime show, PepsiCo launched a Pepsi Refresh Project aimed at consumers. By framing CSR as a dialogue and cooperation between the company and its customers on social media platforms, PepsiCo aimed to strategically involve stakeholders in jointly creating social value through CSR programs, rather than simply conveying CSR messages to customers. While some research has shown that customers expect corporates to demonstrate social responsibility and express a desire to learn more about corporate social responsibility activities, customer awareness and comprehension of corporate social responsibility remains astonishingly low (Tsarenko and Tojib 2015). Therefore, involving customers in the institutionalization process of CSR and building connections between corporates and customers throughout organizational levels and aspects may effectively promote CSR strategic goals and development. Yet, it remains uncertain whether co-cocreation of CSR, as compared to traditional one-way creation and communication of CSR, can contribute to better customer outcomes and business performance, especially in the virtual online environment. Therefore, the current research aims to investigate whether and how the co-creation of CSR between businesses and customers, as compared to the traditional one-way creation and delivery of CSR messages by businesses, can enhance customers' feedback and relationship with the companies in the virtual online environment.

Background

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined as the way in which an organization regards and participates in its impacts on the economic, environmental, and social systems in which it operates (Kim, 2019). CSR plays an important role in establishing relationships between businesses and their stakeholders by considering the organization's effects on, and involvement in, the wider economic, environmental, and societal context. Traditional service-dominant logic viewed corporate and customers as the two ends of the value chain. Corporate were seen as the creators of value, while customers were only the customers and consumers of value, and value was transmitted from corporates to customers in one-directional way along the value chain (Normann and Ramírez, 1993). However, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) proposed the concept of "value co-creation", which overturns the traditional view

that value is unilaterally created by corporates while customers are only value consumers. This concept prominently emphasizes that value is jointly created through the interaction between customers and corporates. The value co-creation concept not only transforms corporates' value creation approach from a single mode to an "interactive win-win" model, but also shifts their value proposition from short-term exchange value to long-term exchange value.

With the rapid development of information technology, digital and online platforms emerged to construct service scenarios. Concepts such as virtual Corporate Social Responsibility co-creation (i.e., the co-creation of CSR between companies and their customers in the virtual online environment), have emerged and become more and more important in business and marketing practice. Companies leverage digital technologies engendered by the advancement of social media to build virtual spaces where corporates can engage in discourse and co-creation around social responsibility with stakeholders such as customers and the broader public through online and virtual means. The rise of these concepts suggests companies are exploring new digital modes of conducting corporate social responsibility practices, communications, and value creation amidst the interconnected, technology-mediated environment of the Internet age (Korschun and Du, 2013). Therefore, in the current research, we aim to empirically investigate the following questions.

1. Does the co-creation of CSR between companies and customers lead to more positive customer outcomes as compared to traditional one-way creation and delivery of CSR, especially in the virtual environment?
2. What is the underlying mechanism through which co-creation of CSR enhances customer feedback in the virtual environment?

This study specifically investigates a series of customer outcomes, including corporate attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth, to assess the comparative effectiveness of CSR co-creation in the virtual business environment. Accordingly, this study puts forward the following hypotheses.

H1a-H1c: Compared to the traditional model of corporate social responsibility dialogue, the two-way dialogue mode of virtual corporate social responsibility co-creation leads to better customers' a) corporate attitudes, b) purchase intentions, and c) positive word-of-mouth intentions.

Key Findings

An empirical study is designed to test the proposed hypotheses, in order to assess and testify the potential differential effect of the co-creation of CSR versus the traditional one-way creation of CSR in the online virtual context. This study adopts a between-subjects experimental design with two scenarios (co-creation of CSR or not), with a total of 200 participants to be recruited from the Prolific consumer panel for the completion of the related online survey. The expected results of this study should demonstrate that in the virtual business environment, compared to the traditional model of corporate social responsibility dialogue, the two-way dialogue mode of corporate social responsibility co-creation can contribute to better customers' corporate attitudes, purchase intentions, and positive word-of-mouth intentions, sufficiently supporting all the proposed hypotheses. The expected findings of the current research can not only demonstrate the importance of having customers involved in a company's CSR creation and construction, but also reveal that the co-creation of CSR should be effectively adapted into a company's online and digital platforms such as its official website and mobile app, which can enhance customer relationship and sustainable business performance.

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SESSION 11.6 PANEL: AI IN MARKETING- EQUIPPING STUDENTS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

Moderators:

Eric Harvey, Jamie Grigsby, Joie Hain, Jen Riley, and Paytn Green

**SESSION 11.7 PANEL: MARKETING OUR STUDENTS,
PROGRAMS, AND CAREERS: HOW TO SUSTAIN
GROWTH IN THE FACE OF DEMOGRAPHIC CLI**

Moderators:

James Blair, Prachi Gala, Lee Allison, Karen Hopkins,

Dana Harrison, and Haya Ajjan

SESSION 11.8: FUTUROLOGY & MACROMARKETING

Moderators:

Michael Hyman

SESSION 11.9: SERVICES MARKETING SERIES

Moderator:

Emily Treen

Summary Brief

Enhancing Employee-Customer Empathy Through Job Creativity

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Employee empathy is defined as an employee's ability to anticipate and respond to a customer's feelings, thoughts, and experiences at the time of service interactions (Wieseke et al., 2012, p. 317). Employee empathy has become a critical factor that can significantly influence organizational outcomes. More precisely, in service settings, empathy is a core determinant of favorable customer service evaluations (Aggarwal et al., 2005; Giacobbe et al., 2006). Therefore, employee empathy is a critical prerequisite for successful service encounters (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996). Indeed, according to a survey of 150 CEOs, 80% recognized empathy as key to success (Zaki 2019).

This current study empirically examines the influence of employee empathy and customer empathy on employee creativity and customer organizational citizenship behavior. Employing dyadic data for analysis, the study reveals that employee empathy enhances employee creativity via employee proactivity. This, in turn, fosters perceived employee performance, which subsequently cultivates customer empathy. Moreover, it is found that customer empathy not only elevates customer organizational citizenship behavior but also reciprocates to augment employee empathy. Crucially, this study lays a foundational framework for developing strategies that synergize employee and customer empathy, suggesting a dynamic matching of employees and customers on the basis of their emotional states to engender gratifying service interactions. This alignment proposes a novel approach for cultivating a reciprocal empathy cycle, potentially elevating both employee and customer satisfaction and contributing to a more cohesive service marketing strategy.

Summary Brief

Communicating Quality: The Role of Product Labels in Improving Purchase Intention for Store Brand Pet Food

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Consumers often comparatively evaluate many different food products at once in more complex shopping environments. This experiment examines the role of extrinsic cues and product labels in enhancing pet food store brand's perceived quality and purchase intention. Results from online experiments show that, alongside extrinsic cues, product labels with specific product information (intrinsic cues) lead to higher evaluations and increased purchase intentions. The findings provide insights into effective store brand practices for retailers and suggest avenues for future research.

Keywords: Perceived quality; Store brands; Pet food; Product Labeling; Extrinsic cues; Price; Brand name; Store name; Intrinsic cues; Retailing

Introduction

Store brands also called private labels, are goods owned and merchandised by a particular retailer. A variety of reasons are expressed by retailers for offering store brands including the desire to differentiate the retailer from competitive establishments, to increase unit sales and profits, to enhance quality images, and to provide consumers with greater choices (Beneke, 2012). It is estimated that store brands' average selling prices are approximately 30 percent less than that of national brands (Ailawadi et al., 2001). Perceived quality is a key determinant of store brand success (Richardson et al., 1994). Consumers, however, often perceive store brand to be of inferior quality than competing national brands. Moreover, the practice of positioning store brands against leading national brands via the appearance of physical similarity has been determined not to influence consumers' perceptions of product quality similarity between the store brands and national brands (Sayman et al., 2002).

Quality is defined by the moment consumers receive information or cues about a product while shopping or consuming it. Consumers evaluate a product's functionality based on their needs, forming value judgments from intrinsic and extrinsic cues (Zeithaml, 1988; Steenkamp et al., 2010). With increased access to product information through the internet, consumers become more conscious (Grewal, 1998), using cues like store name, brand name, and price discounts as signals (Dawar and Parker, 1994; Dodds et al., 1991). The quality of products offered by a retailer influences customer patronage. Stated purchase intent rises when consumers can evaluate both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes and their interactions (Enneking et al., 2007; Sprott and Shimp, 2004). Literature explores relationships between store name, brand name, price, quality, and value (Dodds et al., 1991), and marketers seek to understand how consumers use different cues in product evaluations (Chang and Wildt, 1994). Moreover, studies also indicated that perceived quality, influenced by price and intrinsic product attribute cues, positively affects perceived value, while perceived price negatively affects it. High perceived value increases willingness to buy and actual purchase (Zeithaml, 1988). Understanding these components and their role in influencing store patronage decisions can improve retailers' competitive positions. This paper examines the links between price, product attribute cues, perceived quality, value, and purchase intention, along with the effects of product labels on these relationships.

For illustration, consider a brand manager of a store brand pet food who is deciding what information to include in a communication package to induce consumer patronage. Many product features can be included in the communication message. There could be many marketing tactics to increase sales, perhaps no simple answers to the question. Literature suggests that the link between product attributes (intrinsic and extrinsic) the intention to purchase is influenced by several intervening constructs (Enneking et al., 2007; Zeithaml, 1988). As most product characteristics, such as ingredients, are not directly observable, consumers rely on food labels to infer aspects like food quality. In developed countries, product ingredients and nutrition information are displayed on most food packages. However, the abundance of information on labels can make it difficult for consumers to identify important details.

In view of the store branding challenges for pet foods, our study investigates product labelling as an approach to improving consumers' perceptions of store brand quality. Toward this, first we propose specific research hypotheses based on the literature in marketing and consumer behavior. Next, we conducted an online experiment expose (or do

not expose) participants with product details (intrinsic cues) in evaluating its quality and test these hypotheses. Then, the results, based on an analysis of data collected are presented. Finally, we discuss the implications and limitations of our study and provide directions for further research. No research to our knowledge has examined the effect on product quality perceptions while got an exposure to product labels.

Conceptual Framework

Consumers actively seek and process information about products to form precise impressions, a process well-explained by cue utilization theory. This theory posits that products are perceived through an array of cues, which serve as surrogate indicators of quality (Richardson et al., 1994). These cues are classified as either extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic cues include attributes like price, brand name, and packaging, which are not inherent to the physical product. In contrast, intrinsic cues are product-related attributes such as ingredients that directly affect the product's physical properties. Perception of quality varies based on factors such as the timing and location of purchase or consumption. The relationship between price and product quality has been extensively. From a consumer's perspective, price represents the cost of obtaining a product (Zeithaml, 1988; Teas and Agarwal, 2000). Price as an indicator of quality has been extensively studied, with the price-perceived quality schema directly tested (Rao and Monroe, 1989; Steenkamp et al., 2010). Consumers perceive price similarity between store and national brands as an indicator of high quality, while significant price differences suggest lower quality (Collins-Dodd and Lindley, 2003). Large price differences can negatively impact perceptions of value and quality for store brands, whereas narrowing the price gap between national brands and store brands can enhance perceived quality. Price-aware consumers have an acceptable price range within each category, reinforcing that price similarity with national brands suggests high quality and significant price dissimilarity indicates poor quality (Cudmore, 2000; Sarkar et al., 2017).

Brand name also significantly influences perceived quality and positively affects consumers' internal reference prices (Grewal et al., 1998). The effect of store name on perceived quality is smaller but still positively influences willingness to buy (Dodds et al., 1991). Consumers' purchase intentions are closely linked to their perceptions of the quality gap between national brands and store brands (Steenkamp et al., 2010). The store's name also serves as a rich informational cue, evoking a vivid image of the store in consumers' minds. Consumers use store names to describe prototypical stores, with the store name encapsulating the store's overall image, consistent with the category-based processing perspective of store image. It is argued that as a brand's equity is linked to the strength of its brand name, a store's image is similarly positively related to the strength of its store name. Thus, an increase in the strength of a store's name enhances the perceived image of the store.

Despite regulatory assurances that store brand ingredients must be competitive with those of national brands, store brands are often judged inferior in quality. This judgment is likely not solely based on extrinsic cues but also on consumers' direct responses to intrinsic cues. Extrinsic cues like price and brand name are more easily recognized and interpreted than intrinsic cues, which are harder to process. For food items, consumers often regard intrinsic cues such as ingredients, taste, texture, or aroma as more critical in determining real quality than extrinsic cues like advertising, labeling, or packaging. To enhance perceived quality, retailers may adopt strategies to increase a store brand's physical similarity to well-known national brands, such as mimicking packaging graphics. Consumers who have tried a brand and experienced its intrinsic attributes are likely to rely less on brand name cues when forming quality judgments. Thus, the perceived quality advantage of national brands due to brand name should diminish when consumers actually try a store brand. This situation is more complex for products like pet food, where consumers do not have direct access to intrinsic attributes like taste. Therefore, consumers must rely heavily on extrinsic cues and the information provided on product labels to assess quality. This reliance underscores the importance of effective labeling in communicating quality and influencing purchase intentions for pet food store brands. Therefore, interpretational aids can assist consumers in evaluating the product details. Research indicates that while consumers who use product labels can understand some terms, they often find other types of information confusing. Most consumers can handle basic information and simple calculations but struggle with more complex tasks. Adding interpretational aids, such as verbal descriptors and reference values, improves product comparison and helps in purchasing decision (Cowburn and Lynn, 2005).

Food labels are perhaps the most critical channel for directly communicating information about food products to consumers (Hall and Osses, 2013). Many retailers also use front-of-pack labeling systems to present product details simply (Newman et al., 2014; Gomez et al., 2017). Some consumers have been found to over-report their understanding of food label information when tested against revealed knowledge. This issue is more pronounced with pet food products, as consumers cannot taste the product, leaving them without intrinsic cues for judgment. Consequently, food labels may be of limited use due to consumers' lack of knowledge, leading to difficulties in decoding the information. Informational overload on labels can further contribute to consumer indifference or misunderstanding. If consumers find the information too complicated, they may feel deliberately misled. Since labels

contain diverse messages and complex combinations of information, understanding how consumers use food safety information on labels is intertwined with the broader issue of food label use. According to Texeira (2008), only 14.6% reported that they checked the nutrition claims on the packages. Most respondents spent only 30 seconds reading the food label, who mentioned that relatively few consumers actually read the nutrition information provided and even fewer understood it. Many of the benefits from standardizing the labeling of food also potentially apply to the labeling of pet food. One goal of pet food labeling, much like the labeling of packaged food, is to help pet owners make smarter choices and thereby provide a higher quality of care for their pets. Despite the potential health implications for pets and the economic importance of the pet food market, a lack of data has precluded an analysis of pet food label usage from being conducted (Lamke et al., 2015).

Perceived value is proposed as a mediating construct in the relationship between price, non-price information, and purchase intention. Perceived value is often viewed as a trade-off between the give (perceived sacrifice) and get components (quality) of a product, which has a positive impact (Zeithaml, 1988). Researchers have posited that value is an evaluation that balances what consumers receive in an exchange versus what they give up (Dodds et al., 1991). Value perceptions can form independently of transaction participation, while purchase intentions assume a pending transaction, making them crucial indicators of actual purchase behavior. Purchase intentions are commonly used in literature as predictors of actual purchase behavior. Although perceived value and purchase intention are distinct constructs, they are generally positively related. Low perceived value, due to low quality or high price, typically leads to low purchase intention. Conversely, high perceived value usually results in high purchase intention.

The effects of intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes on quality perceptions and purchase intention have been widely studied and accepted (Chang and Wildt, 1994). Both price and brand name have been shown to have a significant but moderate effect on buyers' perceptions of quality, whereas store name has had a small and nonsignificant effect (Rao and Monroe, 1989). Moreover, Dodds et al. (1991) proved that the external cues of price, brand name, and store name are three cues that influence perceptions of product quality and value, and hence willingness to buy. However, the effects product labels and the above three extrinsic cues on perceptions of value or willingness to buy have rarely been studied. Hence, in this study, we extend Dodds et al. (1991) model (Figure 1) and attempt to understand consumers' responses to store brand pet food with respect to the perceived quality, value and purchase intention, when they exposed to the product label (intrinsic attributes). Based on the above discussion, the following three hypotheses are proposed.

H1: When a pet food store brand is presented with label information along with extrinsic cues, the perceived quality of the store brand will be higher.

H2: When a pet food store brand is presented with label information along with extrinsic cues, the perceived value of the store brand will be higher.

H3: When a pet food store brand is presented with label information along with extrinsic cues, the purchase intention of the store brand will be higher.

Hereafter, we conducted online experiments designed to test the impact of extrinsic cues and the ability of product labels to enhance a store brand's perceived quality and purchase intention.

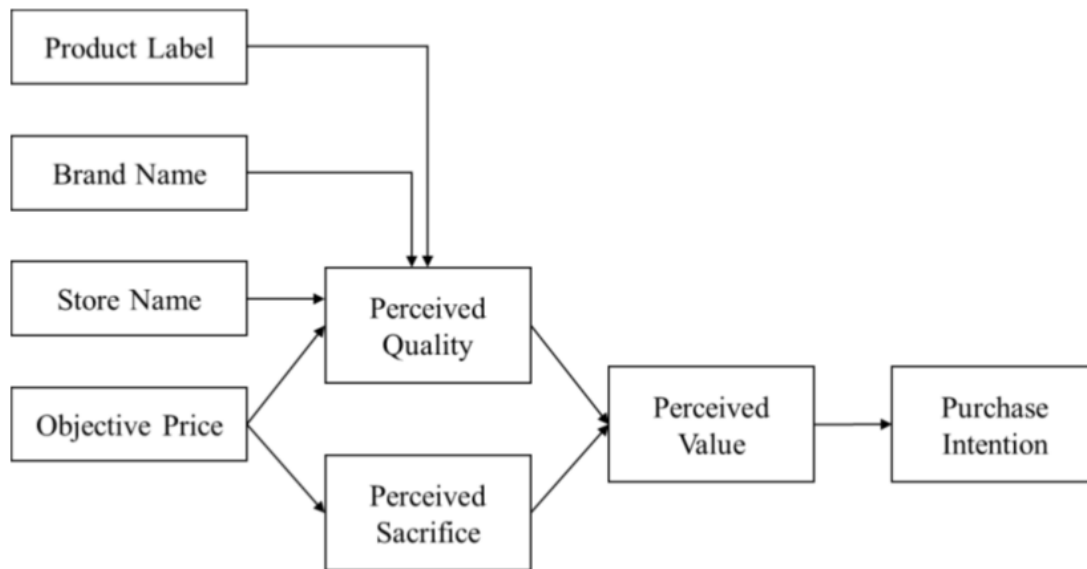


Figure 1: Extended conceptualization to include product label

Methodology

To test the hypotheses, we employed a between-subjects design with two levels of product information (with and without label). To ensure external validity, we used actual product images and renowned pet retail store logo in the experiment. The product label levels were manipulated by presenting each participant with two packages - a combination of a national brand and a store brand from the pet food category. We controlled the price, keeping the store brand price 10-20% lower than the national brand. The respondents, who were pet owners and active shoppers, frequently visited pet food retail outlets in cities in Connecticut, Georgia, and California. Most participants were relatively middle-aged (21-40 years), affluent, and educated, and regularly purchased these brands for their pets. Participants examined the pet food brands and read the label information designed on a webpage. The webpage included product details such as price, brand name, package size, and weight to mimic an in-store experience. The images of the national brand (market leader) and the store brand (competitor in the same category) were presented side-by-side to facilitate direct comparison. The store brand's price was kept close to that of the national brand to control the effect of price on quality perceptions. Since store brands are typically available at discounted prices, examining the effects of price discounts was beyond the study's scope. In the first group, participants viewed images of pet food packages with product labels (ingredients). In the second group, participants viewed images of the same pet food packages without any product labels. After evaluating the brand pair, participants completed a questionnaire that collected demographic information (age, income, marital status, education level) and confirmed their pet ownership and shopping habits. All responses were collected through an online survey platform, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

Consumer evaluations of perceived quality and purchase intention were measured using 7-point Likert scales, using the Dodds et al. (1991) and Sprott and Shimp (2004) scales. Perceived value was measured using the Dodds et al. (1991) scales. Consumer demographics (age, income and marital status) and general purchase behavior were measured to control for the effects of possible confounding variables to improve the study's internal validity.

Results

Cronbach's alpha values were calculated to assess the reliability of the scales used for the three dependent variables. The values were .80 for perceived quality, .91 for perceived, and .92 and .96 for purchase intention. Hypothesis H1 predicted that perceived quality of a pet food store brand would be higher when presented with label information along with extrinsic cues and results support this hypothesis ($F_{1,35}=7.412$, $p<.10$). Likewise, H2 predicted that perceived value of a store brand when presented with label information along with extrinsic cues and the result was statistically significant ($F_{1,35}=10.259$, $p<.10$). Finally, the purchase intent for a pet food store brand (H3) is also found statistically significant ($F_{1,35}=9.518$, $p<.10$). Therefore, with product label, pet food store brand was perceived to be higher in quality, value and purchase intent, refer Table 1 and Figure 2

Dependent Variables	Mean	
	Without Label	With Label
Perceived Quality	3.97	4.67
Perceived Value	4.18	4.59
Purchase Intention	3.96	4.51

Tabel 1: Mean ratings of pet food store brand

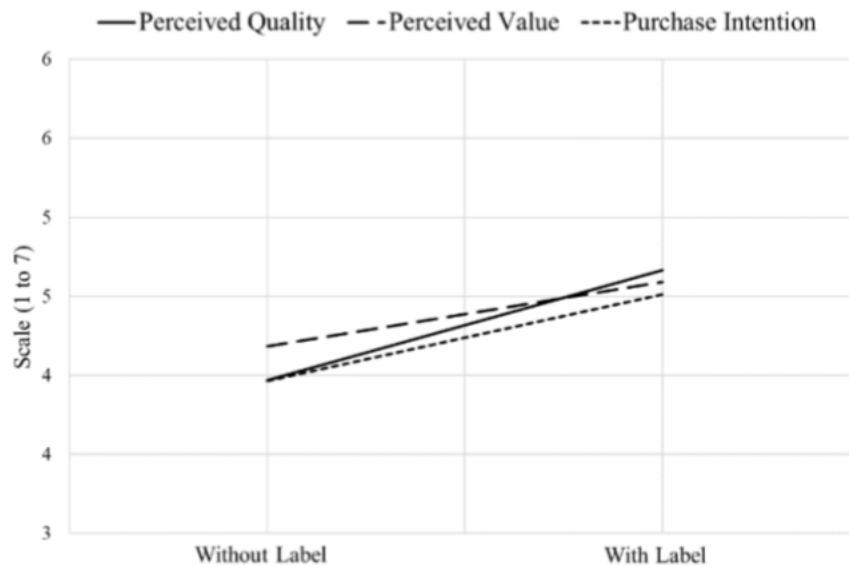


Fig 2: Mean variation of pet food store brand

Discussion

Consider the average pet food shopper who traverses the aisles of his or her favorite store on a weekly basis. S(he) is regularly exposed to thousands of products but pays close attention to relatively few and has likely purchased only a small subset of the items. Even absent product usage experience, this average shopper has nonetheless formed evaluations of untried items based on brand name familiarity, corporate reputation, advertising exposure, and perhaps many other factors. Pet owners (consumers) likely believe that national brands are of higher quality than store brands in the same category.

An experiment with pet food products tested whether the product labelling of store brands augments consumers' quality perceptions of these brands vis-à-vis better known and higher equity national brands. This study incorporated the product attributes (intrinsic and extrinsic): price, store name, brand name and product labels directly in the model and thereby provided a way to assess their effects on the pet owners' evaluation of the product, where customer do not have direct access to the intrinsic cue of the product. The results are generally consistent with conceptual models (Dodds et al., 1991; Teas and Agarwal, 2000; Zeithaml 1988). The findings also suggest that a form of product labelling serves well to enhance consumers' quality perceptions of store brands. Hence, by providing consumers the opportunity to expose product information (specially the ingredients) of pet food store brand, learning occurred such that participants gained knowledge about the store brands intrinsic nature quality perceptions then were positively affected by this additional information.

Correctly designing communication strategies (product labelling) is critical for brand equity, and company's profitability. Considering earlier research on the price-quality relationship, this study looks at the effects of key extrinsic cues (price, brand name and store name), and intrinsic cue (product label) on perceived quality and purchase intention of store brands, under product label information strategy and by controlling for price differences between the store brand and national brand. If consumers perceive a large quality differential between a national brand and a store brand, brand managers should attempt to reduce this quality perception gap. They should focus on deciding the optimum place for product labels to compete with national brands. Besides, they need to be cautious in selecting the

right information to communicate. In conclusion, if pet food retailers carefully decide to display product labels on their store brands, it will positively influence purchase intentions and increase sales volume.

Conclusions and Limitations

In an ideal scenario, retailers would exclusively keep their own brands, leveraging greater control and higher profit margins. Our experimental evidence and theoretical arguments highlight the advantages for retailers in promoting their brands, particularly when they have a strong market presence and store image. This strategy provides consumers with concrete reasons to judge store brand quality more favorably, beyond just price and brand name extrinsic cues. Consumers make numerous food-related decisions (for themselves and pets) daily but often lack the cognitive capacity to process all available information, leading them to rely on a limited number of product attributes to avoid information and choice overload. Therefore, simple product labels, which serve as intrinsic cues, become crucial. For pet food, labels provide essential information about ingredients and nutrient content. The results of this study demonstrate that perceived quality associated with product cues significantly influences pet food owners' buying intentions. Thus, perceived quality and product labels play a critical role in shaping value perceptions and purchase intentions.

Our findings have substantial managerial implications for pet food store brand retailers. Success in this market depends not only on maintaining high intrinsic product quality but also on developing strong communication strategies, such as effective product labeling. Brand managers should recognize that consumer patronage is influenced by more than just price or quality. Enhancing pet food product labels, or educating pet owners about their benefits, could significantly aid consumers in making better shopping decisions. Retailers that effectively design and display informative product labels on their store brands can positively impact purchase intentions and ultimately increase sales volume. Collectively, the study indicates a complex relationship between managerial decision variables—such as price and product attributes—and the constructs of perceived value and purchase intention. These findings align with earlier literature on generic store brand food consumption (Cudmore, 2000; Enneking et al., 2007; Sarkar et al., 2017) and pet food-related studies (Lemke, 2015).

As with most empirical research, this study is subject to certain limitations. First, a purposive sample was used, and we conducted experiments on an online platform, which is slightly different from real world retail environment. Moreover, we considered price (close to national brand), brand name, store name and product details (intrinsic attributes) in our study. One might speculate that other independent variables, like packaging may impact the results. Further investigation is needed to replicate these findings with different samples, incorporating other marketing variables and treatment combinations (such as different price levels, packaging similarity to a national brand) and using different types of products representing various classes. Future research may explore the interaction of product cues with any of the other experimental factors speaks for the robustness of the findings. The generalizability of the results presented here must be tempered with the realization that our analysis is based on one pet food product category and conducted with limited participants.

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SESSION 12.2: #Branding

Moderator:

R Wixel Barnwell

Summary Brief

From Authenticity to Accessibility: Developing a Formative Scale for Brand Coolness

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Understanding the concept of brand coolness is crucial for driving consumer purchases, yet the strategies marketers can use to achieve this remain unclear. This research seeks to uncover the mechanisms behind the creation and maintenance of cool brands. By employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this paper develops a new scale to measure brand coolness. Through in-depth interviews, the results revealed five primary factors contributing to brand coolness: Authenticity, Brand Associations, Originality, Storytelling, and Accessibility. Utilizing these insights, a robust formative scale for brand coolness was established, which correlates with existing reflective measures of cool. This new scale not only influences consumer perceptions but also captures previously unidentified dimensions of coolness.

Research Background

What makes a brand cool, and why do so many fail in achieving it? In today's crowded market, achieving brand coolness is increasingly challenging. Despite brands' relentless pursuit of coolness, many brands struggle to capture and sustain it, posing significant challenges for marketing practitioners and researchers (Tapp & Bird, 2008). Even with existing research and measures of coolness (e.g., Warren et al. 2019), the fundamental question remains: how is a cool brand created, maintained, and built over time? This paper aims to explore how practitioners develop and sustain cool brands. To this end, a formative scale for creating brand coolness is introduced. This scale provides marketing researchers and practitioners with a set of predictive, measurable variables that can be adjusted in the quest to achieve coolness.

Conclusion

Our research revealed that coolness emerges when the elements of Authenticity, Storytelling, Originality, Accessibility, and Associations synergize. A brand can be perceived as cool when all these factors are integrated to influence consumers' understanding of coolness. The formative scale, based on insights from interviews with industry professionals, offers brand managers and marketing managers a quantitative measure of the extent to which each dimension contributes to the creation and sustainability of coolness across different brands.

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Summary Brief

The Effects of Color vs. Black and White Imagery in Luxury Good Ads on Consumer Brand Evaluation: An Empirical Study

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With the rise of the internet and social media in recent years, the world has seen a shift in marketing communication strategies and the use of color, or lack thereof, in advertisements. Prior research, specifically concerning color and black and white imagery in luxury brand advertising, is not only sparse, yet results are also conflicting surrounding which, if either, is the better tactic. Prior research indicates pros and cons to both. It is the purpose of this research to seek to reconcile these opposing findings.

The Case for Color

Some prior research offers evidence for greater effect of color advertising over black and white. For one, color ads seem to attract more attention. A study of phone directory ads by found that ads in color are read up to 42% more often than the same ads in black and white (White (1997). To what can we attribute these differences? Greenleaf (2010) argues that since people are used to seeing in color and not black and white, the latter presents a novel and challenging experience requiring greater cognitive resources to identify and decode the scene being viewed. Interestingly, even for those media for which black and white is customary, such as newspapers, color is now found to be favored. For example, Sparkman & Austin (1980) find that color ads sell more than black-and-white ads, and Click & Stempel (1976) report that newspaper readers prefer the front pages of newspapers with color.

Color's global rise to prominence throughout advertising spans numerous categories, including for luxury goods, the domain of this research. Data from a global digital advertising archive, *AdForum.com*, reports that between 2001 and 2018 only 17% of luxury print ads were black and white. However, the luxury industry is distinct from other global markets, and the way that color marketing impacts this specific industry has not been widely researched. One particular study by Baek et al. (2018) examined the effect of color warmth on consumer perceptions, but it focused on a retail setting rather than advertising. Another study by Kim et al. (2020) examined the impact of different color dimensions on consumer evaluations of luxury service settings, such as hotel rooms. This study extends what is known about color as a powerful tool for advertising in the luxury goods industry. Based on these findings, we propose that:

P1: Color is an effective persuader for luxury goods.

The Case for Black and White

However, in spite of the ubiquity of color imagery in advertising today, or, perhaps because of it, there is still a case to be made for the continuing effectiveness of black and white imagery as a tool for persuasive communication. Not only can the power of black and white come from its now sparse usage, making it the exception that draws the eye, but as well from certain sensory advantages that black and white has always held over color. For example, Schindler (1986) argues that the use of color in an ad can sacrifice contrast, reducing legibility and readability.

Black and white imagery may not only hold sensory advantages over color, but black and white imagery may also convey particular meanings that may be particularly advantageous for brands in certain product categories such as luxury goods, the domain of this research; this is evidenced by the fact that certain luxury brands, including Dior, Prada, Givenchy, and Chanel commonly employ black and white imagery in their advertising. The efficacy of black and white and its meanings for the advertising of luxury goods is further demonstrated by Wang et al. (2021), who find that black and white connotes luxuriousness more so than color imagery, enhances consumers' perceptions of authenticity and uniqueness, and has a greater impact on consumer ad evaluation when the ad uses a hedonic appeal. We therefore propose that:

P₂: Black and white is an effective persuader for luxury goods.

We reason that there are different types of luxury goods and that color and black and white modes can be differentially effective, depending on the type. Luxury goods used in these past studies consisted of clothing, handbags, and watches, which can be seen as extensions of the self. This study extends past research to other types of luxury goods, such as those used in more socially expressive settings, rather than those of self-expression. Thus, I propose the following:

P₃: Color imagery as proximal stimuli are more effective for luxury goods that serve a social function.

Method

A series of t tests comparing differences in mean response to exposure to a Veuve Clicquot ad in color vs. black and white were run using the SAS PROC TTEST procedure (SAS Institute 2023). Whereas Wang et al. (2021) tested the effects of color vs. black and white imagery in luxury good advertising on consumer response to the ad itself, this research tests its effect on response to the ad as well, but it also goes on to also test the effect of color vs. black and white on consumer response to the luxury good being advertised at three levels – perception, attitude and choice – as well as on package visuals.



Key Findings

Results are generally in support of the proposition that color is a stronger tool for advertising luxury goods compared to black and white, in that consumer responses are greater. Since prior research finds the opposite, this study further suggests that the answer of which condition is better lies in the nature of the luxury goods being advertised. Prior research that supports black and white imagery over color imagery addresses luxury goods that are worn, and therefore serve as extensions of the self, whereas this study is less about the self and more about others. Champagne is not a self-expressive good that separates one person from others through exclusivity, rather, it brings people together through its use in social settings and special occasions.

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Summary Brief

Assessing Web-Based Branding Effectiveness via Product Involvement, Flow, Persuasion Knowledge, and Eye Movements

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The current study adopted a mixed methods approach, where participants' eye movements associated with browsing a mock brand website were tracked by a biometric system, in conjunction with a lab experiment. Study findings confirmed that the effect of prior product involvement on purchase intention was successively mediated by user interface flow and website advertising value, controlling for persuasion knowledge and visual attention. Results contribute to new theoretical expansions to explain how consumers evaluate brand websites.

Introduction

Having “a strong online presence, particularly a website, can be make or break for generating more revenue,” as most consumers will visit a brand’s website before making a purchase (Kaplan, 2020, para 1-2). This study seeks to contribute to our understanding of how consumers evaluate web-based marketing communication—by examining the effect of product involvement on purchase intention—and the potential mediators and covariates including user-website interaction flow, website quality evaluation, persuasion knowledge and visual attention.

Product involvement, as reflected by the interest, relevance, and value internalized by a consumer (Dholakia, 2001) is usually unaffected by external or situational factors (Quester & Lim, 2003). Past research suggested that greater involvement with the product (such as sneakers) featured on a website was related to greater cognitive effort in information processing, which led to greater consumer attitude and satisfaction (Serravalle et al., 2023). A survey of consumers who had used online food ordering apps during the Covid-19 pandemic also found that product involvement positively related to consumer attitudes toward, and satisfaction with, the app (Das & Ramalingam, 2022).

Flow is a construct that has been utilized to explain how consumers cognitively and affectively experience marketing website navigation (Huang, 2006). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) described flow as the feeling of immersion, enjoyment, concentration, and control a person feels when engaging in an activity. For instance, the extent to which having a fluid experience when browsing a brand website will impact consumer satisfaction and decision-making (Liang et al., 2021; Xu & Lin, 2023). The same is true for the connection between flow and consumer behavior (e.g., Huang et al., 2012; Serravalle et al., 2023). Existing research that examines the relationship between product involvement and consumer-website interface flow remains limited.

Consumer flow experience has also been shown to affect perceptions of quality of (Obadă, 2014) as well as cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses (e.g., purchase intent) toward a brand website (e.g., Chen & Lin, 2022). When consumers lack sufficient product information, they may utilize peripheral cues such as perceived website quality to help make purchasing decisions (Qalati et al., 2021; Wells et al., 2011). Extant research has yet to examine how perceived website advertising value may contribute to the relationship between product involvement and purchase intention.

The persuasion knowledge model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) posits that consumers respond to persuasion attempts by processing the persuasive message through their knowledge of the message agent/source, the message/topic, and persuasion intent. Even though some studies found persuasion knowledge to have a negative effect on advertising outcomes, other studies suggested that such an effect could be mitigated when persuasion attempts were not seen as intrusive and/or associated with entertainment or informational value (Evans & Park, 2015; Ham et al., 2015). Still, additional research exploring the potential factors that may mediate the negative effects of persuasion knowledge on advertising outcomes is needed.

Moreover, when consumers exercise their persuasion knowledge, they must cognitively process and pay attention to the ad itself (Boerman et al., 2015; Pfiffelmann et al., 2020). Visual attention (measured via eye-tracking) to branding efforts (e.g., labels) has been found to positively influence advertising outcomes such as purchase intention (Monteiro et al., 2019). Research tracking eye movements, for instance, has validated the effect of visual attention to online video (Simmons, et al., 2020), pop-up (Lewandowska et al., 2022) and banner ads (Simonetti & Bigne, 2024) on consumers. Visual attention was shown to be greater for textual than pictorial elements of ads viewed on a computer compared to a mobile device; ads also received more attention on a computer than a mobile device (Xie et al., 2022). As eye-tracking experiments have primarily examined a single ad at a time, research still needs to assess how visual attention during browsing an entire multi-level/page brand website may impact advertising outcomes such as user interface flow and perceived advertising values of the website.

Based on the research gaps identified in the literature summary above, further research is required to help provide a more complete understanding of the potential effects of product involvement on purchase intention, as mediated by user-content interface flow and perceived website advertising value. The same is true for the lack of understanding of how user-content interface flow, product involvement and purchase intention may be related to persuasion knowledge and visual attention.

As demonstrated above, the different theories and constructs—including product involvement, persuasion knowledge, user-content interface flow, purchase intention, and visual attention—are interrelated with each other in a conceptually coherent manner. Thus, this study proposes to integrate these conceptual components and test them via an experiment of a mock brand website a set of preliminary research hypotheses to generate exploratory research findings.

Methods

Undergraduate participants from a large northeastern university were recruited and offered extra credit for their participation, with advance IRB approval. Participants (N=113) completed this mixed methods study in a research lab. They first answered a set of demographic, product involvement, and persuasion knowledge questions. This was followed by browsing and interacting with any page(s) of a mock website for up to 15 minutes, while their visual attention was measured by their eye movements (via *EyeLink 1000 Plus*). Afterwards, they responded to the items assessing interface flow, website advertising value and purchase intention. The mock website featured a multivitamin supplement marketed by a fictitious brand “VitaMinerals” and included the following pages: “homepage,” “about us,” “FAQ,” “customer support,” and “shop.”

Two eye movement measures (fixation count and fixation duration, $r=.78$) were examined together as a construct of visual attention. *Fixation count* refers to the total number of fixations (i.e., unique resting of the eye) falling within a certain interest area (e.g., graphic element of the website). *Fixation duration* pertains to the sum of the time of all fixations in a particular interest area lasting for longer than 100 milliseconds (Salvucci & Goldberg, 2000).

The current project has completed data collection, but data analysis is still at the rudimentary stage because this is the first study that attempts to analyze a novel conceptual framework (which integrates multiple theories and constructs). As the study aims to fill the aforementioned research gaps to advance the literature, it may need to further refine the preliminary research hypotheses presented below to encapsulate the theoretical assumptions of interest and to fully test them in a statistically sound manner.

Results

Hayes (2022) PROCESS model 6 for serial mediation at 95% confidence intervals and 5,000 bootstrap was used to test the study hypotheses. Table 1 reports the direct effects related to H1-H3 and H5-H6, while table 2 reports the indirect effects of H4. Specifically, H1a-b asserted that prior product involvement will be positively related to perceptions of a) perceived user interface flow, b) perceived website advertising value, and c) purchase intention. Results showed that prior product involvement predicted user interface flow ($\beta=.35, p<0.001$) but not website advertising value or purchase intention; H1a was thus confirmed instead of H1b and H1c. H2a-b proposed perceived user interface flow will be positively related to perceptions of a) website advertising value and b) purchase intention. Perceived interface flow predicted both website advertising value ($\beta=.60, p<0.001$) and purchase intention ($\beta=.23, p<0.05$), validating H2a-b. H3 presumed that perceived website advertising value will be positively related to purchase intention; this hypothesis was supported by the results ($\beta=.40, p<0.001$).

Table 1: Direct effects of Mediation Analysis

<i>Dependent Variable (DV)</i>				<i>p</i>	
Predictors & Covariates	β Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i> value	value	95% CI

<i>DV: User interface flow</i>					
Visual attention	-.04	.09	-0.49	.63	[-.23, .14]
Persuasion knowledge	.17	.09	1.82	.07	[-.02, .34]
Product involvement	.35	.09	3.76	***	[.16, .53]
<i>DV: Website advertising value</i>					
Visual attention	.10	.07	1.39	.16	[-.04, .25]
Persuasion knowledge	.14	.08	1.83	.07	[-.01, .29]
Product involvement	.02	.08	0.24	.81	[-.14, .19]
User interface flow	.60	.08	7.48	***	[.44, .75]
<i>DV: Purchase intention</i>					
Visual attention	-.09	.08	-1.16	.25	[-.24, .07]
Persuasion knowledge	-.15	.08	-1.82	.07	[-.31, .01]
Product involvement	.16	.09	1.94	.06	[-.00, .33]
User interface flow	.23	.10	2.21	*	[.02, .44]
Website advertising value	.40	.10	3.88	***	[.19, .61]

Note: *** $p < 0.001$ level (2-tailed); * $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed); standardized beta coefficients presented based on transformed z-score values

Table 2: Indirect Effects of Mediation Analysis

Pathways	β	SE	95% CI
Product Involvement → User Interface Flow → Purchase Intention	.08	.05	[-.01, .19]
Product Involvement → Website Advertising Value → Purchase Intention	.01	.04	[-.07, .08]
Product Involvement → User Interface Flow → Website Advertising Value → Purchase Intention	.08	.03	[.02, .16]

H4 speculated that perceived user interface flow and website advertising value will successively mediate the relationship between prior product involvement and purchase intention. The effect of prior product involvement on purchase intention was fully mediated by interface flow and website quality in that order ($\beta=.08$, $SE=0.03$; $[CI_{95\%}: .02, .16]$), confirming H4. See Table 1.

H5a-c anticipated that persuasion knowledge would be positively related to a) interface flow, b) website advertising value, and c) purchase intention. All three hypotheses were rejected, due to non-significant results. The same non-significant results were also true for H6a-c, which proposed that visual attention to the mock website will positively relate to a) user interface flow, b) website advertising value, and c) purchase intention, rejecting H6a-c.

Discussion & Implications

Our findings contribute to advance our theoretical and practical understanding of how consumer attention, involvement, knowledge, and value may contribute to their purchase intention through freely browsing a brand website. Specifically, we hypothesize persuasion knowledge as a positive predictor of consumer interaction with a fictitious brand website—to validate the preliminary empirical evidence (Pierre et al., 2023; Jung & Heo, 2019)—and to challenge the dominant paradigm that persuasion knowledge can only be a negative predictor (Evans & Park, 2015; Ham et al., 2015). Even though regressions results did not support our assertion, the positive correlations between persuasion knowledge and a) user interface flow ($r=.28$) and b) website advertising value ($r=.21$) provide a basis for further research to verify whether persuasion knowledge indeed can facilitate instead of barricade consumer interaction with and perceived value of a previously unknown brand website.

Our findings also confirm that 1) product involvement was a positive predictor of user interface flow; 2) user interface flow was as a positive predictor of purchase intention and website advertising value (hedonic and utilitarian); and 3) website advertising value was a positive predictor of purchase intention. While each of these findings expand the existing empirical literature that investigated the same domain, it is noteworthy that consumer perception of the hedonic and utilitarian value of the brand website presents a unique contribution, as similar studies

typically focus singularly on information, usability, or functionality (e.g., Ali, 2016; Hidayatullah et al., 2020; Hsu et al., 2012).

Although biometric measures of visual attention failed to impact the evaluative outcomes of the mock brand website, significant correlations were generated between the total number of open-ended responses and 1) total fixation ($r=.32, p<.001$), 2) total dwell time ($r=.39, p<.001$), and 3) total page visited ($r=.48, p<.001$). Hence, these qualitative consumer comments may help explain why there was a lack of relationship between visual attention and consumer behavior in the current study setting. Of note, the use of qualitative measure in an eye-tracking study is a novel approach rarely seen in the literature.

Importantly, we verified the hypothesized serial mediation effect between product involvement on purchase intention through user interface flow and website advertising quality (controlling for persuasion knowledge and visual attention). This suggests that as perceived enjoyment, immersion and control experienced when browsing a brand website helps determine perceived hedonic and utilitarian value of the website, both variables can be instrumental in disarming the negative effect of persuasion tactics (e.g., Israeli et al., 2024). Future research could consider testing a moderated mediation model—by treating user interface flow as a mediator and website advertising value as a moderator—to further explicate the relationship between product involvement and purchase intention.

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SESSION 12.3: WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE VEGAS

Moderator:

Muhammad Mollah

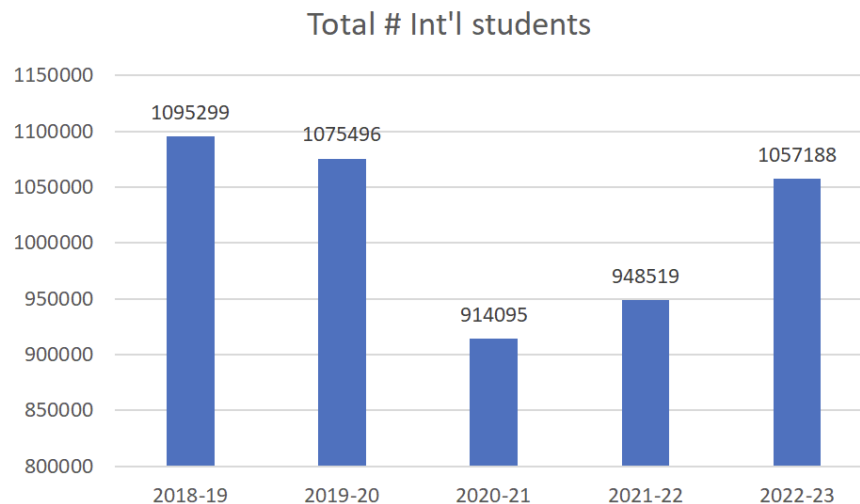
Summary Brief

Importance of Effective US Higher Education Marketing

Dr. Somjit Barat, Pennsylvania State University
Sharmistha Barat, Pennsylvania State University

Since the 1900s when the US has been hosting international students, the country has been a beacon of higher education and research opportunities for learners across the world. While the number of college-level international student enrolments has witnessed steady increase, with minor sporadic exceptions, we have noticed that international enrolments have gained significantly over the last five years. In 2022/23, for example, the total number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities increased by 12% to 1,057,188 students (Open Doors, 2023).

Year	Total # Int'l students	% change
2018-19	1095299	0.05
2019-20	1075496	-1.8
2020-21	914095	-15
2021-22	948519	3.8
2022-23	1057188	11.5



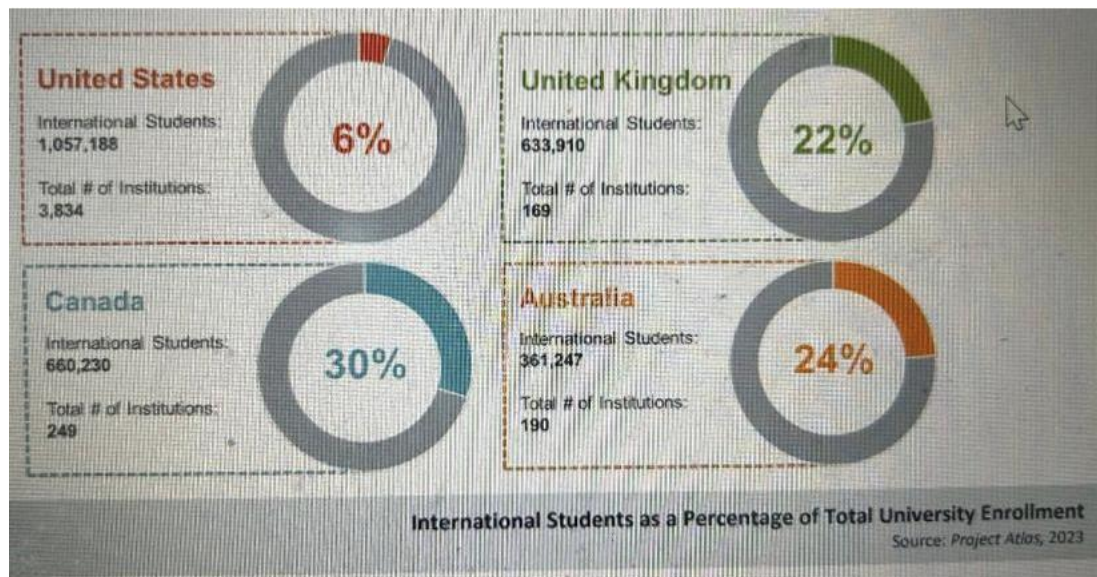
Open Doors Fast Facts 2010-2022 (https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/fast-facts/)

The increase in numbers is the result of several factors such as a robust internationally-acclaimed education system that is more or less uniform across all the 50 states, a streamlined admissions process based on standardized tests (GRE, GMAT etc.); previous school and/or work experience; a robust educational, logistical, legal, financial and acclimatizational infrastructure. Perhaps most importantly, the option to gain work experience post-graduation acts as a significant catalyst for international students to gain acceptance at US universities. It may be mentioned in this context that “the total number of students on Optional Practical Training (or OPT, which offers a pathway to international students in American universities to gain valuable work experience) grew by 8 percent to 198,793 students in 2022/23 (Open Doors, 2024). It is anticipated that in the 2023/24 academic year, OPT will experience another increase”.

At the same time, we must also remember that revenue from international students comprises one of the largest sources of foreign ‘imports’ for the US, the main reason being that international students receive lower scholarships and funding compared to their American counterparts, who rarely pay ‘full tuition’. Consequently, international students fund their education either on their own, or through their native government resources, and by working odd jobs. In any case, such funds mostly get reinvested in the US economy. In fact, “The financial contributions of international students also contributed to over 368,000 jobs in the United States, up by close to 10 percent compared to the prior year (NAFSA, 2023). The same report indicated that every three international students created or supported one U.S. job and that 9 states in the United States saw economic benefits from international students exceed \$1 billion” (Goodman and Martel 2024). It is not a surprise that the US will continue to develop and engender a favorable environment to attract more and more international students. For example, 92% of institutes want to increase their foreign intake over the next five years, while 85 percent of those institutes note that their support for international student recruitment has either remained flat or increased.

Even though the role of foreign students in us higher education has been widely researched, there appears to be lack of attention on the need for more aggressive higher education marketing by American universities. Currently associated with a well-acclaimed university on the East Coast, the authors strongly feel the urge to be proactive in this regard before other countries snatch the initiative away from the US.

Given that the US competes with other industrialized countries (UK, Canada, Germany, Australia topping the list), it is interesting to note that whereas other countries appear to be running out of space, the US still commands considerable room for growth in international student admissions.



The situation has been made even more favorable by a flattening of American students entering higher education, especially since the pandemic. For example, according to Bestcolleges.com, in the last decade alone, college enrollment has declined by 1.5 million, or 7.4 % (Berg et al., 2024; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC). January 2014).

Traditionally, Indian and Chinese students have occupied the lion’s share of foreign students in US universities, whereby other countries have largely been ignored. Given this backdrop, the authors propose that American universities need to ramp up their higher education marketing efforts and focus on countries with considerable potential, such as those that have historically witnessed lack of higher education infrastructure in their own countries, while some others have witnessed gradual erosion of educational opportunities in general due to political instability, social or political persecution or a variety of other compelling reasons. Such factors drive citizens out of their home countries in search of greener pastures abroad, and herein lies an opportunity for American universities to scout for untapped knowledge base.

Such a move by American universities—the authors surmise—will have multiple positive effects on American higher education. Firstly, it will somewhat stem (if not overcompensate) the decrease in tuition fees from

lower number of American students entering colleges. Secondly, it will give the US an upper hand as a beacon of hospitality and tourism in a world where many other countries are shunning tourists and immigrants. Thirdly, it will bring in considerable amount of foreign money that can counterbalance our deepening trade deficit. Fourthly, it can create considerable employment opportunities both in the education as well as tourism sectors, given that that “...every three international students created or supported one U.S. job and that 9 states in the United States saw economic benefits from international students exceed \$1 billion.” (Goodman and Martel, 2024). Last but not the least, having more international students opt for US higher education will allow the US to retain its competitive advantage over other industrialized nations, given the historical intellectual contribution by immigrants to the US business and technical fields.

Therefore, the authors believe that their current research not only addresses a wide lacuna in higher education research and the future trajectory of US higher education, but it also carries several noteworthy social, political and managerial consequences and benefits. Consequently, the authors hope to elicit considerable interest and discussion from the highly engaged and esteemed audience of your Marketing Education Review Special Issue & Wednesday Symposium.

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Summary Brief

An Exploratory Study of Adoption of Blockchain by Organizations

Sandipan Sen, Southeast Missouri State University, USA
Muhammad M. Mollah, California State University, Los Angeles, USA
Mohan Menon, University of North Georgia, USA
Holly Syrdal, Texas State University, USA

This study explores how some organizational capabilities affect the adoption of blockchain technology and how top management support moderates the impact of blockchain adoption on a firm's financial performance. Data was gathered from a survey of IT managers across various regions. Drawing from the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) and using partial least square equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, the results show that organizational capabilities impact the adoption of blockchain technology. Blockchain adoption positively mediates the relationship between organizational capabilities and firm financial performance. Top management support was found to positively moderate the relationship between blockchain adoption and firm financial performance.

**SESSION 12.1: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
ADVERTISING SYMPOSIUM**

Moderator:

Jie Gao Fowler

Summary Brief

Sexy Presence, Guilty Futures? A Cross-Cultural Study of Emotional Appeals in Magazine Advertising in Sweden and the United States

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Pia A. Albinsson, Appalachian State University, USA

This comparative cross-cultural study builds on extant research on the use of rational and emotional appeals. We examine the use of positive and negative emotional appeals in print magazine advertising in Sweden and the United States (U.S.). Conducting a content analysis with native speakers as coders, we find that U.S. advertisements contain more emotional appeals than Swedish advertisements. Positive appeals are more common than negative appeals overall, and apart from humor the most common appeals in both countries differ between the two countries. Results are discussed using cultural perspectives of the two nations.

Summary Brief

Consumer Reviews as a Wild Card in the Integrated Marketing Communications Framework

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Dana Harrison, East Tennessee University, USA

Mihai Orzan, Academy of Economic Sciences, Bucharest, Romania

Melanie Richards, East Tennessee University, USA

Lucia Nicoleta Barbu, Academy of Economic Sciences, Bucharest, Romania

This research paper presents a detailed analysis of consumer reviews in the context of integrated marketing communications. By using network analysis and lexical co-occurrence content analysis, we investigate the development and conceptual framework of consumer reviews research. The main themes identified encompass word-of-mouth, credibility, decision-making, sentiment analysis, and social media. Our results emphasize the significance of these concepts in influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors, highlighting the importance of emotional appeals, personalized advertising, and credibility in marketing strategies. This study makes conceptual contributions by systematizing recommendations for future research to improve the theoretical and practical implications of consumer reviews in IMC.

SESSION 12.4: ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS- VEGAS

Moderators:

Suzanne Oliva

Summary Brief

Investigating Social Media Use for University Student Recruitment: A Content Analysis

Rebecca Colunga, St Mary's University,
Brittany Beck, Appalachian State

Potential students utilize social media when searching for an educational institution to pursue their college degree. Among the different platforms, Tik Tok and Instagram are the most popular options. This study explores the different platforms that are used by students, the content that is consumed and what impact it plays in the decision marketing process. By leveraging the most influential platforms and content types, institutions can better meet the informational needs of their target audience and enhance their recruitment efforts.

Introduction

Today, prospective students utilize social media to navigate a vast sea of information available on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to gather insights, opinions, and recommendations before embarking on their academic journeys (Shields & Peruta, 2019). Historically, platforms like Facebook were dominant, primarily used for connecting with peers and accessing institution-related information (Pew Research Center, 2022). However, newer platforms such as Instagram and YouTube have gained prominence due to their visual and interactive content, which appeals more to the younger demographic (Shields & Peruta, 2019; Warack, 2022). TikTok, with its format of short, engaging videos, has also emerged as influential in this domain (Shields & Peruta, 2019). This study aims to identify which social media platforms are most influential with regards to students' choices in higher education. By examining the patterns of platform usage, the types of content consumed, and the factors driving decision-making, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the role of social media in shaping the appeal of higher education institutions.

Several factors contribute to the impact of social media on college students' decision-making. Content type is a significant factor, with visual and video content being the most influential. According to research by Smith (2021), videos showcasing campus life, student testimonials, and virtual tours are highly effective in attracting prospective students. These content types provide an authentic glimpse into the student experience, helping students visualize themselves at the institution. Moreover, the role of influencers and peer networks cannot be understated. Studies by Chen and Lin (2022) indicate that students are heavily influenced by social media influencers who are either current students or alumni of the institutions. These influencers often share individual experiences and insights that resonate deeply with prospective students. The influence of social media on college students' decisions when entering higher education is significant and multifaceted. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn play crucial roles in shaping perceptions and decisions through several types of content, including visual and video media, peer reviews, and influencer endorsements. Understanding these dynamics can help higher education institutions tailor their recruitment and marketing strategies to effectively engage with prospective students. By leveraging the most influential platforms and content types, institutions can better meet the informational needs of their target audience and enhance their recruitment efforts.

Methodology

A descriptive content analysis was conducted by identifying thirteen universities with a significant, consistent presence on TikTok, the most popular social media platform used by individuals who classify as traditional upcoming university freshmen (Statista, 2024). Videos posted by universities in the sample were recorded for the month of August, an active month for university recruitment, during the year of 2023. This historic data is appropriate for identifying main themes among university social media content, as is the objective of this descriptive content analysis.

Conclusions

This preliminary research seeks to identify how social media is utilized by universities for undergraduate student recruitment. It identifies TikTok as a key platform for engaging potential future students given its popularity among the target age group. Given this, a content analysis was conducted to gather information on how universities are utilizing TikTok for undergraduate student recruitment. The results suggest that TikTok is being used as a means of communicating the university experience. As one may expect, the platform is not being used for direct

recruitment efforts (e.g., announcing incoming freshman scholarships, application deadlines, etc.). Instead, it is being used to convey a sense of a “day in the life” of a student at their university.

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Summary Brief

Understanding Emotional Experiences and Trustworthiness of Fashion AI Apps Through Customer Reviews

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Juanjuan Wu, University of Minnesota, USA

With Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms predicting trends and analyzing customer preferences, it is becoming a game-changer in the fashion industry. Understanding consumer experience, especially their emotional experiences and trust in fashion AI applications (Apps) is of crucial importance. This study uses sentiment analysis and semantic network analysis to examine up-to-date consumer reviews of fashion mobile apps that are enhanced by AI. Findings provide insights into consumers' emotional experiences and trust in AI based on an AI trust model.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI), defined as a technology concerned with the development of computers capable of engaging in human-like thought processes such as learning, reasoning, and self-correction (Kok et al., 2009), is revolutionizing the fashion industry. This industry has always been at the forefront of innovation, constantly pushing boundaries and setting trends (Hafeez, 2024). Generative AI tools can enhance various aspects of the front end of innovation, such as by increasing the specificity of ideas, evaluating them, and sometimes combining them (Eapen et al., 2023). Consequently, AI is transforming the entire fashion ecosystem—from production to marketing and consumption (Hafeez, 2024). In the next three to five years, generative AI could add at least \$150 billion and up to \$275 billion to the operating profits of the apparel, fashion, and luxury sectors (Harreis et al., 2023). However, since generative AI is still in its early stages, there are limited studies on its practical ramifications in the fashion industry (Sohn et al., 2020; Kwon & Kim, 2024). Research is needed to understand consumer experience with and trust in generative AI in fashion.

Emotion significantly impacts customers' relationship satisfaction and their intention to maintain the relationship (Lee et al., 2011). Additionally, perceptions of trustworthiness strongly influence consumers' decisions and behaviors related to a service or product (Toreini et al., 2020). Consumers' trust in AI critically determines the success of AI integration into organizations (Glikson & Woolley, 2020).

Based on the reviewed literature, three forms of AI representation—robot, virtual, and embedded—were identified (Glikson & Woolley, 2020). In the fashion industry today, AI technology is primarily embodied in two forms: virtual AI and embedded AI (Min & Jin, 2024). Virtual AI represents AI without a physical presence but with a distinct identity, such as a chatbot or an avatar. In contrast, embedded AI lacks visual representation or a distinct identity, making it “invisible” to users (Glikson & Woolley, 2020).

In this research, we adopted the NRC Emotion Lexicon, which is associated with eight basic emotions (anger, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy, and disgust) and two sentiments (negative and positive) (Mohammad & Turney, 2013). Besides, the dimensions on trust in AI—tangibility, transparency, reliability, and immediacy (Glikson & Woolley, 2020)—will be used to guide our analysis of the reviews. Tangibility is one of the primary factors influencing initial trust, whether through actual physical presence or virtual presence. Transparency involves providing explanations about virtual AI functionality to moderate users' unrealistically high expectations. Reliability refers to the increase in trust that typically follows interactions indicating highly reliable performance. Immediacy includes actions by virtual AI that enhance trust, such as social responsiveness and personalized reactions from the virtual AI agent (Glikson & Woolley, 2020).

Overall, the NRC Emotional Lexicon and the four main dimensions on trust in AI will be used to interpret the differences and similarities in consumers' emotional experiences and trust in AI fashion apps between virtual AI and embedded AI.

Research Method

To achieve the research goals, three fashion AI apps were selected overall. One is an embedded AI app with human stylists (Stitch Fix), two are virtual AI apps, one with human stylists (Aiuta), and another one without human stylists (StyleLab: AI Clothes Try On). These fashion apps were chosen for their prominent AI technology. Stitch Fix

was selected as an embedded AI app since its algorithms interpret textual feedback from customers and then recommend items to human stylists. Two fashion virtual AI apps were chosen because they utilize AI-enhanced virtual try-on technology to generate life-like portrayals of clothing on people (Shlizerman, 2023), thereby establishing a distinct identity. Human stylists in two of the apps collaborate with AI, acting as advisors on the latest fashion trends, guiding outfit choices, and curating buying suggestions based on the items users favor.

In June 2024, 500 consumer reviews were scraped from the iOS retail mobile app for the embedded AI app with human stylists. Consumer reviews were also scraped from iOS retail mobile apps and Google Play for the virtual AI app with human stylists (304 reviews) and without human stylists (666 reviews). After data cleaning, the NRC Emotion Lexicon was used to detect emotions in the text. Semantic network analysis was then employed to quantitatively present the relationships among the top words in each AI application. Semantic network analysis is a method used to analyze large texts and identify main themes and topics. Subsequently, the top 100 words in each AI application were extracted, and NodeXL was used to create networks for visualization, facilitating comparison among the three apps. The size of each vertex was adjusted based on word frequency.

Findings and Discussion

A radar chart (Figure 1) illustrates the similarities and differences in emotional experience frequencies between the three apps. Overall, all types of AI exhibit relatively high values for “trust” and “joy” compared to other emotions within each AI representation, indicating that all elicit positive reactions. Embedded AI with Human Stylists and Virtual AI without Human Stylists tend to have mixed emotional responses. Among their high levels of trust (0.14/0.12) and positivity (0.25/0.2), notable sadness (0.08/0.06) and negative sentiment (0.13/0.12) were also evoked. Whereas Virtual AI with Human Stylists generally elicits the highest levels of positive emotions such as trust (0.19), joy (0.19), and overall positive sentiment (0.34). Additionally, AI with human stylists generate more positive experiences than AI without human stylists, suggesting that the combination of human stylists and AI might lead to more personalized and satisfactory experiences.

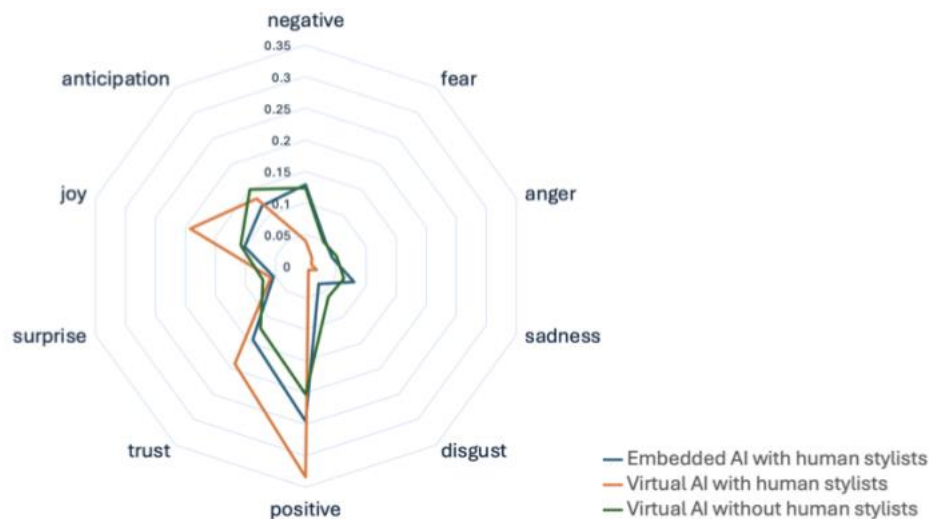


Figure 1. Affect Frequency Radar Chart

The visualization for comparing the three apps is shown in Figure 2. Words that belong to the three apps are positioned in the center of the figure. Words that are shared between two types of apps are located between the titles of each pair of AI representations. Words unique to each AI representation are spaced towards the edges of the graph. The semantic network analysis of Virtual AI with Human Stylists is shown in Figure 3 as an example. In terms of similarity, words like “love” and “like” appear frequently in the shared words, which are also located centrally in the semantic network analysis (Figure 3). This central positioning indicates strong connections with other words, suggesting that both types of AI apps are reliable and satisfy consumers’ hedonic values. Additionally, terms like “different” and “style” are interconnected, demonstrating positive experiences of real-time personalization (immediacy). For example, one review stated, “*The accuracy in real-time visualization provides an incredibly immersive experience, allowing you to try on clothes and explore different styles.*”

As for differences among the three apps, while there are some positive words such as “functionality” and “real” in Virtual AI with Human Stylists, which imply the reliability and tangibility of the technology, “custom” and “freestyle” appear in Virtual AI without Human Stylists and Embedded AI with Human Stylists, respectively, indicating that users can freely choose their own styles—a feature aligned with personalization. However, it seems the category of Virtual AI without Human Stylists has more negative words such as “waste time”, “useless app”, “error”, “went wrong”, etc., suggesting some areas for improvement in consumer experience.

To date, research and practice in fashion AI is at the exploratory stage, this study empirically explores fashion consumer AI experience and comparisons among different types of fashion AI apps using big data analytics. Future research can continue to explore these dynamics to further refine AI applications and optimize user experience and satisfaction in fashion-related contexts.

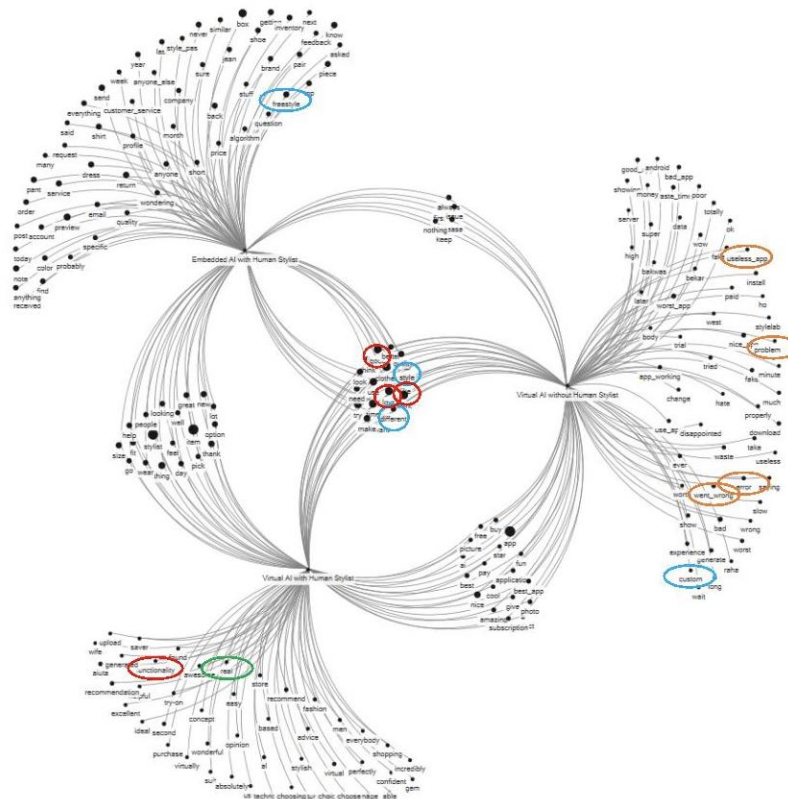


Figure 2. Visualization for Comparison between Three Types of Apps

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Summary Brief

Does Branding Matter? An Exploratory Study of the Importance of Branding in Higher Education

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In a post-pandemic world, universities have experienced significant challenges in enrollment. Online courses offer students the ability to complete a degree from anywhere in the world. Coupled with likely higher attendance costs and limited resources and funding, universities must learn how to compete for applicants amongst potentially all universities. This paper explores the current state of higher education and how traditional uses of branding can be incorporated into the marketing strategies of colleges and universities.

Introduction

During this exceedingly competitive environment, colleges and universities should incorporate traditional branding techniques to determine their strengths, as well as the needs of students, when strategizing the physical, emotional and/or financial aspects of their brands. The continuous use of school colors or logos on business cards, letterhead, websites and apparel reinforces brand recognition and attracts students (Shahnaz and Qadir 2020). In addition, effective branding can evoke memories of a good experience where alumni enroll in graduate school at their alma mater (Wu and Tsai 2022; Brown and Mazzarol 2009), recommend others to attend (Stephenson and Yerger 2014; Brown and Mazzarol 2009) or donate to the university (Stephenson and Yerger 2014; Porter and Johnson 2011). Schools may also focus on legacies, where children or grandchildren often graduate from the same university as their parents or grandparents (Martin and Spenner 2009). Branding can also create trust (Keller and Lehmann 2006) when students recognize that their degree is marketable and after-graduation employment is accessible (Barsoum and Rashad 2018). Additionally, a branded university with a solid reputation satisfies donors that monies contributed will be properly invested or efficiently used for needed resources (Shahnaz and Qadir 2020). Lastly, branding can advertise economically advantageous options (Stephenson and Yerger 2016), such as scholarships or other types of financial aid, as well as online degrees that are different from competitors, but desired by the targeted entering class.

Proposed Methodology

A focus group of approximately twenty undergraduate students was conducted. The purpose of the focus group was to determine what factors the students considered when they selected a university to attend and whether higher education branding influenced their decision. Based on the information provided, we developed a survey instrument that will be administered to a large sample of freshman students in the fall. We are hoping that the results of the survey will help higher education institutions differentiate themselves and be successful in their recruitment activities. The main areas of focus will be on what were the most important factors students considered when selecting a university and do the students feel that their current university has delivered what was promised.

Potential Contributions & Conclusion

We anticipate that the results of this study will help universities with branding techniques to market their strengths, efficiently target their desired customer base and differentiate themselves from their competitors. We anticipate that this research will contribute to the limited existing literature on the desires and needs of students in a post-COVID world. Overarching challenges to branding and attracting students may include a decrease in the number of high school graduates immediately attending college, an increase in students attaining degrees in a remote setting, students attracted to lower-cost universities, students considering the return on investment when pursuing higher education and companies discouraging college degrees and, instead, offering on-the-job training.

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Summary Brief

The Impact of AI on Educational Services: Preliminary Study on the Implications for the Accounting Profession

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Accounting is a service industry, traditionally marked by its adherence to technical knowledge, is undergoing a remarkable transformation driven by the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). This study explores how AI is reshaping the accounting profession and impacting educational services, creating opportunities and posing challenges for practitioners and educators. AI has become increasingly salient to the milieu in the accounting profession, adding a new type of skillset to the traditional technical skills. Studies have highlighted the positive impact of AI on efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making. The assimilation presents a unique challenge as traditional accounting education has focused on imparting technical skills, such as financial reporting, auditing, and taxation. The emergence of AI has created a demand for accountants who possess a blend of technical and technological knowledge. The purpose of this study is to identify what kind of AI skillsets employers are looking for when they hire graduates.

Introduction

The Accounting Profession

The accounting industry, traditionally marked by its strict adherence to well-established methods and procedures, is now undergoing a transformative change driven by the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies (Holmes & Douglass, 2022; Issa et al., 2016). As the emerging technology evolves, it is important for accounting practitioners, educators, regulators, and administrators to understand the profession's perceptions of adapting this technology into the educational services to meet the demands of industry. The Big 4 accounting firms (Deloitte, EY, KPMG, PwC) are integrating AI into their data and analytical practices. While large accounting firms are finding innovative ways to harness the emerging technology, the current state of AI skills needed in the accounting profession is rapidly evolving; therefore, it is critical to examine the impact on educational institutions to provide these services and meet future demands.

The Future of the Accounting Profession

The integration of AI into accounting practice has the potential to redefine the role of accountants in business and society (Gotthardt, 2020; Brabete et al., 2024). As noted, AI is reshaping the accounting profession (Brink and Reichert, 2020) by presenting both opportunities as well as challenges (Richins et al., 2017; Qasim, El Refae & Eletter, 2022) for practitioners and educators (Holmes and Douglass, 2022; Cheng et al., 2024). The assimilation of AI into the accounting profession presents a unique challenge regarding the need for accountants to master the synthesis of standardized knowledge, practical application skills, and technology skills (Holmes and Douglass, 2022). Yet, traditional accounting education has typically focused on imparting technical knowledge of standard principles of accounting associated with financial reporting, auditing, and taxation (Lawson et al., 2014; Aldredge et al., 2020). The emergence of AI has created a demand for accountants who can also understand and leverage technology tools and platforms from a more generalized and advanced approach (Pasewark, 2021). Since AI is creating the need for new and existing accountants to add new skillsets (Petkov, 2020) beyond the traditional practical application technical skills (Zang, 2020), this literature review explores the impact of AI on the accounting profession and gains additional insights into how this emerging technology is reshaping the accountant's role across industries and education (Kokina and Davenport, 2017) of new entrants within the accounting field (Petkov, 2020). Given the rapid evolution of AI development, this research is essential to develop an in-depth understanding of the multifaceted impact along the accounting profession continuum. As AI reshapes the accounting profession, a crucial

question arises for educational services: can accounting programs adapt to meet the market demands created by this paradigm shift? The purpose of this study is to identify what kind of AI skillsets employers are looking for when they hire graduates.

Methodology

A focus group consisting of HR managers of major accounting firms that hire students were conducted to identify the AI skillsets employers are looking for in accounting graduates. Based on the information that was obtained from the focus group and the literature, we plan on developing a survey instrument that will be sent to about 100 firms across the country to gauge the kind of skills employers are looking for in recent graduates. Preliminary findings will be discussed at the conference.

Possible research questions we plan to focus on include:

RQ1: What role will AI play in the accounting professions?

RQ2: What are the gaps that exist among current graduates in AI?

RQ3: Do recruiting firms have the resources to train candidates or are they requiring students to be proficient in that area?

RQ4: Do universities have the resources to successfully incorporate AI in their courses?

Conclusion

In summary, based on the results of the future study, we are hoping to address the research question above, and provide some suggestions on the required skillsets to be added in the curriculum of educational institutions.

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