



**THE WILD, WILD WEST: FINDING  
THE BALANCE  
BETWEEN BIG DATA,  
ANALYTICS AND ETHICS**



**NOVEMBER 8TH - 11TH**

**Fort Worth, Texas**

**DANA E. HARRISON, PROGRAM CHAIR**



SOCIETY FOR MARKETING ADVANCES

# The Wild, Wild West: Finding the Balance Between Big Data Analytics and Ethics

Alisha B. Horky, Editor

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**Sample footnote:**

Keel, A and Wolf, M. (2023). Reconceptualizing Marketing in Today's Global Environment, Alisha B. Horky, Editor, Society for Marketing Advances, 2023, pp. 134-135.

November 2023

Dear 2023 SMA Members,

We had a remarkable turnout at SMA 2023, with over 325 attendees representing 37 states and 13 countries.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude for your active participation and valuable contributions to the conference. Every year, we are reminded that SMA is only a success due to its remarkable members. Your commitment to advancing knowledge in our field is truly commendable. This event takes an enormous team. You served in various capacities, fostered a rich exchange of ideas and insights, and shared diverse perspectives and expertise that contributed to the vibrant atmosphere always characterizing this event.

The annual doctoral consortium was led by Pia Albinsson, Appalachian State University, Sharon Beatty, University of Alabama, and Chris Hopkins, Auburn University. The program consisted of global scholars in the marketing discipline to help guide students in their future careers in academia. Many thanks to Pia, Sharon, Chris, and the guest speakers who helped make this a success for the doctoral students!

There were two popular pre-conference workshops. *Issues and Answers in Scale Development and CB-SEM* was conducted by Barry J. Babin, Louisiana Tech University, and Nina Krey, Rowan University. Merlyn Griffiths, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, conducted the workshop *Finding Novel Research Ideas*. To Barry, Nina, and Merlyn, we appreciate your continued service to SMA!

To the editor of our journal, Marketing Education Review, Seung Hwan (Mark) Lee, and editor of our associated journal, Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice, Raj Agnihortri, thank you for your presence and continued support of SMA. Several event coordinators also deserve recognition: Chris Newman, who organized the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Competition; Joe Hair, who selected the Steven J. Shaw / Joe Hair Best Paper in Conference; Larry Neale, who was responsible for the Innovations in Teaching Competition; and Cindy Rippé, who Chaired the Distinguished Teaching Competition, your time and assistance is highly valued!

Thank you to our many sponsors and exhibitors. Many of these sponsors have been longstanding supporters of SMA: Sharon Beatty, University of Alabama; Michael Hyman, New Mexico State University; Lux Leonis, Ania Rynarzewska; Auburn University, Habert College of Business, Department of Marketing; East Tennessee State University, College of Business and Technology; University of North Carolina Wilmington, Center for Sales Excellence & Customer Delight; Mississippi State University, Department of Marketing, Quantitative Analysis and Business Law; Stukent; Interpretive Simulations; MBTN Academy; Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group. We look forward to our continued partnership.

Finally, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve in the role of Program Chair/President-Elect. Serving in this position over the last year afforded me an opportunity to connect frequently with existing members and engage with new members. There are many fond memories, and I look forward to seeing everyone again in November 2024.

Dana E. Harrison  
Program Chair and President-Elect

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J. Barry Mason, 1984  
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### **Consumer Behavior (Conceptual, Theoretical, Qualitative)**

Stephanie Lawson – Appalachian State University

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### **Social Media & Digital Marketing**

Shirley Mai - East Carolina University  
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### **Special Sessions/ Panel Proposals**

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Wendy Ritz – Florida State University, Panama City  
Marco Wolf – University of Southern Mississippi

### **Tourism, Hospitality, Food, Music, & Sports Marketing**

Julie Steen - University of South Carolina Aiken

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# 2023 SMA DISTINGUISHED FELLOW

## Brian Rutherford



**Dr. Brian Rutherford** is a Professor of Marketing at Kennesaw State University (Kennesaw, Georgia). He received his Ph.D. in Marketing from Georgia State University. Prior to joining the faculty at Kennesaw State University, he was a faculty member at Purdue University (West Lafayette, Indiana).

Dr. Rutherford has been actively engaged with the Society for Marketing Advances since the early 2000s as a doctoral student, including attending the Doctoral Consortium. Dr. Rutherford has received Distinguished Professor, Teaching, Research, and Service awards from Kennesaw State University. Dr. Rutherford has served on over 30 dissertation committees and has published over 65 peer-reviewed journal articles. His research appears in leading publications that focus on sales management and business-to-business marketing. He has also received a number of best paper awards.

Dr. Rutherford recently served as the Editor of Marketing Management Journal. Currently, he serves as an Associate Editor for the Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing and an Associate Editor for the Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice. In 2021, Dr. Rutherford co-edited a Special Issue of the Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice titled, "Expert Insights in Marketing Theory and Practice," which collectively has already exceeded 500 citations. In addition, he has co-chaired Doctoral Consortiums for the Society for Marketing Advances, Marketing Management Association, and the National Conference in Sales Management.

# 2023 SMA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

## J. Charlene Davis



### **Dr. J. Charlene Davis,**

J. Charlene Davis received her B.S. in Management with specialization in Production/Operations and her M.B.A., from Ball State University, and Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky.

Charlene is a Professor of Marketing, and Department Chair at Trinity University. Her previous administrative roles there include Director of Accreditation and Chair of various university committees. She teaches undergraduate principles of marketing, integrated marketing communications, and marketing consultancy.

Charlene's research interests include pedagogy, consumer motivations for involvement in the arts and philanthropic organizations, service quality, service failure and recovery, and branding. Her work has been published in the Journal of Retailing, the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, the Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, the Journal of Services Marketing, Marketing Education Review, and the Journal of Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. Charlene serves as a Board Member for BioBridge Global a family of nonprofits that includes South Texas Blood & Tissue, QualTex Laboratories, GenCure and The Blood & Tissue Center Foundation, since 2018.

Charlene joined SMA conference as a presenter in 2003. From 2005-2012 she served as the Placement Director. In 2014 she became Program Chair/President, and in 2015, President. She served again as Program Chair for 2018 and President in 2019. Charlene is grateful for the professional opportunities that came about entirely through her SMA network, specifically, serving as an officer, and her membership on editorial review boards for Marketing Education Review and the Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice.



# 2023 SMA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

## William C. Moncrief



### **Dr. William C. Moncrief,**

Bill Moncrief received his BA and MBA from the University of Mississippi (1975, 1978) and his Ph.D. from LSU in 1983. He began his career at TCU in 1982 and remained there 41 years retiring in August of 2023. While at TCU he served as Chair of the Department of Marketing for 14 years, Interim Dean, Assistant to the President for one year, and Senior Associate Dean for 14 years. His research interest is in sales and sales management publishing 65 journal articles appearing in the Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, Industrial Marketing Management, Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, Journal of Business Research among others. He has numerous conference presentations and publications.

He has been named as One of the Top 40 undergraduate faculty in the nation in business by Poets and Quants, the Chancellor's award for Distinguished Research and Teaching (highest honor given at TCU), TCU Honors Professor of the Year, Neeley School Alumni Professor of the Year, TCU Dean's Research Award, Dean's Teaching Award, and National AMA Sales SIG Life-time Achievement award among others.

Bill has been an active member of SMA since 1978 attending SMA conferences for more than 40 years. He has served SMA as session chairperson for numerous years. He has also served as an officer for SMA including secretary, President Elect and Program Chair, and then President in 1992. He was named an SMA Fellow in 2002 and was elected as an SMA Inaugural Board of Governors member. Bill co-served as Doctoral Consortium Coordinator for three years, and he presented at the Doctoral Consortium for over ten years. Greg was instrumental in bringing the Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice (Taylor & Francis/Routledge) into the SMA sponsors portfolio during his time as JMTP editor, and to this day T&F continues to support the SMA Annual Distinguished Scholar Award. For the past seven years he has worked closely with the SMA leadership team to attract a diverse set of top scholars in the marketing field to come to the conference to share their insights at the doctoral consortium and in a plenary session.

## 2023 Research Track Reviewers

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Aarushi Aarushi  
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Joyce Zhou  
Jennifer Zoghby

# 2023 SMA / ROUTLEDGE-TAYLOR & FRANCIS DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR AWARD RECIPIENT **Linda Price**



## **Dr. Linda Price,**

Linda L. Price is Professor of Marketing and Dick and Maggie Scarlett Chair at University of Wyoming, her alma mater. She has been named: Association of Consumer Research Fellow, American Marketing Association Fellow, Academy of Marketing Science Distinguished Educator, CBSIG Lifetime Achievement Awardee, and recipient of the AMA V Kumar Doctoral Student Mentorship Award. Her long record of service includes serving as Editor of Journal of Consumer Research, President of the Association for Consumer Research, and President of American Marketing Association Academic Council. She currently serves on the advisory board or editorial review board for several leading marketing journals.

Linda combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies to examine consumer and collective practices, identity, adaptation and change, materiality, and network interactions. Her work has applications for services marketing, brand relationships, customer experiences and sustainability. Several of her papers are considered seminal, and many introduced new constructs to the marketing field such as: the Market Maven, Commercial Friendships, Imagery Processing, the Fresh Start Mindset, and Family Identity. Much of her scholarship has been published with her beloved PhD students. Linda is most grateful for the opportunity she has had to meet, work with and mentor PhD students, watching them blossom and grow.

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## AWARD WINNING PAPERS

### ***Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Competition – Winner***

*The Gritty Consumer: The Influence of Grit on Consumer Behavior*

Logan Pant

### ***Innovations in Teaching Competition- Winner***

*Semester Long Participation Competition to Increase Student Engagement*

Jen Riley

Priscilla Pena

### ***Distinguished Teaching Competition – Winner***

*The Power of Listening to Create a Culture of Student Success*

Michael Levin

### ***Sharon E. Beatty Best Paper in Services Marketing***

*Managing Consumer-to-Consumer Online Incivility: How Service Provider Perceived Effort Influences Observers in a Virtual Service Channel*

Todd Bacile

Alexa Fox

Ayşe Banu Elmadag

Mehmet Okan

### **Best Paper in Consumer Behavior (Conceptual, Theoretical, Qualitative)**

*Affective Aesthetic Atmospheres: Redefining Beauty with #BodyPositive TikTok Influencers*

Kelley Cours Anderson

Karen Anne Wallach

Pia Albinsson

Ryann Tracy

### **Best Paper in Consumer Behavior (Quantitative)**

*Understanding What Drives Cryptocurrency Purchase Intentions*

Bhaskar Upadhyaya Subedi

Nwamaka Anaza

Delancy Bennett

Cecilia Ruvalcaba

### **Best Paper in Marketing Education**

*An Investigative Study towards “What Leads Students to Select their College Major?”*

Kate Matthews

Diane Edmondson

Lucy Matthews

### **Best Paper in Marketing Strategy & Entrepreneurship**

*Relational and Financial Perspectives in B2B Supplier Relationships*

Christopher Hopkins

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Daniel Padgett

Emory Serviss

**Best Paper in Personal Selling & Sales Management**

*The Dark Side of Salesperson Ambidexterity: How Salesperson Ambidexterity Increases Felt Stress*

Colleen McClure  
Thomas DeCarlo  
John Hansen

**Best Paper in Products, Brand Management, & Pricing**

*The “Emperor’s New Clothes” Effect in Product Design Minimalism*

Niek Althuizen  
Sona Klucarova

**Best Paper in Promotions/Advertisement and IMC**

*The Interaction Between Comparative Advertising Formats and Use of Recycled Material by the Sponsoring Brand*

Ayesha Tariq  
William Neese

**Best Paper in Public Policy, Non-Profit, & Healthcare Marketing**

*A Cross-Cultural Study of How Do Ecolabels Persuade Consumers to Purchase Green Products: A Meta-Analysis*

Franklin Velasco  
Omar Itani  
Paul Cajina

**Best Paper in Social Media & Digital Marketing**

*When Brands Roast on Social Media: Effect of Roasting on Brand Preference*

Sphurti Sewak

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

*Applying Victim Intervention Marketing Analytics in the Hospitality Industry*

Vernon Murray  
Sherry Dingman

**Best paper in Marketing Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility**

*A Study on the Relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior on Corporate Sustainability*

Dongjun Rew  
Jin-Woo Kim  
Yong-Chae Rhee

**Mark Hyman-Best Paper in Marketing Futurology and Philosophy**

*Beyond Materiality: Unveiling the Emotional Attachments to Non-Fungible Tokens as Digital Possessions*

Kaan Canayaz

**Best Paper in Retailing and eCommerce**

*The Effect of Consumers’ Emotions on Their Desire to Return to Pre-pandemic Shopping Routines*

Cheryl-lyn Ngho  
Christopher Groening

**Best Paper in Societal Impact of Marketing Education**

*Incorporating a Societal Impact Component in Distance Education Classes: A Case Study*

David Bojanic

Sarah Stanley

Cassandra Elrod

**Best Paper in Big Data, Analytics & Business Ethics**

*A Netnography of Human Trafficking on TikTok*

Alec Slepchuk

Breanne Mertz

Courtney Peters

Irem Yoruk,

Vernon Murray

**Steven J. Shaw - Joe Hair Best Paper in Conference**

*Relational and Financial Perspectives in B2B Supplier Relationships*

Christopher Hopkins

Colin Gabler

Daniel Padget

Emory Serviss



SOCIETY FOR MARKETING ADVANCES

## FROM THE EDITOR

During the Society for Marketing Advances 2023 annual conference, we joined colleagues from across the U.S. and around the globe in exploring the ever-changing world of marketing, focusing on the ways in which the use of analytics and big data are reshaping our discipline.

These proceedings represent the insightful and innovative research shared at the conference. The papers and briefs presented in these proceedings reflect the hard work and dedication of our members as they advance the field of marketing. Research showcased in the following pages encompass topics such as tourism and hospitality marketing, advertising, consumer behavior, digital and social media, retailing, supply chain, sales, marketing education, and marketing analytics, among others.

I would like 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<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> in Tampa, Florida. Please join us for the opportunity to continue looking forward as we explore “The Age of AI.”

Best Wishes,

Alisha B. Horky  
SMA Proceedings Editor



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## **Session 2.2: CSR Backlash and Impact**

**Chair:** Brian Taillon

# Summary Brief

## Service Manner: A Qualitative Approach to Understanding Service Technology Experiences

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*This article explores the use of service technologies (STs) in hospitality settings and how those services impact customer experiences. While existing research has focused on consumer adoption of STs, this study takes a qualitative approach to understand how these technological advancements shape customer experiences through the service manner exhibited by these technologies. The findings highlight the significance of ST capabilities, including physical appearance, functionality, and interactional experience, in shaping customer expectations and satisfaction. The study emphasizes the need for businesses to optimize ST interactions to enhance the overall customer experience based on both customer and ST characteristics.*

### Introduction

The increasing utilization of STs in hospitality settings, particularly in server roles, aims to enhance customer experiences. Scholars such as Murphy et al. (2019) and Blaurock et al. (2022) have recognized and emphasized the significance of this trend. Hospitality establishments, with the aim of revolutionizing customer service, are embracing these technological advancements (Liu et al., 2022) worldwide, including India, Maastricht, Malaysia, Budapest, and various establishments such as Pizza Hut and Christchurch International Airport. However, while consumer adoption of STs has received attention in existing literature, there is limited research on the impact of these technologies on customer experiences and their service manners, indicating a need for further investigation in these areas. Thus, the purpose of this study is to qualitatively explore the impact of service technologies (STs) in hospitality settings on customer experiences, focusing on the service manner exhibited by these technologies and the factors that shape customer expectations from and perceptions of the service environment as well as satisfaction with the service.

### Service Manner: Experiences with Service Technologies

Service manners, encompassing attitude, behavior, and communication style, are crucial factors for positive customer experiences. It involves treating customers with respect, attentiveness, and professionalism while addressing their needs. Implementing STs like digital ordering systems, self-service kiosks, or mobile apps can enhance efficiency and convenience in dining experiences. Integration of these elements can lead to improved customer outcomes. While some studies suggest STs yield inferior customer outcomes compared to human servers (Ivanov and Webster, 2017), further exploration is needed. Hwang et al. (2022) found that restaurants with service robots offered higher perceived value, indicating potential benefits. Additionally, Chan and Tung (2019) found that customers reported higher sensory and intellectual experiences with robot servers. These contrasting results highlight the need for qualitative research to uncover factors contributing to different customer outcomes.

Based on existing literature (Murphy et al., 2019; Blaurock et al., 2022), there is a need for additional exploratory research to understand consumers' perceptions of ST experiences (Liu et al., 2022). Qualitative research on service interactions with STs in restaurant settings is crucial. It is also important to understand how customers perceive and respond to STs' social characteristics, as Choi et al. (2019) and Odekerken-Schröder et al. (2021) found positive attitudes when service robots successfully mimic social behaviors. Qualitative research can also shed light on service recovery dynamics with service robots. Hu et al. (2021) found that customers perceived human service recovery as more sincere, highlighting the importance of examining how service robots handle interactions and align with customer expectations. **References Available Upon Request**

## Summary Brief

# The Impact of Company Affiliation with the Black Lives Matter Movement on Financial Performance

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*This study examines the effect of company affiliation with the Black Lives Matter movement on company image financial performance. The paper reviews cause related marketing, the Black Lives Matter movement, and financial performance. We will evaluate company revenue and stock market reactions after making announcements to support BLM.*

### Introduction

Marketers continuously seeks sustainable competitive advantages in an increasingly complex business landscape. There is a growing interest in social causes that influence consumer support for companies (Patel et al., 2016). Specifically, Cause Related Marketing (CRM) emphasize a collaborative partnership between the cause and its supporters. CRM serves as a method to address present social issues by providing funding, resources, and achieving marketing goals (Demetrious et al., 2010).

The relatively recent and controversial Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has significant implications for marketing and business, particularly as its audience potential continues to expand. Numerous renowned brands have utilized their marketing expertise to support this latest civil rights cause.

This paper examines the impact of CRM participation in BLM and its influence on individuals' perception of the supporting company. Additionally, we compare companies associated with BLM with companies not involved with the movement. Finally, we evaluate the financial performance of companies involved with BLM, those not involved with the BLM movement, and the industry average over a 5-year period. When companies engage in CRM, ideally, the partner's brand receives a boost in reputation while the cause benefits from moral and financial support. This study employs both quantitative and qualitative assessments to evaluate the advantages gained from historical and current events, aiming to understand the relationship between CRM, BLM, company image, and financial performance.

Moreover, this study aims to explore the potential enhancement of company value through CRM using stakeholder theory. We will utilize an event study methodology to analyze the relationship between the announcement of CRM programs, specifically those supporting BLM (Black Lives Matter), and stock market reaction to those announcements. The events under analysis are the company announcements directly related to the implementation of the CRM program with BLM.

### CRM

Cause-related marketing (CRM) has emerged as a prominent aspect of corporate marketing strategies, gaining preference over other consumer-targeted marketing communications. It involves companies aligning their identity with nonprofit organizations, worthy causes, and significant social issues through marketing initiatives and fundraising programs. CRM is defined as the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities in which a company pledges a specified contribution to a designated cause when consumers engage in revenue-generating transactions that fulfill organizational and individual objectives. Recognizing the importance of enhancing relationships with stakeholders and the broader community, more and more businesses are adopting and implementing CRM (Hoek, 2008).

In essence, CRM can be employed to enhance corporate reputation and profitability by signaling to stakeholders that the organization is dedicated to fulfilling moral obligations and exceeding regulatory requirements. It allows companies to gain visibility, respect, and convey social responsibility, public-mindedness, and even patriotism. Extant consumer research has established that CRM works for consumers because such campaigns, among other things, result in greater purchase intentions for an unknown (versus a known) brand, escalate brand choice, advance corporate reputation, increase firm intangible value, yield a warm feeling of having done something good,

legitimize other corporate brands when associated with one product category, and result in positive consumer attitudes and greater purchase intentions (Patel, 2016). However, before marketers advocate the use of CRM they arguably should also consider how the strategy impacts company value.

## **BLM**

In 2013, three Black female organizers came together to establish Black Lives Matter (BLM), a civil rights movement and advocacy project centered around the Black community. The movement was initiated through the use of a social media hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter. Black Lives Matter, similar to previous movements, manifests itself through local organizing, nationwide and global protests, hunger strikes, and various acts of civil disobedience (Cameron, 2021).

The #BlackLivesMatter hashtag initially emerged as an online network to combat anti-Black racism on a global scale. From its inception, the founders recognized the necessity for the movement to evolve into an organization that could support the Black community and its allies in effecting social change to ameliorate the conditions of marginalization faced by Black individuals.

With the widespread impact of the Black Lives Matter movement across the United States, many brands have endeavored to take a stand against systemic racism and demonstrate solidarity. Consumers are increasingly holding brands accountable and demanding action, and we aim to provide guidance on how brands can contribute (Williams, 2020). According to Coates (2014), the world is being compelled to confront the call for social transformation encapsulated by the rallying cry of "Black Lives Matter." Millions have marched in protest under the banner of Black Lives Matter, and even world leaders have taken a knee in support of this societal demand. Numerous well-known global brands have utilized their marketing platforms to express support for BLM. Nike adapted its famous slogan in their "For once, Don't Do It" advertisement (Williams, 2020).

## **CRM and BLM**

A majority of Americans believe that brands should address social issues related to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. According to a survey conducted by Opinium and shared with Marketing Dive, almost 71% of U.S. adults believe that brands have a role to play in responding to racial injustice and police brutality. In response to these beliefs, several brands have intensified their efforts to address BLM-related issues by making donations to nonprofit organizations, committing to equality in the workplace, and participating in boycotts against online hate speech. One example is Starbucks, a coffee chain that recently reversed its ban on wearing BLM apparel at work, though it remains to be seen whether this decision will have long-term effects on the company's brand. Starbucks' experience provides valuable lessons on how brands need to navigate sensitive social issues (Williams, 2020).

## **Stakeholder Theory**

Applying stakeholder theory allows us to advocate for the economic merits of supporting BLM from the shareholders' standpoint. According to stakeholder theory, businesses exist within a network comprising diverse stakeholders, including individuals, groups, or organizations that influence or are influenced by the company's operations.

Stakeholder theory is based on the notion of an efficient market while recognizing that the company's well-being is of paramount importance. The optimal welfare of the company is achieved when it considers a wide array of stakeholders (as mentioned above) rather than solely focusing on a few. In essence, to enhance company value, businesses must address the expectations of multiple stakeholders, not just those of consumers.

An effectively designed CRM program can effectively achieve this objective by establishing a triadic relationship among three entities: the company, its customers (both belonging to the organizational stakeholder category), and the cause/charity (representing the community stakeholder category). Through this mutually beneficial strategy, all three parties stand to benefit from the CRM initiative (Runté, Basil, & Deshpande, 2009).

CRM programs are likely to generate positive outcomes for actors in both the organizational and community stakeholder categories, making such initiatives financially valuable for the company. Consequently, analyzing CRM through the lens of stakeholder theory is likely to result in positive expectations for future financial performance and lead to improved company cash flows (Das, et. al. 2020).

## **Financial Performance**

Examining the economic worth of CRM – is important because the effectiveness of any marketing strategy (such as CRM) is ultimately decided by its impact on the firm's market value (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). We will utilize an event study to assess market reaction. In a general evaluation of market performance, we review the total revenue trend of 30 companies that publicly support BLM. We will compare those revenues with industry averages

(Table 1). In a specific analysis of company performance after announcing support of BLM verbally and financially, we will contrast stock prices before and after the announcement of support.

### **Event Study**

An event study is a statistical analysis used in finance and economics to examine the impact of a specific event on the stock price of a company or the overall market. The goal of an event study is to determine whether the event had a significant effect on the value of the company's shares and to quantify the magnitude and direction of that effect.

Event study methodology permits the separation and evaluation of the impact of CRM programs' announcements on a company's future profit performance. By calculating abnormal returns, which represent the disparity between actual returns and expected returns in the absence of CRM program announcements, we can assess the unique contributions of these programs to the company's overall value (Das et al., 2020)

We will employ the event study methodology to assess the impact of company involvement in BLM, on stock price. Event studies operate under the assumption that stock prices rapidly and accurately incorporate new information, on average. When companies announced the initiation of BLM affiliation, investors assessed its potential short and long-term value implications. This evaluation is reflected in stock returns, where positively perceived announcements lead to increased stock prices due to the anticipation of value-enhancing activities, while negatively perceived announcements result in decreased stock prices, indicating expected poor results.

To measure the expected value effects of CRM programs, we will calculate abnormal returns. These will be determined by comparing the observed stock return surrounding a BLM announcement with the estimated normal market-induced stock return during that period. Abnormal returns will serve as an indicator of the anticipated value impact of BLM association.

We will carefully examine each announcement to identify any potential confounding factors that could influence the stock price during the five-day window (5/28/20-6/2/20), when BLM support announcements peaked. Some examples of such confounding effects include the declaration of dividends, earnings reports, announcements of impending acquisitions, major contract awards, changes in top executives, stock splits and repurchases, divestitures, as well as new product introductions. By considering these factors, we aim to ensure that any observed changes in stock price can be attributed accurately to the specific BLM program announcement and not influenced by other external events.

We propose 3 research questions in this study.

RQ1 Do companies who support BLM generate better financial performance?

RQ2 Do companies who express the support of causes in their mission perform better financially?

RQ3 Is there a correlation between company image and purchase intention?

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## Summary Brief

# Band-Aid On A Beer Can: The Case of Corporate Social Responsibility Backlash

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*Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an important mechanism for organizations to gain support from different stakeholders in the marketplace. The conveyance of CSR-related messages helps firms create identification with customers and demonstrate commitment to social causes while still looking for profitability. While the actions that constitute CSR are well documented in the literature, a framework that incorporates issues of CSR hypocrisy relative to perceptions of timeliness and commitment to a cause is less developed. This study seeks to provide a set of propositions to guide future research in terms of the adoption of corporate strategies that conform to normative pressures and the issues associated with CSR campaigns designed only to answer normative and social pressure, rather than amplify a cause embedded in the core values and principles of the organization.*

### Introduction

The spring of 2023 in the United States was taken by several well-known brands facing backlash and boycott calls for their corporate support of LGBTQ+ causes (Yurcaba & Arkin, 2023). This forced some firms to shift their stance and modify their direction while others decided to face the criticism and stand their ground. For example, Anheuser-Busch InBev, (parent company of Bud Light), ended a campaign with a transgender influencer and Target reduced and moved Pride clothing displays. Additionally, in what some saw as an effort to stave off controversy (Smith 2023), the flagship beer Budweiser sported a Harley Davidson co-brand logo on its label as shown in Figure 1. In contrast, the Los Angeles Dodgers decided to reinvite to their Pride Night a nonprofit LGBTQ+ organization after initially succumbing to external pressures, with the organization noting the 10-year relationship they have had with the team in their acceptance of the re-invitation (Cooper, 2023).

**Figure 1: Harley-Davidson – Budweiser co-brand**



Source: Budweiser

Support of causes and movements, such as the LGTQ+ community, has been viewed by firms as providing a lens to investors and customers alike, showing who they are and what they stand for as corporate citizens. Corporate social responsibility (CSR), defined as the corporate undertakings aimed at addressing social issues has become increasingly present in corporate strategy-making and in consumers' minds (Nickerson et al., 2022). Not surprisingly, CSR stands as a powerful mechanism for gaining consumer support in the marketplace. However, this support is only achieved inasmuch to the extent that corporate claims do not deviate from the cause they advocate for (Schamp et al., 2023). Because of this, responding to market trends while meeting the often conflicting demands of their stakeholders stand as a challenging task for marketers (Aguilera et al., 2007). The above example of Bud Light not being prepared to back their decision to join the LGBTQ+ conversation resulted in severe backlash for the brand, with loss of revenue and loss of the position of leadership in terms of market share (Yahoo, 2023).



This illustration provides a practical example that despite advances in the literature the link between CSR and performance remains blurred, with findings questioning whether these actions do improve profitability (Habel et al., 2016), or merely serve to shift away attention from more pressing matters (Kang et al., 2016). Further, most of the findings on the relationship between CSR and performance focus on the contextual dimensions under which CSR is more likely to hamper or drive firm performance (Matten & Moon, 2008; Rim et al., 2020; Wagner et al., 2009). Because of this, the adoption of CSR strategies built on specific causes, and their effectiveness, remains mostly overlooked (Foss & Klein, 2022). The institutional theory predicts that firms will scan the environment in search of factors that increase their legitimacy in the market, eventually resulting in organizational isomorphism and a decrease in efficiency (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In line with these tenets, this study provides a set of propositions concerning the legitimacy and effectiveness of such strategies. More specifically, it seeks to investigate whether the legitimacy of such CSR strategies offset the loss of efficiency in terms of marketplace support.

## Literature background

This paper draws from the institutional theory, in that firms will attempt to gain customer support through the commitment to practices that conform to normative and social pressures incorporated into the core values of the firm (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The adoption of such practices is often driven by institutional actors with enough capital to influence corporate behavior (Campbell, 2007). Nevertheless, the legitimacy may be contingent upon perceptions of corporate image and the commitment to the cause, otherwise risk being labeled as woke-washing, the act of engaging in the prosocial cause without “clear or determined records of social causes” (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Woke-washing can also be understood as the social parallel to greenwashing in sustainability (Ioannou et al., 2022). Commitment in this aspect is viewed not only through resources such as donations but also through active communication of actions and their sustainment through time, as to overcome perceptions of organizations engaging in social activities to distract stakeholders and elude their views away from underlying problems or shortcomings in their operations (Connors et al., 2017).

Legitimacy, by its turn, stems from the isomorphism of organizations in the marketplace relative to the adoption of a practice (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). That is, it refers to the status conferred by stakeholders of an organization in terms of how much organizations resemble each other in terms of the adoption of well-accepted and diffused practices and values of those stakeholders (Deephouse, 1996). These practices, however, are much more likely to yield positive perceptions when they conform to both stakeholders’ expectations and values. Violation of expectations or incongruity with stakeholders’ norms, values, and beliefs is likely to deter organizational efforts in terms of a cause (Bansal & Clelland, 2004).

Violating these expectations implicates an incongruity between explicit brand values and those advocated by the brand, implying perceptions of inauthentic and deceptive practices. As illustrated by the Bud Light anecdote, firms inadvertently taking a stand on value-driven issues without the appropriate prosocial corporate practice to back those claims are likely to receive severe backlash (Vredenburg et al., 2020). This also highlights the need for previous and continued commitment to the cause as part of the core principles guiding corporate actions. A lack of previous commitment or the adoption of practices contrary to the advocated cause deters the effects of CSR in terms of legitimacy, reverting organizations to a state of illegitimacy stemming from inauthenticity or deception (Kang et al., 2016).

Stakeholders’ perceptions of corporate hypocrisy are likely to undermine corporate legitimacy in advocating for a cause (Wagner et al., 2009). That perception is accentuated if the action is not supported by the firm in the face of opposition or backlash. This is because of customers’ perceptions that the firm is only engaging in defending that cause due to the favorable consequences that it is expected to have the firm in terms of social acceptance and an increase in the public’s perception of corporate citizenship. In other words, stakeholders perceive companies as merely ‘free riding’ popular social causes to gain marketplace favor, without really contributing to the cause for which they advocate (Campbell, 2007).

In line with this, propositions are made relative to the CSR-related practices, and legitimacy relative to the commitment and congruency of the cause with the core principles of the organization (Pfajfar et al., 2022). First, it is argued that, in line with the tenets of institutional theory, social causes act as an external force shaping corporate strategy, ultimately driving perceptions of legitimacy in the eyes of external constituents. There is support for the assertion that consumers tend to project social aspirations in their expenditures and consumption patterns (Schellong et al., 2019), providing the foundations for the first proposition.

Second, support for a brand is more likely to be achieved when there is a identification of customers with the characteristics and features conveyed by the brand (Fournier, 1998). That means organizations that engage in a cause without any previous prosocial corporate objectives are more likely to receive backlash from their activities (Pfajfar et al., 2022). Consequently, these firms deviate from their core principles and are thus perceived as ‘inauthentic’ given

their high engagement in a social cause being occasional, rather than continuous and backed up by their corporate values or previous engagement with the cause. This is oftentimes followed by an abandonment of the action as a valid strategy, attempting to revert to the previous status (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Further, in terms of social causes, brands are more likely to effectively convey their message when CSR activities follow an already existing framework that supports social causes. That is when consumers can promptly make CSR associations with the brand (Fernández et al., 2022). In line with this, those organizations that build their corporate values upon social causes are more likely to be seen as legitimate in terms of their CSR-related actions, especially if the social cause conforms to the brand purpose (Lacey et al., 2015).

Finally, the extent to which a firm commits to a cause is also a driver or deterrent of legitimacy. Pledging to or moving away from an enacted CSR activity may serve as a highly observable signal of the firm's commitment to the cause they advocate for (Schamp et al., 2023). Those firms attempting to 'free-ride' on trending causes are more likely to succumb to external pressure, and move away from advocating from the cause once backlash occurs. In this case, the legitimacy of the activity is hampered both for supporter and non-supporters of the cause. This happens because these firms demonstrate that their commitment is not to address social issues, but to use a cause as a 'ladder' to climb up on customer preference rates (Wagner et al., 2009). Therefore, these activities can be seen as an appropriation of a set of values aimed solely at hiding other issues associated with the company, resulting in misinformation and miscommunication of the values associated with the cause (Scheidler et al., 2019). Thus, the extent to which a firm commits or not to a CSR-related activity may represent further identification or disconnect of its customer base with the brand.

According to the presented arguments, the following propositions are formulated:

***Proposition 1:*** *CSR activities positively affect the legitimacy of a brand.*

***Proposition 2:*** *The alignment of corporate values with CSR-related activities influences the perceived legitimacy of prosocial claims, such that misaligned messages are perceived as less legitimate, and aligned messages are perceived as more legitimate.*

***Proposition 3:*** *Commitment to the cause moderates the relationship between CSR-related activities and legitimacy, such that continuity of the message positively moderates the relationship, and ceasing of the message negatively moderates the relationship.*

### **Concluding thoughts**

CSR has been gaining prominence, being considered imperative in the pursuit of corporate legitimacy in the eyes of some stakeholders (Woodroof et al., 2019). Advocacy for a cause, however, does require that marketers gain a broader understanding of their customers, and their preferences, much like any other communication strategy (Pfajfar et al., 2022). While CSR activities may serve as a tool to communicate the commitment to broader social issues, the gain in legitimacy may not offset the potential backlash that a hypocritical, unwarranted CSR campaign may generate. Very often CSR campaigns do not target the most important stakeholders of a company: their actual customers. Rather, these actions target a share of stakeholders that only voice their complaints in social arenas. However, a badly planned CSR campaign has the potential to anger advocates of the cause and push non-supporters away from the brand, decreasing both the legitimacy and efficiency of CSR in marketing terms (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

A crucial aspect of effective CSR campaigns is the commitment to the cause over the long term. Demonstrating genuine, sustained dedication to a social issue is essential for building trust and credibility among customers, stakeholders, and the wider community. Long-term commitment to a cause also allows for a deeper and more meaningful impact (Rim et al., 2020). It enables companies to invest time, effort, and resources into understanding the complexities of the issue and collaborating with relevant stakeholders. By engaging in a long-term commitment, companies can also foster stronger relationships with both the subset of customers who advocate in social arenas and the broader customer base. Customers appreciate the consistency and are more likely to support and remain loyal to brands that consistently demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility.

Prior experience with the brand knowledge of a firm's CSR activities can also influence the perception of cause hypocrisy among consumers (Wagner et al., 2009). Previous experience and knowledge of the CSR activity can create expectations of alignment and consistency. When consumers have experienced positive interactions with a brand and are aware of its CSR initiatives, they expect the brand's actions to align with its stated values and commitments. If there is a perceived disconnect between the brand's CSR claims and its actual behavior, it can lead to skepticism and the perception of cause hypocrisy. Prior brand purchases can amplify this perception as consumers may feel let down if the brand fails to meet their expectations based on their previous experiences (Baghi & Antonetti, 2021).

Consumers value transparency in CSR communication, seeking evidence of genuine commitment and impact. If consumers feel that a brand is using CSR initiatives merely for marketing purposes or to enhance its image without making meaningful changes, it can be seen as hypocritical. Prior brand purchase can make consumers more attuned to inconsistencies or discrepancies in the brand's CSR claims, leading to a heightened perception of cause hypocrisy if the brand's actions do not match its rhetoric (Wagner et al., 2009). Prior brand purchase establishes a level of trust between consumers and the brand. Consumers who have previously purchased from a brand and are aware of its CSR activities may have higher expectations and trust in the brand's commitment to social and environmental issues (Baghi & Antonetti, 2021). If the brand's CSR efforts are perceived as falling short of these expectations, it can result in a perception of cause hypocrisy. Consumers may question the brand's motives and authenticity, doubting the true impact of its CSR initiatives.

In line with this discussion, this paper suggests that organizations align their corporate messages with their core value and principles, lest their brand image is tainted with inauthenticity and hypocrisy (Wagner et al., 2009), and avoid entering conversations that do not resonate with the organizations' core values (Scheidler et al., 2019). This study has implications for the literature on CSR and corporate legitimacy. For CSR it proposes that the choice of a cause to be advocated should be taken lightly and should happen in isolation from corporate past and current values. For corporate legitimacy, it proposes that CSR does not stand as a direct way to achieve acceptance and gain support from stakeholders. To maintain brand legitimacy, brands must align their actions with their stated values and commitments consistently. Transparency, accountability, and meaningful impact are essential in avoiding perceptions of cause hypocrisy. Brands must ensure that their CSR initiatives are genuine, well-planned, and effectively communicated to build and maintain trust among stakeholders. By demonstrating authenticity and consistency, brands can enhance their legitimacy, differentiate themselves in the market, and foster long-term relationships with customers and stakeholders. Addressing social issues is important. However, brands seeking to take a stand should be careful not to sound deceptive or inauthentic in their claims.

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## **Session 2.3: Selling & AI**

**Chair:** Lou Pelton

## Summary Brief

# Adopting New Technology: Understanding the Impact of Artificial Intelligence in the Sales Process

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In recent years, technology advancement has substantially disrupted the business-to-business sales industry (Singh et al, 2019). This technology advancement is not only in the adoption of customer relationship management (CRM) systems, social media, or virtual meeting platforms (i.e., Zoom), but also in the usage of other artificial intelligence tools (i.e., chatbots and ChatGPT). However, most research on artificial intelligence usage in the sales industry is conceptual in nature (Chang, 2022). Of the published research on this topic, a significant majority focuses on the sales funnel (e.g., Paschen et al., 2020; Syam & Sharma, 2018).

Limited to no research exists that examines the attitudes and behaviors of business-to-business salespeople as it relates to artificial intelligence usage. Specifically, salesperson attitudes such as grit, engagement, creativity, support, hope, emotional exhaustion, work-family conflict, work demands, productive procrastination, job satisfaction, and turnaway intentions could all be impacted by an organization's required usage of artificial intelligence by their salespeople. It is possible that there could be differences in business-to-business salesperson attitudes based on whether the organization utilizes artificial intelligence in the sales process versus those that do not.

To investigate the impact that artificial intelligence usage has had on the sales industry, a Qualtrics panel survey of 300 business-to-business salespeople will be used. As part of this survey, salespeople will answer questions on their usage of various sales technologies, including artificial intelligence tools, as well as their attitudes and behaviors to the constructs mentioned above. In order to analyze these results, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) will be used. Multigroup analyses will be run to investigate differences between users and non-users of artificial intelligence technology tools. Managerial implications of these results will be discussed.

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## **Session 2.4: Technology in the Digital Age**

**Chair:** Elten Briggs

## Full Paper

# Gen Z and Personalized Digital Marketing: Examining the Influences on Gen Z's Reactive vs. Proactive Avoidance Behaviors

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*Marketers continue to struggle with understanding consumers' personalization preferences and how to effectively reach and engage consumers. As consumers increasingly adopt ad blockers, use private browsers, or take other actions to proactively limit data tracking, marketers must simultaneously address the deprecation of third-party cookies, app tracking transparency, and privacy regulations that further restrict data collection and personalization efforts. Conflicting evidence also exists on the effectiveness of brands' personalized marketing efforts and how consumers react when presented with brands' personalized and non-personalized marketing content. Marketers must therefore enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing personalization across a host of interactive marketing touchpoints. Regression analysis of 436 Generation Z consumer survey responses explores the differential effects leading to reactive vs. proactive marketing avoidance across nine interactive marketing communications. The study contributes to the limited knowledge on Generation Z consumers' preferences and personalized marketing across various digital marketing touchpoints.*

### Introduction

Digital marketing personalization entails using consumers' personal data and digital engagement behaviors to design and deliver highly relevant marketing communications across a range of interactive marketing touchpoints (Chandra et al., 2022; Guttman, 2021). Effective digital personalization presents content and ads matching consumers' preferences and behaviors, resulting in reduced cognitive load and increased purchase intentions (Chen et al., 2022; Hayes et al., 2021). Research indicates consumers have increasingly high expectations regarding personalization, yet brands contribute to consumer irritation when they fail to deliver on these expectations (Li & Liu, 2017). As digital marketing and consumers' social media usage continue to evolve, marketers must adjust their interactive marketing and personalization strategies (McKee et al., 2023). For example, digital marketing strategies increasingly leverage a diverse range of interactive marketing communications to achieve marketing objectives ranging from generating awareness to engaging loyal customers (Wang, 2021). While marketers need to understand how to improve the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts across all consumer groups, it is particularly important to understand marketing efforts targeting the newest adult cohort within the United States Generation Z (Gen Z) because this generation spends significantly more time, compared to older generations on social media sites and mobile devices (Florenthal, 2019; Pelletier et al., 2020).

Marketers have increasingly turned to digital personalization to improve communication and targeting of consumers, however, conflicting results on personalization's effectiveness have been found (Li & Liu, 2017). The intimate nature of social media and mobile devices may enhance consumers' suspicions and privacy concerns associated with personalized marketing efforts (Shanahan et al., 2019; Tran, 2017; Tsang et al., 2004). The increased use of personalized marketing efforts by less trusted marketers also causes consumers to consider the ads less useful, while increasing negative reactance and privacy concerns (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2015). As a result, conflicting evidence exists regarding how consumers feel about being targeted by personalized marketing. On the one hand, consumers may perceive personalized communications as more relevant to their needs and thus increase the consumers' positive perceptions of a brand, increasing consumer attention and decreasing reactive avoidance (Jung, 2017). Although personalization efforts can benefit consumers by saving them time and money searching for products, personalized marketing also increase consumers' privacy concerns (Lee & Rha, 2017). Referred to as the privacy paradox, consumers may proactively attempt to avoid future marketing efforts deemed as privacy-intrusive. Consumers increasingly feel an internal conflict when it comes to personalization and digital marketing. How consumers, particularly those among the Gen Z cohort, balance this privacy paradox conflict is of increased interest to practitioners and marketing researchers (McKee et al., 2023). While consumers may express more positive attitudes when marketing communications are more personally relevant, consumers are increasingly aware of and suspicious



toward the tracking methods used to create personalized, interactive marketing communications (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2018; Tran, 2017). Consequently, consumers may also experience trust issues and negative attitudes toward brands when consumers realize their digital behaviors are extensively tracked by marketers (Hsu, 2018).

As consumers experience conflicting attitudes toward brands' personalized marketing efforts, it is increasingly likely that they are also seeking methods to proactively avoid digital tracking and personalized marketing efforts (McKee et al., 2023). Given their reliance on social media and mobile devices, Gen Z consumers' willingness to receive or restrict personalized marketing efforts may in part be socially-constructed by value perceptions of interacting with different marketing touchpoints (i.e., email, social, online video). As a result, marketers must understand Gen Z's marketing avoidance behaviors across a diverse range of interactive marketing touchpoints (Wang, 2021). Consumers' digital marketing avoidance can occur in different ways. For example, consumers may reactively ignore marketing communications, including taking actions to delete irrelevant marketing messages (i.e., emails, text messages) after receiving them (Redondo & Aznar, 2018). However, technology options such as ad blockers, private browsers, and other efforts now allow consumers to proactively restrict tracking and data sharing with brands, limiting the extent to which brands can personalize the marketing communications. As digital personalization opportunities continue to expand, digital marketing may become more invasive and thus increase consumers' internal conflict (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2018). At the same time, Gen Z's reliance on technology makes it harder for them to fully escape the growth of digital marketing's tracking efforts without missing out. A key question is the role socially-constructed value perceptions of different marketing touchpoints plays in consumers marketing avoidance behaviors, and particularly how it relates to Gen Z's internal conflict of personalization paradoxes (McKee et al., 2023). Accordingly, the current study explores the antecedents of two distinct digital marketing avoidance behaviors – reactive avoidance vs. proactive avoidance. We contribute to the literature by addressing consumers' attitudes toward personalized marketing and the two distinct marketing avoidance behaviors. We also explore how value perceptions of different digital marketing touchpoints influence consumer behavior in the digital marketing personalization context, an aspect relatively unexplored in the marketing literature for Gen Z.

## **Research Background and Hypotheses**

### ***Reactive vs. proactive marketing avoidance behaviors***

Marketing avoidance can take many forms such marketing blindness, low click through rate, installing ad blockers, avoiding websites, and other behaviors. Consumers also increasingly have options to proactively opt-out or restrict certain tracking efforts that marketers commonly use to personalize marketing communications (Strycharz et al., 2019). Digital marketing avoidance behaviors can thus range from more reactive behaviors (i.e., ignoring or deleting the marketing communication, scrolling past an ad, leaving a website, or closing an app) to more proactive avoidance behaviors (i.e., installing ad blockers, using private browsers, turning off GPS tracking on mobile devices). Notably, proactive marketing avoidance may also further reduce the effectiveness of marketing efforts as marketers will have less trustworthy consumer data to personalize future marketing communications. Consumers increasingly expect targeted marketing efforts to be more personally relevant (Li & Liu, 2017). Although privacy concerns and ad irritation have been shown to positively influence online advertising avoidance (Tran, 2017), it is unclear how this differs when examining consumers' value perceptions of a wide range of digital touchpoints. Consequently, what contributes to reactive vs. proactive digital marketing avoidance behaviors is critical given the increased costs of scaling digital personalization across multiple digital touchpoints (Wang, 2021).

### ***Value of personalized interactive marketing touchpoints***

Marketers can digitally target and personalize marketing communications to consumers through behavioral targeting and complex algorithms that analyze consumers' preferences, demographics, and behavioral data to show more personalized and relevant marketing messages (Li & Huang, 2016; Shanahan et al., 2019). Although a growing stream of academic research on personalized marketing exists, results have provided conflicting evidence on personalization's effects. Cho and Cheon (2004) provided seminal research establishing how personalized online ads can lead to advertising avoidance by consumers, such as blocking online ads. However, Li (2016) found that when consumers perceive marketing messages on preferred channels to be personalized, it has a stronger effect on consumer perceptions, regardless of whether the marketing message is actually personalized. Research by Tran (2017) revealed conflicting effects by showing some users consider personalized Facebook ads are more reliable, creating a positive attitude toward the ad; however, other consumers are more suspicious of the ads, thereby increasing ad avoidance. When exposed to personalized Facebook ads, consumers who consider the social media platform an intimate media platform may attempt to avoid brands using this advertising method (Shanahan et al., 2019; Tran, 2017). However,

research is lacking that explores consumers' value perceptions across a diverse set of digital marketing touchpoints and the relationship to personalized marketing avoidance behaviors (McKee et al., 2023; Wang, 2021).

### ***Non-personalized marketing irritation and avoidance behaviors***

Consumers increasingly expect digital marketing communications to be more personally relevant today due to technological advancements. Research shows that the lack of personal relevance is one of the leading causes of irritation among consumers (Taylor, 2019). According to Redondo and Aznar (2018), when an online ad is considered intrusive, negative emotional reactions such as irritation and annoyance occur among consumers, and intrusive ads typically lead to subsequent ad avoidance (Li et al., 2002; Riedel et al., 2018). Accordingly, if a person is irritated with non-personalized marketing, the consumer may choose to reactively avoid the individual message or take more proactive actions to avoid future marketing efforts.

$H_{1(a-b)}$ : Irritation with non-personalized marketing is positively associated with (a) reactive marketing avoidance behaviors and (b) proactive marketing avoidance behaviors.

### ***Privacy concerns and avoidance behaviors***

Privacy concerns are likely to play a crucial role in consumers' marketing avoidance behaviors (McKee et al., 2023). For example, how marketers collect and use consumers' data, not only impacts privacy concerns, but can influence brand attitudes, intention to continue using a digital platform, and other online behaviors (Eastin et al., 2016; Muhammad et al., 2018). When consumers express privacy concerns, they may perceive personalized marketing as more intrusive (Wei et al., 2019) and exhibit increased skepticism (Baek & Morimoto, 2012). Moreover, consumers' attitudes toward products advertised on social media pages can be negatively affected (Lin & Kim, 2016). Consumers' privacy concerns can also have broader implications for brand-related behaviors, such as negatively impacting attitudes towards continued use of social networking sites and intentions to use location-tracking apps (Jahari et al., 2022; J.-M. Lee & Rha, 2017). As a result, we posit that

$H_{2(a-b)}$ : Privacy concerns is positively associated with (a) reactive marketing avoidance behaviors and (b) proactive marketing avoidance behaviors.

### ***Desire for personalized marketing and avoidance behaviors***

Although privacy concerns and irritation positively influence ad avoidance, perceived personalization leads to increased credibility and attitude while decreasing skepticism and ad avoidance (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Tran, 2017). Research indicates perceived ad relevance is more important in predicting how consumers respond to online behavioral advertising than privacy concerns (Kim & Huh, 2017). Research also shows that positive attitudes toward specific social media platforms can increase engagement with ads on the specific platform (Sanne & Wiese, 2018), and also reduce ad blocker adoption (Redondo & Aznar, 2018). Thus, when Gen Z consumers have positive attitudes toward personalized marketing it will decrease their engagement in reactively or proactively avoiding marketing.

$H_{3(a-b)}$ : Desire for personalized marketing is negatively associated with (a) reactive marketing avoidance behaviors and (b) proactive marketing avoidance behaviors.

### ***Socially-constructed value perceptions of digital marketing touchpoints and avoidance behaviors***

The digital environment and related information flows increase the potential impact for consumer-to-consumer and brand-to-consumer interactions on behavioral intentions (Peltier et al., 2020). Hughes et al. (2019) suggests that consumers' motivations to use a particular social media platform may influence acceptance of marketing campaigns on the specific social platform. While most studies in the extant literature only investigated avoidance behaviors in a single marketing context, the current study empirically examines how the socially-constructed value perceptions across nine digital touchpoints, including SMS/text messages, digital advertising, social media, mobile advertising, online video, and other interactive marketing contexts.

In the digital environment, consumers often form value perceptions of the usefulness of different social media platforms, mobile apps, and other content based on what peers think and share. For example, Lee and Lee (2011) found that subjective norms have a positive influence on consumers' intention to watch online video ads, Sanne and Wiese (2018) also found subjective norms to be a significant predictor of a person's intention to engage with Facebook advertising, and social influence negatively affected consumers' ad avoidance of Facebook ads while positively affecting ad engagement (Youn & Kim, 2019). Kim et al., (2015) show personal norms influence other consumers' online behaviors, finding that social influence significantly predicts a person's online behavior. Furthermore, Ferreira

and Barbosa (2017) demonstrated that consumers possessing more of a positive attitude toward Facebook advertising are more likely to share eWOM information and less likely to avoid ads. Given this, we measure social influence by exploring how socially-constructed value perceptions of digital touchpoints impact marketing avoidance behaviors and posit that as Gen Z consumers place greater value on a digital marketing touchpoint, it will decrease their desire to reactively or proactively avoid digital marketing efforts.

*H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>12(a-b)</sub>*: The level of socially-constructed value perceptions of digital touchpoints is negatively associated with (a) reactive marketing avoidance behaviors and (b) proactive marketing avoidance behaviors.

## **Method**

### ***Data Collection and instrumentation***

An online survey was emailed to undergraduate students at two universities in the Midwestern United States, at their university email accounts. The Gen Z cohort is an important group to study because this age group spends more of their time on the internet and shops online more than any other age group (Salpini, 2017; Turner, 2015). Students completing the survey were given extra credit for their participation. A travel-based personalized marketing scenario was used for the survey because according to C. Li (2016) bias can occur with personalized marketing experiments when respondents think generic ads are personalized and personalized ads are generic. The survey questions were programmed into Qualtrics, and a pilot study was performed to narrow down scale items.

### ***Measures***

A multi-stage process informed the questionnaire measure development. First, extensive review of the literature identified important constructs and measures related to personalized marketing. Although original in nature, because of the specific forms of personalization and digital media investigated, a review of the marketing literature informed the development of survey items measuring non-personalized marketing irritation, privacy concerns, desire for personalized marketing, socially-constructed value perceptions of digital marketing touchpoints, and reactive and proactive marketing avoidance. A group of marketing faculty and digital marketing experts reviewed all survey items to ensure appropriateness. All measurements used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used to validate the scales.

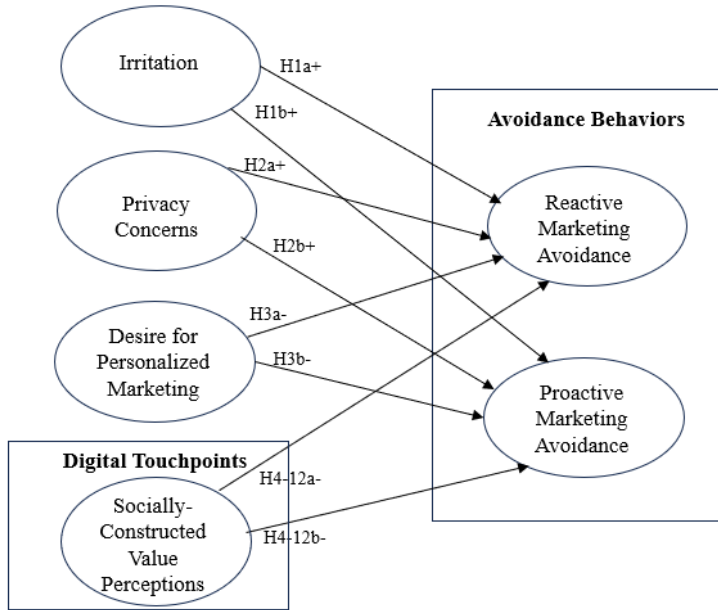
of the dependent variables ad avoidance, defined as an individual's affective, and behavioral avoidance of online ads, measured as a multi-dimensional construct affective (five-item scale), behavioral (fourteen-item scale), adapted from Cho and Cheon (2004). The independent variables were: social influence, an individual's perception of how people they communicate with in-person and online feel about the use of different digital marketing touchpoints multi-dimensional construct (four-item scale) adapted from Venkatesh et al., (2003), desire for personalized advertising (DPA), an individual's perceived value of receiving personalized ads or other marketing content (four-item scale) adapted from Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015); Davis (1989); and Tam and Ho (2006), privacy, measuring an individual's perceived risk based on privacy concerns (four-item scale) adapted from Featherman and Pavlou (2003), irritation, an individual's irritation when ads are not personalized (eight-item scale) adapted from Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015) and Li et al., (2002). The control factors used were: (gender, time spent online, and number of social media profiles). To test the main effect hypothesized relationships (H1a-d-H12a-d), individual regressions were performed, using a two-tailed significance test for the directional hypotheses.

### ***Measurement model and scale development***

The items representing the six theoretical constructs were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and CFA. The authors used AMOS 28 to conduct a CFA to measure unidimensionality validation (Churchill, 1979). Estimation of the measurement model was done according to Anderson and Gerbing (1988), requiring each of the items to load on their priori specified factors, with each factor allowed to correlate with other factors. Goodness of fit index (GFI) was expected to exceed the .90 cutoff, as were adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and normed fit index (NFI), as established by Bentler and Bonnett (1980). According to Hair et al., (2010), we anticipated the root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) and its confidence interval to be less than the suggested cutoff level of .08. We followed the process established by Mathwick and Rigdon (2004) for individual item loading significance tests. Coefficient alpha scores for the interval scaled dimensions were expected to exceed the .7 level for construct reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Each construct was expected to have an average variance extracted (AVE) > .50 for convergent validity, maximum shared variance (MSV) < AVE, and average shared variance (ASV) < AVE to ensure discriminant validity for each construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Data collection and sample**

A pilot study, along with two waves of surveys, was sent out to a total of 782 students, with a response rate of 78.2%. After removing surveys due to being incomplete, there was a sample of 436 usable surveys. Demographics for this study were males (43.6%) and females (56.4%), within the Gen Z cohort with ages ranging from 18 to 22.



**Figure 1: Proposed Model**

**Measurement model and scale results**

An EFA with varimax rotation was conducted in SPSS, which identified five dimensions based on eigenvalues > 1.0. The five factor dimensions (irritation, ad avoidance [multi-dimensional], social influence [multi-dimensional], desire for personalized advertising (DPA), and privacy. The multi-dimensional construct ad avoidance had two dimensions (reactive and proactive) and social influence had nine dimensions (text, video, mobile, email, web, digital, social media, personalized ad, and overall). Overall, the dimensions explained 52.9% of the variance. Cronbach alpha scores for the five dimensions all exceeded the .70 benchmark to confirm construct reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Descriptive statistics, variable correlations, and significance levels for the factors used are shown in Tables 1-2.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Variable Correlations, and Significance Levels**

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SMS/Text Messages	Online Video	Social Media	Email	Personalized Content on Brand Website	Brand-Created Digital Content	Mobile Ads	Personalized Ads	Overall Digital Ads
<b><i>Socially-constructed value perceptions of digital marketing touchpoints</i></b>											
Brands' SMS/Text Messages	2.59	1.20	1								
Brands' Online Videos	3.68	0.95	.278**	1							
Brands' Social Media Posts	3.85	0.91	.295**	.458**	1						
Brands' Email	2.94	1.09	.519**	.264**	.322**	1					
Personalized Content on Brand Website	3.95	0.82	.211**	.353**	.412**	.218**	1				
Brand-Created Digital Content	4.02	0.72	.181**	.416**	.512**	.256**	.511**	1			
Brands' Mobile Ads	3.49	1.03	.380**	.469**	.629**	.279**	.390**	.454**	1		
Personalized Ads from Brands	3.82	0.82	.204**	.388**	.534**	.232**	.628**	.571**	.503**	1	
Overall Digital Ads from Brands	3.93	0.79	.353**	.467**	.611**	.349**	.474**	.567**	.586**	.554**	1
<b><i>Personalized marketing attitudes</i></b>											
Non-Personalized Irritation	4.02	0.89	-.110*	0.027	0.048	-0.073	.143**	0.044	-0.041	.103*	-0.009
Privacy Concerns	4.00	0.95	-0.059	-0.051	-0.009	-.092*	0.005	-0.036	-0.042	-0.007	-0.056
Desire for Personalized Marketing	3.77	0.93	.211**	0.027	.358**	.214**	.476**	.399**	.348**	.483**	.414**
<b><i>Avoidance behaviors</i></b>											
Proactive Avoidance	2.95	1.01	-0.025	-0.049	-0.054	-0.017	-.152**	-.112**	-.086*	-.200**	-.173**
Reactive Avoidance	4.32	0.66	-.128**	0.008	0.011	-.119**	.143**	.085*	-.099*	0.02	0.039

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Variable Correlations, and Significance Levels Continued**

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Non-Personalization Irritation	Privacy Concerns	Desire for Personalized Marketing	Proactive Avoidance	Reactive Avoidance
<b><i>Personalized marketing attitudes</i></b>							
Non-Personalization Irritation	4.02	0.89	1				
Privacy Concerns	4.00	0.95	.097*	1			
Desire for Personalized Marketing	3.77	0.93	0.072	-.177**	1		
<b><i>Avoidance behaviors</i></b>							
Proactive Avoidance	2.95	1.01	-0.015	.319**	-.255**	1	
Reactive Avoidance	4.32	0.66	.267**	.313**	-0.035	.180**	1

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

### Multivariate regression results

Hypothesis testing was conducted using multivariate regression in SPSS. Twelve independent factors (irritation, privacy, desire for personalized advertising (DPA), and the nine value perceptions of digital touchpoints, and the control factors (gender, time spent online, and number of social media profiles) were tested on their impact on the dependent variable marketing avoidance (reactive and proactive). The multivariate results for the two distinct types of marketing avoidance (reactive and proactive) are shown in Table 3. In order to test the main effect hypothesized relationships ( $H_{1a-b}$ – $H_{12a-b}$ ), individual regressions were performed. Of the 12 hypothesized relationships, two were fully supported for both reactive and proactive marketing avoidance ( $H_2$  = privacy concerns and  $H_{11}$  = Value of personalized ads from brands), four were partially supported for just one type of avoidance ( $H_{1a}$  = non-personalized marketing irritation,  $H_{3b}$  = desire for personalized marketing,  $H_{6a}$  = value of mobile ads,  $H_{12b}$  = overall value of digital ads), and three relationships were opposite of the hypothesized relationship ( $H_{8a}$  = value of personalized content on website,  $H_{9a}$  = value of brand-created digital content,  $H_{12a}$  = overall value of digital ads). The univariate and multivariate results are discussed in the following sections with a summary of the hypothesis testing shown in Table 4.

**Table 3: Tests of the Multivariate Regression Hypotheses**

Parameter	Multivariate Test Wilks	Reactive Avoidance Standard $\beta$	Proactive Avoidance Standard $\beta$
Constant	.595***	1.051	2.910
Non-Personalized Irritation	.881***	.205***	-.018
Privacy Concerns	.846***	.278***	.297***
Desire for Personalized Marketing	.984	-.037	-.136**
SMS/Text Messages	.996	-.060	.019
Online Video	.994	.018	.045
Mobile Ads	.976*	-.170**	.022
Emails	.989	-.084	.064
Personalized Content on Website	.933***	.177*	-.022
Brand-Created Digital Content	.983	.098*	.041
Social Media Posts	.987	.024	.100
Personalized Ads	.972*	-.121**	-.158**
Digital Ads Overall	.972*	.126**	-.151*
	<i>F</i> -value (sig.)	9.628	7.446
	$R^2$	.215	.174

Note. DPA = desire for personalized advertising, SI = social influence.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Reactive marketing avoidance.** The model for reactive marketing avoidance was significant ( $F = 9.628$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and the model explained 21.5% of the variation in reactive marketing avoidance. Four of the 12 hypotheses pertaining to reactive marketing avoidance were supported and in the hypothesized direction. Additionally, there were three unexpected findings with significant, but reverse findings than hypothesized. First, non-personalized marketing irritation ( $\beta_{1a} = 0.205$ ;  $p < .001$ ) had a positive and significant relationship with reactive marketing avoidance, supporting  $H_{1a}$ . Second, privacy concerns ( $\beta_{2a} = 0.278$ ;  $p < .001$ ) had a positive and significant relationship with reactive marketing avoidance, supporting  $H_{2a}$ . Third, value perceptions of mobile ads ( $\beta_{6a} = -0.170$ ;  $p < .01$ ) had a negative and significant relationship with reactive marketing avoidance, thus  $H_{6a}$  was supported. Lastly, value of personalized advertising ( $\beta_{11a} = -0.121$ ;  $p < .01$ ) had a negative and significant relationship with reactive marketing avoidance, supporting  $H_{11a}$ . The regression results also included three surprising findings with significant paths but opposite of the hypothesized direction. Three digital marketing touchpoints each had an unexpected positive significant effect on reactive marketing avoidance, including value perceptions of: personalized content on a website ( $\beta_{8a} = 0.177$ ;  $p < .05$ ), brand-created digital content ( $\beta_{9a} = 0.098$ ;  $p < .05$ ), and digital ads overall ( $\beta_{12a} = 0.126$ ;  $p < .01$ ). No control variables had a significant impact.

**Table 4: Summary of Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Relationship	Supported
$H_{1a}$	Non-Personalized Marketing Irritation ( $\beta_{1a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes
$H_{1b}$	Non-Personalized Marketing Irritation ( $\beta_{1b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{2a}$	Privacy Concerns ( $\beta_{2a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes
$H_{2b}$	Privacy Concerns ( $\beta_{2b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes
$H_{3a}$	Desire for Personalized Marketing ( $\beta_{3a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{3b}$	Desire for Personalized Marketing ( $\beta_{3b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes
$H_{4a}$	SMS/Text ( $\beta_{4a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{4b}$	SMS/Text ( $\beta_{4b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{5a}$	Online Video ( $\beta_{5a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{5b}$	Online Video ( $\beta_{5b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{6a}$	Mobile Ads ( $\beta_{6a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes
$H_{6b}$	Mobile Ads ( $\beta_{6b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{7a}$	Email ( $\beta_{7a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{7b}$	Email ( $\beta_{7b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{8a}$	Personalized Content on Website ( $\beta_{8a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	Reversed
$H_{8b}$	Personalized Content on Website ( $\beta_{8b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{9a}$	Brand-Created Digital Content ( $\beta_{9a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	Reversed
$H_{9b}$	Brand-Created Digital Content ( $\beta_{9b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{10a}$	Social Media ( $\beta_{10a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{10b}$	Social Media ( $\beta_{10b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	No
$H_{11a}$	Personalized Ads ( $\beta_{11a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes
$H_{11b}$	Personalized Ads ( $\beta_{11b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes
$H_{12a}$	Digital Ads Overall ( $\beta_{12a}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Reactive Marketing Avoidance	Reversed
$H_{12b}$	Digital Ads Overall ( $\beta_{12b}$ ) $\rightarrow$ Proactive Marketing Avoidance	Yes

Note. H4-12 relate to value perceptions of different interactive marketing touchpoints

**Proactive marketing avoidance.** The model for proactive marketing avoidance was significant ( $F = 7.446$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and the model explained 17.4% of the variation in proactive marketing avoidance. Four of the 12 hypotheses for proactive marketing avoidance were supported and in the hypothesized direction: privacy concerns ( $\beta_{2b} = 0.297$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $H_{2b}$  supported), desire for personalized marketing ( $\beta_{3b} = -0.136$ ;  $p < .01$ ;  $H_{3b}$  supported), value perceptions of personalized advertising ( $\beta_{11b} = -0.158$ ;  $p < .01$ ;  $H_{11b}$  supported), and value perceptions of digital ads overall ( $\beta_{12b} = -0.151$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $H_{12b}$  supported). The control variable gender had a positive and significant relationship with proactive marketing avoidance ( $\beta = 0.107$ ;  $p < .01$ ), indicating females are more likely to engage in proactive marketing avoidance behaviors.

#### Summary discussion of multivariate results and implications

Socially-constructed value of digital touchpoints had several interesting findings. First, mobile and personalized ads were both negative when it came to reactive ad avoidance, but personalized content on a brand's website, brand-created digital content, and digital ads overall were unexpectedly positive. These reversed findings imply

that when Gen Z consumers have higher value perceptions they are still likely to reactively avoid marketing messages shared via these three interactive marketing touchpoints. In comparison, higher value perceptions of mobile and personalized ads decreased reactive avoidance behaviors. Since two of these interactive marketing touchpoints relate to digital content that brands may place on websites or other interactive marketing channels (personalized content and brand-created digital content), this may suggest the consumer-brand relationship may moderate how consumers will react to the marketing efforts for this type of content. The impact of value perceptions of digital ads overall provides a conflicting perspective on the two types of marketing avoidance behaviors. While it had a positive relationship with reactive marketing avoidance, the relationship with proactive marketing avoidance was negative. This contradiction needs further investigation to understand how digital ad value perceptions influence the two types of marketing avoidance behaviors. The authors surmise this may reflect a Gen Z consumers' fear of missing out (FOMO). Even when Gen Z consumers believe peers and social connections have positive opinions of digital ads, individuals will reactively avoid them if not personally relevant ( $H_{12a}$ ). However, when it comes to proactive marketing avoidance, such as installing an ad blocker, Gen Z consumers may be willing to suffer some annoyance to ensure they do not miss out on trending digital ads that may otherwise get blocked.

Overall, the significant relationships of Gen Z's avoidance behaviors (reactive and proactive avoidance) found seven significant relationships with reactive marketing avoidance (non-personalized marketing irritation, privacy concerns, value of mobile ads, value of personalized content on websites, value of brand-created digital content, value of personalized ads, and value of digital ads overall). Significant relationships with proactive marketing avoidance included four factors (privacy concerns, desire for personalized marketing, value of personalized marketing, and value of digital ads overall). Finally, an interesting comparison between privacy concerns and desire for personalized marketing is that privacy concerns was significant for both reactive and proactive marketing avoidance, however, desire for personalized marketing was only significant for proactive ad avoidance, confirming the importance to better understand what leads consumers to proactively avoid marketing efforts.

## **Discussion**

### ***Theoretical implications***

As digital marketing increases, consumers increasingly are exposed to digital ads and other personalized content. Marketers also have increased personalization efforts in attempt to provide more relevant ads (Jung, 2017; Li & Liu, 2017), but this may also lead to increased privacy concerns (Jung, 2017; Lin & Kim, 2016). Consumers may therefore be more likely to avoid digital ads and other personalized marketing efforts, as evidenced by the increasing rate of ad blocker adoption (Redondo & Aznar, 2018; Tran, 2017). The current study contributes to understanding what may cause consumers to engage in two different avoidance types, including reactive and proactive marketing avoidance behaviors. Gaining an understanding of how consumers formulate their marketing avoidance-related behaviors offers important insights to designing personalization efforts across digital touchpoints.

The findings illustrate how socially-constructed value perceptions of digital marketing touchpoints, and consequently attitudes and behaviors of Gen Z, related to avoidance of personalized marketing efforts. This research answers the call by Hughes et al., (2019) and Risselada, et al. (2018) to gain a better understanding of the effect social influence has on influencing acceptance of digital personalization and resulting acceptance of digital marketing campaigns across various marketing touchpoints. The current study finds that socially-constructed value perceptions of different digital marketing touchpoints impacts digital marketing avoidance behaviors differently, with some unexpected differences based on specific interactive marketing touchpoints. The results thus contribute to the consumer avoidance behavior literature by demonstrating how consumer-to-consumer interactions may influence consumers' avoidance behaviors on different digital marketing channels.

Second, the findings identify that there are distinct dimensions to consumers' marketing avoidance including behavioral reactive ad avoidance and proactive ad avoidance. The study also identifies the differential impacts socially-constructed value perceptions and consumers' attitudinal constructs (desire for personalized marketing, privacy concerns, and non-personalized marketing irritation) have on these two distinct consumer avoidance behaviors. Reactive avoidance is influenced by two attitudinal constructs (non-personalized irritation and privacy concerns) and five digital touchpoint value perceptions (mobile, web, digital, personalized ads, and overall). The proactive marketing avoidance dimension was influenced from the attitudinal constructs of privacy concerns and desire for personalized marketing, along with value perception of digital ads overall. More of an immediate response from irritation of reactive ad avoidance, albeit negative for the marketer, still enables marketing of ads to be seen by the consumer in the future compared to proactive ad avoidance such as ad blocker adoption, thus ceasing ads to be viewed by a consumer now and in the future. Desire for personalized marketing had only one significant effect and helps reduce proactive marketing avoidance. Importantly, this suggests that marketers that effectively integrate personalization efforts into their marketing may be able to reduce Gen Z consumers' proactive efforts to avoid ads and other digital marketing efforts. Finally, the privacy concerns positively influenced both the marketing avoidance dimensions (reactive and proactive). Importantly,



this further demonstrates the difficult balancing act marketers need to walk in creating relevant and personalized marketing efforts, while avoiding becoming too invasive on consumers' privacy.

This study also found unexpected findings related to the different media types and the resulting effect on reactive avoidance behaviors. Reactive marketing avoidance had three significant paths that were reversed from what was hypothesized. Specifically, personalized web content, brand-created digital content, and personalized ads, each had unexpected positive effects, thus increasing consumers' reactive marketing avoidance. As previous studies have not researched different media types within the same study, these findings provide an interesting area of focus for a better understanding of the varied and unexpected results. The implication to marketers is by having a better understanding of the effects of the different media types on consumers, they can utilize specific media types to influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors accordingly for better collaboration and engagement. The results demonstrate that there are complex interrelationships that require models that investigate the joint effects of these attitudinal constructs, interactive marketing value perceptions, and the different avoidance behaviors.

### ***Practical Implications***

The implications of this study provide marketing practitioners important understanding about the resulting behaviors of marketing avoidance. The empirical results provide valuable insight on how marketers need to balance personalization efforts to be of benefit, not annoyance to consumers. As a result, marketers can help increase consumers' acceptance of a brand's personalized marketing efforts. Applying our findings can give marketers new insights into improved ways to target and reach their consumers for more successful marketing campaigns. If marketers' goal is for consumers to see ads and other marketing content, they should leverage our findings related to marketing avoidance and various media types. Marketers should not underestimate Gen Z's privacy concerns, because privacy concerns were significant and positive across both dimensions of marketing avoidance (reactive and proactive). Also, once a consumer adopts proactive marketing avoidance efforts such as ad blockers, a key question remains in determining how a marketer may re-engage that consumer. Marketers need to ensure digital marketing efforts are personally relevant to consumers to aide in decreasing irritation and to be of benefit to consumers. Specific to privacy concerns, brands should ensure personalized marketing efforts, digital, and web content are transparent about how consumers' information has been gained and how it is being used and give consumers opt-out abilities. Lastly, marketers should consider creating content and ads to have a ranking ability to allow consumers to rank how relevant the ads and content are to them. This ranking system will not only give consumers the feeling of control but will also enable two-way communication between marketers and consumers in order to gain valuable insight.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

Although Gen Z was the target sample, focusing on a single generational sample does not provide generalizable results. Future research could study additional age groups to see if differences exist in the findings. This research focused on the media types of online personalized ads, digital content, and social media, which provided some surprising and varied results. Some of the hypothesized relationships were reversed in the findings, which provides an interesting finding to explore in future research. The current study also contributes to research that examines the privacy paradox, however, there are still many questions left unanswered. For instance, where is the tipping point between privacy, proactive ad avoidance (ad blocker adoption), and the fear of missing out? Additionally, as this research shows the importance of desire for personalized advertising to decrease proactive marketing avoidance, future research should focus on what marketers can do to increase this desire for personalized ads while also decreasing privacy concerns. This study measured Gen Z's attitude at one time in a cross-sectional survey; future research could extend this research over a period of time in a longitudinal study.

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## **Session 2.5 Communication & Persuasion**

**Chair:** Henry Slubowski

# Summary Brief

## When Customers Belong: Antecedents to Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Intent to Pay More in Loyalty Programs

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*In marketing research, attempts are being made to regularly predict customer loyalty. One of such answers lies in customer-company identification or CCI, which has become even more critical as customer loyalty has surged in popularity as a marketing strategy for attracting, retaining, and growing customer relationships. This research study aims to address how can a loyalty program and the sense of belonging it fosters be used to create CCI among loyalty program members? The study found a significant relationship between a sense of belonging and CCI. Therefore, loyalty program elements that can create a sense of belonging would be a strong place to focus as cognitive and affective CCI lead to more long-term loyalty and loyal behaviors in customers.*

### Introduction

Researchers looking for a way to regularly predict customer loyalty have found an answer in customer-company identification or CCI. Understanding CCI has become even more critical as customer loyalty has surged in popularity as a marketing strategy for attracting, retaining, and growing customer relationships (Kim et al., 2020).

Du et al., (2007) define CCI as a “consumers’ psychological attachment to a company based on a substantial overlap between their perceptions of themselves and their perceptions of the company” (p. 227). In studies, CCI has been linked to some of the same loyalty-related firm outcomes as customer satisfaction, yet when comparing the bodies of research on CCI and customer satisfaction respectively, the number of studies focused on understanding CCI are far fewer. This study focuses on how a loyalty program and the sense of can belonging it fosters be used to create CCI among loyalty program members and, to what degree does CCI affect loyalty-related outcomes like electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and a customer’s willingness to pay more?

### Background

CCI is focused on how relationships with companies can be one of the ways customers fulfill their self-definitional needs based on a strong, favorable identification with the firm, driven by their perceptions of similarities between themselves and the firm (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Recent work has recommended that CCI has an affective and cognitive element and must be characterized as such.

That belonging a customer senses based on membership to a loyalty program can satisfy a customer’s need for self-distinctiveness. Belonging to a group and maintaining membership permits the member to feel different compared to the rest of the population. When customers feel like they belong, they take signs and nods from that group that supply an outline on how to act or feel (McAlexander et al., 2002).

### Key Findings

The relationships between belonging and cognitive and affective CCI were significant. The relationship between cognitive CCI and intent to pay more and eWOM was positive and significant. The relationships between affective CCI, eWOM intention, and intent to pay more were both positive and significant.

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## Summary Brief

# Mic Check: How Does the Use of Hip-Hop Music in Advertising Impact Perceived Brand Authenticity and Behavioral Intention?

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*Marketing scholars have only recently begun to investigate hip hop's impact on consumer decision making. Hip hop brand culture has been investigated as a global diaspora, a consumption-oriented counterculture, a consumer subculture, and others considered its influence on brand placements in music videos and lyrics. This research builds on the work of Morhart et al. (2015) and Fritz et al. (2016). More specifically, it examines the relationship between hip-hop music, perceived brand authenticity and consumer behavioral intention. It will also be used to conceptualize an integrated marketing communication (IMC) framework that provides brands the needed tools to consider the cultural appropriation of certain tactics. Creating a roadmap for brands to use when implementing hip-hop songs into their marketing campaigns will enable brands achieve campaign goals without fear of being: (1) perceived as being inauthentic or (2) accused of cultural appropriation.*

### Introduction

There is a creative paradox at play in crafting advertising campaigns. Customers desire to see ads that speak directly to them, such as those featuring models that mirror their bodies, races, ages, and abilities. Brands have responded by including more people from diverse backgrounds in their advertising campaigns. However, with limited advertising budgets, brands also seek to produce universally appealing ads that attract many demographic segments with a single ad. As one of the most important creative elements, music is incorporated in more than 90% of television advertisements (Kellaris et al., 1993). The music chosen to accompany the ad might hold a key of how to resolve the paradox of how to achieve personalized and universal appeal in a single ad. Frith (2003) suggests that 'what people listen to is more important for their sense of themselves than what they watch or read'. The universal appeal of hip hop, which became the most popular music genre in 2017 (Nielsen, 2018) attracts a wide audience, yet due to its roots in black culture, supports DEI efforts for inclusive brand imagery. We contend that, in the pursuit of creativity, brands use hip hop music as a one size fits all approach when attempting to market themselves as diverse and gain access to niche markets. However, resolving this paradox using Hip-hop music poses the inherently difficult challenge of threading the needle required to retain the authenticity and messaging that appeals to audiences who identify with its black experience roots while also sanitizing some of those messages to appeal to white audiences. An inherent danger is that the brand will get this balance wrong: black audiences might see the use of hip-hop music as cultural appropriation and some white audiences may see it as too "woke" and controversial.

### Background

While Flo Rida's song "Low," about a stripper, plays in the background, an animated white grandmother with the stereotypical gray bun celebrates finding low prices at her Kroger supermarket by shaking, shimmying, and getting 'low' next to her cart in the grocery store aisle. White granny is one of several animated characters created to support Kroger's 2019 "Fresh for Everyone" brand relaunch. César Pelizer, an animator and commercial director, said in interviews that he created characters like the grandmother and chose Flo Rida's song in an effort to "celebrate diversity in a strong, bold, and colorful style" (Springer, 2021, para. 5). Imbuing rap music into commercials is a way for brands to reach a broader audience given the genre's popularity since hip hop overtook rock as the most popular music genre in 2017 (Nielsen, 2018). Furthermore, those approving the music decisions at brands and agencies hail from a new generation of marketers who grew up listening to hip hop and personally recognize its marketing power as an 'authentic' culture (Kelly, 2020).

Although the song's hook is catchy, the lyrics and meaning are disconnected from an Ohio-based retailer who uses heritage as a core brand foundation, "Just as Barney Kroger did [in 1901] ...we've always prioritized value, convenience, and making our customers' lives easier" (About Kroger, n.d, para. 2.). When brands try to get edgy with creative execution, they fail to recognize how quickly brand trust can be damaged. Kroger fortunately avoided having to explain why it chose a catchy hip-hop song that openly objected to women as a way to 'celebrate diversity' but the Kroger example also illustrates the point that hip-hop music is at risk of being commoditized like an interchangeable

stock photo when brands want to signal their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts through their marketing communication programs.

The rise in hip-hop-infused campaigns is likely due to a new generation of marketers who understand how rappers are perceived as real and who believe that hip hop's inherent diversity supports DEI initiatives for inclusive brand imagery, without taking into account hip hop's origin as a cultural expression born in the 1970s as an outlet for expressing anger at social inequalities that shaped many Black people's lives (Wang, 2018). Cultural appropriation is the inappropriate or unacknowledged adoption of an element or elements of one culture or identity by members of another culture or identity. It can include the exploitation of another culture's religious and cultural traditions, dance steps, fashion, symbols, language, and music. This can be especially controversial when members of a dominant culture appropriate from minority cultures.

Furthermore, the issue of authenticity is often raised in discussions of cultural appropriation. Critics of cultural appropriation argue that cultural elements are lost or distorted when they are removed from their originating cultural contexts, and that such displays are disrespectful or even a form of desecration. In addition, there is resistance to advertising that is perceived to undermine the musical authenticity of favored bands through excessive commercialization that some consumers allege debases fine art and ruins the experience and memories of many people, highlighting 'antagonisms between music and advertising' (Eckhardt & Bradshaw, 2014). On the other hand, some argue that cultural appropriation can be a useful tool for outsiders to adapt and transform cultural elements (Mishan, 2022). However, it is important to note that cultural appropriation is not the same as cultural appreciation, which involves seeking to understand and learn about another culture in an effort to broaden one's perspective and connect with others cross-culturally (Cuncic, 2022). Ultimately, the question of authenticity in cultural appropriation is complex, multifaceted, and requires thoughtful engagement with the cultural elements in question.

## Key Findings

Data collection for this project is currently underway.

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## **Session 2.6: Panel: The Role of Higher Education in Developing Ethical Analytics Practices**

**Chair:** Mike McGuirk

# Panel Session

## The Role of Higher Education in Developing Ethical Analytics Practices

Mike McGuirk, MA, Babson College  
Dana E. Harrison, TN, East Tennessee State University  
Astrid Keel, CA, University of La Verne

Companies' use of data to support decision-making across all facets of the business is at an all-time high. In fact, many organizations believe the insights derived from the analysis of consumer, corporate, and industry data is one of their most important strategic assets. However, if businesses are to continue to reap the benefits of using data, particularly consumer and marketing data, to achieve sustainable growth, *the implementation of responsible and ethical analytics practices is paramount.*

Many consumers are concerned about the limited control they have over their personal data, which has led to a sharp rise in global data regulations. Although data regulations provide consumers with greater peace of mind, regulations that become too onerous and restrictive will quickly cause businesses to lose their ability to stay tapped into the voice and needs of the consumers. Therefore, the analytics, data science, business intelligence, and artificial intelligence (AI) communities (academic and corporate) need to collectively work together to determine the best methods to instill ethical business practices and safeguards across every stage of the analytics and AI development cycle.

The objective of this panel is to explore the role higher education can provide in the development of ethical analytics practices. The session will include an overview and analysis of the most current and relevant research on ethical practices in big data, analytics, and AI. This will be followed by a series of pedagogical considerations for integrating critical business ethics topics into the design of marketing and marketing-oriented analytics courses. The panel members will also share potential opportunities for new academic research on ethical analytics practices, particularly in marketing. The session will conclude with audience Q&A.

## **Session 3.1: Drugs, Driving, & Donations**

**Chair:** Lucy Matthews

# Summary Brief

## An Investigative Study towards “What Leads Students to Select Their College Major?”

Kate N. Matthews, University of Tennessee, USA  
Diane R. Edmondson, Middle Tennessee State University, USA  
Lucy M. Matthews, Middle Tennessee State University, USA

With over 19 million students enrolled in college (NCES, 2021), understanding the degree selection process is important for departments, colleges, and universities alike. As the number of traditional college-aged students declines, this information is even more important as universities, colleges, and departments will be fighting for majors. For students, selecting the proper major early on reduces time in school, resulting in lower tuition costs. Therefore, a better understanding of the degree selection process is beneficial for both parties involved.

In this study, there were four primary research questions under investigation. The first question focuses on what factors lead to a student selecting a specific major. The second question investigates what leads a student to switch majors. The third studies how might a university, college, or department best market to students during the decision making process. Finally, the last research question examines what differences exist in the decision making process based on gender, class standing, and college.

Data was collected using a Qualtrics survey from 1,177 undergraduate students from a university in the Southeastern United States. The survey asked questions about personality types, reasons for selecting a major, and a variety of attitude and demographic items. All of the attitude-based scales were unidimensional and taken from existing literature. The results were investigated in a variety of ways and displayed in individual tables to examine differences in means and responses.

For the sample, all respondents were over the age of 18, with a majority being the traditional college age. The vast majority of participants were considered to be full time, taking in-person courses. Almost all were single with a predominant Caucasian sample. Students were split among school class standings with 61% being either juniors or seniors. Almost 60% of students had never changed their major while 15% changed their major two or more times.

The results indicate that the highest ranked reasons that students select a major are interest and passion. Next, they feel the major is a fit with their personality type. Further, when changing a major, the highest reason for doing so was also interest and passion, followed again by fit with personality. While students seek support from their families for the major that they selected, family influence was not a significant contributor to selecting the degree with the exception of students in the College of Business. Five differences were found based on gender. Additionally, several differences were noted based on class standing and college. Recommendations are based on the results of this study are provided.

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# Summary Brief

## Understanding Natural Language Processing as Regulatory Technology for U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Evidence from Recalls on Plant-based Food Products

Jiyeon An, Fayetteville State University, NC, USA

*This paper introduces natural language processing as regulatory technology, a policy enforcement innovation, to examine the recalls of plant-based products by using information gathered from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Recalls, which involve removing products from the market either voluntarily or involuntarily, can jeopardize consumer safety. These incidents pose significant challenges to the plant-based food supply chain, including managing recalls through supplier relationships with regulations and standards set by the FDA. Despite the importance of recalls in the food supply chain, little attention has been given to empirical examination with regulatory technology with greater scale, speed, and scope. Structural Topic Modeling, an unsupervised machine learning technique, was used to determine emerging topics and explore topic relationships to understand the potential of using regulatory tech to govern the nascent industry. The implications of the study's findings are discussed for both theoretical and managerial purposes.*

### Introduction

Ensuring the safety of consumers is crucial, which is why the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) plays a crucial role in protecting their well-being. The food supply chain has become increasingly complex and globalized, leading to a rise in food recalls. This recall-prone interdependence is due to a lack of strong governance and large corporations' dominance, as Zhang et al. (2020) noted. Wowak and Boone (2015) stress the importance of regulatory measures in the nascent industry, as a negative incident, such as an FDA recall, can significantly impact finance and industry-wide spillover effects.

FDA as a regulatory body serves to ensure consumer safety means reducing the likelihood of harm or negative outcomes resulting from using a product, such as illness, injury, or damage to property or equipment (Maruchek et al., 2011). In the agri-food system, food products are stored, handled, and distributed, which can pose risks due to perishable ingredients that are easy to contaminate and complex global supply chains (Whipple et al., 2009). Alternative food movements and sustainable eating practices have emerged as viable solutions to these safety concerns.

Studies have shown that recalls significantly impact the financials of the emerging industry and can also affect the overall growth of the industry (Wowak & Boone, 2015; Zhang et al., 2020). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) records these incidents, which can be used to analyze the capabilities of the FDA in handling product recalls. This information provides valuable insights into the dynamics of the nascent agri-food system.

The empirical context in this paper is the plant-based food marketplace as the role of FDA can be examined in this emerging landscape. Many people turn to plant-based food as a substitute for animal-based food culture. Companies like Oatly and Beyond Meat, which offer milk and meat substitutes, have experienced significant growth of 300% and 50% between 2019 and 2021, respectively (Beyond Meat, 2022; Oatly, 2022). While plant-based products can promote sustainable eating, they also pose potential risks to consumer safety regarding food consumption including reported recall incidents.

### Data and Results

This study utilized Structural Topic Modeling (STM) as a form of regulatory technology, which refers to innovative policy enforcement methods. The goal was to gain insights into the role of regulatory bodies in emerging markets, such as plant-based products in the food industry. The use of regulatory technology has been previously discussed concerning fintech, given its significant impact on consumer welfare. This paper aims to encourage the adoption of policy enforcement innovation within the food industry. For the analysis, the FDA used data collected between 2012 and 2022. Products that explicitly included "plant-based" were categorized as plant-based. The dataset recorded 72 recalls for plant-based products with various levels of severity of the incidents.

The STM method was selected to analyze recall details, such as reasons for recall in the dataset. This approach has several advantages, as Roberts et al. (2014) outlined. The method utilizes Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) (Blei et al., 2003) to identify latent patterns of topics by analyzing their distribution across texts. This unsupervised machine learning method helps uncover hidden relationships, allowing for a better understanding of a phenomenon in an

inductive manner. Visualizing the relationships as a topic network allows us to investigate how various topics are interwoven, potentially representing different market actors in the agri-food system.

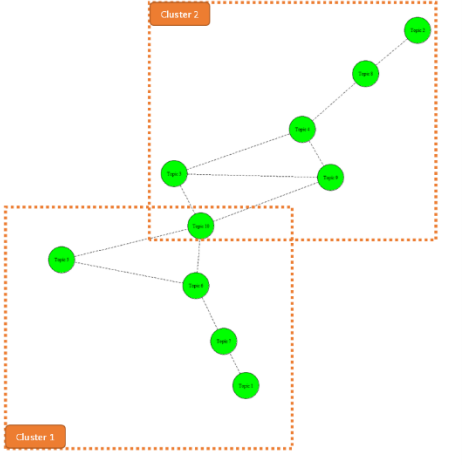
To conduct STM, R, an interpretive programming language, was used to follow a series of data processing. Since the recall details are unstructured text data with no predetermined format, preprocessing was conducted. In Step 1, we process the text data by using stemming and stop word removal techniques to identify the root forms of words and remove stop words. This step prepares the data for topic modeling. Next, we use the processed text to create a corpus representing a set of textual documents, which can help identify latent topics (Step 2). Finally, in Step 3, the STM estimates topic parameters, discovers topic clusters and assesses topic prevalence.

The findings from the STM analysis are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. Table 1 lists the top ten topics and the most frequently used keywords associated with them. Figure 1 displays a topic network analysis that visually shows the relationships between the topics, forming two community clusters. Topic 10 is the most significant node, connecting with Topics 5, 6, 3, and 9. In contrast, Topics 1 and 2 have the least connections, only with Topics 7 and 8, respectively. The community clusters formed around Topic 10 are the downward cluster of Topics 5, 6, 7, and 1 and the upward cluster of Topics 3, 9, 4, 8, and 2. We will discuss the practical implications of these empirical insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers.

**Table 1: Summary of Topic**

Topic identifier	Example keyword	Topic label
Topic 1	gluten, free, ppm, label, test	Gluten issue
Topic 2	powder, organ, supplier, use, salmonella	Salmonella contamination
Topic 3	egg, milk, contain, peanut, sweet	Diary-based food culture issue
Topic 4	bag, manufactur, almond, product, voluntari	Voluntary recall
Topic 5	soy, complaint, declar, inspect, depart	Non-voluntary recall
Topic 6	ingredi, incorrect, mislabel, label, package	Food fraud
Topic 7	firm, notifi, affect, determine, food	Plant-based agri-food system issue
Topic 8	contamin, recall, listeria, monocytogen, various	Listeria monocytogenes contamination
Topic 9	undeclar, possible, plant-based, lecithin, white	Soy lecithin issue
Topic 10	wheat, flour, chocolate, allergen, walnut	Allergen issue

**Figure 1: Topic Network**



**Discussion**

The rising number of food recalls has raised concerns about complexity, globalization, and weak governance in the food supply chain. This paper aims to investigate the recall of plant-based products with data from the FDA. Introducing an STM method allowed us to test theories on recall in the context of sustainable food consumption, enhancing our understanding of food recall capability. This approach helps understand how to recall interrelated topics across various stakeholders in a specific nascent market segment, the plant-based food product. This finding answers a standing research call for empirical investigation in a specific food industry segment to identify stakeholders' engagements (Oliveira et al., 2023).

Through this analysis, we have gained insight into the causes, procedures, and results of recalls in the plant-based food industry. Our research identified two groups: those who take advantage of opportunities in the plant-based agri-food system and those influenced by food culture. In future studies, it would be beneficial to conduct a more detailed investigation into the precursor, process, and outcome phases of recalls (Wowak & Boone, 2015).

To understand the precursor phase, researchers could examine how a company's resource allocation and top management composition affect the recalls. The recall process phase could involve analyzing organizational culture to navigate complex supply chain relationships. Additionally, when evaluating the recall outcome phase, it is important to consider consumer reactions and how companies learn from recall incidents to advance recall scholarship further.

This research can help practitioners and policymakers learn about recalls and how to prevent threats to consumer safety by understanding their precursors, processes, and outcomes. Public policymakers can also use this analysis to identify patterns of recalls and improve guidelines and alarm systems like the European Union recall policy—the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed to protect the food supply chain from safety threats.

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# Summary Brief

## The Impact of Donation Dedications on Others' Perceptions of Self-Promoting Donors

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*Charities are constantly looking for ways to increase awareness. One way to do this is to convince donors to share information about their donations on social media. Unfortunately, most donors avoid sharing this information because they do not want to be perceived as boastful. This research shows that by offering donors the opportunity to dedicate their donation in someone's honor, charities can provide a donor a way to promote their own donations without appearing to be a selfishly motivated braggart. This research shows that participants perceived donors who promoted their donations on social media as less of a braggart and less selfishly motivated when the donor dedicated their donation to someone. These and other findings provide charities insights into how to make it more socially acceptable for donors to promote their own charitable acts and create more awareness.*

### Introduction

Like for-profit organizations, charities and other nonprofits depend on publicity and word of mouth (WOM). In today's digital age, generating widespread WOM has become more achievable than ever. With approximately 4.62 billion social media users worldwide, social media platforms are a potential wellspring of publicity for charities, especially if they can convince donors to share their donations online (Kemp, 2022).<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, many donors are reluctant to post about their donations because they do not want others to think of them as self-promoters. This reluctance is understandable considering the fact that self-promoters are perceived less favorably and typically have more negative interactions with others (Wosinska et al., 1996; Siem and Stürmer, 2018; Tan et al., 2020). Furthermore, promoting one's prosocial behaviors has been shown to backfire and cause others to assume the prosocial actor is selfishly, rather than altruistically motivated (Berman et al., 2015). Therefore, rather than risking the possibility of being labeled a selfishly motivated braggart, many donors choose to keep information about their donations private.

Although many people avoid promoting their good deeds, research shows that it is possible to promote one's own prosocial behaviors without being perceived as a braggart (Berman et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2020). One potential way for donors to promote their donations without appearing to be a selfishly motivated braggart is by dedicating one's donations in honor of someone else. This research demonstrates that, by dedicating a donation, a donor could announce their good deed while deflecting attention away from themselves and onto the person to whom they have dedicated their donation. This would potentially allow the donor to earn credit for their prosocial behavior without appearing to be a self-promoter with selfish motivations.

### Background

Social media can be a powerful tool for creating greater awareness for organizations of all types, including charities. When donors go to social media to share information about donations, it makes others more aware of the charity and encourages them to make their own donations. For this reason, many charities create self-promotion devices, such as social media hashtags as a way to encourage donors to promote their donations (Yang and Hsee, 2022). Unfortunately, many of these self-promotion devices go unused and donors rarely promote their own donations because they do not want others to perceive them in a negative way. Specifically, donors do not want to be perceived as braggarts with selfish motives.

Research in impression management shows that people tend to perceive those who promote their own prosocial behaviors as braggarts with selfish motives (Berman et al., 2015; Siem and Stürmer, 2018). Because most people do not want to be perceived in these ways, many donors remain quite about their charitable donations. However, research demonstrates that there are ways to promote one's own charitable acts without being perceived negatively. For example, asking others to donate and acknowledging a third-party involved in a prosocial behavior are two ways to promote a prosocial act without being perceived as a braggart (Berman et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2020). The later example is in-line with other self-presentation research which suggests that a person can make a self-presentation more acceptable by shifting the focus away from self (Dayter, 2014). With this in mind, charities could encourage donors to promote their own donations by encouraging them to dedicate their donations in honor of someone. Although this is a common

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<sup>1</sup> The report notes that "social media 'users' may not represent unique individuals."



practice, to our knowledge, research has not examined how donation dedications impact the perceptions others form about donors who promote their own donations. Research has also failed to examine how dedicating a donation in honor of someone impacts the likelihood that a donor will post about their donation on social media. We explore these questions in this research.

### Key Findings

In this research, we had two conditions (social media post with donation dedication vs. social media post without donation dedication). As expected, a One-Way ANOVA revealed that participants in the social media post with dedication condition perceived the donor to be more altruistically motivated compared to participants in the social media post without dedication condition ( $M_{\text{with dedication}} = 4.75$ ,  $SD = .99$  vs.  $M_{\text{without dedication}} = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ,  $F_{1, 183} = 6.76$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .036$ ). Also as expected, participants in the social media post with dedication condition viewed the donor as less of a self-promoter compared to participants in the social media post without dedication condition ( $M_{\text{with dedication}} = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 1.42$  vs.  $M_{\text{without dedication}} = 5.10$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ,  $F_{1, 183} = 8.74$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .046$ ).

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## **Session 3.2: Inquiring Minds Want to Know**

**Chair:** Sphurti Sewak

# Summary Brief

## When Brands Roast on Social Media: Effect of Roasting on Brand Preference

Sphurti Sewak, Illinois State University, USA  
Jayati Sinha, Florida International University, USA

*Social media has opened avenues for brands to engage with users worldwide, which is especially prevalent on Twitter. A recent trend on Twitter is “roasting,” with brands taking a jibe at users or other brands. We investigate this trend by conducting four pre-registered studies using a real foreign brand and fictitious brands. We find that brand roasting leads to lower perceived appropriateness, consequently leading to lower brand preference. We further ascertain a boundary condition to this effect, type of conversation, B2B (Business to Business) or B2C (Business to Customer). We find that B2B roasting is deemed more appropriate by consumers and results in higher brand preference. This research theoretically advances the social media literature on brand interactions while also placing roasting within the larger context of established humor theories. Practically, we determine that despite being hugely popular, “roasting” is viewed unfavorably by consumers, negatively impacting their brand preference.*

### Introduction

A recent Statista report suggests that the amount spent by the brands on social media advertising has increased from USD 15.63 billion in 2016 to USD 48.94 billion in 2021, estimated to reach USD 56.85 billion in 2022 (Statista, 2020). Hence, it is evident that social media has evolved into a vital medium in branding efforts, with brands increasingly on the lookout to make themselves stand out on social media platforms. Social media opened avenues for brands to connect to consumers individually, which furthered traditional methods such as appealing websites (Rowley, 2008). In today's world, many social media platforms are available for brands. Among these social media platforms, Twitter is distinct because it allows brands to interact with consumers even if they are not following them (Swani et al., 2014).

A Twitter trend that garnered significant consumer engagement over the past few years is roasting. While Wendy's was the first to start the trend of roasting on Twitter, many other brands followed suit. Brands routinely post content on their Twitter account, typically related to their product or service offerings or the resolution of a customer complaint. We compare roasting posts to such posts in our conceptualization and test the downstream consequences of both these posts. We chose Twitter as the SM platform as it is known to be widely used by brands for interacting with consumers (Sook Kwon et al., 2014; Swani et al., 2014). Moreover, Twitter has become a hub for brand roasting. However, this research uncovers a novel domain that shows increased consumer engagement but decreased brand preference. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirical research to investigate brand roasting on social media, linking it to brand preference. Specifically, we demonstrate that brand roasting on Twitter leads to lower brand preference. We further ascertain the process causing this effect and when roasting can potentially be more appealing to customers.

### Background

Considering prior literature has emphasized the importance of studying brands' social media posts on consumer behavior (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020; McClure & Seock, 2020), our research fits in very well with such calls. We also place the phenomenon of roasting within the larger context of established humor theories. Specifically, our research builds on and extends the existing literature on the disparagement theory of humor (Speck, 1991). Second, our research shows that not everything that goes viral results in favorable offline behavior. We find that brand roasting results in a lower preference for the roasting brand due to perceived inappropriateness. However, consumers perceive Business-to-Business (B2B) roasting as more appropriate than Business-to-Customer (B2C) roasting, leading to higher brand preference.

### Key Findings

We found that while such roasting posts are popular, they result in a lower preference for the roasting brand. We found perceived inappropriateness as the underlying reason while ruling out the alternative explanation of surprise and sarcasm. Lastly, we were able to tease apart the difference between B2B and B2C roasting, finding that B2B roasting is perceived as more appropriate than B2C roasting. Consequently, B2B roasting results in higher brand preference than B2C roasting.

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# Summary Brief

## Humanistic Innovation in Modern E-commerce Marketing in the Continuous Advancement of AI Technology

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*The pandemic tripled the e-commerce industry's website traffic and competitiveness. Today's e-commerce marketer needs to ensure the fundamentals of convenience, connection, care, and customer service are up to par with the change in online consumer demands and expectations. The value of providing a humanistic innovation in e-commerce marketing and experiences is what sets some e-commerce businesses over others in their competitive advantage. The on-going advancement of artificial intelligence, machine learning and the sophistication of modern e-commerce marketing tools to engage, nurture and deliver targeted and personalized experiences is an on-going management of relying on technology influence over humanism approach of strategic planning. E-commerce personalization's new era has a need for further study of how much reliance on human control of rule induction into AI, versus full automation. Focusing on a qualitative study with top e-commerce executives and user experience leaders in the U.S.A., this study serves as a gateway for modern foundations of strategic planning and input of these AI technologies into the modern era of e-commerce marketing and experiences, with an underlying goal of how much human innovation still exists with AI technology.*

### Introduction

Today's digital consumer is savvier than ever, with expectations of online shopping that have accelerated in demands since the pandemic. Customer expectations have set a new level of heightened awareness of how e-commerce businesses interact and engage with them. Zight (2022) stated that, "Delivering better customer support experiences is crucial in winning customer trust and loyalty." The attitude towards personalization is still a significant conversion tactic, however customers expect more than just recommendation of items delivered to them they may want. Today's modern online customer also expect a full customer journey of service & convenience from the top of the e-commerce funnel to post purchase support to truly become loyal to a given e-commerce brand (Bufe, 2023). For the past three decades the spawn of digital innovation with artificial intelligence has been part of many research studies and experiments (Bawack, et al., 2022). With a consistent evolution of AI technology increasing in its sophistication in delivering focused and personalized experiences to online customers, the usefulness of it is still in an infant state of how exactly it fits into best practices of modern e-commerce marketing and experience planning. Focusing on the building blocks of e-commerce experience planning, the steps into with AI is involved in the ideation of a strategy, to planning, to execution are different from company to company. Focused research is needed to uncover the best practices that may exist.

### Background

The research examines how modern e-commerce businesses of all sizes, leverage the use of Artificial Intelligence technologies in their digital experiences and how it's integrated into modern strategic planning. Electronic commerce (e-commerce) can be defined as activities or services related to buying and selling products or services over the internet (Bawack, et al., 2022). The researchers from this study conducted a bibliometric study focused on how e-commerce personalization technology influences not just product recommendations, but also the scope of how this technology supports customer trust, loyalty, and overall sentiment. The researchers' findings found that each area had an impact to the customer experience and the usefulness of this type of technology. The relationship between customer and e-commerce brand has a connection built upon the use of AI technology to bridge that relationship.

However, to which degree of AI planning and execution between an e-commerce business and customer still has gaps in the modern era of strategic planning with these tools. There are no one-size fits all approach for each e-commerce business. In addition, the complexity of what e-commerce personalization is for one e-commerce business can vastly differ from another (Bawack, et al.) 2022. Through research, it is found that some facets of personalization are simply product recommendations for some companies and others in the full extend of a customer experience, with even personalization at checkout and post purchase support. Castillo (2023) highlighted that extensive data-generating tools have made it crucial for businesses to implement new strategies and techniques that will provide quick and accurate information to aid managers in decision-making. The author also demonstrated that AI could automate processes, gain insights from past data, and provide the user with consumer or market insights through program-based algorithms that help managers in their decision-making processes. From that point, the focus of this research is to understand while

benefits exist of this AI technology, where exactly in the strategic decision-making process is the planning of this tool taking place.

Mohamed, et. al. (2022) conducted a study on the strategic framework of e-commerce business in the post-pandemic era. Their focus through commercial activity centers were to understand the current model of strategic planning for e-commerce based on case study application and brick and mortar data sets. The findings of this study were an eight-part framework that has merit in the context of how e-commerce companies today focus on the exact way to engage with customers through a functional website and design. Further research will benefit with the firsthand accounts of respondents who have been the e-commerce industry over the past two decades and have seen a shift in their strategic planning methods post pandemic. Following some of the inspiration from Mohamed, et al (2022), the additional focus of this study is to gain firsthand accounts & thematic analysis of executives in the industry, to promote a recommended framework of the intersection of human innovation and artificial intelligence reliance.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology will consist of open-ended structured interviews of 10-12 respondents who have worked in the e-commerce industry as a leader for over the past ten years. The sample size of respondents will be a mix of smaller e-commerce businesses under \$10M to larger corporations of over \$500M in annual revenue. The goal of the mixed company sizes in revenue is to distinguish the ways in which human innovation at the intersection of artificial intelligence is conducted in strategic planning. Commonalities, differences, and potential nuances will be uncovered through thematic analysis on the responses and insights from the interviews. Byrn (2021) stated that “TA (thematic analysis) is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning across a data set, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences.” The purpose of this analysis is to uncover those identified responses with correlations and differences, then to finalize with a blueprint of recommendation on a modern framework of e-commerce industry leaders to use as they incorporate their human innovation of AI rule settings into the entire e-commerce customer experience.

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# Summary Brief

## Theoretical Framework on Displaying Box-Open Products in a Brick-&-Mortar Store

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*The business implication of retail return is immense. The growing volume and dollar value has made developing insights on retailing these products as box-open products critical. The paper considers the display proximity of box-open items to new products and proposes relationships with risk perception, price fairness, and purchase intention of box-open products. We also hypothesize the moderating role of box-open product warranty and carbon footprint information on relationships related to risk perception and price fairness of box-open products. -*

### Introduction

Retail returns are a significant cost center for manufacturers and retailers in the USA. The retail return reached an average of 16.6% in 2021. It was around 10% in 2020. The monetary value of these returns is expected to grow from \$ 597 billion in 2021 to \$ 627 billion. Another estimate suggests that the return rate is much higher for online retail at 30% in contrast to brick-and-mortar shops that have a return rate of 8.89%. Studies have indicated that the frequent reason for a customer to return a product is damaged items, wrong items and items, not the same as described, and didn't like the product. An observation made by a recent study is that consumers would prefer online retail stores when a return is possible at the local brick-and-mortar store. Brick-and-mortar retailers prominently attempt to sell these returned products in good condition as box-open or open-package products.

This paper presents a theoretical framework to study the impact of a few critical factors of box-open product retailing on customers' purchase intention for a box-open product.

### **Proximity and purchase intention:**

A box open item is often kept at a designated area in a retail store (Ross et al., 2023). It helps retailers avoid cannibalizing new product sales with a lower-cost alternative open-box item (Zhang et al., 2021). However, RSC literature suggests that displaying new and remanufactured products does not cannibalize new product sales as the customer segment for these products differs (Guide Jr. & Li, 2010). Remanufactured products are recovered at the end of service life (Thierry et al., 1995). Retailers sell these products in the original packing, i.e., box-open condition. Similarly, one can expect a box-open product kept next to a brand-new product shows similar consumer behavior. Hence, we propose:

**H1:** Proximity of box-open products to new products does not affect customers' box-open product purchase intention.

### **Proximity and Risk Perception**

Many box-open products displayed next to brand-new products would signal consumers about intrinsic inferior quality and performance concerns, with box-open products shelved next to new products (Liu et al., 2016). However, displaying box-open products in a designated area, such as the As-Is area in IKEA, would obstruct the visibility of new and box-open products to consumers in eye shots, resulting in reduced risk perception.

**H2:** Box-open product shelved next to the new product would increase risk perception about the box-open product.

Further, consumers tend to have lower purchase intention for a product that they perceive as having a higher risk.

**H4:** Higher perceived risk of box-open products would result in lower customer purchase intention.

### **Proximity and Price Fairness**

Box-open products shelved next to new products would make price comparisons between these convenient for customers. A low-priced box-open product would signal inferior quality intrinsically (Atasu et al., 2008). The condition of the packaging would act as an intrinsic cue of the fair value of a box-open product. However, displaying an open box item in a designated area would avoid such a price comparison. It is to note here that all the products in the designated area being box-open would reduce the perceived price of those products even to a lower level. These arguments lead to the following:

**H3:** Box-open products shelved in a designated area with other box-open products (next to new products) would reduce (increase) the perceived fair price of box-open products.

Further, Customers tend to have higher purchase intention for a product that they perceive to be reasonably priced. Hence,

**H5:** Higher perceived price fairness of box-open products would result in higher purchase intention of customers for box-open products.

### Warranty

Manufacturer offer warranties to assist customers with any malfunction in the performance of the products(Mitra, 2016). Warranty coverage of a box-open product is usually less than that of a new product, if not without a warranty(Ji et al., 2021). A box-open item with warranty coverage indicates that the product is functionally similar to a new product, and the manufacturer is confident in the product's performance. The less-than-new product warranty coverage can be attributed to the previous customer who operated/used the product and is compensated by the lower pricing of box-open products. Hence,

**H6:** A warranty coverage for box-open products reduces the risk perceived by the customer for the box-open item.

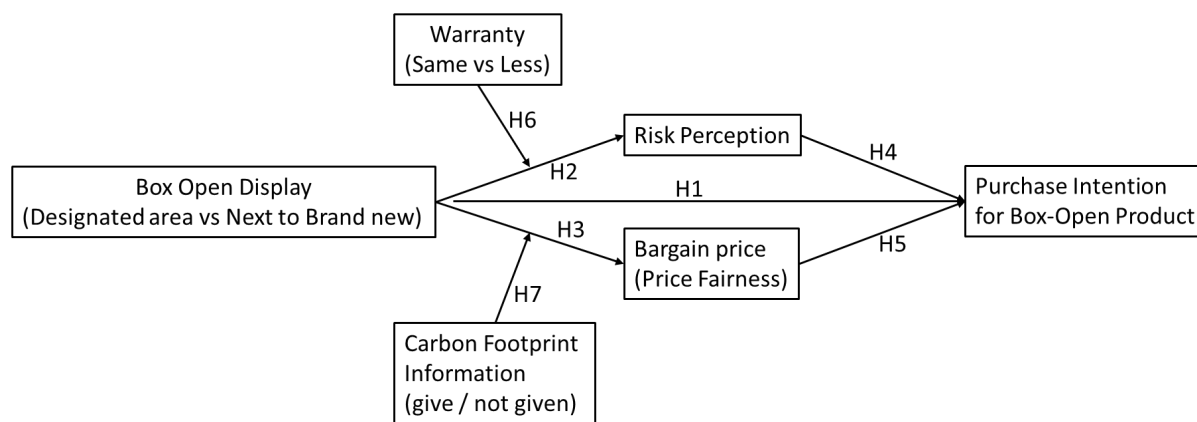
### Carbon footprint Information

Carbon footprint information provided with a box-open item indicates the quantity of carbon footprint a customer can save by purchasing a box-open item. Environmentally conscious customers would find such information valuable addition to the products (Atasu et al., 2008). These customers would not substantially discount the value of box-open products because of packaging conditions and perceive box-open items' prices as fair due to environmental conscience, irrespective of where these products are shelved in the store. Therefore:

**H7:** Giving carbon footprinting information with box-open products would moderate the reduction in the fair price of box-open products.

The hypothesis is summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Hypothesis summary



### Discussion

This research presents a theoretical framework related to retailing of box-open items in a brick-and-mortar retail store. The empirical testing of the proposed relationships would help retail store managers position box-open items in retail stores.

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## Summary Brief

# How do Product Recalls Affect Rival Brands? Interorganizational Spillover Effect of Product Recall on Shareholder Value. Evidence from Food Retailers

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*The study investigates the spillover effect of the product recall at one U.S. food retailer on the shareholder value of other U.S. rival food retailers. Using the AMC framework, the research examines how rival firms' following motivational factors: awareness of the crisis (media coverage), a rival firm's capability to respond (organizational slack), and motivation to respond (hazard severity) influence the direction and magnitude of the rival firm's shareholder value after a product recall. The results of event study show a negative and significant effect of a product recall on rival food retailers. The results of cross-sectional regression demonstrate that product recall's high media coverage can mitigate the negative effect of a product recall for rival food retailers. Furthermore, rivals with high resource slack have more opportunities to absorb the negative consequences of a product recall. Finally, recalls with high hazards result in greater investors' disapproval.*

### Introduction

A product-harm crisis occurs “when a product is found to be defective or even dangerous to at least part of the product's customer base” (Cleeren et al., 2017). It usually involves a large group of customers being affected by a well-publicized situation (Dawar and Pillutla 2000). According to statistics from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, product crises result in more than \$1 trillion in property damage, injuries, and deaths each year ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)). In some cases, product recalls are required when a company's product is unsafe for consumers or does not meet industry standards. Between 2017 and 2021, the FDA announced almost 800 recalls, 500 of which were related to food ([www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)). Firms in various industries, such as food, toys, electronics, furniture, and vehicles, have experienced multiple product recalls (Borah and Tellis, 2016).

### Background

Much evidence of spillover effects from product harm crises is contradictory. The limited empirical research that exists offers mixed findings. For instance, using data on automobile recalls, Jarrell and Peltzman (1985) have suggested that product recall at a focal firm has a negative spillover effect on rival firms. However, Barber and Darrrough (1996) argue that product recall announcement that affect focal firm does not significantly influence the shareholder value of rival firms. Recently, Liu and Varki (2021) have shown that the negative spillover effect is weaker for rivals with higher corporate product reliability. Therefore, the spillover effect of focal firms on rivals is more complicated than expected and additional research is needed to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Using the event study methodology, the present study extends the knowledge in this area by analyzing the stock market reaction to the rivals after the product recall and investigating boundary conditions under which a spillover effect is likely to occur. Drawing from the accessibility-diagnostics theory, the present study argues that a product recall announcement at one U.S. food retailer is likely to affect the shareholder wealth of other U.S. food retailers, resulting in an interindustry spillover effect. Based on expectancy violations theory, the study proposes that high media coverage of the product-harm crisis prior to its official announcement, will mitigate this effect. In addition, using the resource-based view (RBV), we suggest that firm slack resources will be positively associated with abnormal returns of rival food retailers.

### Key findings

Table 1 presents the results of abnormal returns for different event days and windows. The results show a negative and significant effect of a product recall on rival food retailers. Table 2 presents the results of cross-sectional regression covering the two days including the announcement date as the dependent variable (0, +1). The results demonstrate that product recall high media coverage can mitigate the negative effect of product recall for rival food retailers. Furthermore, rivals with high resource slack have more opportunities to absorb the negative consequences of a product recall. Finally, recalls with high hazards result in greater investors' disapproval.

**Table 1. Abnormal returns from product recall announcement**

Windows	CAR	t-statistic	Patel z
(-2,0)	0.24%	1.17	2.42*

(-1,0)	-0.16%	-1.13	-0.78
(0,0)	-0.18%	-1.92	-1.91
(0,1)	-0.52%	-3.25**	-4.37**
(0,2)	-0.37%	-1.82	-1.73
(1,2)	-0.20%	-1.16	-0.89
(2,2)	0.15%	1.52	3.24**

\*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

**Table 2. Effects of product recall on rivals' shareholder value**

Variable	Model 1 (Main Effects)		Model 2 (Interaction Effects)	
	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.
Constant	-0.114	0.109	-0.117	0.108
<b>Main Effects</b>				
Media Coverage (H2)	0.000	0.003	0.013*	0.005
Slack (H3)	0.258**	0.096	0.250**	0.095
Hazard Severity	-0.003	0.002	0.000	0.003
<b>Interaction Effects</b>				
Hazard Severity x Media Coverage (H4)			-0.023**	0.006
<b>Controls</b>				
Firm Size	0.010	0.010	0.011	0.010
Leverage	-0.016	0.015	-0.017	0.015
Year Dummies <sup>±</sup>	-	-	-	-
	R <sup>2</sup> =0.052		R <sup>2</sup> =0.071	

\*\*p<.01 \*p<.05; ± No Year dummies were significant.

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## Summary Brief

# How Do Consumers Prefer to Pay at Retail Businesses? Examining Payment Processes and Preferences

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*Retailers have provided consumers a variety of different options when checking out. We compare consumer intention to recommend, purchase intentions, brand loyalty, perceived fairness, and attitudes across five different payment processes including paying with a cashier, paying with self-checkout, paying with a self-order kiosk, paying with a self-administered terminal alongside a cashier, and paying fully online. No significant differences occurred suggesting the checkout process for retailers does not matter for these desired outcomes. We do find significant differences occurring with perceived efficiency and ease of use, where self-order kiosks were the highest rated and cashiers were the lowest rated. Retailers targeting consumers who care about efficiency and ease of use during the checkout process, should utilize self-order kiosks at their brick-and-mortar locations.*

### Introduction

Technology has been highly influential in the way consumers shop. It has changed the way consumers purchase products, providing them with more options and greater convenience. The EY Future Consumer Index found “80% of U.S. consumers are still changing the way they shop. 80% are currently visiting brick-and-mortar stores less than before the pandemic, and 43% shop more often online for products they would have previously bought in stores (Gramling, Orschell, & Chernoff, 2021).” Online shopping has grown rapidly in recent years, with more and more consumers turning to the internet to make their purchases. This has led to a significant shift in the retail industry, with traditional brick-and-mortar stores having to adapt to the convenience of online shopping. While we know that local businesses have had to implement new strategies to be successful, there is not a lot of research on how the impacts of technology and e-commerce have affected the purchasing processes of small businesses. By purchasing processes, we refer to the process of payment from consumers to businesses. Traditionally an employee would facilitate this process (a cashier for example), but technology has revolutionized this field through e-commerce and online shopping, as well as payment through payment terminals and other digitized forms of payment such as self-checkout. The retail sector is a vital part of the economy and understanding how technology is affecting consumers purchasing preferences in this sector can assist businesses in adapting to the changing market. With so many ways to purchase goods, it begs the question: what way do people prefer to pay in retail specific stores? This research paper will investigate consumers preferences as to how they purchase products in the retail sector.

### Background

Online shopping has made it easier for people to compare prices, access a wider range of products, and receive their purchases without having to leave their homes. Fluid consumers are those with access to smart technology which allows them to access additional information, process it, and move quickly as well as more informed through the consumer decision making process (Blair, 2019; Correia, 2016). Self-checkout systems have made in-store shopping more convenient by allowing customers to scan, bag, and pay for their purchases without the assistance of a cashier. Previous research has found several different factors can impact the preferences of consumer check-out methods including information search time and socioeconomic status (Zaware et al., 2020). With the check-out process, we anticipate consumers will be overconfident in their skills. This includes scanning items, entering weights or product codes, bagging items, and other check-out related tasks. We use the Dunning-Kruger effect to support this assumption. The Dunning-Kruger effect is a form of cognitive bias consumers experience and an explanation for consumers overestimating their abilities. This suggests consumers with lower abilities in the check-out process will overestimate their ability to complete these tasks, leading them to believe that check-out options where they have more control (like self-check) out are more optimal (Dunning, 2011).

### Results

A one-way ANOVA was utilized to test differences across all five stimuli. There were no significant differences across all five conditions for intention to recommend ( $F(4, 281) = .69, p = .60$ ), purchase intentions ( $F(4, 281) = 1.28, p = .28$ ), brand loyalty ( $F(4, 281) = .42, p = .79$ ), perceived fairness ( $F(4, 281) = .59, p = .67$ ), and attitudes ( $F(4, 281) = .78, p = .54$ ). We do find a significant omnibus test for perceived efficiency ( $F(4, 281) = 3.79, p = .01$ ). As a result, we conduct a post-hoc Tukey test to determine where the difference is occurring. Paying with a self-order kiosk ( $m = 4.83, SE = .22$ ) had a significantly higher perceived efficiency than using a cashier ( $m = 3.75, SE = .21$ ) ( $p < .01$ ). Additionally, a self-administered terminal alongside a cashier ( $m = 4.64, SE = .20$ ) had a significantly

higher perceived efficiency than using a cashier ( $m = 3.75$ ,  $SE = .21$ ) ( $p = .02$ ). Additionally, we find a significant omnibus test for perceived ease of use ( $F(4, 281) = 3.14$ ,  $p = .02$ ). As a result, we conduct a post-hoc Tukey test to determine where the difference is occurring. Paying with a self-order kiosk ( $m = 4.93$ ,  $SE = .21$ ) had a significantly higher perceived ease of use than using a cashier ( $m = 3.93$ ,  $SE = .21$ ) ( $p = .01$ ). Additionally, a self-administered terminal alongside a cashier ( $m = 4.68$ ,  $SE = .20$ ) had a marginally higher perceived ease of use than using a cashier ( $m = 3.93$ ,  $SE = .21$ ) ( $p = .08$ ). This provides partial support for H6.

### Discussion and Conclusion

With many retailers looking to improve efficiency due to competition in the marketplace (Kiser, Johnson, & Woolridge, 2019), self-checkout kiosks and self-administered terminals alongside a cashier provide consumers a perception of improved efficiency and ease of use compared to other check-out options. Retailers using self-checkout kiosks and self-administered terminals alongside a cashier can provide consumers a perception their organization provides efficiency and ease of use in their checkout process compared to competitors in the marketplace. This can be viewed as a competitive advantage when targeting consumers, like time-poor consumers, valuing these attributes. Retailers using cashiers will have negative perceptions from consumers regarding efficiency and ease of use. Although we did not get significant difference effects across the different checkout scenarios for intention to recommend, purchase intentions, brand loyalty, perceived fairness, and attitudes these do provide helpful insights for retailers. As a result, retailers should choose the checkout option that is the lowest cost to them since it will not negatively impact consumer perceptions across these outcome variables. This ensures retailers can operate more optimally and not fear negative repercussions from their customer base. With larger American corporations having become leaner over the past several decades reducing employment numbers (Blair, 2016; Davis, 2016), this could be a useful strategy to cut our excess costs.

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## **Session 3.3: Confessions of a Shopaholic**

**Chair:** Nicole Boylan

## Summary Brief

# **Effects of Uncertainty Avoidance on Film-motivated Tourists' Perceptions of Destination Image, Place Attachment, and Intentions**

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*This study will look to examine mediation effects of place attachment and moderation effects of film and cultural factors within a destination image-place attachment-intentions model. Self-congruity theory, self-determination theory, and an index of cultural dimensions will be employed within a quantitative, cross-sectional study structure. Study findings may be used to enhance theoretical perception of the aforementioned model and to inform destination marketers' comprehension of tourists' selection processes when selecting a travel destination.*

# Summary Brief

## The Effect of Consumers' Emotions on Their Desire to Return to Pre-pandemic Shopping Routines

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*Macro-level changes in the retail environment can evoke consumer emotions, such that some consumers are hopeful that the retail environment will become stronger than pre-pandemic while others are fearful that the pandemic will have a negative lasting effect on the retail environment. Furthermore, the pandemic has impacted the way consumers shopped, such that consumers' shopping norms have switched from in-store to online shopping at a rapid pace. This research investigates how these emotions (hope and fear) towards the retail environment affect their desire to return to pre-pandemic shopping routine as well as the and the mediating role of internal locus of control and moderating role of subjective norms. The results show that consumers are more likely to shop in-store when they are hopeful (vs. fearful) about the future of the retail environment. Furthermore, the opinions of others matter more for fearful (vs. hopeful) consumers such that high levels of subjective norms significantly exacerbate the negative effect of fear on the likelihood of shopping in-store. Consumer's internal locus of control mediates the relationship between consumer emotions and likelihood to shop in-store when subjective norms are high.*

### Introduction

Macro-level changes in the retail environment (caused by COVID-19 and inflation) have forced retailers to change their channel offerings at an accelerated pace (e.g., close physical stores, enforce in-store shopping mandates, and migrate online) (Bradley et al., 2021); consequently affecting the way consumers shop. The continued unpredictability in the retail environment evokes emotions among consumers that then influence their shopping behavior, such that some consumers are hopeful about returning to their pre-pandemic in-store shopping routines but some who remain fearful about doing so (Meyersohn, 2022).

### Background

This research investigates how consumer emotions (hope and fear) toward the retail environment affect their desire to return to their pre-pandemic shopping routines (i.e., likelihood to shop in-store). We suggest that consumers who are hopeful (vs. fearful) about the future of the retail environment are more likely to shop in-store, and that this relationship is explained by consumers' internal locus of control (i.e., how much perceived control consumers have over their own actions). Macro-level changes in the retail environment have impacted the way consumers shop, such that shopping behavioral norms have switched from in-store to online (Ngoh & Groening, 2022; Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). As such, we anticipate that the effect of consumer's emotions on their likelihood to shop in-store is conditional on consumer's susceptibility to their subjective norms. In sum, this research addresses the following research questions:

1. How do consumers' emotions impact their likelihood to shop in-store?
2. What is the mediating role of internal locus of control on the relationship between consumer emotions and their likelihood to shop in-store?
3. What is the moderating role of consumers' subjective norms on the relationship between consumer emotions and their likelihood to shop in-store?

### Key Findings

#### Study 1

To test **H1**, we applied a series of independent sample t-tests. The t-tests showed a significant difference between consumer emotions (hope vs. fear) and likelihood to shop in-store ( $t(285) = 2.93, p < .01$ ). Participants assigned to the hope condition were more likely to shop in-store ( $M_{hope} = 5.35, SD = 1.43$ ) compared to participants in the fear condition ( $M_{fear} = 4.82, SD = 1.69$ ).

To test **H2**, we conducted a 2 (emotion: hope vs. fear)  $\times$  2 (subjective norms: high vs. low) ANOVA between-subject design on likelihood to shop in-store that revealed significant main effects of emotion ( $F(1, 279) = 7.94, p < .01$ ) and subjective norms ( $F(1, 279) = 10.20, p < .01$ ), and a marginally significant interaction effect between emotion and subjective norms ( $F(1, 279) = 3.29, p < .1$ ). Including the demographic variables (age, gender, household size, in-store and online shopping frequency, income, marital status, and employment status) as covariates did not change the effect. The interaction effect revealed that in the hope condition, participants showed no significant difference in their likelihood to shop in-store across the high and low subjective norms conditions ( $M_{low SN \times hope} = 5.47, SD = 1.26, M_{high SN \times hope}$



= 5.22,  $SD = 1.58$ ). However, in the fear condition, the likelihood to shop in-store when subjective norms are high ( $M_{high\ SN \times fear} = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 1.82$ ) was significantly lesser than in when subjective norms are low ( $M_{low\ SN \times fear} = 5.29$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ).

### Study 2

To test **H3**, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS macro model 8 with bootstrapping ( $n = 10,000$ ) and at a 90% confidence interval. The moderated mediation effect is significant (index =  $-.080$ , 90% confidence interval:  $-.170$ ,  $-.012$ ). The results showed a significant effect of subjective norms on locus of control ( $b = -.405$ ,  $t = -2.121$ ,  $p < .05$ ), significant main effect of locus of control on likelihood to shop in-store ( $b = -.197$ ,  $t = 2.590$ ,  $p < .05$ ), a non-significant main effect of consumer emotion on likelihood to shop in-store ( $b = .235$ ,  $t = 1.355$ ,  $p > .1$ ), and a non-significant interaction effect between emotion and subjective norms ( $b = -.064$ ,  $t = -.246$ ,  $p > .1$ ). Consistent with our prediction, the indirect effect of subjective norms is significant in the high subjective norms condition ( $b = -.047$ ,  $SE = .033$ , 90% confidence interval =  $-.107$ ,  $-.002$ ) but not significant in the low subjective norms condition ( $b = .033$ ,  $SE = .031$ , 90% confidence interval =  $-.009$ ,  $.089$ ) conditions. Including the demographic variables (age, gender, household size, in-store and online shopping frequency, income, marital status, and employment status) as covariates did not change the effect.

### Conclusion

Macro-level changes in the retail environment evoke different consumer emotions that can be negative (e.g., fear, anger, anxiety) or positive (e.g., hope). Subsequently, these emotions impact consumers' channel shopping behavior. Research in marketing has typically studied hope at the product-level and showed that consumer hope in a product has a positive impact on their purchasing intentions even though there is uncertainty about the product (Lin et al., 2020; MacInnis & Mello, 2005). This research contributes to hope research by examining hope at the retailer-level, showing that uncertainty in the environment that the retailer belongs in (i.e., retail environment) can evoke hope and influence consumer behavior. Specifically, we show that consumers' hope regarding the future of the retail environment can motivate their channel shopping behavior to return to their pre-pandemic shopping routines.

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# Summary Brief

## Fast Fashion Brands: Predicting Purchase Intentions

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*This study investigated the role of Corporate Social Responsibility, Consumer Brand Engagement, and Consumer Happiness in predicting Purchase Intention for fast fashion consumers. Using Bayesian structural equation modeling with latent variables, the moderating effects of Consumer Happiness on Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Brand Engagement on Purchase Intention were tested. The results indicated that both Hedonic and Eudaimonic Consumer Happiness moderated the effects of Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Brand Engagement in predicting Purchase Intention. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between these important constructs in understanding consumer behavior.*

### Introduction

The fast fashion industry provides consumers with the style, price, and speed to express their sense of identity. Competition within this segment has only increased with the arrival of ultra-fast-fashion brands. In this competitive environment, predicting purchase intentions is important, as it helps companies forecast future sales and may serve as a method for gauging the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. Understanding the determinants of purchase intention could be instrumental in remaining competitive in this segment. Researchers have individually studied Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE) (e.g., Fernandes and Moreira, 2019), and Consumer Happiness (CH) (e.g., Tosun and Tavşan, 2023), and Purchase Intention (PI). However, investigating their combined influences on PI may be insightful. Using Bayesian structural equation modeling, this study explores the moderating role of CH on the effects of CSR and CBE on PI.

### Background

CSR, CBE, CH, and PI are important constructs in understanding consumer behavior. CSR, a multidimensional construct dating back to Roman Law, involves economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic factors and has evolved to be integral to corporate missions (Chaffee, 2017; Latapí et al., 2019). CBE is conceptualized as comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors and has been linked to brand success and loyalty (e.g., Hollebeek et al, 2017; Fernandes and Moreira, 2019). CH encompasses both hedonic (CHH) and eudaimonic (CHE) factors and relates to the pursuit of subjective pleasure and meaningful goals (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Tosun and Tavşan, 2023). PI, defined as an individual's plan to buy a brand (Spears and Singh, 2004), has been shown to be positively influenced by customer engagement and loyalty (Kim, Shin, and Kim, 2021).

PI, a predictor of consumer behavior, is influenced by various antecedents, such as CSR, CBE, and CH. CSR's impact on PI highlights its role in influencing competitive advantage (Mohr and Webb, 2005), whereas CBE links to stronger purchase intentions and brand loyalty (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Studies have also demonstrated that happy customers, displaying positive brand attitudes and engagement, lead to greater purchase intentions (Yang and Mattila, 2016). These relationships collectively underline the multifaceted nature of understanding and predicting consumer purchase intentions. Given that purchase intention has been independently studied with these other constructs, it is logical to explore a model testing relationships among CSR, CBE, CH, and purchase intentions, understanding how they interrelate in a complex consumer landscape.

### Key Findings

Table 1 presents the results. Both hedonic and eudaimonic CH factors had reliable effects on PI. Specifically, higher hedonic CH levels corresponded to negative effects of affective BE and to positive effects of behavioral BE on PI. Conversely, higher eudaimonic CH levels corresponded to positive effects of affective BE and to negative effects of behavioral BE on PI.

**Table 1: Significant Interactions on Purchase Intention**

	Estimate	Posterior S.D.	One-Tailed P-value
Hedonic CH X Brand Engagement			
<i>Cognitive</i>	6.379	4.843	0.079
<i>Affective</i>	-9.964	3.810	0.000*
<i>Behavioral</i>	20.741	9.266	0.000*
Eudaimonic CH X Brand Engagement			
<i>Cognitive</i>	-1.344	2.736	0.324
<i>Affective</i>	4.134	1.551	0.000*
<i>Behavioral</i>	-6.533	3.873	0.024*

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## Summary Brief

# The Voice of Reason: The Effect of Visual vs Voice Anthropomorphism on Customer Satisfaction with Retail Technology

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*Using the computers as social actors paradigm and anthropomorphism literature, we use an experimental design to explore differences in consumer perceptions of competence and satisfaction with retail technologies between two types of anthropomorphism.*

### Introduction

Two types of anthropomorphism have been explicitly identified in the literature, visual and cognitive anthropomorphism (Barney et al., 2022; Kim & McGill, 2011). Visual anthropomorphism refers to the surface resemblances between non-human entities and humans, while cognitive anthropomorphism involves attributing humanlike thinking abilities to non-human entities. An additional type of anthropomorphism that may straddle the line between these two definitions is verbal anthropomorphism. Verbal anthropomorphism, manipulating audio content to sound more humanlike, is increasingly common as online tools become better at sounding human (ex. Alexa, Siri).

In this research, we seek to examine the differences in consumer responses to visual vs. verbal anthropomorphism. Specifically, we examine how the type of anthropomorphism in retail technology impacts perceptions of competence and, subsequently, satisfaction with retail technology. We discuss the impact this may have on theory and managers.

### Background

#### *Verbal Anthropomorphism and Competence*

The computers as social actors paradigm proposes that individuals anthropomorphize computers to better understand and interact with them in a humanlike way that is most easy and natural for people to understand (Nass et al., 1997). This paradigm helps explain how consumers can have more complex relationships with technological resources such as retail shopping applications (Barney et al., 2022) and self-checkouts (Fan et al., 2016) and can develop feelings of trust toward these non-human entities (Golossenko et al., 2020). Competence, in terms of brand personality perceptions, means a consumer views an entity as being responsible, dependable, and capable of performing its designated function well (Aaker, 1997). To attribute responsibility and capability to a non-human entity, a consumer needs to believe the entity possesses some degree of agency, which requires a degree of anthropomorphism.

In accordance with anthropomorphism literature, while visual anthropomorphism involves a more surface-level recognition of similarities that allows a consumer to understand better the schema that it may interact with the technology with, cognitive anthropomorphism involves a deeper attribution of humanlike mental states and abilities (Kim & McGill, 2011) that may trigger more automatic social behaviors such as treating a nonhuman entity with empathy and concern (Waytz et al., 2010). Therefore, different mental processes may be associated with each type of anthropomorphism. Verbal anthropomorphism involves a surface-level resemblance to a human voice and the communication of information consistent with cognitive abilities. Since verbal anthropomorphism contains elements of cognitive anthropomorphism (ex., use of coherent sentences in speech), it should be associated with more incredible humanness than visually anthropomorphized technologies and have greater expectations placed upon it. Therefore, we propose that retail technologies with verbal anthropomorphism will be associated with higher perceived competence levels than those with visual anthropomorphism.

*H1: Consumers will perceive retail technologies with verbal anthropomorphism as more competent than those with visual anthropomorphism.*

#### *Competence and Satisfaction*

In accordance with the computers as social actors paradigm, when consumers anthropomorphize technologies, they treat them in a way that they would an employee or other social actor (Nass et al., 1997). Consumers tend to feel that they have received a better service experience when their service provider is competent at their job, whether it is a

service the consumer has a high degree of involvement with (ex., a haircut) or a low degree of involvement with (ex. an oil change). Consequently, perceptions of employee competence and satisfaction with a service experience have a strong relationship with one another (Westbrook, 1980). We propose that consumers who encounter a retail technology will also have a higher degree of satisfaction when they perceive it to be competent. Therefore,

*H2: Competence perceptions will have a positive relationship with satisfaction with the retail technology.*

Furthermore, we propose that consumers who are presented with a verbal anthropomorphized retail technology will have a greater degree of satisfaction than those presented with a visually anthropomorphized retail technology through the mediating relationship with perceptions of competence of the retail technology.

*H3: Competence perceptions will mediate the relationship between anthropomorphism type and satisfaction with retail technology.*

### Key Findings

One hundred thirty-one subjects participated in the study (58.2%,  $M_{age} = 38.57$ ). Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios designed to manipulate two types of anthropomorphism (Visual vs. Verbal). A one-way ANOVA revealed that the participants in the verbal anthropomorphism condition perceived the App as significantly more competent ( $M_{verbal} = 4.84$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) than the individuals in the visual anthropomorphism condition ( $M_{visual} = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ;  $F(1,131) = 8.90$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .064$ ), providing support for H1. A second one-way ANOVA provided support for H2 since it was found that the participants in the verbal anthropomorphism condition were significantly more satisfied with the App ( $M_{verbal} = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) than the individuals in the visual anthropomorphism condition ( $M_{visual} = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ;  $F(1,132) = 9.62$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .068$ ). Finally, using Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstraps, it was found that a significant positive indirect effect of perceived competence of the retail technology on the relationship between the type of anthropomorphism and customers' satisfaction ( $b = .42$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI [.1392, .7343]). The test results support H4 and show that the perceived competence of the retail technology fully mediates the effect of anthropomorphism on customer satisfaction.

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## **Session 3.4: Sales & The Frontline**

**Chair:** Benjamin Garner

## Summary Brief

# Halos and Horns: The Positive and Negative Effects of Stereotyping Frontline Employees with Intellectual Disabilities

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*As disability awareness and the employment of people with disabilities becomes more commonplace in service-providing settings, research should seek to understand situations that will impact frontline employees with disabilities. While prior work has focused more on people with physical disabilities in service settings, we argue that the findings from previous research on consumer perceptions regarding people with physical disabilities may be generalized to individuals with intellectual disabilities. As such, this paper explores the phenomenon of stereotyping frontline employees with intellectual disabilities and its implications for service firms. In the case of individuals with intellectual disabilities, we propose that stereotypes of warmth and competence can lead to both positive (i.e., halo) and negative (i.e., horn) effects for service firms. By understanding and addressing the impact of stereotypes on frontline employees with intellectual disabilities, service firms can create inclusive environments that benefit both the employees and the firm's overall success.*

## Introduction

Every year in the United States, the chance of interacting with a frontline employee with a disability increases. Over 1 in 4 people in the U.S. currently have a disability, and more businesses are seeking to improve their accessibility and image towards people with disabilities (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). Most people with disabilities who work are employed in the services industry (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Additionally, the National Core Indicators (2021) reports that 26.8% of employed individuals with an intellectual disability specifically work in service settings. As such, a more nuanced understanding of consumer perceptions of people with disabilities in a service setting has significant marketing implications, enabling businesses to meet the needs and preferences of a diverse customer base while promoting inclusion and equality for the growing services workforce of people with disabilities.

This study focuses on frontline employees with intellectual disabilities (i.e., a disorder that affects areas such as thinking, understanding, social skills, and practical abilities; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) as opposed to previous work that focuses on frontline employees with physical disabilities (Kalargyrou et al., 2020; Madera et al., 2020). In the context of the service industry, it is important to recognize that stereotypes of people with intellectual disabilities may operate differently than stereotypes of people with physical disabilities. Findings from previous research on consumer perceptions regarding people with physical disabilities cannot be automatically applied to individuals with intellectual disabilities. While both groups may encounter challenges related to disabilities, the factors influencing societal perceptions and attitudes can vary significantly (e.g., Bell & Kleine, 2001; McMahan et al., 2008; Russinova et al., 2011). Specifically, generalizing findings from studies on consumer perceptions of physical disabilities to intellectual disabilities fails to account for the unique cognitive, social, and communicative barriers experienced by individuals with intellectual disabilities. These differences in disability types could contribute to distinct stereotypes that are specific to individuals with intellectual disabilities in the service industry. Therefore, it is essential to conduct focused research to better understand the dynamics of stereotypes faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities in the service industry and its implications for their experiences and interactions with customers. As such, **this study seeks to extend the services literature by examining the effects of positive (i.e., halo) and negative (i.e., horn) disability-related inferences, specifically for people with intellectual disabilities.**

## Background

A stereotype is a widely held, oversimplified, and generalized belief or idea about a particular group of people that is automatically activated (Bargh et al., 1996) and often leads to stigmatization, or the act of assigning negative labels, stereotypes, or beliefs to individuals or groups based on specific characteristics, traits, or conditions (Andersen, 2022; Pettigrew & Meerteens, 1995). Accordingly, people with disabilities are members of a stigmatized group in the United States. While many steps have been taken to ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, stigmatization of people with disabilities can manifest in various

ways (Akrami et al., 2006). For example, people with intellectual disabilities are often stereotyped as warmer but less competent than individuals without disabilities (Cuddy et al., 2008). Prior research documents that the stigmatizations towards people with intellectual disabilities manifest in discriminatory acts, such as more negative characterizations (Russinova et al., 2011) and performance evaluations (Bell & Kline, 2001) as compared with people with various physical disabilities. As a result, more employees with an intellectual disability file more discrimination allegations against employers than employees with physical disabilities (McMahon et al., 2008).

Overall, the current literature supports the industry trend as studies seek to understand how consumers feel and interact with frontline employees with a disability in service settings. However, these studies only focus on frontline employees with physical disabilities (Kalargyrou et al., 2020; Madera et al., 2020) and the outcomes of consumers' inferences regarding frontline employees with disabilities. Most current studies find no significant differences in levels of perceived competence for people with a physical disability, except for a frontline employee with a visual disability (Kalargyrou et al., 2020). However, most studies treat the roles of stereotyping and service outcomes as individual outcomes, finding no links between each (Kalargyrou et al., 2018; 2020). Madera et al., 2020 established competence as a mediator between a physical disability and levels of service quality, but no studies observe the attitudes that individuals form from perceptions of competence and warmth.

While much current research focuses on negative customer stereotyping of people with disabilities, more should be placed on its possibility for good (Kalargyrou et al., 2018; 2020; Madera et al., 2020). As such, we propose that the stereotypes towards people with disabilities can manifest in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand, consumers may perceive higher warmth in employees with intellectual disabilities, such as their kind-hearted nature, compassion, or inherent goodness. This inference extends to positive perceptions of the service firm, as consumers also associate the firm with caring, inclusivity, and social responsibility. On the other hand, consumers may also perceive employees with intellectual disabilities as lacking competence due to internal factors such as their intellectual ability. This inference can lead to negative judgments, skepticism, or doubts about the firm's service quality or suitability for their needs. Thus, the heightened warmth perceptions towards people with intellectual disabilities may lead to halo effects for the service firm, while lessened competence perceptions may result in horn effects.

### **Proposed Methodology**

The goal of this research is to examine the effects of positive (i.e., halo) and negative (i.e., horn) disability-related inferences, specifically for people with intellectual disabilities in a service setting, using two studies. Study 1 will be an exploratory survey to examine individual's perceptions of people with various disabilities. We will measure inferences and stereotypes (e.g., warmth and competence) toward people with disabilities, then we will assess various service perceptions towards firms who hire people with disabilities. Study 2 will utilize an experiment to investigate the influence of disability type, specifically distinguishing between frontline employees with no disability and frontline employees with intellectual disabilities, on perceptions and service outcomes towards firms that hire people with disabilities.

For both studies, we will recruit a diverse sample of participants through an online platform. Results will be analyzed using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Overall, the findings from this study have the potential to bring valuable insights into how disability type influences perceptions and service outcomes. These insights can be instrumental in guiding service providers and policymakers towards fostering greater inclusivity and enhancing service experiences.

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# Summary Brief

## Fundraising Cold Calls: Experiential Learning Techniques for Developing Students' Sales Skills

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### Abstract

*Sales and communication skills are a critical component of today's marketing curriculum, and this project will explore a service-learning pedagogy project that utilized a real-to-life fundraising cold-calling project in an advanced selling course as a way to help students develop their cold calling sales skills.*

### Introduction

Sales skills are in demand in today's marketplace, and employers are looking for new hires who demonstrate communication skills needed for the sales environment. These include talking face-to-face, over the phone, via email, and through multiple communication channels. Students today have what seems to be an aversion to actually talking on the phone, and instead prefer buffered communication such as texting or social media. However, companies need employees who can connect with people in a variety of channels, including over the phone. This research project is a pedagogical research project that implemented an experienced-based learning opportunity for students to develop cold calling phone skills through live, real-world interactions. Service-learning and experienced-based learning have both been highlighted as important, high-impact practices for education (AACU, 2013). Additionally, marketing scholars have recognized the importance of experiential learning and have implemented service-learning in their marketing courses (Cadwaller, Atwong, and Lebard, 2013; Metcalf, 2010; Weise and Sherman, 2011).

### Selling, Communication, and Experiential Learning Techniques

Developing sales skills in students is critically important (Alvarez, Taylor, & Rauseo, & Rauseo 2015). However, providing students real-world sales skills training is time-intensive and poses multiple challenges for instructors. Some common ways instructors have tried to teach these skills include in-class presentations and pitches, sales competitions, role plays, internships, and service-learning projects. For example, instructors often use controllable situations that are more feasible for simulating learning, such as role plays (Alvarez, Taylor, & Rauseo, 2015). However, simulations and role plays can sometimes lack verisimilitude for real-life sales situations (Rippe, 2015). Real-life practice can be difficult to provide for students, especially for 20-30 upper-level students in a given marketing class. This research focuses on service learning as a way to develop sales skills.

Service learning is known to be challenging for instructors and students. Instructor challenges include the logistics of connecting students with real situations that have consequences and opportunities, identifying willing community partners for students to work with, develop service-learning contracts and expectations, creating and maintaining equal workload among students, assigning the appropriate amount of course time and hybrid release time, and convincing students to take the project seriously. Students must be willing to complete service-learning projects and work hard, and the employer needs to benefit from the exchange in one or more ways.

Many students sign up for upper-level classes without a clear career path in mind, and thus some students may take an upper-level sales course merely for the credit hours. Others take the course because they believe a sales track is a good career fit. Differences in student motivation and career focus pose challenges for the classroom environment and the ability to achieve strong sales project outcomes.

### Teaching Innovation

This research highlights one pedagogical experiment that sought to create real-world experiences for students while making the process sustainable for the instructor and a win for the university. Students signed up for an "Advanced Selling" course in the Fall of 2022. The instructor put together a curriculum of readings, articles, podcasts, and practice sessions to develop students' awareness of sales best practices. Towards the end of the semester, the instructor collaborated with the Alumni Donation office on the University campus to arrange access to an alumni database. The instructor arranged for students to have access to alumni contact information during class time, and students used their phones to call alumni (prospects) to request donations for a student scholarship fund. For three

weeks' worth of class time, students came to class, spread out into multiple classrooms and laboratory spaces, and worked through these alumni database lists making cold calls. Students engaged in live conversations with real people over the phone, which helped them develop confidence using the phone and selling experience.

## Method & Results

At the end of the project, students were surveyed about their experiences. Responses included 17/21 upper-level marketing students (M=7, F=10; M<sub>age</sub>=22.12 years). This sample included 14 seniors, 2 juniors, and 1 sophomore. Students were surveyed about their experiences at the end of the semester.

Students were asked to rate their perceptions of the helpfulness of three portions of the course curriculum, including two guest speakers, articles (course readings), and the alumni fundraising project. Results showed that students rated all three portions of the curriculum highly, but rated the alumni fundraising project the highest (See Table 1 below). Ratings were on a scale from 1-5, where 1=Extremely Unhelpful and 5 = Extremely Helpful.

**Table 1: Student Ratings of Curriculum Content**

<b>Guest Speakers</b>	3.94
<b>Articles</b>	3.94
<b>Alumni Fundraising Project</b>	4.24

## Qualitative Data

Students were also asked several open-ended questions regarding their feelings about the alumni fundraising project that emphasized cold calling and real-world communication with potential donors. Student responses showed that many students were nervous at first and had significant discomfort. However, over the course of the three weeks of calling, their emotions changed and became less fearful and more confident. Students reported that their initial emotions were “scared,” “nervous,” “dreading it,” “intimidated” and “overwhelmed.” Students were asked to describe their emotions after the conclusion of the project, and their growth was reflected in increased word usage such as “neutral,” “normalized,” “confident,” and “excited.” In other words, over time, fear and anxiety was replaced with confidence and normalcy, even if they still didn't prefer cold calling.

Students felt like the activity was ideal for gaining sales experience. Student comments showed that this assignment contrasted with a typical lecture style, and they reported that this active learning provided them “real-world” experience. In the end, students raised approximately \$2,500 in scholarships for the college of business. Students were proud of their work and felt accomplished after they earned a donation. Students learned sales skills such as calling and talking, as well as less heralded organizational skills, such as completing paperwork and logging database information and client information – similar to CRM notation.

## Discussion

There are many challenges and benefits of using service-learning and experiential learning. These included multiple meetings between the instructor and the participating organization. This process posed challenges that will be discussed more in-depth in a future manuscript. Additionally, students were initially reluctant to making calls, or at minimum nervous and ambivalent. At the end of the project, many were proud of their work and felt much more comfortable with their cold calling and communication abilities.

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## Summary Brief

# The Effect of Sales Assistant-Customer Interaction on Immersion inside Retail Stores

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*In premium-luxury stores, service delivery represents a key competitive advantage for retailers with sales assistants being critical in determining the customer experience success. While traditional research relies on qualitative methods and self-reported measures, this study takes a neuroscientific approach by measuring neurologic immersion, which captures emotional value of an experience at 1Hz during the value co-creation. The purpose of this study is to examine the degree of sales assistants' immersion in two retail stores during the service experience predicts store visit duration and customer purchases. Results show that the immersion is contagious from customers to sales assistants accurately predict store visit duration, purchases, and purchase amounts. This study also demonstrates that neuro-tools can unveil the dynamic nature of service exchange.*

### Introduction

In highly symbolic consumption contexts such as premium-luxury stores, the role of sales assistants is key to provide service to customers. Sales assistants and customers engage in a dynamic exchange where strong social-relational processes and uniqueness motives drive consumption. While most of this research relies on qualitative methods and self-reported measures, this study takes a neuroscientific approach by measuring the contagion of neurologic immersion in the sales experience between the customer and sales assistant during the value co-creation. Furthermore, as technology swiftly advances, wearable and wireless devices enable neuro-data collection inside real settings, providing external validity results outside of the laboratory.

### Background

In this study, we assess the degree of sales assistants' contagion of immersion with customers in two premium-luxury retail stores during the personal selling process, and how immersion affects customer purchases. We propose that sales assistants' immersion would increase the likelihood that customers will purchase and purchase amounts. We also expect that the sales assistants' immersion will increase customer visit duration leading to greater customers' purchases. We analyzed 49 unique service interactions (30F, 19M) in a study conducted in two retail stores. Neurologic data were collected at 1Hz across the sales interaction using arm worn sensors on the sales assistant and processed using Immersion Neuroscience™, a platform which captures real-time neural signals associated with attention and emotional resonance. All interactions were timed to obtain visit duration data. Mediation analyses and machine learning were performed to predict purchasing behavior.

### Key Findings

Results supported all three hypotheses. Sales assistant higher peak immersion with clients increased sales, versus non-purchase clients ( $t= 1.83(47)$ ,  $p= .01$ ). A mediation model found that peak immersion had both a direct effect on purchases and increased the time spent shopping that increased purchases ( $ps<.05$ ). The effect of peak immersion on time shopping was quantitatively stronger in the women's clothing store compared to the men's store. A machine learning model predicted purchases with 92% accuracy using peak immersion, time shopping, and store loyalty. These results were robust to the inclusion of control variables.

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## **Session 3.5: Panel: Co-Design: Serving Up, Scaling Up, and Cocreating Knowledge on Perusal**

**Chair:** Kelley Cours Anderson

# Special Session

## Co-Design: Serving Up, Scaling Up, and Co-creating Knowledge on Perusall

Kelley Cours Anderson, College of Charleston, USA  
Ashley Hass, University of Portland, USA  
Debra Laverie, Texas Tech University, USA  
Jill Davis, Texas Tech University, USA

*To meet the desired personalized experiences in today's college classroom, we will examine a co-design platform (i.e., Perusall) that can enhance students' ability to cocreate knowledge. As a group, we will contrast co-design platforms to facilitate cocreated knowledge in a flipped classroom (e.g., Perusall, Packback) and actively engage in the Perusall codesign platform. Participants will apply annotations and evaluate diverse functions available on this platform. Related research and best practices will be shared. Don't forget to bring your laptop!*

### Background

Faculty worldwide are continually tasked with new expectations to engage students to become work-ready and resilient. Nevertheless, the task of resiliency is demanding on faculty as well. Between pivoting to new course formats and continual technology transformations (Crittenden 2021; Rohm et al. 2021) to service our student-customers (Clayson and Haley 2005), faculty are pulled thin to create the highly sought-after mass customized and personalized experiences in the classroom. One form of resolve proposed is integrating digital tools, many of which with novel tools proposed to meet faculty's demands. Nevertheless, limited empirical research exists to understand if these tools are beneficial to students. Furthermore, these tools can feel overwhelming for faculty to adopt; thus additional introduction and training can support faculty and student success.

### Learning Objectives

1. Spark discussion and reflection on our own experiences as cocreating community and knowledge in college classrooms.
2. Contrast co-design platforms to facilitate cocreated knowledge in a flipped classroom (e.g., Perusall, Packback, OAKs).
3. Apply annotations and evaluate diverse functions available to integrated Perusall, a social annotation platform.

### Session Flow

The aim is to introduce learners to Perusall, a social annotation platform, as a means to engage students and stimulate knowledge cocreation. Participants will first be prompted in a discussion surrounding cocreation in the classroom. Our theoretical lens of service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Vargo and Lusch 2016) is leveraged to understand how codesign platforms can support some common challenges in the classroom followed by reflection into participants' hoped learnings. This includes the use of platforms such as Perusall, Packback, and FlipGrid.

Next, we will share insights streaming from our empirical study that evaluates a co-designed platforms' potential for student success. This empirical study leverages PLS-SEM to analyze 300 student responses following the implementation of a co-design platform across five diverse marketing classes. Results indicate that the co-design platform enhances students' critical thinking and perceived autonomy, which mediates students' perceived engagement, the value of the activity, and meeting the classes' objectives.

The remainder of the session will be run as an interactive demo, where participants are invited to bring their laptops. We will create a Perusall course as a shell to provide an interactive space for everyone to learn about Perusall. We will have multiple hotspots available for allowing participants to engage live if desired. Best practices for the platform will be shared, including suggestions to mitigate potential pitfalls of these platforms. Participants will leave with a toolbox of resources to help implement this tool in their courses.

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## **Session 4.2: Tipping the Scale on Consumer Loyalty**

**Chair:** Ayse Banu Elmadag

# Summary Brief

## The Effect of QR Code Menus on Consumer Loyalty

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Quick Response (QR) codes are an increasingly popular means of accessing information quickly. One area in which these square-shaped barcodes that can be scanned using a smartphone or tablet have gained significant traction is as a way of accessing menus (Ozturkcan and Kitapci 2023). QR code menus have revolutionized the ways people interact with and explore food and beverage options in restaurants, cafes, and other food service establishments by instantly redirecting consumers to digital versions of menus hosted online.

Traditionally, dining establishments provided patrons with printed menus listing available dishes and beverages. However, printed menus have a myriad of limitations such as high printing expenses, requirements for regular updates, and limited space to provide detailed descriptions or images of available items (Ozturkcan and Kitapci 2023). Moreover, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for touchless menu solutions, many food service establishments reduced their use of printed menus to minimize potential health risks with QR code menus, which offered a streamlined and contactless solution (Iskender et al. 2022; Ozturkcan and Kitapci 2023). As concerns about the pandemic have waned, however, QR code use in food service establishments has seen a dramatic decrease. Operators suggest this is due to consumers' distaste for the menu technology (Nierenberg 2023). Despite such anecdotal evidence suggesting that consumers are averse to QR code menus, there has not yet been empirical evidence regarding this issue. In the current research, we examine how QR code menus impact consumers' loyalty to food service establishments.

Key factors influencing consumer perceptions of inconvenience with technology acceptance include time and effort required (Collier, Moore, and Horky 2015; Melián-González, Gutiérrez-Taño, and Bulchand-Gidumal 2021). For example, characteristics of chatbots which inhibit expression increase consumers' perceptions of inconvenience (Melián-González, Gutiérrez-Taño, and Bulchand-Gidumal 2021). Furthermore, placing a new technology in a location which is inconvenient to consumers negatively impacts consumers' attitudes toward self-service technologies (Collier, Moore, and Horky 2015). Along those lines, scanning a QR code to access a menu necessitates taking out the phone and positioning the phone correctly, which can be seen as time-consuming and requiring more effort than a paper menu. Moreover, QR code menus often present the entire menu on a screen, requiring scrolling, zooming, or swiping, disrupting the familiar and straightforward food service establishment experience. Perceptions of inconvenience can significantly impact consumers' loyalty. Disruptions or inconveniences can weaken the consumer-brand relationship and thus decrease consumer loyalty (Dick and Basu, 1994). When consumers experience inconveniences in their interactions, negative emotions, dissatisfaction, and a decreased willingness to continue their relationship with the brand can result (Melián-González, Gutiérrez-Taño, and Bulchand-Gidumal 2021). The degree of inconvenience can be enhanced among those consumers with a high need for interaction (Suarez, Berezina, Yang, and Gordon, 2019).

Drawing on prior literature regarding technology acceptance, the current work posits that QR code menus can lead to decreases in consumer loyalty compared to providing consumers with a menu. We propose that this effect occurs because consumers find QR code menus to be inconvenient. In addition, we suggest that this effect is subject to a theoretically and managerially relevant boundary condition: need for interaction. We conducted two studies to test our hypotheses. Study 1 examined our effect and the underlying mechanism. In Study 2, we test the moderating role for need for interaction.

For Study 1, we recruited one hundred and eleven participants ( $M_{age} = 39.0$ , Female 45.0%) from Cloud Research Connect. We told the participants that they are meeting a friend for brunch in a casual restaurant named "The Table". Once they went to the restaurant, they get the chance to review either a QR code menu or a non-QR code menu. Those who were in the QR menu condition had to use their phone to scan the QR code to access the menu while those who were in the non-QR menu condition, could see the menu on the screen without scanning the code. To make the scenario realistic, we told the participants to indicate what they would like to order. Next, we administered our focal dependent variable, brand loyalty by using 3 items on a 7-point scale (recommend the "Table" to others, encourage the friends and relatives to dine at "Table", and consider the "Table" as the first choice for food; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996; 1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ). We measured the mediator, transaction inconvenience, by asking participants to think about to what extent they felt inconvenience, hassle, and bothersome when reviewing the menu (Sinha, Chandran, and Srinivasan, 1999; 1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .97$ ). Participants concluded the survey by recording their age and gender.

One way ANOVA on brand loyalty revealed that participants displayed a higher loyalty for non-QR menu condition ( $M_{\text{non-QR}} = 5.07$ ) than the QR menu condition ( $M_{\text{QR}} = 4.59$ ,  $F(1, 109) = 4.24$ ,  $p < .05$ ). To examine the mediating role of transaction inconvenience, we used PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrapped resamples. We used menu type (QR vs. no-QR) as the independent variable, brand loyalty as the dependent variable, and the transaction inconvenience as the mediator. Menu type was significant in predicting transaction inconvenience, such that those who were in the non-QR menu condition felt less inconvenient ( $M_{\text{non-QR}} = 1.67$ ) while those who were in QR menu condition ( $M_{\text{QR}} = 2.53$ ,  $F(1, 109) = 8.99$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .$ ). There was a significant indirect effect of transaction convenience [-.25, -.03] suggesting that transaction inconvenience was responsible for our effect. This study provides evidence that the usage of non-QR menus increases brand loyalty as the customers feel less inconvenient compared to QR code menus.

Two hundred and ninety-seven participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 39.2$ , Female 47.1%) from Cloud Research Connect completed Study 2 for a nominal fee. We used a similar restaurant scenario as in Study 1 with a different brand name and a menu. The study followed the same procedure, where we measured brand loyalty (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ) and transaction inconvenience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ). Additionally, we measured the individual difference in need for interaction (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ), a 3-item 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree/7 = Strongly agree; adapted from Suarez, Berezina, Yang, and Gordon, 2019; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .77$ ). Study concluded by participants recording their demographics.

We conducted menu type (QR vs. non-QR) by need for interaction regression on brand loyalty. Results showed that there were non-significant main effects of menu type ( $\beta = .42$ ,  $t(292) = 1.76$ ,  $p = .08$ ) and the need for interaction ( $\beta = .04$ ,  $t(292) = .80$ ,  $p = .43$ ). A significant interaction between menu type and need for interaction ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $t(196) = -2.22$ ,  $p = .03$ ) was observed. Next, we used the Johnson-Neyman technique to find regions of significance (Spiller et al., 2013). We found when need for interaction was high (above 5.27), participants displayed higher loyalty when the menu type was non-QR code than when the menu type was QR code. Additional analysis showed that the effect was driven by the non-QR menu condition ([95% CI: .00, .31]).

To test the full conceptual model, we conducted PROCESS Model 8 (Hayes, 2018) to examine whether there was moderated mediation. We used menu type as the independent variable, brand loyalty as the dependent variable, transaction inconvenience as the mediator, and need for interaction as the moderator. For menu type, QR code menu was coded as 1 and the non-QR code as -1. We observed significant moderated mediation index (5000 bootstraps,  $B = -.08$ ,  $SE = .03$ , 95% CI [-.14, .04]) supporting our conceptual model. Conditional indirect effects were significant for need for interaction at 4.33 ( $B = -.11$ ,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI [-.19, -.04]) and above. However direct effects were non-significant for need for interaction ( $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .08$ , 95% CI [-.12, .18]).

In sum, while QR code menus offer advantages in terms of contactless interactions and cost savings for food service establishments, consumers may still perceive them as inconvenient when compared to traditional paper menus. Acknowledging these consumer concerns is vital for food service establishments planning to adopt QR code menus successfully. Strategies such as offering both QR code menus and paper menus, ensuring a user-friendly digital menu experience, providing clear instructions for scanning, and minimizing distractions could alleviate perceived inconveniences and enhance consumer loyalty. Further research could delve into exploring the optimal design and implementation of QR code menus to mitigate inconveniences and optimize user experiences in the food service industry.

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## Summary Brief

# Sponsorship Synergy: Unleashing the Brand Power in Concert Sponsorship

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*Studies have yet to be conducted to assess the impact of the 'performing act' (e.g., singer, band, comedian) on the sponsoring brands of those acts. As a result, this study aims to fill the gap in the existing concert promotion literature by determining whether the performing act (singer/band) transfers any of their auras to the sponsoring brands, resulting in a positive brand image among concert attendees.*

### Introduction

Live music concerts have experienced a meteoric increase in popularity and attendance since 2022, after a two-year hiatus due to pandemic-related restrictions. SponsorUnited's (2023) report shows that 60% of artists in the rap, hip-hop, and country music genres have brand endorsements, and sponsors tend to partner with musicians passionate about environmental sustainability. Coca-Cola, Red Bull, Tito's, Monster, and Pepsi are the top five brands involved with music festivals, while artists such as Steve Aoki, Snoop Dogg, T-Pain, and Dolly Parton have up to 15 sponsorship agreements (Yahoo 2023).

However, no other musical artist in the history of 'touring' has had such a massive economic impact as Taylor Swift, who has emerged as a 'titan' in the music industry, with her 2023 'The Eras Tour' projected to generate \$4.6 Billion for local economies through ticket sales, hotel and restaurant bookings, travel arrangements, and other costs incurred by Swifties in order to attend the concert (McIntyre, 2023). The tour's primary sponsor is Capital One, which has profited from Taylor Swift's fame by allowing cardholders to purchase tickets in advance (Willman, 2022).

Few studies investigate the impact of the 'performing act' (e.g., singer, band) on the sponsoring brands. Decrop and Derbaix (2014) investigated the favorable influence of an artist's popularity, career stage, musical style, nationality, and singing language on ticket prices in Belgian concert tours. Hence, this exploratory study aims to fill a gap in the existing concert promotion literature by evaluating whether the performing act (singer/band) transfers any of their auras to the sponsoring brands, resulting in a favorable brand image among concert attendees.

### Method and Findings

The data collection location was a major city in the American Midwest renowned on the 'concert circuit.' 138 completed surveys were analyzed. A mediation analysis was conducted to test the brand favorability relationship with consumers' intent to purchase. The results show that attitude toward the performing act was positively associated with brand favorability ( $b = .6076$ ,  $SE = .0685$ , 95% CI [.4721, 7430]), and brand favorability was positively associated with purchase intent ( $b = .8046$ ,  $SE = .0637$ , 95% CI [.6786, 9306]). Notably, the model revealed a significant indirect effect of performing act attitude on purchase intention via the proposed mechanism of brand favorability ( $c = .4888$ ,  $SE = .0684$ , 95% CI [.3565, 6205]). In addition, the direct relationship between attitude toward the performing act and purchase intent was insignificant ( $c' = .0627$ ,  $SE = .0633$ , 95% CI [-.0626, 1880]).

### Discussion

The findings show the relationship among performing act perception, brand evaluation, and purchase intent, which contributes to the literature on brand sponsorship. We conclude that the primary act of a concert may extend their 'halo' to the sponsoring brand(s) in order to generate positive perceptions among concertgoers.

The literature provides evidence for brand fit/congruence as an essential precursor to the future consumer adoption of sponsoring brands and the impact of 'performing artists' behind ticket sales and attendance. We use the combined framework of the Source Credibility and Halo Effect Theory and offer the view based on our results that the main act of a concert might extend their 'halo' to the sponsoring brand to create favorable perceptions among attendees.

The existing notion that there is a relationship between an artist/celebrity performance and brand purchases was not supported by the current study, which did not find a direct effect of performing act attitude on purchase intentions.

This study aimed to explore the artist-brand relationship in the context of music concert sponsorships. Future research may partner with a sponsoring brand or an artist to increase survey responses and investigate other variables that may influence the relationships. Future research may also include artist-related variables such as fan accessibility

(through social and other media activity), social activism, sexual orientation, a history of transgression, and personality characteristics in order to elucidate the artist-brand relationship.

References are available upon request.

## Summary Brief

# Is It a Tip or a Bribe? The Double-Edged Sword of a Service Failure in a Pre-Service Tipping Environment

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In recent years, many sectors of the service industry have witnessed a significant shift in tipping behavior both from the consumer perspective as well as the service provider. Tips are now solicited from consumers in many more service contexts. In addition, service providers seem to expect tips from consumers in many situations that would not have been considered tipping situations in the past.

One particular tipping phenomenon that has arisen is the solicitation of pre-service tips. In most tipping contexts within the marketplace, a tip was considered to be a reward for exemplary service that has already been provided (Karabas, Orłowski, and Lefebvre 2020). However, the proliferation of online ordering and payments as well as the “contactless” service provision offered during the COVID pandemic has shifted this. Often occurring in online contexts (although not exclusively), consumers are provided the opportunity to tip their service provider before any service is actually provided. For example, the tip for meal delivery is rarely paid after the food has been delivered. Instead, it is paid beforehand, often as a means to motivate delivery drivers to even take the business. A cliché often used by Door Dash drivers is, “No tip, no trip” (Mordowanec 2022).

As one would expect, this new order of steps in the service context (service being rendered after the tip is paid) has the potential to alter consumer perceptions and response in the context of a service failure. In the past, a service failure would lead to a decreased or complete lack of a tip from the consumer. In so doing, the consumer would be able to impose some level of justice to the situation. When the tip is offered before a service failure, though, that opportunity to “balance the scales” is taken away from the consumer (Warren and Hanson 2023). Further, the consumer may attribute the service failure to a lack of or unsatisfactory tip. If the consumer attributes the service failure to some level of justice being divvied out by the service providing employee, how will this affect future exchanges with the organization?

Given these potentially detrimental affects from this new tipping context, the purpose of this paper is to explore consumer perceptions of the effect of pre-service tips in the context of a service failure. Drawing from equity theory and attribution theory, we posit that tipping beforehand first of all presents the concern of procedural justice for the consumer because there is no opportunity to recover the tip if a service failure occurs. Additionally, the risk is introduced that the consumer may perceive a service failure as some form of justice enactment by the service employee as a redress for an inadequate tip.

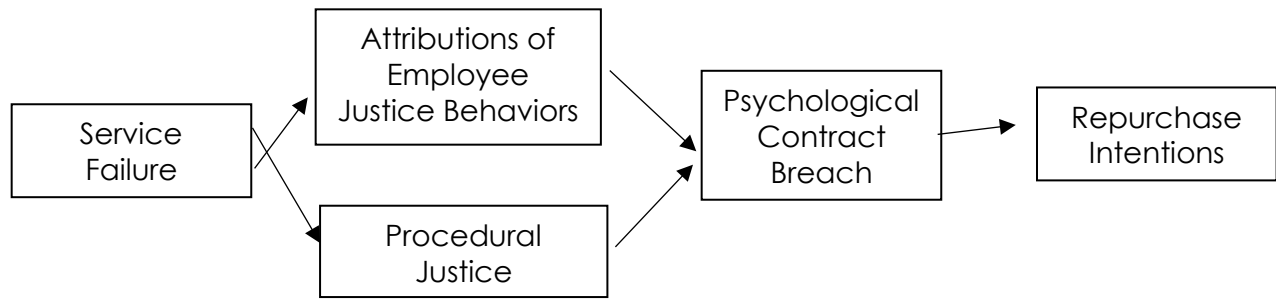
## Background

The current research draws from equity theory and attribution theory. Equity theory asserts that individuals compare the fairness of the rewards they receive in an exchange with the inputs they have committed to that exchange (Livingstone et al. 1995). Three dimensions of fairness have been identified in the extant literature: distributive, procedural, and interactional (Ramaswami and Singh 2003). Procedural fairness presents as the most relevant to the current research context as tipping before service is provided would be a potential violation of the process of fairness.

In addition, we pull from attribution theory. In attribution theory, an individual’s causal inferences are posited to influence their behavioral and attitudinal outcomes (Folkes 1988). For example, a consumer that attributes a late delivery to bad weather as opposed to worker incompetence will have different view of the service as well as a different likelihood of engaging with the service provider again. This theory is particularly salient in a service provision context. In the event of a service failure, the consumer will make judgements as to the cause of the failure. When a tip has (or has not) been provided in advance, the consumer will at least consider the possibility that the tip had some influence over the service-providing employee. This influence could take the form of a lack of motivation or (much worse) the form of a deliberate retribution on the consumer for a perceived slight on the tip.

Figure 1 depicts our theoretical model for this research.





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## Summary Brief

# Consumers' Perceptions of Technology Use in Hotels and its Impact on Brand Value and Brand Image

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*Technology usage has increased in the hospitality and tourism industry. Consumers are having new expectations about what technology they can experience when staying in hotels. The first study will involve a social media content analysis using Google Reviews for hotels with perceived high levels of technology usage. Reviews will be scraped using software and then coded for different. After the social media content analysis of the reviews, an instrument for a cross-sectional study will be created to further investigate the effect that perceived high levels of technology usage in hotels has on brand value and brand image, and how those mediate the effect that perceived high levels of technology usage has on consumers' future behaviors. We will investigate how consumer characteristics moderate the effects of perceived high levels of technology usage and brand value, and how hotel moderate the effects of perceived high technology usage and brand image.*

### Introduction

Technology has rapidly advanced within the last few years, and hospitality and tourism services are adopting technology like artificial intelligence (Yin et al., 2023) and service robots (Tuomi et al., 2021) to draw in customers. As these technologies become more popular and widespread, customers in hospitality start forming expectations and perceptions of how technology is used in service settings (Yognathan et al., 2021). Online reviews are one tool new customers use to get information and reduce risk before using the service (Stamolampros et al., 2019; Sparks & Browning, 2011). Therefore, it is more important than ever to understand the content of online review for these technology-based service in hospitality industry because of the impact that meeting these technological expectations found in online reviews can have on a hospitality and tourism brand.

There are cultural differences between online restaurant reviewers and airline reviewers that have been explored (Jia, 2020; Stamolampros et al., 2019). Reviews of hospitality and tourism services are usually collected on TripAdvisor (Lei et al., 2019; Stamolampros et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2019), but Google Reviews are becoming more studied in recent years (Majó et al., 2021; Endres et al., 2021). There are multiple attributes that go into hotel ratings by customers (Jang et al., 2018) and cultural differences can affect these reviews (Mariani & Predvoditeleva, 2019). Technology related to branding has been studied in hotels with marketing (Lau, 2020), recovery from shock events (Sigala, 2020; Lau, 2020), and destination loyalty (Azis et al., 2020). Value co-creation with customers also impacts branding (Cabiddu et al., 2013; González-Mansilla et al., 2019; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019), and technology can enhance value co-creation (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Bonamigo & Frech, 2020; Solakis et al., 2022; Carvalho & Alves, 2022). Expectation Confirmation Theory is used to explain customer satisfaction based on the confirmation of their expectations about a service (Oliver, 1980), and has been applied in hospitality and tourism research in hotel reviews (Hu et al., 2019; Nam et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2021). This literature has mainly focused on electronic word-of-mouth in TripAdvisor reviews (Nam et al., 2020) and mobile applications (Kim et al., 2019). Consumer characteristics like innovativeness and risk perception can also play a part in technology and value co-creation (Sarmah et al., 2017; Morosan & DeFranco, 2019; Yen et al., 2020), and hotel characteristics have been studied in value co-creation (Hwang & Seo, 2016; Berenguer-Contrí et al., 2020).

There is a lack of literature on how expectations of new technologies have been affected by Google Reviews and how these experiences affect hotels' brand image and brand value. This study aims to discover what expectations customers had regarding technology in perceived high technology hotels they reviewed and how customers' attitudes are affected by brand image and brand value based on expectations.

### Proposed Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to examine how customers get expectations based on other reviews and how meeting or failing to meet customer expectations affects hotel brand image and brand value. The current research questions are:

- RQ1: Do Google Reviews give customers expectations about technological experiences in hotels?
- RQ2: Does meeting reviewers' technological expectations influence hotel brand image and brand value?
- RQ3: If technological expectations influence hotel brand value, do consumer characteristics moderate this effect?
- RQ4: If technological expectations influence hotel brand image, do hotel characteristics moderate this effect?

RQ5: How are attitudes towards future behavior affected by the brand image and brand value from expectations of technology in the hotel?

### **Proposed Methodology**

The proposed method for Study 1 begins with a social media content analysis. Using scraping software, we will download at least 1000 Google Reviews for hotels with high perceived technology usage (such as the Henn Na Hotel brand in Japan). High perceived technology usage hotels will have some form of artificial intelligence, robot “staff,” or self-check-in technology. Each of the reviews will be coded using a text-mining approach based on natural language processing (NLP) to label reviews (Collobert et al., 2011) based on the intent of the trip, number of travelers (for example a solo traveler vs a group traveling), nights of stay of the trip, nationality of reviewer, and the score of the review (what number one through five was left on the review). This aligns with the grouping of text based on context of the reviews found in Aggarwal, 2012 and Guerreiro & Rita, 2020. Any reviews not written in English will be translated by the scraping software but reviewed again to check for consistency. We will look at reviews for multiple hotels to study for differences in hotel characteristics (for example a three-star hotel vs a five-star hotel, proximity, types of rooms, venue spaces). Based on the results of the social media content analysis, a survey will be created for a cross-sectional study. Study 2 involves using a survey to investigate attitudes towards future behaviors based on the effects of technological expectations on brand image and brand value. We will use this survey to investigate if consumer characteristics moderate the effect of technological expectations on brand value, and if hotel characteristics moderate the effect of technological expectations on brand image. Some of the scales that will be used are product experience accuracy (Brannon & Samper, 2018), word-of-mouth intention (Holmqvist et al., 2019), a modified scale of variety-seeking (Del Rio Olivares et al., 2018), and attitude toward the brand (Thompson & Norton, 2011). Depending on other findings in the reviews, more scales will be added or removed. Structural Equation Modeling will be used to analyze the derived model and test casual relationships (Hair et al., 2010).

### **Potential Implications**

Hotel managers and owners looking to invest in current technology will learn about what technological experiences customers are expecting on their hotel visits. This will allow them to adjust to what customers expect and could lead to higher satisfaction. They will also gain insight into what impact their technology has on their brand image and brand value so that they can hone their branding efforts more effectively. Theoretical implications include expanding Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) literature. Much of the ECT research based on hospitality and tourism online reviews uses TripAdvisor, so this expands its research on a different platform. It also expands ECT literature related to brand image and brand value. This research also adds on to ECT in relation to value co-creation literature by studying how ECT impacts brand value, consumer characteristics, and technological expectations related to the hotel experience.

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## **Session 4.3: Brand Risk**

**Chair:** Jennifer Zoghby

# Summary Brief

## Presenting an Ethical Façade: How Illegal Online Pharmacies are Winning the War Against Legitimate Online Pharmacies

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*Although the number of online pharmacies is proliferating, no research evaluates ethical issues associated with online pharmacies. This study compares the ethical standards and practices of illegitimate online pharmacies (IOPs) and legitimate online pharmacies (LOPs). We assessed the content of LOP and IOP websites. IOPs present information to spoof adherence to ethical components of interest to consumers shopping for an online pharmacy, such as privacy, security, and fulfillment/reliability. Also, IOPs provide greater price transparency and use deceptive communications (i.e., misleading information, deceptive promotions, and exaggerated product benefits). LOPs are less likely to disclose information about drugs, instead focusing their websites on the convenience of their services, not the medications available. Finally, unlike LOPs, IOPs typically sell prescription drugs without a valid prescription, do not reveal much company information, offer limited enabling services, and use bogus trust markers to persuade consumers. These findings offer several regulatory, public policy, and managerial implications.*

### Introduction

The market size of global online pharmacies was USD 69.25 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach USD 210.35 billion by 2028, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17.83%. Legitimate online pharmacies (LOPs) are licensed and/or accredited pharmacies that abide by state and federal laws and sell only approved prescription drugs with a valid prescription. However, illegitimate online pharmacies (IOPs) violate state and federal regulations by selling misbranded or unapproved prescription drugs of unknown origin, safety, and effectiveness. They dispense prescription drugs, controlled substances, or other medical treatments without a valid prescription, adequate directions for use, or required side effects and warnings. The number of IOPs is proliferating, and the COVID-19 pandemic has escalated this growth. IOPs vastly outnumber LOPs (approximately 96% of online pharmacies worldwide). Roughly 70% of prescription drugs dispensed to U.S. patients were sold by IOPs with the number of prescriptions dispensed annually through IOPs increasing at a CAGR of 10%.

Lately, IOPs have been a subject of topical interest for various stakeholders, including government, ethicists, public policymakers, and consumer advocates. However, this vastly understudied urgently needs empirical research to evaluate ethical issues associated with IOPs. Although IOPs engage in unethical business practices by violating regulations; what indicators in the design and information on IOPs' websites differentiate their business from that of LOPs. The ability to discern these signals could help consumers avoid ineffectual or dangerous medications and assist regulators and researchers to more quickly identify IOPs. This content analysis compared the ethics of online pharmacy as indicated by characteristics presented on IOP and LOP websites.

### Ethics of Online Pharmacy

We defined the ethics of online pharmacy (EOP) as the moral standards and implementations of policies and procedures to guide an online pharmacy's conduct and transactions. We focus on seven EOP components: privacy, security, deception, fulfillment/reliability, drug-related issues, company exposure, and trust markers. *Privacy* is represented by what information online pharmacies collect from customers and how they collect, use, and disclose/share it. These privacy practices may be objectively signaled in a privacy policy posted on the website. *Security* refers to the security of online transactions and the protection of financial information from unauthorized access (Roman, 2007). Security of websites can be enhanced by Secure Socket Layer (SSL) or Transport Layer Security, which is indicated when a website address includes "https" rather than just "http" in its URL. *Deception* refers to online pharmacies' deceptive or manipulative practices with the intent to persuade consumers to purchase their offerings. Deceptive practices create an impression or belief among consumers that is different from what could be expected by a consumer with reasonable knowledge, and that impression or belief is false or misleading. Some deceptive practices may include exaggerations of product benefits, misleading language and promotional techniques, and nondisclosure of prices. *Fulfillment or reliability* represents the delivery of a range of enabling services (shipping and tracking services; return, refund, and replacement policies; and customer support) that provide core services to meet customers' needs. *Drug-related ethical issues* involve whether online pharmacies sell prescription drugs without a valid prescription and whether they provide necessary drug information (e.g., usage, side effects, dose, and storage). *Company exposure* is related to transparency about the seller or disclosure of an online pharmacy's information (e.g.,

name, phone number, email address, and country of operation and shipping). Finally, online pharmacies also include *trust markers* on their websites to encourage customers feel safer and more confident in their purchase decision.

## Method

This study applies content analysis to provide an objective and quantifiable description of online pharmacy website content. Specifically, our content analysis uses a combination of *a priori* and emergent coding, which permits us to achieve more fine-grained identification of website characteristics and tactics. The *a priori* coding categories were based on previous theoretical work on ethics in online retailing (e.g., Roman, 2007). We engaged in emergent coding during a pretest to identify potential problems, unclear categories, and missed characteristics in our *a priori* categories. We then iteratively met to discuss and refine the instrument, then recoded the pretest sample until no more coding disagreements arose. This emergent coding process refined the coding categories associated with each Ethics of Online Pharmacy component.

We identified websites through three sources: 1) the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP), 2) the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and search engines. The NABP maintains a list of IOP and LOP websites. The FDA identifies and references IOPs in warning letters. Finally, we also searched various search engines (e.g., Google, DuckDuckGo, Bing) using keywords. The final sample included 78 eligible websites, consisting of 39 IOP and 39 LOP websites. Coders completed extensive training in using the 58-item coding scheme to measure EOP components. Subsequently, coders independently reviewed websites and coded the characteristics of the seven EOP components, type of online pharmacy (legitimate vs. illegitimate), URL, and company name.

## Key Findings

Overall, IOPs are more likely to provide privacy policies than LOPs (87.2% vs. 76.9%) and explain how and what consumer information are collected. More LOPs include consumers' information usage (76.9% vs. 64.1%) and disclosure (77% vs. 64.1%) policies than IOPs. Most IOPs (61.5%) and LOPs (71.8%) do not provide security policies. Surprisingly, more IOPs disclose secured payment methods or credit cards they accept than LOPs (59% vs. 20.5%) and accept or encourage payment in Bitcoin or other cryptocurrencies (43% of IOP vs. 0 LOPs). More IOPs (74.4%) provide a return policy than LOPs (17.9%). Most IOP websites exaggerate product benefits and characteristics and use misleading or deceptive language and deceptive promotions. Interestingly, almost all IOPs disclose drug prices, while only 17.9% of the LOPs do. Over half of IOP sites allow customers to track their orders, compared to only one-quarter of the LOPs doing the same. Also, IOPs are more likely to allow customers to return products, obtain a refund, and get a replacement in case of any issues. Over four in 10 IOPs offer a warranty/guarantee versus only 5% of LOPs. About 90% of IOP sites provide shipping methods and times versus 53.9% of LOPs. Average shipping times range from 1.43 to 5.43 for LOPs versus 5.27 to 26.4 days for IOPs. Nine in 10 IOP sites contain an FAQ page versus half of LOP sites. As expected, all IOPs do not require prescriptions from the patients' doctors. Compared to LOPs, IOPs are more likely to provide necessary drug information. Eight in 10 IOPs allow consumers to search for specific medications; however, only one-quarter of LOPs provide such services. Only four in 10 IOP sites disclose their name and email address, but only 28.2% provide a physical address. Most IOPs identify by their subdomain names (e.g., 1meds.com, 003us.com). One-third of IOPs' sites do not reveal the country of operation, and only 15.4% disclose the country of shipping. As expected, most LOP sites provide third-party certifications (69.3%) and accreditations (66.7%), but only a handful of IOP sites show certification seals (5.1%) and accreditation (5.1%) on their websites. Most IOPs and LOPs depict healthcare workers on their homepage. However, patients visiting IOP sites cannot interact with healthcare workers through these sites. Interestingly, LOPs are more likely to show typical patients on the home page than IOPs. On the other hand, IOPs provide "Reviews" on their websites more than LOPs (41% vs. 15.4%).

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# Summary Brief

## Skin in the College Game: NIL, Crime, and Brand Risk

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*Beginning in 2021, intercollegiate student-athletes have been allowed to be compensated for their name, image and likeness (NIL). Allowing NIL compensation abrogated decades of near-universal prohibition on cash compensation for student-athletes by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). We hypothesize that NIL compensation will reduce the arrest rate of student-athletes via the following mechanism: 1) student-athletes now have a measurable market value attached to their public image; 2) entities that provide NIL compensation now have increased risk to their brand image as a result of the association with the student-athletes, and 3) the student-athletes are now able to be advised by outsiders acting as “agents” in relation to their NIL value. We also conclude that governing bodies themselves, including the NCAA, may need to become more involved in the NIL process.*

### Introduction

The United States Supreme Court’s unanimous ruling in (*NCAA v. Alston*, 2021) opened the door for NIL compensation for student-athletes. Prior to the NIL era, beginning in the 2021-22 academic year (in most jurisdictions), student-athletes were mostly limited to in-kind benefits provided by their university. These benefits could include an academic scholarship, housing, food, limited travel benefits mostly related to competitions, and, in limited circumstances, other expenses related to the “full cost of attendance” at the university. Benefits provided by “boosters” of their university – whether cash or in-kind – were not permitted. Representation of student-athletes or prospective student-athletes by agents was strictly prohibited. The NCAA punished both the institution and the student-athletes upon discovering violations of these rules.

Initially, the primary form of NIL compensation was presumed to be endorsement-type deals with private businesses in the style of those obtained by professional athletes. Many such NIL deals have indeed come to fruition, ranging from endorsements from local businesses in college towns (such as Nebraska WR De’Coldest Crawford doing an advertisement for a Lincoln-area HVAC company) to national and global brands such as Dr. Pepper (which has an ad campaign featuring Heisman trophy winner Bryce Young during the 2022 football season). However, a new source of NIL has emerged: “collectives,” which are private, non-profit organizations with loose but official affiliations to the universities themselves but who aim to make their teams more attractive by having lucrative NIL deals to offer prospective student-athletes. While the collective NIL deals do not technically count as compensation from the university itself, the entities are closely enough aligned that the schools incur reputational risk by association with large payouts by their aligned collectives to the student-athletes involved.

For the student-athletes themselves, NIL was a game changer not just because of the increase in the quantity of compensation but also because it created a quantifiable dollar value on their image. The top-earning student-athletes have endorsement deals with national/global brands akin to those of professional athletes. As such, their NIL agreements often include clauses that allow the payor to rescind the deal for legal troubles and other character-related incidents, in much the same vein as the endorsements involving professional athletes. This process creates “skin in the game” for the student-athletes themselves. Indeed, because NIL agreements are expressly prohibited from including anything tied to a student athlete’s athletic performance, such compensation in and of itself prioritizes good behavior off the field or court more than it does so on it.

Additionally, student-athletes are permitted, under limited circumstances, to be advised by people inside and outside of their institution on matters relating to NIL, including attorneys, tax advisers, and other professionals with relevant expertise. This acts in many ways as an important exception to the NCAA’s traditional flat ban on student-athlete representation by “sports agents.” This development potentially increases the student-athletes awareness of the implications of potential off-field transgressions because any advisers/consultants can put a quantifiable value on the downside of misbehavior.

### Literature Review

The research surrounding sports marketing and branding is well-established, with numerous studies indicating that corporate sponsorship and branding within the sports arena can have a positive effect for companies across multiple dimensions, such as sponsorship awareness (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004), brand recall, and recognition (Biscaia, Correia, Ross, & Rosado, 2014), positive purchase intentions towards sponsor products (Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Ko, Kim; Lee & Trail, 2012), and even behavior loyalty (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008; Biscaia, Correia, Rosado, Ross, & Maroco, 2013; Maxwell & Lough, 1990). College sports, in particular, have been identified as an ideal venue for businesses to increase their brand image (Chen & Zang, 2011) by leveraging the college or university's previously developed relationship with the community and their strong emotional connections to the institution's fans, students, and alumni (Dees, Bennett, & Villegas, 2008).

However, researchers have also noted the potential negative impacts of endorsement deals, especially when an individual player is the main artifact of the sports branding and marketing relationship. Examples of athletes that had their sponsorships canceled after engaging in "bad behavior" include Lance Armstrong, Tiger Woods, and Michael Vick, to name a few. Further complicating matters is the fact that the NIL collectives, while not officially connected to a particular university, may be viewed by paying members as a de facto arm of a particular team or college. These collectives may now be seen as part of the sports branding and marketing ecosystem for a university's athletic department. It will be interesting to see if fans, which are paying into these NIL collectives, will hold both collectives and the team/university they are supporting accountable, if funded players behave badly.

It may seem strange then that there is very little research being conducted by a university, or a NIL collective, prior to enrolling and placing a student-athlete on scholarship. The NCAA currently requires colleges to adopt policies similar to the Tracy Rule, but they do not have to be as strict. Enforcement is also questionable since the student-athlete themselves complete a self-reported form, which would then trigger a further investigation if they responded yes to certain questions. Additionally, institutions are not required to conduct background checks on prospective student-athletes. A recent study by Cintron, Levine, and McCray (2020) found that only 11.6% of NCAA Division I schools conduct some form of background checks for student-athletes specifically. To date, there is no published research regarding NIL collectives and their policies regarding background checks.

## **Methodology**

This study obtains data obtained by the authors from publicly available sources regarding arrests of student-athletes in NCAA Division I men's sports from 2017 to present. This data and time frame will facilitate the examination of changes, if any, in arrest rates before and after the decision to allow NIL and then disaggregate between the 2021-22 academic year, prior to the rise of collectives, and then subsequent academic years. We disaggregate men's sports from women's sports in this analysis because males (particularly in the relevant age cohort) are more likely to be arrested than females and because it is widely perceived that non-sporting related matters confound measurements of the NIL value of women's sports student-athletes.

## **Expected Contribution and Topics for Future Research**

This study begins the process of evaluating the impact of NIL policies on student-athlete conduct. It is anticipated that this initial analysis will be the first in a series of studies related to this topic. First, as noted earlier, the data set inclusive of student-athlete behavior will be constructed by the authors; neither the NCAA and its member institutions nor the conferences to which its member institutions belong appear to track these data. Given the incentives laid out herein, it would be advisable for the NCAA, conferences, and member institutions to track these data.

Further, as NIL is likely a precursor to revenue sharing of media rights, the NCAA, conferences, and institutions are likely approaching a "business partnership" with the student-athletes. Presumably, these organizations would prefer to have as much information as possible about their potential business partners. One potential risk management tool might be to require background checks on prospective student-athletes, as virtually all member institutions require for employees (including part-time student employees).

A potential further area for research inquiry is whether there is a proportional impact on student-athlete personal behavior relative to the amount of NIL. These data points are also not freely available currently.

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# Summary Brief

## Unveiling the Voice of the Stay: An Exploratory Big Data Analysis of Hotel Guest Reviews

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### Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of the hospitality industry, hotels increasingly recognize the intrinsic value of internal customer experience and satisfaction surveys. These surveys serve as a powerful tool to gauge the sentiments and perceptions of guests who have directly experienced the hotel's services and amenities. Understanding the voice of these internal customer reviews holds paramount importance for hoteliers in their quest to enhance guest satisfaction, identify areas for improvement, and elevate overall service quality. In this research paper, we embark on an insightful exploration of internal customer experience data derived from hotel guest reviews guided by the three-factor theory (TFT) (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002, Li et al., 2020). These reviews, conducted through internal surveys, offer an invaluable source of candid feedback from guests who have interacted with the hotel first-hand. By tapping into the potential of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and sentiment analysis, we aim to uncover the sentiments and opinions expressed by guests across various aspects of their stay.

### Background

The three-factor theory (TFT) proposed by Kano (1984) and further explored by Matzler and Sauerwein in 2002 (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002), suggests that the connection between hotel features and customer satisfaction is not straightforward. In other words, the relationship may not follow a linear pattern. For instance, having positive evaluations of a particular attribute could enhance customer satisfaction, but the lack of positive evaluations (or even the presence of negative evaluations) of that attribute might not necessarily decrease customer satisfaction. TFT, therefore, provides a valuable framework to gain more nuanced insights into how customer evaluations of hotel attributes influence overall customer satisfaction.

Sentiment Analysis, a subfield of Natural Language Processing (NLP), has emerged as a powerful tool to gauge the sentiments conveyed in textual data (Cambria & White, 2014). Leveraging sentiment analysis on hotel guest reviews enables the systematic identification of expressed sentiments as positive, negative, or neutral (Nasukawa & Yi, 2003; Kirilenko et al., 2018; Luo et al., 2021). While sentiment analysis provides valuable insights into overall guest sentiment, exploring the sentiments associated with specific aspects of the hotel experience, such as arrival, room, staff, hotel amenities, and departure, can offer a more nuanced understanding of guest feedback. In this research paper, we embark on an exploratory big data analysis of hotel guest reviews, aiming to unveil the multifaceted voice of the stay. By harnessing the potential of NLP and sentiment analysis, we seek to unravel the sentiments expressed in different review sections, shedding light on the aspects that impact guests' perceptions the most. Furthermore, we employ Topic Modeling, specifically Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), to delve deeper into the underlying themes and patterns within the textual data (Negara et al., 2019).

### Research Questions

- Are there any discernible patterns in sentiments across different sections of hotel reviews, and do certain areas of the hotel (e.g., lobby, room, bathroom, etc.) show stronger correlations with word frequency?
- What are the underlying themes and topics that drive positive and negative sentiments in hotel reviews, and do these themes transcend multiple review sections?
- How do specific aspects, such as service, amenities, or location, impact sentiment scores in different review sections?
- What actionable insights can be derived from sentiment patterns and topic modeling to enhance customer satisfaction and improve hotel services?

### Methodology

In this research, we collected internal customer experience data comprising a diverse range of guest reviews captured through internal surveys over a period of 9 years (2013 – 2021). Data was obtained from a 4-star luxury hotel with 236 guest rooms located in the Southern United States.

Rigorous data preprocessing techniques were applied to ensure the data's cleanliness and relevance, allowing for accurate analysis. Leveraging sentiment analysis, a subfield of Natural Language Processing (NLP), we systematically assessed the expressed sentiments in different sections of the guest reviews. Our analysis focused on key aspects, including arrival, room experience, interactions with staff, overall impressions of the hotel, departure experience, and guest recommendations for further enhancements. Furthermore, we employed Topic Modeling with Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to delve into the underlying themes within the reviews. This technique allowed us to cluster words and identify latent topics that characterize guest feedback across various review sections. A regression analysis will also be conducted to examine how these evaluations of hotel attributes influenced customer satisfaction.

## Conclusion

Through an exploratory analysis of internal customer experience and satisfaction surveys, this research endeavors to provide invaluable insights into the hospitality industry. By understanding the voice of the stay expressed in these internal reviews, hotels can proactively adapt their services, tailor guest experiences, and ultimately elevate guest satisfaction levels. The findings of this study hold the potential to transform hotel management practices as hotels strive to foster a guest-centric culture that prioritizes continuous improvement and exceeds guest expectations at every touchpoint. This study may also provide a framework to work directly with hotel companies and use their data for research purposes. Historically, big data examining hotel customers have been scraped from online sources such as TripAdvisor, Yelp, and other social media channels. However, the current data set represents paying customers and includes check-in and check-out dates, with the survey instrument being distributed to a verified email address for the guest. Companies are often unwilling to share such data with academics for research projects, and it is hoped that the results of this study will add insights and value for the partnering firm and provide an example that future researchers can use to help gain access to similar data sets.

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## Summary Brief

# Think Impartial Statements About a Brand are Better Than Pessimistic Comments? Think Again!

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*A comprehensive examination of the discourse on Twitter surrounding the 2023 Men's College World Series highlights that it is not only positive and negative consumer sentiments that contain insights for brands, but potentially unpolarized sentiment that falls in the middle. Sentiment categorized as neutral or none, was noted to decrease after the final game of the series. Through the lens of social identity theory, this research explores the effects of significant sporting events on consumer sentiment and engagement, carrying significant managerial and scholarly ramifications.*

### Introduction

Sports enthusiasts are like no other. The behavior of a fervent sports aficionado can often defy general comprehension (Dietz-Uhler & Lanter, 2008). Emotional intensities are typically amplified during occurrences of high significance to consumers. Many sports fans display these emotions and connect with each other by expressing their opinions of favorite teams and rivals online (Hirshon, 2020).

Consider, for instance, the 2023 Men's College World Series, an event laden with momentous highs and lows. The second match in the Best-of-Three series witnessed a historically unprecedented defeat for Louisiana State University, succumbing 24-4 to the University of Florida. However, in the decisive concluding match, LSU rallied to overpower Florida 18-4, thereby clinching the championship title. During the series, Twitter was ablaze with statements full of passionate sentiment surrounding fan favorite teams.

### Background

Social identity theory is prominently used in the study of sports fans and their behavior. Social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). Relative to sporting events, the phenomena of both BIRGing - basking in reflected glory after a team victory and CORFing - cutting off reflected failure following a loss (Snyder et al., 1986; Wann & Branscombe, 1990) are often displayed by fans.

Using RapidMiner software, Twitter was scraped using the search term “LSU Baseball” after LSU’s historic loss of game 2 in the series and subsequent triumphant win of game 3 in the series. Text analysis was performed using the MeaningCloud extension. This study adds to current streams of sports fan behavior literature with the additional assessment of sentiment categorized as neutral or none. A Tableau visual representation serves to crystallize the flux in public sentiment enveloping LSU Baseball in the wake of these pivotal contests.

### Key Findings

Post-match Twitter data following LSU's cataclysmic loss in Game 2 and their phenomenal triumph in Game 3 reveals a stark dichotomy in public reactions and displays consumers participating in BIRGing and CORFing behaviors. One would expect to see sentiment increased after the game 3 win. Negative sentiment from the public also increased after the game 3 win. The only categories that saw a decrease after the game 3 win were the neutral and none categories. To be categorized as "neutral," the sentiment typically includes a positive statement along with a negative statement. If a statement that does not show positive or negative emotion, a label of "none" is given. This is similar to stating a fact.

LSU’s game 3 win likely reassured the public that the team could operate at optimal performance. This confidence may have led to stronger opinions during and after the game. When analyzing social media data, businesses should exercise caution. For instance, one might observe the rise in negative sentiment after game 3's victory. However, there was an even greater increase in extremely positive sentiment following the win. Thus, marketers should always consider the broader context when faced with a swell in consumer negativity.

A multitude of consumer thoughts and emotions such as conviction, certainty, and belief most likely led to the decrease in the neutral and none categories and increases in the negative and positive statements. Oftentimes, neutral sentiment may be considered better than negative, however, neutral consumer sentiment towards a brand could mean they are less

remarkable in the minds of the consumer. Therefore, it's crucial for brands to have a well-defined identity and principles, even if it leads to more polarized responses from consumers.

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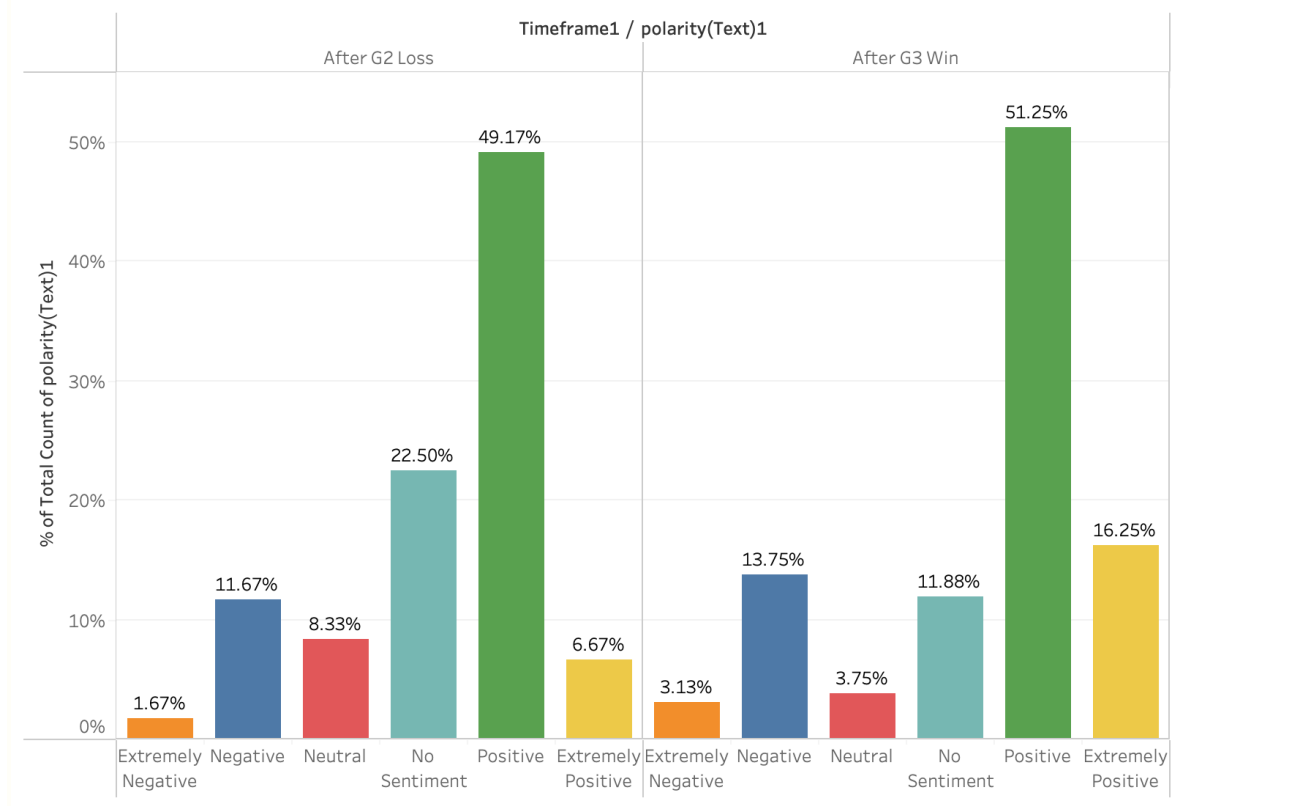
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Twitter Sentiment towards LSU Baseball after game 2 loss (24-4) and game 3 win (18-4) in CWS Finals



## **Session 4.4: It's a Journey**

**Chair:** Shivam Agarwal

# Summary Brief

## Leveraging Packaging: Harnessing Existing Products for Successful New Product Promotion in Marketing

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*The importance of packaging has been well researched and documented in both the academic literature and by practitioners. While many aspects of packing have been studied, very little work has focused on the role of advertising a product on the packaging of a different product. This research investigates the mechanisms and implications associated with integrating new product promotion into existing product packaging. Furthermore, the study explores consumer responses and attitudes towards new product promotion through packaging, shedding light on the impact of product congruency for the promoted product. The manuscript explores this phenomenon through an experimental investigation and proposes areas for future research.*

### Introduction

Packaging plays a vital role as the initial point of contact with consumers for consumer products. Recognizing its pivotal influence on product success, researchers and practitioners have devoted substantial efforts to comprehend the intricacies of crafting appealing brand-aligned packaging (Silayoi & Speece 2005). Packaging designs range from purely functional to creatively engaging, capturing consumers' attention at the outset of their product experience. Consequently, packaging represents an opportune space for promoting related or complementary products within a company's portfolio. Despite extensive research on various aspects of packaging, the practitioner strategies employed in this domain have been overlooked. One such underexplored facet is the utilization of packaging to promote different product types. Drawing from observations conducted within retail environments, notable examples have emerged, including Heinz promoting their Sriracha ketchup on the back of their regular ketchup bottle and Sharpie showcasing an alternative marker variant. These instances underscore the astute employment of product packaging as a promotional tool. Notably, while the observed examples primarily promote alternative products, it is intriguing to contemplate the impact of advertising competing offerings vs. complementary products that could serve as additional revenue sources. This study endeavors to shed light on this phenomenon, revealing untapped potential and illuminating pathways for marketers to effectively leverage packaging as a strategic marketing instrument.

### Background

The halo effect theory, initially introduced in psychology by Thorndike (1920), elucidates how individuals' overall impressions shape their evaluation of individual characteristics. This theory has been subsequently applied in the marketing literature to investigate diverse phenomena such as corporate reputation (Caruana 1997), restaurant branding (Lui et al. 2019), and food labeling (Sundar et al. 2021). Extending the halo effect theory, our research examines how consumers' decision-making processes are influenced by advertising a product on the packaging of another familiar product. This "halo" effect suggests that positive perceptions of a product in one domain can permeate overall evaluations, even in the absence of comprehensive information or evidence regarding specific attributes. Our study provides a compelling rationale for the positive impact of advertising complementary products on product packaging.

Drawing from the halo effect theory, we expect that the advertised product's position on the original product's packaging will yield a favorable effect. However, it is essential to determine the optimal product category for such advertising initiatives. A comprehensive analysis of over 100 consumer goods products reveals several instances of cross-product advertisements on packaging, predominantly featuring products within the same brand or under the same umbrella company. Consequently, we turn to the literature on brand extensions for insights into the suitable product types for packaging advertising. Two critical factors influencing the success of brand extensions are product feature similarity and brand concept consistency (Park et al. 1992). Congruent brand extensions involve expanding into complementary product categories (e.g., Igloo coolers expanding into travel mugs), while competitive brand extensions encompass venturing into different products within the same category (e.g., Coca-Cola introducing new flavors of soda).

Congruent brand extensions have the potential to enhance brand loyalty by providing additional solutions within the category (Ren et al. 2011). In contrast, competitive brand extensions may encounter cannibalization, as consumers may opt for the new product over the original offering. Brand extensions receive more favorable evaluations when the fit is strong and the extension is perceived as non-trivial (Aaker & Keller 1990). By nature, congruent products exhibit a higher degree of similarity to the original, making them a prime focus for advertising on product packaging. Thus, we propose that advertising congruent products on packaging will elicit higher purchase intentions compared to competitive products especially when being perceived as such.

## Key Findings

The purpose of this study is to see how the congruence or competitiveness of the ad on a packaging might lead to a different response in the purchase intention and is moderated by the perception of the brand extension. To test this relationship, a total of 145 respondents from a large southern university (38.6% male; average age = 19.91) answered the survey. Participants were told that they were shopping for a lip balm and were shown a specific lip balm. That lip balm included an advertising for two different products in the top right corner of the packaging.

Process (Model 1) for SPSS was used to analyze the data. The interaction between the type of advertising (competing product vs. complementary product) and purchase intention was not significant ( $a_1 = -1.71$ ,  $t = -1.82$ ,  $p = .07$ ). However, the interaction between the type of advertising and purchase intention is moderated by the brand extension fit and is positive and significant ( $a_2 = .41$ ,  $t = 2.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ) supporting our expected results. Specifically, when congruence for the promoted product was high (BEF +1SD = 5.79, effect = .77,  $t = 2.68$ ,  $p < .01$ ; 95% CI: [.20, 1.33]), then the relationship between the type of advertising and purchase intention was significant but when BEF was moderate (BEF = 4.52, effect = .12,  $t = 1.22$ ,  $p = .22$ , 95% CI: [-.19, .82]) or BEF was low (BEF -1SD = 3.25, effect = -.39,  $t = -1.09$ ,  $p = .28$ , 95% CI: [-1.11, .32]) then the effect of the type of advertising on purchase intention was not significant. A Johnson-Neyman value shows that when BEF is 5.32 or higher, then the congruent ad leads to more purchase intention.

Our study provides preliminary evidence that advertising on a product packaging can be beneficial as long as the product does not resemble too much the product sold. This finding aligns with the rationale that an advertised product closely resembling the product being sold may either cannibalize sales or lack the distinctiveness necessary to captivate consumers. Notably, our investigation reveals that the hand cream serves as a favorable complementary product to the lip balm, outperforming the advertised flavor lip balm. These findings contribute valuable insights to the topic of advertising on product packaging but more importantly it validates the need to conduct additional studies to strengthen the validity of the paper.

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29.

# Summary Brief

## We Took a Break and Got from FOMO to JOMO... Now What?

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*Social media continues to dominate the everyday lives of consumers. As marketers explore new ways to utilize social media platforms, we should also strive to understand the impacts of social media use on consumer well-being. Toward that end, we examine the constructs of FOMO and JOMO as they relate to social media, with particular attention to outcomes associated with consumers reaching a feeling of social media JOMO.*

### Introduction

Social media continues as an integral part of consumers' lives. As users move from one platform to another and new platforms take shape, we continue to learn more about the ways in which social media can connect consumers to one another and brands can connect to their consumers. However, as we continue to learn how firms can best utilize social media, we must also understand the impact social media use can have on consumers' overall well-being. As the potential negative impacts of excessive social media use are revealed, there is increased interest in digital detoxing and changing social media habits. As firms continue to increase spending on social media (spending on social media marketing advertising alone is expected to be \$207 billion in 2023 (Statista, 2023)) any changes to consumer use of social media should be addressed.

Recent research (e.g., Can and Kaya 2016; Dossey 2014), notes excessive compulsion to be connected to social media as having addictive qualities. This excessive use can stem from many sources but is attributed in several studies to feelings of FOMO. FOMO or the fear of missing out is defined as “a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent” and can manifest as a need to stay connected to what others are doing (Pryzbylski et al., 2013). FOMO is associated with higher social media engagement, and lower need satisfaction, mood, and life satisfaction (Pryzbylski et al., 2013). Lin & Jian (2022) find that personality traits, including regret tendency and social comparison orientation, can heighten feelings of FOMO. Rogers and Barbe (2019) note that FOMO can also lead to excessive social media use, which can cause sleep disorders. However, other studies note that the fear of missing out can lead to social media fatigue (Dhir et al., 2018).

Social media fatigue, among other factors, has led researchers to identify an alternative construct to FOMO: JOMO. As we continue to learn more about FOMO, research has also turned to its counterpart, JOMO. JOMO, or the joy of missing out,” refers to positive feelings, such as joy and excitement, that arise when one has an abundance of mutually exclusive options and the freedom to choose among them” (Aitamurto et al., 2021). This construct has been examined in the social media context by Arnada and Baig (2018), who describe JOMO as “the long or short-term desire to disconnect from social media for the purpose of mitigating the perceived stress caused by being continuously connected to social media.”

As researchers continue to explore the role of FOMO and JOMO in social media behaviors, the two concepts are often linked. For example, Chan et al. (2022) propose a mindfulness framework to help consumers move from FOMO to JOMO. A primary tenet of their framework is the conscious, mindful use of social media, rather than habitual or mindless use of social media can aid feelings of JOMO. While Chan et al. (2022) focus on changing the way users engage with social media, other research examines the impact of taking social media breaks, voluntary or non-voluntary, on feelings of JOMO. This idea of taking planned breaks from social media, often describes as a “digital detox” is gaining ground in the popular press and is also present as a trend on social media content. Jorge (2019) explores self-reported social media breaks among social media users. They identify accounts whose users are taking breaks through the use of hashtags such as “socialmediadetox” or “disconnecttoreconnect.” Many of the accounts studied reported an increased sense of well-being after their social media “detox.”

While much of the research surrounding social media use cessation or reduction focuses on voluntary actions, Eitan & Gazit (2023) were able to capture emotional reactions to the six-hour Meta outage that occurred in 2021. They find that for some consumers, the outage caused FOMO and stress, while for other consumers, the outage led to feelings of positivity and JOMO. Whether voluntary or involuntary, many studies have focused on taking social

media breaks with the hope of inspiring JOMO. However, the actual impact of JOMO on social media use has not been fully explored.

## Research Methods

JOMO continues to gain in popularity as a construct, particularly as it applies to the realm of consumer well-being. While several studies have examined the impact of voluntary and involuntary social media breaks on feelings of JOMO, little research has focused on the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes associated with feelings of JOMO. The purpose of this research is to extend the knowledge regarding social media JOMO by examining the impact of JOMO on social media-related behaviors and attitudes. In order to achieve this, we have collected both qualitative and empirical data. A model of outcomes related to JOMO has been developed utilizing information gleaned from existing literature and our previous qualitative studies. It is our intention to present the model at the conference and detail its implications.

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# Summary Brief

## A Multi-Group Analysis of Social Media Influencers by Genre and Their Effects Differing on the Customer Journey

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*Social media influencers (SMIs) use social media platforms to reach millions of followers directly. Social media influencers' unique, para-social interactions with followers affect followers' consumer behavior throughout the customer journey. While para-social interactions are one-sided, influencers engaging followers must retain perceived authenticity to retain influence over followers and to raise follower numbers. If this authenticity balance occurs, SMIs may be an effective and efficient approach to marketing to Generation Z, who value authenticity. This research displays evidence that SMI perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between para-social interactions. Likewise, there is clear evidence that the genres of SMIs have differing effects on different stages of the customer journey. This study advances the understanding of the differences in para-social relationships formed with SMIs, explores the ways different genres influence the customer journey, and the SMIs' role throughout all stages of the customer journey.*

### Introduction

Across the globe, individuals have embraced social media platforms, spending time, attention, and money at an ever-increasing rate. With 3.78 billion social media users across the planet (Gaubys, 2021), business leaders salivate at their global marketing potential. With the rapid adoption of smartphones, a projected 4.1 billion users by 2025, social media is at the fingertips of all generations, including the elusive Generation Z. Social media users have remained constant for the last five years at 72 percent of the overall population within the U.S. and among Generation Z, 84 percent of respondents surveyed use social media (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

Social media users are willing to accept guidance on everything from makeup techniques to carburetor installation. SMIs engage followers by offering a custom experience, unlike the mass-market approach of traditional television. Social media platforms like Google-owned YouTube offer searchability that traditional media have yet to match. Although the social media landscape may seem daunting and dizzying to marketing professionals, SMIs may ease this burden. As advertising dollars moved into digital marketing, influencers seized more and more. A projected \$30.81 billion in SMI advertising is projected for 2023 (Statista, 2023), an astonishing increase from \$1.7 billion just seven years prior (Santora, 2021). As the market leads, marketing academic research must understand these shifts.

### Background

Marketing executives utilize social media influencers to reach and engage with potential customers, yet academic understanding of this phenomenon is limited (Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, & Thrassou, 2021). SMI research may use para-social interactions to illuminate this trend, especially regarding younger followers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Moreover, this research sheds light on Generation Z, the first generation born with the Internet, smartphones and a preference for customizable, searchable entertainment and information. This illusive, under-researched consumer spends an average of 3.4 hours online watching videos daily (Whitten, 2019). To reach Generation Z, firms are increasingly marketing online and through social media, rather than traditional advertising channels. Generation Z is often dismissive of traditional targeting methods, causing firms to rely more heavily on SMIs (Cavill, 2020). This study attempts to understand the role SMIs have on each stage of the customer journey. If customers are skipping stages as posited by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), respondents could negatively respond to single-stage items but also could respond positively to the unstudied stages. Secondarily, we use multi-group analysis to determine if SMIs in different genres affect the customer journey differently in the various stages.

### Data Collection

A survey instrument was designed and delivered in Qualtrics to a panel of users recruited via the Prolific website. Respondents were pre-screened for age and regular social media usage. Prior to collecting the final sample, we administered a pilot test to a convenience sample to identify and correct any issues with wording or comprehension

(Hair et al., 2015). To achieve 80% statistical power with a minimum R2 of .10, 165 respondents were required (Cohen, 1992). The final sample included 478 respondents.

### Key Findings

Our findings show clear evidence that customers are skipping stages in the customer journey. For instance, an SMI might make the consumer aware of a product (pre-purchase), but the consumer does not purchase the product (purchase) but does share the SMI's message (post-purchase) with a social media "friend" that might be interested in the product. The MGA shows clear evidence that advertising managers need to account for genres as well as more traditional measures of SMI influence, like engagement and follower counts.

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## **Session 4.5: Born for Sales**

Chair: Grace Harrison

# Summary Brief

## A Multi-group Analysis of the Effect of Monetary Incentives on Employee Loyalty and Goal Attainment of Salespeople

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*Monetary incentives are widely known to help motivate employees. These monetary incentives are mostly used to increase the employees' efforts to attain the firm's goals. Other variables come into play when monetary incentives are used. Employee loyalty can help the firm attain goals as employees feel connected to the firm and value it for their wants and achievements. Employee loyalty was investigated to show if employee loyalty mediates the relationship between monetary incentives and goal attainment. The multi-group analysis of different age cohorts revealed differing strengths of influence on the variables. This study advances the understanding of employee loyalty in the workplace and the need to plan a process to enhance the loyalty of younger employees for the betterment of both salesforce and the firms' interests.*

### Introduction

From the employers' standpoint, goal setting is important in the work environment (Locke, 2004). Compared to vague 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. When these conditions are met, a positive linear relationship exists between goal difficulty and task performance (Locke and Latham, 2006).

Monetary incentives are rewards given to employees or individuals for excellent performance or attaining their goal. Examples include a bonus, salary increase, commission or paid time off. These monetary incentives are used to motivate workers to increase performance. Motivating workers is a crucial dimension of labor relationships that has been studied at length (Corgnet et al., 2015).

Employees are considered the core of an organization and the success or failure of the organization is attributed to the performance of the employees (Murli, Poddar & Seema, 2017). Therefore, it is important for the organization to attract and retain their talented employees as talented employees influence the performance of the organization in a positive manner (Khan, Daniyal & Ashraf, 2020).

### Background

Motivating workers is a crucial dimension of labor relationships that has been studied at length (Corgnet et al., 2015). Corgnet et al., (2015) explain in their literature review that specific and difficult goals, perceived as attainable, lead to greater performance than vague and easy goals. Second, workers are more motivated or committed to attaining goals when they perceive them as relevant and difficult to attain. Finally, goals are shown to increase workers' persistence to exert effort. Corgnet et al., (2015) reference Locke and Latham's research on goal setting and expand on the incentives used to attain those goals. If the goals are relevant to the employees, they will increase their efforts to attain the goals and incentives (Corgnet et al., 2015).

Employee loyalty is a deliberate commitment to further the best interest of one's employer, even when doing so may demand sacrificing some aspect of one's self-interest beyond what would be required by one's legal and other moral duties (Elegido, 2013). According to Ponta et al. (2020), it is known that economic motivation is one of the most used stimuli to improve the firm's performance. Focusing on the relationship between monetary incentives and employees' performance, one of the most important aspects is performance-related pay. Salespeople work harder if they value the monetary rewards and trust that those awards are related to their increased efforts. Attaining firm goals will increase revenues, profits, market share, and similarly valued outcomes. These monetary incentives are often a gamble for the firm as there is no direct method to show the impact monetary incentives will have on goal attainment.

### Data Collection

The study uses a survey randomly distributed using a Qualtrics survey and distributed by Prolific to ensure that the participants fit the criteria for the study. The respondents are salespeople in the financial sector. The study explores the influence of monetary incentives on these outside salespeople and its effects on both employee loyalty and goal attainment. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is the analytical modeling technique used in this study.

## Key Findings

In this research, it was shown that monetary incentives do have a positive influence on both employee loyalty and goal realization. The multi-group analysis unveiled differences in these constructs depending on the age cohort of the salesperson. The managerial implications that employee loyalty mediates the relationship between monetary incentives and goal attainment should be good news to sales managers.

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## **Session 4.6: Innovations in Teaching Session I**

**Chair:** Larry Neale

# Summary Brief

## Teaching the Next Generation of Marketers: Unleashing the Power of ChatGPT

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*Generative AI, such as ChatGPT, is a powerful tool that has been quickly adopted by marketing professionals. It's also been quickly adopted by students to help with schoolwork. Marketing academics have been slower to adopt this new technology. This teaching innovation offers recommendations to help instructors introduce the power of Generative AI technology in the marketing classroom to prepare students to understand alternative uses of the innovation.*

### Introduction

Generative AI, such as ChatGPT, are causing ripples across the higher education spectrum. There has been a great deal of debate about the merits and perils of ChatGPT and learning in both higher education circles and popular press (for an overview, see Heaven 2023; Scott 2023, Terry 2023; Claybourn 2023; Gilliard and Rorabaugh 2023). It should come as no surprise that students have heard about and are using this tool. Surveys this spring show that more than a third of all college students admit to using this new tool for schoolwork over the previous six months (Kyaw 2023). Another survey showed that while half of the students believed using ChatGPT to complete assignments is cheating, almost the same percentage believe it is possible to use it ethically to assist with schoolwork (Nietzel 2023). Regardless of their stance, once students use it, three-quarters are likely to recommend using it to other students (Nietzel 2023). Another issue with students using ChatGPT is higher education's lack of response to its use in the classroom. A survey from Spring 2023 indicated that only 14% of universities had enacted policies on using ChatGPT and only 18% of faculty had course guidelines on the use of such tools (D'Agostino 2023).

Outside of academia, generative AI has been quickly adopted by professionals in the field of marketing because it empowers marketers to create more targeted campaigns and enhance customer experiences (Altaf, 2023). These tools increase productivity related to marketing tasks such as updating website content, creating social media posts, crafting blogs and other articles, and conducting marketing research. Not only is ChatGPT changing work in the marketing field, but employers are increasingly expecting new graduates to have a working knowledge of ChatGPT. A recent survey by Intelligent.com showed that 93% of hiring managers report they will give preference to applicants with experience with ChatGPT (Intelligent.com 2023).

All these challenges require that marketing majors develop skills using ChatGPT. Students may have experience using ChatGPT to help with assignments, writing essays or summarizing books, but they are not learning the applications for the marketing field. The awareness of this lack of marketing knowledge led to the creation of an introductory lecture on the use of ChatGPT for marketing.

### Teaching Generative AI

The innovation is to introduce students to Generative AI in the marketing classroom by using a class period to give an overview of ChatGPT for text, DALL-E 2 for images, and Tome.AI for presentations. Key to this overview is teaching students to use prompts to create marketing and other content as opposed to their knowledge of how to use it for completing assignments. To make the application more relevant to the students, the class invented a business, and the tools were applied to create various marketing materials to promote this fictional business. After selecting the business opportunity, the instructor leads the class through a series of activities to highlight how generative AI tools can be used to create a marketing campaign, including using the technology to generate a lists of possible business names, possible social media topics, sample product pages. The class can also introduce the ability of generative AI to write in target audience voice and to write for different media platforms. The class can also introduce image generators such as DALL-E 2. Typically, students will be amazed at the flexibility and adaptability of these tools. They also can see the impact on marketing and how it will increase productivity in the field.

It's important to demonstrate the need to evaluate the output of generative AI. Highlight examples of where obvious mistakes were made or where problems can arise from the output. For example, did it recommend a business name that is already associated with another business? It's also important to stress the possibility for bias to occur and that the users of this tool are responsible for trying to identify and correct it. Students should realize that these outputs are starting points, and not a final product, and that human review is vital to successful application of these tools.

As a final step, students were assigned to write a comparative analysis of ChatGPT and search engines in

terms of their effectiveness, ease of use, and other factors. They were given a set of marketing topics and instructed to use both ChatGPT and search engines to find relevant information and insights. The goal was to give a recommendation for which tool they would recommend for future research on the chosen topic and why that was the case. This helped them better understand that ChatGPT wasn't a panacea, but rather a useful tool to help with content creation.

### Concluding Note

It's important to address the potential barrier to adopting this teaching innovation. Many academics are concerned that they will inadvertently introduce students to a tool that could be used to cheat. Don't worry about that, students already know about it. Instead, focus on it being the future of marketing and a skill set our students will need in the future. It is better to highlight the ethical use of this technology by teaching students how to properly use it. ChatGPT is often called a "calculator for words." And, just like the relationship between math and calculators, it's important to learn the basics before relying too much on the tool. But marketing educators can't ignore this innovation. Most academics can remember their middle school math teachers telling them that they wouldn't always have a calculator in their pocket; they can recognize that now we do. Future marketing professionals will have this tool in their pocket, and it's up to marketing educators to help them navigate it properly.

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## **Session 5.1: Investigations into Student Learning**

**Chair:** Mary Harrison

# Summary Brief

## Study Abroad: Pre-Pandemic vs. Post-Pandemic

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*Study abroad programs provide unique experiences for students, which include learning new languages, travel, exposure to new cultures, and an expanded world-view. According to Davidson and Garas (2023), "Academic mobility has been central to the concept of western university from its earliest days..." (p 72). However, particularly since the Covid-19 Pandemic, study abroad programs have seen a vast decline in participation. Issues such as traumatic stress, fear of contamination and economic stress took its toll on the viability of international travel for on-site study abroad programs (Allman, Atadil and Bettis-Outland, 2023).*

Traumatic stress affected many people by the sudden appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. This created worldwide panic as traditional travel, work, recreational, educational and family customs were completely upended. There was an immediate and uncompromised expectation to follow rules that often changed daily. Long periods of isolation and confinement created a nearly universal feeling of higher anxiety, insomnia, post traumatic stress disorder, depression and alcohol abuse on a global level (Pierce, Hope, Ford, Hatch, Hotopf and Abel, 2020; Flaherty, Nasir and Reiseangst, 2020).

Study abroad students who anticipated an exciting and inspirational educational journey suddenly found themselves in an unbelievable state of despair due to the catastrophic nature of changes brought on by the pandemic.

Further, for students contemplating travel abroad during the pandemic, fear of contamination was a major concern (Jayasimha, Srivastava and Manoharan, 2021). A primary contributor to fear of contamination involved access-based services (ABS), technology that enables temporary access to products and services which are subsequently accessed by other anonymous users. Use of ABS cannot be avoided in travel, as its effects will be experienced in some form such as when travelers use vending machines, water fountains, bath facilities and baggage retrieval.

Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, study abroad programs were seen as a common way of exposing students to different international locations where they were able to learn new languages, eat local food, and meet people of varying backgrounds. Brewer and Gaertner (2001) suggest that extended contacts across international groups can affect attitudinal changes represented by less references to "us/them" and more "us." Upon returning to their home university, students often exhibited an expanded world-view and were more tolerant of international differences.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic created high levels of uncertainty for those making decisions to participate in non-essential travel (Flaherty, Nasir and Reiseangst, 2020). Though study abroad programs enrich students' understanding of different cultures and enhances the overall learning experience, it is rarely considered a form of essential travel. The chaos of travel restrictions brought upon by Covid-19, particularly for students who were unable to return to their home country for months after the travel restrictions were implemented, could result in less demand for study abroad experiences in the future. Students whose study abroad programs were interrupted due to the pandemic were offered options such as independent study, online learning or refunds (Martel 2020). Unfortunately, these options are hardly comparable to an on-site study abroad experience, and could negatively impact the desire or intention of students to participate in future study abroad programs. In turn, this could have a snowball effect where university study abroad programs experience funding adjustments that affect the number and quality of study abroad experiences that can be offered to international students.

Nonetheless, due to the significant benefits enabled by traditional study abroad programs, many universities became creative in order to maintain study abroad options during and after the pandemic. The most popular of these options are described as international virtual exchange (IVE), or virtual study abroad (VSA) programs (Lee, Leibowitz and Rezek, 2022; Upson and Bergiel, 2022). In general, these virtual programs may be conducted either synchronously or asynchronously, with student groups located in multiple countries. The focus is on collaborative interaction such as discussion or project-based learning, as opposed to a lecture-style course. The primary objective is to improve global competencies and allow participants to build rapport and understanding. It has been suggested that

IVE may actually lead to a stronger desire for on-site study abroad (Lee et al 2022); however, it is still too early to tell whether post Covid-19 will reduce, or increase intentions to study abroad (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975).

In a study of differences between virtual and in-person study abroad programs, it was found that there was a consistent sub-level performance in language speaking between virtual and in-person study abroad programs. However, comparisons of reading, listening and writing outcomes showed much smaller gaps in proficiency, and sometimes the gaps were non-existent (Davidson and Garas 2023).

This work examines the post-pandemic effect on students' intention to participate in virtual or on-site study abroad programs (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). In addition, this study analyzes students' behavior with regard to their response to and acceptance of risk or uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 2001).

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## Summary Brief

# Marketing Students' Perceptions of Experiential Learning: A Scale Development Approach

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*To conceptualize marketing students' perceptions of experiential learning, this research followed previous scale development procedure guidelines. The study included a mixed methods approach with initial qualitative interviews, followed by two quantitative studies. The results of the study revealed four components of the experiential learning concept. These results show that students value experiential learning in different ways. Additionally, engaging students in experiential learning projects significantly influences students' learning satisfaction and future learning intentions. Implications include recommending instructors use research results to develop experiential learning projects, including assessing students' prior knowledge about the subject. Instructors are encouraged to incorporate various teaching experiences for students and to conduct experience reflections and analyses on their learning experiences.*

## Summary Brief

# A Content Analysis: Where do Analytics and Artificial Intelligence Skills Rank in Company Hiring Preferences?

Tatia Jacobson Jordan, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA

*This paper performs two content analyses of 100 LinkedIn entry-level digital marketing job advertisements to compare the differences; one was completed in October, 2021 and one will be completed in October, 2023. Top skills required for undergraduate marketing majors are listed in order of frequency. Results are analyzed to examine changing expectations in skill preferences for new graduates in the digital marketing space. These findings add to research on marketing education by offering insight for departmental curriculum committees to ensure course offerings match the needs of companies who hire our graduates.*

### Introduction

As my content analysis of LinkedIn job advertisements showed (Jacobson Jordan, 2022), companies have digital marketing skill preferences for their graduates that need to be considered by curriculum committees if universities hope to stave off the very real threat of digital marketing certificate programs as a replacement for the more costly undergraduate four-year degree. Of the employer-requested skills preferences that were unveiled through this content analysis, 16 out of the top 20 skills required for entry-level digital marketing positions are skills related to digital, social, and mobile. The increased use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs like Chat GPT raises the question: should AI be taught in conjunction with content creation, the number one skill corporations require of marketing undergraduates, according to this research (See Table 1)? The updated paper aims to see how skills preferences have shifted in the last 24 months since this data was last compiled, particularly because of the recent popularity and availability of AI programs and the prolific publication of AI prompts. Of particular interest is the frequency of analytics and AI skills in this new subset of data.

### Background

According to SEMRush, the “AI market is predicted to snowball in the next few years, reaching a \$190.61 billion market value in 2025.” Anyone living through this cultural shift understands the impact this will have on the way that businesses interact with and use digital marketing technology. Considering this pace of dynamic change, common sense dictates and research confirms that marketing students will always need updated curriculum to meet the needs of the digital, social, and mobile era. Two significant marketing education studies include Schlee & Harich (2010), who shared results of a content analysis of US jobs indicating that marketing technology skills are in high demand and concluded by recommending an increase in “technical” education in marketing curriculum (p. 350). In 2017, Schlee & Karns conducted a content search of job listings to see what skills were necessary for entry level marketing positions. Their findings also supported increased technology skills for new marketing graduates (p. 75).

Based on the research methodology in Schlee & Harich (2010), and Schlee & Karns (2017), this paper performs a content analysis of LinkedIn’s job postings in October and November 2021 and September and October 2023 (this future research will be conducted in 2023). In the previously published paper, LinkedIn search terms used were “digital marketing” and “entry-level.” Subsequently, 100 entry-level digital marketing positions were analyzed for the digital marketing skills that employers required for jobs that posted on LinkedIn during that timeframe (10/1/21-11/30/21). All digital marketing job skills listed for the position were entered into the database and the top six skills were listed in order of occurrence. Any job titles using the word “manager” were not included in this list, as that conveys a skill level beyond “entry-level.” Only jobs that require a 4-year bachelor’s degree were included and the jobs all specified a marketing degree as one of the majors the job seekers were interested in. No jobs that required a master’s degree were included, as this question looks only at undergraduates who are applying for “entry-level” positions on LinkedIn. Job locations used were the United States and they were not tied to any specific industry. At least one job from every state in the US was represented. Skills were listed in the order of occurrence in the job advertisement to create a hierarchy in the data. Column one listed the most important skill listed in the job description.



Column two listed the second, and so on. Six columns of data (the top six skills listed) were analyzed for 100 job advertisements, for a total of 490 skills from undergraduates that these jobs were seeking.

This updated research presentation will showcase findings of this content analysis from ads posted in September and October of 2023 and will compare them to the top 20 skills from 2021 (see Table 1). Research questions: 1) What skills are listed in 2023? 2) Has the frequency of analytics (and other) skills changed in the intervening 24 months? and 3) What is the frequency of artificial intelligence as one of the skills preferred for marketing undergraduates? (It was nonexistent in the 2021 research findings).

### Findings

Table 1 showcases the top 11 skills listed in 2021, or any skill that appeared as a top skill in more than 10% of the advertisements.

**Table 1: List of Digital Marketing Skills Requested in LinkedIn Job Ads (2021)**

Skill	Frequency
Content Creation	31
Social Media Marketing	28
Analytics	25
Email Marketing	25
KPI Tracking	24
Search Engine Optimization	20
Google Analytics	13
Content Marketing	12
CRM	12
Campaign Creation	11
Search Engine Marketing	11

Discussion and recommendations on how we can incorporate more of the requested skills into our marketing curriculum will conclude the presentation.

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# Summary Brief

## Using Service Learning to Teach Digital Marketing

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Digital marketing has become a central feature of marketing curriculum. Rapid technology innovations, coupled with shifts in the way consumers utilize online platforms, require educating students on the best practices of the digital marketing landscape. However, it is also a constantly moving target.

One way to approach teaching digital marketing is to use service-learning to connect students with real employers and organizations and help them learn by experience. This type of project typically involves the instructor building relationships with organizations and having student groups work on one or more projects throughout the semester. This provides a type of “internship” experience for students who can see what it’s like to work with real clients and real constraints. Students have the opportunity to gain real-world feedback from clients and witness business challenges that organizations face. Through digital marketing, social media, and content marketing courses, we have personal experience helping our students work on video projects, blog articles, conduct social media research, develop social media content, and more. These outcomes provide a very rich opportunity for students, but they come at a cost.

There are several challenges with implementing service-learning projects. First, it can be time-consuming for both students and instructors. Instructors are challenged to find appropriate clients to work with, monitor student progress and deliverables, and communicate with everyone involved. Students need to allocate additional time for project completion, group meetings, and project revisions. Students often remark that service learning course requirements exceed those of “normal” college courses.

Service learning also presents other unique challenges that instructors need to navigate. Students do not always see the value of the experience they get during the semester, and often complain about the client or the variability of the projects. Clients are often busy and not great at communicating with students or providing necessary information for projects to move forward. Group project student members often participate at different levels and social loafing can occur. Student work schedules conflicting with group meetings, student personality clashes that impact decision making, and differing levels of student interests in the subject provide further complications. Lastly, students often lack professionalism and follow through when asked to revise projects and communicate with clients. Service learning projects also have the potential for instructors to experience lower-than-average student evaluations.

This panel seeks to explore best practices in using service-learning for teaching digital marketing, social media, and content marketing courses. Focus will be paid upon best practices for selecting participating organizations, creating skill-based group assignments, project management strategies that include scaffolding, integrating project discussions in course lectures, balancing differences in project scope among groups, supervising students’ work to ensure a great outcome, providing enough technical training to complete the project, helping students learn about client and team communication, and emphasizing the importance of business professionalism.

# **Session 5.2 Consumer Beliefs**

**Chair:** Laurel Aynne Cook

# Summary Brief

## A Qualitative Study in AI: Psychological Antecedents of Smart Speaker Engagement

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### Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) programs and machines represent the dynamic technological interfaces between human and computer engagement (Davenport et al., 2020; Poushneh, 2020). Digital and robotic innovations, including Generative AI, enable AI devices to interpret and learn from external data to mimic intelligent human behavior for executing goals and tasks (Haenlin & Kaplan, 2019). This human mimicry, including the production of content including short and long-form text, image, audio and video content (Aydin & Karaarslan, 2023), allows marketers to use AI to engage with consumers on a deep, reciprocal level through human-computer interactions (HCIs), leading to enhanced benefits for both the consumer (e.g., enhanced consumer service) and the firm (e.g., increased sales and profitability) (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). As the world has become more technologically advanced, AI devices such as smart speakers have attracted a great deal of academic (Grewal et al., 2020; Moriuchi, 2020), business and societal attention (Porter & Heppelmann, 2014).

Smart speakers, with the most popular one being Alexa by Amazon, represent a self-service subset of AI technology that uses machine learning to allow humans to execute computer commands using their voices (Moriuchi, 2019). User inputs improve machine learning through natural language generation, which enables continuous improvements in device performance (Huang & Rust, 2021; Low, 2020). Unlike other forms of self-service technology, or nonhuman agents that consumers engage with (e.g., products, brands, animals), smart speakers allow for a consumer-agent relationship that consists of actual rather than perceived reciprocity (Davenport et al., 2020; Fournier, 1998). AI research also suggests that the attributes of the task that the smart speaker is being asked to perform influences consumer engagement (Falcone & Castelfranchi, 2001; Lubars & Tan, 2019). For example, variables including trust in the agent, user motivation, risk and task difficulty all influence the users' decision to delegate a task to a smart speaker individually (Bloomfield, 1995; Lubars & Tan, 2019). However, while consumer engagement has been heavily studied in marketing for the past 15 years (Homburg & Giering, 2001), it has yet to be studied in the context of smart speakers. This represents a glaring gap in the literature, considering the distinctive anthropomorphic attributes that distinguish AI devices from other types of agents studied previously in the marketing literature. By design, smart speakers elicit different levels of anthropomorphism, or the imbuing of a non-human agent with humanlike characteristics, depending on the individual consumer (Fournier, 1998). The study of the relationship between anthropomorphism and AI engagement is embryonic (Goudey & Bonnin, 2016; von Zitzewitz et al., 2013; Wagner & Schramm-Klein, 2019), and researchers have called for a clearer account of how anthropomorphism impacts consumer interaction with/utilization of smart speakers (Moriuchi, 2020). Additionally, the interaction between user characteristics, and both attribute-oriented and task-oriented characteristics, remains a largely unstudied gap in the context of smart speaker engagement.

Reports over the past three years show that only about one in four U.S. adults, and 25% of U.S. households own at least one Amazon Alexa device (Sterling, 2020; Vincent, 2021). Further, most consumer who do own smart speakers, most use just the basic, core features to perform everyday tasks such as setting a timer or checking the weather (Ingber, 2023). They are otherwise reluctant to use the device's more advanced features (e.g., make payments, comparison shop, or refill prescriptions,) and do not engage with this highly humanized form of technology in the same meaningful, relational capacity that they do with other non-human agents such as brands, products, and pets (Davenport et al., 2020; Honig & Oron-Gilad, 2018; Liao et al., 2019; Schmitt, 2019; Ingber, 2023).

The focus on engagement in the context of smart speakers represents a departure from conventional research on technology adoption, due to the psychological nature of the construct and the potentially humanlike characteristics of smart speakers. Consumer engagement is a deeply psychological, iterative, and multi-dimensional construct, and users' psychological characteristics, such as personality, and inner motivations are important antecedents (Marbach et al., 2016). However, consumers display a varying willingness to engage with smart speaker devices due their own characteristics (e.g., personality) device attributes (e.g., anthropomorphism) and task characteristics (e.g., willingness to delegate) of smart speakers (Falcone & Castelfranchi, 2001; Lubars & Tan, 2019; Wagner & Schramm-Klein, 2019). Additionally, a large gap in the existing literature is presented by a lack of research on the interaction between these constructs. Thus, there exists a need to extend beyond conventional adoption research and conceptualize the construct of engagement more thoroughly and accurately, by taking into consideration how unique consumer characteristics, as well as the user's perception of anthropomorphism, interact to impact engagement with dynamic

technologies like smart speakers (Saffarizadeh et al., 2017; Wagner & Schramm-Klein, 2019). In the process, we aim to delve into consumers' deep thoughts and feelings to better understand what and how they think about the role of smart speakers as a part of their lives. Therefore, this research examines:

RQ: What are the user characteristics, task-delegation characteristics, and attribute-oriented characteristics that influence consumer engagement with smart speakers?

Currently, research surrounding smart speaker acceptance remains underdeveloped in the marketing discipline. This research contributes a better understanding of engagement as it is impacted by specific user, task, and technology attribute characteristics. Determining which of these antecedents drive engagement is extremely beneficial from a marketing perspective. Thus, a phenomenological qualitative study was conducted to gain a deep understanding of consumers thoughts and feelings about smart speakers and the potential explanations of those perceptions. Our research is also unique in that we deploy a metaphor analysis to understand subtle, sub-conscious nuances. Lugosi and Quinton (2018) suggest that human-computer interactions are complex, multi-dimensional, spatially and temporally unique, and worthy of exploratory research methods. In short, a full understanding of HCIs will benefit from rich descriptions and soft data gathered through conversations (Mintzberg, 1979). Given the dynamic nature of engagement and its largely psychological underpinnings, an exploratory study was helpful in surfacing personality characteristics and perceptions that enable a clearer understanding of consumer mindsets and behaviors toward smart speaker engagement (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008). Finally, we attempt to go beyond measures of frequency of use and intention to use which, when self-reported, are generally subjective and skewed (Rosenbaum, 2019). Therefore, a qualitative study was necessary to better understand the impact that psychological characteristics have on consumer's propensity to anthropomorphize, delegate tasks, and engage with smart speaker technology. This manuscript details the use of semi-structured interviews for the purpose of uncovering constructs related to the phenomenon of smart speaker engagement on a deeper level. Further, findings from this qualitative study lay the groundwork for future empirical studies.

# Summary Brief

## Conceptualizing a Generational Examination of The Big Five Personality Traits on Nostalgia

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*In an ever-evolving world, marketers are consistently researching ways to better understand consumers and the traits that guide consumers to purchasing a product. One way a business with brand longevity may create a competitive advantage is through the utilization of nostalgia as a marketing strategy. When doing so, a crucial first step for a business is that they must understand the target audience and the personality traits that would lead one to nostalgia proneness. To better understand the consumer and their preferences towards nostalgia proneness marketers can examine The Big Five personality traits cross-generationally to identify generational consumer behaviors. The intention of this paper is to create a research schema which is focused on understanding consumers with nostalgic tendencies with the objective of creating effective marketing strategies for a business with the intent of creating brand longevity.*

### Introduction

Within an organization's strategy, there is a consistent push for brands to create an attention-grabbing product or promotion that differentiates them from their competition (Porter, 1996). Nostalgia can be an aid to creating this unique position, for organizations with brand longevity. Nostalgia offers consumers comfort from a sense of loss (e.g., disconnection from the past) and relief in the form of love (e.g., social connectedness) (van Tilburg, 2022). Organizations can create this connection with the consumer with a deeper understanding of consumer traits.

Understanding consumer traits can be analyzed through a look into personal characteristics (e.g., The Big Five) across generations. Following an understanding of generational trait characteristics, preference towards nostalgia can be examined to determine purchase intentions. The information obtained can be framed to create a strategy revolving around generational target audiences, for organizations.

The goal of this paper is to discuss personal antecedents (e.g., The Big Five personality traits) and internal antecedents (e.g., nostalgia proneness) that lead to purchase intentions, across generational cohorts. The outcomes of this study could provide organizations with consumer insight to strengthen their overall strategy. The overarching theory focuses on creating a unique resource-based view (RBV) for firms with brand lineage to better understand their target audience.

### Literature Review

Defining it as a feeling of when "things were better than, than now," Davis (1979) pioneered research on nostalgia by examining the topic from a sociological perspective. Literature on nostalgia primarily identifies three main forms of nostalgia as personal, historical, and collective. While the three forms of nostalgia differ, primarily in their triggers, they encompass similar feelings initially identified by Davis (1979), which creates an overall feeling of nostalgia proneness. With the uniqueness of nostalgia and the ability to connect on historical, personal, and collective levels, it can be used as an effective element to a marketing strategy that creates personalization for consumers prone to nostalgia.

Nostalgia has the opportunity to enchant consumers' experiences with brands through emotionally charged marketing strategies (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). The purpose of marketing strategy is to facilitate an organization to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Varadarajan, 2010). Integrating nostalgia through consumer and brand-focused marketing strategies enables organizations to focus on resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable (Barney, 1991). Capitalizing on this unique competitive advantage can be aided by understanding The Big Five personality traits, since understanding an organization's target audience and consumer characteristics is arguably one of the most essential aspects of creating a marketing foundation.

Nostalgia has primarily been studied as an emotional process (Holak & Havlena, 1992) rather than through personality characteristics. Since nostalgic consumers can be individualistic, The Big Five personality traits can aid in narrowing down a target audience's characteristics, especially across generational cohorts. While scholars have looked at The Big Five as an outcome of nostalgia (Wildschut et al., 2006), the traits have yet to be examined as antecedents that lead to an outcome (e.g., purchase intentions). Since personality traits can't be fully inferred through interactions (Gosling et al., 2003), The Big Five can aid in understanding generational consumers on a deeper level.

The Big Five has been applied to marketing research that has examined brand personality (Mulyanegara et al., 2009), brand evangelism (Doss & Carstens, 2014), and relationship marketing (Caliskan, 2019). Further, The Big Five and nostalgia have been examined in research primarily in the field of psychology, and is specific towards

personalities such as narcissism (Hart et al., 2011), motivation (Stephan et al., 2014), empathy (Juhl et al., 2017), and spirituality (Biskas et al., 2022). Even so, research is currently lacking a cohesive narrative that would aid future researchers in understanding individual characteristics and nostalgic tendencies concurrently. As such, the utilization of cross generational examination of The Big Five could offer insights into personality traits that are more dominant in individuals who are nostalgic prone.

At this point, it is difficult to identify the specific personality traits from The Big Five that will accompany each generation. However, since personality traits are considered to be developed during adolescence and remain relatively stable and consistent (McCrae & Costa, 2003), a cross-generation examination could benefit in understanding characteristics that may be consistent across a generational cohort. Therefore, paired with personality traits, the study of multiple generational cohorts will further indicate specific characteristics that lead to nostalgia proneness than to purchase intentions, leading to smarter marketing strategies.

### **Proposition & Measurement**

The Big Five personality traits are agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, extroversion, and openness to experience (McCrae and Costa, 1990). Individuals with high levels of agreeableness typically value conformity (not violating expected standards or upsetting others) and traditional values (complying with cultural or religious norms) (Roccas et al., 2002). Individuals who score high in neuroticism tend to be anxious, depressed, and insecure (Roccas et al., 2002). Individuals who practice conscientiousness tend to make plans in advance, desire to be informed, and display effective interactions with others (Roccas et al., 2002). Similar to agreeableness, individuals with high levels of extroversion tend to value interpersonal relationships (Mooradian & Swan, 2006). Openness to experience is compatible with universalism (e.g., understanding and tolerance of people and ideas) (Roccas et al., 2002, p. 792) and the likelihood of adopting new products, ideas, firms, or services (Hirschman, 1980). Current assumptions about personality traits and nostalgia proneness are stated in the following proposition.

**Proposition:** *Generations that are higher in agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness will be more prone towards nostalgia, such that nostalgia proneness is increased.*

To measure this concept, multiple scales can be used in a quantitative survey. John et al. (1991) developed an abbreviated version of the original Big Five Inventory scale, using forty-four short phrases on a five-point Likert scale to assess The Big Five personality traits (Rammstedt & John, 2020). For nostalgia proneness, Holbrook (1993) developed an eight-item scale that can be measured using a Likert scale to examine nostalgia on a personal level. However, the Southampton Nostalgia Scale created by Routledge et al. (2008) is easier to understand, due to the terminology, and more applicable to marketing development (Hallegatte & Marticotte, 2014). To further measure purchase intentions, a vignette could be used.

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## **Session 5.3: Smoke & Mirrors**

**Chair:** Mary Joe Gardner

# Summary Brief

## Follow Up and Lead Qualification: An Examination Through a Construal Theory Lens

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*Prospecting, qualifying, and following-up on leads are widely recognized as important contributors to salesperson performance. Despite such recognition, these activities receive scant attention within the sales literature. To advance understanding of these activities, the authors apply construal level theory to explore how abstract versus concrete mindsets may influence salesperson perceptions of leads. In doing so, this research proposes several propositions regarding (1) how abstract and concrete mindsets, (2) the subjective importance of lead desirability (e.g., possible sales amount) and feasibility (e.g., likelihood of making a sale), and (3) recency bias may influence salesperson's perception of leads. Implications to sales manager and organizations are discussed.*

### Introduction

Organizations invest significant amounts of money each year on increasing the selling skills of their salesforce. Evidence suggests these investments are producing meaningful returns for these organizations (Ahearne, Jones, Rapp, and Mathieu 2008). In recognition of the importance of selling skills and technology to increase salesperson and organizational performance, a substantial body of sales literature is accumulating. Prospecting, qualifying leads, and following-up on leads is widely recognized as being amongst the most important contributors to sales performance. To advance research regarding these activities, we apply construal level theory to examine how abstract versus concrete mindsets influence salesperson perceptions of leads.

### Background

Construal level theory (CLT: Liberman and Trope 1998; Trope and Liberman 2003) posits that people interpret and respond to stimuli in their environment using either a low- or high-construal. The central premise is that psychological distance between the perceiver and the stimuli influences how the stimuli is mentally construed, evaluated, and to what extent the stimuli is preferred in actual choice. Psychological distance refers to a person's subjective experiences of things (i.e., entities, events, objects) that are close or far away from one's direct experience of here and now (Liberman Trope, and Stephan 2007; Trope and Liberman 2010). Psychologically distant stimuli prompt more abstract thought orientations, which emphasize general, superordinate, goal-relevant, and essential features of the stimuli, and are associated with high-level construals. In contrast, psychologically proximal stimuli prompt more concrete thought orientations, which emphasize specific, subordinate, goal-distant, and incidental features of the stimuli, and are associated with low-level construals (Trope and Liberman 2003).

The distinction between values associated with desirability and feasibility aspects of stimuli is one of the important manifestations of high- versus low-level construal. Desirability refers to the value of the action's end-state and reflects the superordinate *why* aspects of an action, whereas feasibility refers to the means (i.e., ease or difficulty) of reaching the end-state and reflects the subordinate *how* aspects of an action (Liberman and Trope 1998).

Making sales to prospective customers as well as the amount of the purchase are two critical factors that determine salesperson's performance. Thus, it reasons that both probability of making a sale and the expected purchase amount is important to a rationale salesperson when forming judgements and taking action regarding a prospective customer. We propose, consistent with CLT, that the probability of a business-to-business (B2B) salesperson making a sale (*how*) refers to feasibility, whereas the expected amount of a sale (*why*) refers to desirability. Normatively, the importance of the probability of making a sale (i.e., feasibility) should depend on the expected amount of a sale (i.e., desirability) to the same degree that the importance of the expected amount of a sale (i.e., desirability) depends on the probability of making a sale (i.e., feasibility). However, according to CLT, in thinking about near compared with distant future goal directed actions, feasibility features (i.e., low construal level) are more likely to influence near-future preferences, whereas desirability features (i.e., high construal level) are more likely to influence distant-future preferences (Liberman and Trope 1998). Thus, we predict that by activating a more abstract (i.e., high construal level) mindset salespeople will focus more on the sales potential of a prospective customer (i.e., desirability) (**Proposition 1**), whereas the activation of a more concrete (i.e., low construal level) mindset will lead salespeople to focus more on the probability of making a sale to a prospective customer (i.e., feasibility) (**Proposition 2**).

Furthermore, CLT posits that the feasibility of attaining an end-state is subordinate to the desirability of the end-state (Sagrignano, Yaacov, and Liberman 2002). Thus, in the B2B sales context, the probability of making a sale is subordinate to the expected amount of a sale. Hence, salespeople may view the probability of making a sale to be important only if the expected amount of a sale is high; however, salespeople may continue to view the expected amount

of a sale as important whether the probability of making the sale is high or low. If salespeople think of the probability of making a sale as subordinate to the expected amount of a sale, then information regarding the probability of making a sale should be more prominent in construing near- than distant-future actions. In contrast, information regarding the expected amount of a sale should be more prominent in construing distant- than near-future actions. Thus, we predict that salespeople will focus more on the probability of making a sale to a prospective customer (i.e., feasibility) depending on the level of sales potential of a prospective customer (i.e., desirability) more than the sales potential of a prospective customer (i.e., desirability) depending on the level of probability of making a sale to a prospective customer (i.e., feasibility). As the perception of sales become psychologically distant, salespeople will prefer sales with a low probability of making a sale with a large amount purchase (**Proposition 3**). As the perception of sales become psychologically proximal, salespeople will prefer sales with a high probability of making a sale with a small amount of purchase (**Proposition 4**).

Recency bias refers to the tendency of people to react more heavily to recent observations, outcomes, and experiences and assume they are more likely to occur in the future if they have recently occurred in the past (Fudenberg and Levine 2013). Applied to the B2B context, recency bias suggests that recent outcomes of leads prospecting may bias near-future expectations on results. Thus, we predict that recent success (failure) prospecting is positively associated with expectations of success (failure) for near-future prospecting efforts (**Proposition 5**). Additionally, the repetition of an event or experience enhances that event or experience's recency relative to other experiences (Flexser and Bower 1974). As B2B salespeople prospect on a continual basis, the frequency with which salespeople prospect may desensitize them to recent outcomes. Thus, we propose that experience prospecting moderates the positive relationship between recent success (failure) prospecting expectations of success (failure) for near future prospecting efforts such that higher frequency prospecting weakens this positive relationship (**Proposition 6**). Higher levels of construal advance abstract thinking, thus prompting people to focus on similarities between a target and reference category (McCrea, Wieber, and Myers, 2012). Therefore, we postulate that construal level moderates the positive relationship between recent success (failure) with a lead and expectations of success (failure) with a soon to be contacted lead such that higher levels of construal strengthen this positive relationship (**Proposition 7**).

## Discussion

This research contributes to the sales literature in that it associates construal levels of lead salespeople to the evaluations of factors that influence prospecting, qualifying leads, and following-up on leads. First, we illustrate how abstract and concrete mindsets influence salespeople's perception of leads. That is, when a more abstract (i.e., high construal level) mindset is activated, salespeople will focus more on the sales potential of a prospective customer (i.e., desirability). In contrast, when a more concrete (i.e., low construal level) mindset is activated, salespeople will focus more on the probability of making a sale to a prospective customer (i.e., feasibility). Furthermore, the subjective importance of the feasibility (i.e., probability of making a sale) outcomes of prospecting, qualifying leads, and following-up on leads depend on their desirability (i.e., expected amount of sale) more than the subjective importance of the desirability (i.e., expected amount of a sale) outcomes of prospecting, qualifying leads, and following-up on leads depend on their feasibility (i.e., probability of making a sale). Second, we describe recency bias to be positively correlated with subjective probability estimates of the outcome. More importantly, construal level and frequency of prospecting moderates the relationship. Specifically, whereas higher construal level strengthens the relationship, high frequencies of prospecting negatively affect the relationship between recency and subjective estimates.

We highlight that construal level is an important factor that influences salespeople's evaluations of leads and presumably their subsequent behavior. Hence, managers and salespeople must consider how factors such as workplace design, software design, and well as personal dispositions influence construal levels of persons.

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## Full Paper

# A Future Research Agenda of Virtual Influencers in Brand Communications

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*With the rise of virtual influencers (VIs) and their effects on marketing communications in comparison with human influencers, this paper aims to propose a future research paradigm on how to develop a brand communication strategy through an understanding of the perceptions of VIs from a consumer standpoint in the environment of technology-based marketing. The suggested six propositions provide future digital marketing research guidelines to leverage in the use of VIs and engage with their audience in formulating better strategies for marketing campaigns.*

### Introduction

Over the past couple of decades, the rise in technology has impacted about every facet of our lives. One of the industries that has seen the most significant impact is business, specifically marketing. The shift from traditional media, such as television and radio, to digital marketing on mobile devices and social media platforms has presented both opportunities and challenges for marketing professionals to balance.

Both in the past and present, celebrity endorsements have been a strategic way for brands to promote themselves. By partnering with the hottest and trendiest figures in pop culture, brands can communicate their credibility and strengthen brand attitude and awareness (Ozdemir, Kolfal, Messinger, and Rizvi 2023). The rise in technology and digital channels has given way to a new type of “celebrity,” the social media influencer. These human influencers post about their everyday lives or specific interests on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok (Haenlein, Anadol, Farnsworth, Hugo, Hunichen, and Welte 2020). The organic nature in which such social media influencers make their start and grow their following has made them attractive to consumers. Most social media influencers are everyday people who showcase their everyday lives, making them seem more relatable to consumers (Hughes, Swaminathan, and Brooks 2019; Leung, Gu, Li, Zhang, and Palmatier 2022). This relatability manifests in perceived credibility, accessibility, and a feeling of friendship with their followers (Lou, Kiew, Chen, Lee, Ong, and Phua 2022). These human influencers have become so popular that brand partnerships and sponsorships have become commonplace, for instance, with some charging thousands of dollars for a singular, sponsored post on Instagram (Haenlein et al. 2020).

Given the age of technology of the 21st century, digital media and social media are continuously evolving in their use and practices. A relatively new aspect of these platforms has built off of the success of human social media influencers and their opportunities for brand promotion, called virtual influencers (Thomas and Fowler 2021). Virtual influencers (VIs) are essentially computer-generated robots who are given unique human characteristics, personalities, and physical traits (Lou et al. 2023; Sands, Ferraro, Demsar, Chandler 2022). These influencers are made possible by the recent advances in CGI technology as well as the rise in virtual-based business models caused by the COVID pandemic. The entrance of these VIs is essential to analyze because the artificial intelligence (AI) technology industry is showing signs of continued progression (Thomas and Fowler 2021; Lou et al. 2023).

VIs currently generate about three times more engagement on social media than human influencers (Ozdemir et al. 2023). The most successful VI is Lil Miquela, for example, who has amassed more than 3 million followers on Instagram and was named one of Time Magazine’s most influential people on the internet in 2018 (Drenten and Brooks 2020). This VI, depicted as a 19-year-old living in Los Angeles showcases her daily life via social media, whether that be hanging out with friends at a concert or eating a meal at a restaurant (Kugler 2023). The AI robot even promotes brands and shows support for social causes such as the Black Rights Matter movement (Lou et al. 2023; Franke et al. 2022).

Furthermore, global spending on this industry is expected to reach upwards of \$110 billion in 2024, as opposed to the \$50 billion spent in 2020 (Franke, Groeppel-Klein, and Müller 2022). VIs are thus important from a business perspective due to their usage opportunity to promote brands in the same way as human influencers. However, these AI figures come with their own risks and benefits to a brand’s marketing and promotional strategies (Thomas and Fowler 2021). The challenges and opportunities are in relation to important business and marketing considerations such as brand awareness, innovativeness, credibility, engagement, perceptions of authenticity, brand fit with the endorser, consumer purchase intention, convenience, and the human perception of AI relating to human resemblance.

The rest of this article is organized as follows: a literature of the major findings from the existing research followed by the six research proposals focusing on VIs in the brand-consumer communication relationship with related background. The discussions about the complementary usage between VIs and human influencers are also provided for future research. Finally, the managerial implications of VIs in influencer marketing is included.

## **A Literature Review of Influencers in Brand Communications**

Influencers, as given within the word, have the ability to influence individuals to feel a certain way. Organizations of all kinds have started to become able to connect with their target audience in new ways through influencers, and this is only the beginning. Human influencers create connections with their followers, share products or services they love, and in turn this promotes a brand (Campbell and Farrell 2020). From the consumer's perspective, brand-influencer connections help a brand's marketing success by connecting with its target audience (Kim and Kim 2021). It is one thing for a consumer to be influenced by the brand's own advertisements, but for the consumer to see promotional messages through a figure that is relatable and as part of their consumer base. This helps establish a closer relationship between the brand to the consumer. From the influencer's perspective, he benefits through gaining popularity, making money, and working alongside his favorite organizations (Kim and Kim 2021). Ultimately, the brand benefits by having a more genuine form of marketing compared to what consumers have seen traditionally in previous years, reaching a larger audience, and getting their name out quickly and effectively (Campbell and Farrell 2020).

In recently years, VIs have been added into marketing mix. VIs are computer generated avatars that are created to look and act like real people, used for promotion and interaction on various social media platforms (Lou et al. 2023; Sands et al. 2022). They are seemingly and surprisingly similar to human influencers, the main and most obvious difference being that they are *not* human although there are suspicions around whether or not they will someday replace human influencers entirely (Ozdemir et al. 2023).

This review will delve into the unique qualities and attributes of human influencers and virtual influencers and what each lacks from the other.

### **Human Influencers**

Human influencers are influencers who exist outside of the virtual world. They are actual people who have a physical presence and can directly address followers in their social media posts (Campbell and Farrell 2020). By increasing and implementing their real-world experiences, senses, and interpersonal skills to connect with their audience in an authentic and relatable manner, human influencers provide sincere endorsements, to develop trust, and to create a bond with their followers which then allows for both the brand and the influencer to capitalize from successful product promotion, leading to mutually beneficial partnerships (Sands et al. 2022).

One of the key advantages of human influencers is their capacity to convey authenticity and reliability while promoting a product or service (Kim and Kim 2021). As they are physically present in the world, they can interact with the items they endorse, thoroughly examine their features, and provide firsthand accounts of their experiences. This tangible connection to the product or service creates a sense of trust and credibility among their followers.

The bond between a human influencer and their audience is often built upon mutual trust and relatability which develops throughout the influencers' career using social media. Human influencers are seen as individuals who are relatable to their audience (Kim and Kim 2021). They often experience similar challenges, desires, and goals just like their followers. This mutual experience that is shared between human influencers and their followers allows them to connect on a deeper level and establish a genuine rapport. As a result, when a human influencer promotes a product or service, their audience is more likely to trust their recommendations and make purchasing decisions based on their endorsement (Ki, Cuevas, Chong, and Lim 2020; Campbell and Farrell 2020).

Successful promotions by human influencers benefit both the brand and the influencers themselves. By collaborating with a human influencer, the brand is able to gain exposure and broaden its audience. This is because the influencer produces content that reaches and influences its followers which can contribute to increasing sales and brand recognition (Campbell and Farrell 2020). Furthermore, the brand can then assimilate into the influencer's authenticity and credibility (Kim and Kim 2021). By doing so, this will then help the brand to potentially create a positive reputation and also increase their chances for customer loyalty. For the human influencer, if they are able to successfully promote the brand's product or service, they have a higher chance of being financially rewarded for their promotion by their endorsed brands (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Ki et al. 2020).

## **Virtual Influencers (IVs)**

Although human influencers came before virtual influencers (VIs), VIs are attempting to replicate and enhance the influence that human influencers possess. “They [virtual influencers] are designed and provided with a human-like personality by a team of people” (Ozdemir et al. 2023). Both types of influencers have the same goal and are intended to deliver the same results of persuasion of a target audience toward a brand. So why bring the virtual aspect? Ozdemir and his associates (2023) examine the overall research question of whether individuals perceive VIs as persuasive as human influencers. “Unlike humans, virtual influencers do not suffer from physiological limitations like sickness, fatigue, and aging, and their images in promotional social media posts are more easily controlled to align with brand interests.” Therefore, having the virtual aspect of VIs is more predictable, programmable, and reliable.

Brands communicate exactly what they want to be displayed by the VI without the fear of factors such as the influencer not following directions and the influencer becoming controversial because of outside factors and losing the audience. From this perspective, VIs can be in perfect alignment with a brand’s personality (Franke et al., 2023). It is important for a brand to be able to trust the influencer to express the brand and/or its product or service in the way the brand intends and wants (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Kim and Kim 2021). VIs can be programmed to do just that, unlike humans.

Brands are trusting the reputation of their image with an influencer that was previously outside of their organization. This is why VIs are increasingly becoming more appealing to brand marketers because of the controllable variables. Existing literature suggests that consumers nowadays have been more and more familiar with virtual agents in brand communications and viewing VIs significantly in favor of marketing efforts (e.g., Kim et al., 2023). Human influencers have environmental, physical, mental, and emotional factors that are uncontrollable (Ozdemir et al. 2023). These factors can prohibit the success of a human influencer from conveying the brand promotion to its target audience.

On the contrary, VIs are able to provide brand managers with more control over their behavior and content as they are AI robots and do not have hazard in which the offline life may potentially have negative impacts on the online identity (Kim et al., 2023) in cases where a human influencer may be difficult to work with due to poor attitude, a high maintenance or egotistical persona, or reputational damage caused by misconduct. A company can use the VI whenever it is convenient to them without having to get another human involved and work around time or physical constraints, which leads them to create posts on a regular basis (Kim et al., 2023).

Importantly, recent technological advancement has deepened the anthropomorphism of AI through the creation of digital humans (Crolc, Thomaz, Hadi, and Stephen 2022) who are computer generated virtual entities with taking full human form and mimicking human behavior, communication, mannerisms, facial expressions and more (Seymour, Lovallo, Riemer, Dennis, & Yuan, 2023). These personalities exist across a wide spectrum of not only use and function, but aesthetic and realism. With such anthropomorphic technologies, marketers can easily create VIs on the basis of a desired brand image and to use them for communication and social media activities because a team of human coders can design VIs by customizing to the target audience however the coding team wants or the brand wants for the message being sent through the sponsorship (Franke et al. 2023).

As a result, the anthropomorphism of VI can increase a brand’s awareness and consumer engagement with higher competitive advantage and are providing more attributes than their human counterparts. For a brand looking to implement VIs in their strategy, the spectrum of function and design and its application to the individual VI will be an important aspect that can differ across industries. For instance, Kim and his colleagues (2023) provide the related empirical evidence that if a VI possesses greater human characteristics, then the message in a social media post will be more effective for its audience.

Based on the evolving development of VIs and the accompanied benefits, the future research paradigm presented in the next section is thus focused on the VIs in the context of brand-consumer communications.

## **A Research Agenda of Virtual Influencers in Brand-Consumer Relationship**

In eyes of social media users, VIs and human influencers have a lot in common by sharing their personal life experiences and interacting with their followers (Ozdemir et al. 2023). The most imperative aspect of the utilization of VIs to understand is that they will continue to evolve. As time goes by, the ability to use them will only get easier as technology advances and becomes more accessible to everyone. VIs can have substantial benefits to a brand and their respective marketing and promotional strategies. First of all, the VI can be created and manipulated to be a near-perfect fit for the company (Ozdemir et al. 2023). Because it is not a real human, an entire backstory, personality

traits, thoughts, and opinions can be constructed that align with the exact brand image that the company wants. This allows for the brand communications to be stronger due to their consistency and alignment with company values, mission, and strategy. This versatility makes VIs an invaluable asset to a brand.

### **The Adoption of VIs for Brand Connection**

When taking a first look at establishing an emotional bond between the consumer and the brand, some may assume that human influencers are better for such a job on social media. The logic behind is that human influencers are able to form a relationship with their following, sometimes to the point where the followers feel like they know the influencer personally, making this influencer seem trustworthy in their minds, and giving off the impression that they are a trusted source of information (Kim and Kim 2021). This emotional connection makes followers excited and eager to hear about the influencers' thoughts or opinions, and they often feel a high level of satisfaction if their favorite influencer interacts with them (Ki et al. 2020; Hughes et al. 2019). This is good for the influencers as well as the brand. The influencer gains trust through that emotional connection, and thus has more 'control' over their followers, and the brand gains revenue through the sales these influencers are pushing their followers to make through the use of marketing campaigns (Leung et al. 2022).

If one takes a further look at VIs, however, he may find that VIs actually experiences the same phenomenon in certain circumstances. Kugler (2023) argues that the more the VI is anthropomorphized, the more followers become engaged and emotionally attached to them. That is, the more these VIs are starting to resemble humans in the ways they act, talk, interact, move, and look, the more their followers are prone to feel more connected to them the same way they would any other human influencer (Crollic et al. 2022). Franke et al. (2022) suggest that some VIs are given fully developed fictional lives with elaborate personalities and they display human emotions, such as heartbreak and affection, on social-media sites. While these VIs are starting to resemble human influencers in many ways, they are also similarly gaining an emotional brand bonding with the followers. Such brand connection may lead to increased engagement on posts (Delbaere, Michael, and Phillips 2021), which causes over time strong brand loyalty with the brand community (Habibi, Laroche, and Richard 2014; Munnukka, Karjaluoto, and Tikkanen 2015). All of these outcomes from the adoption of VIs are particularly beneficial to the endorsed brand by generating more steady sales.

Furthermore, as VIs gain more popularity and the technology surrounding them advances, they have the potential to not just be seen as VIs, but instead viewed as real people in the growing metaverse. With the anthropomorphism of VIs, the current VIs are not just chatbots; they are fully-fledged visual and conversational personas with complete visual bodies and faces, unique personalities, and entire backstories (Crollic et al. 2022). As a result, VIs have become highly technology-based marketing experts who are capable of increasing engagement by creating the content that features for the endorsed brand in real-world settings (Delbaere et al. 2021).

In today's ever-changing world, the possibilities are endless as to what the future holds for VIs. In those online brand communities, for instance, social media enables users to communicate not only with closely tied friends and acquaintances but also other individuals who are with predisposition by sharing common interests (Habibi et al. 2014; Munnukka et al. 2015). VIs are able to communicate with humans the same way other humans would as well, further blurring the lines between human and virtual influencers in general in the digital space (Franke et al. 2022).

Therefore, human and VIs alike are creating important emotional brand bonds with their followers, which is in turn giving social media marketing campaigns better turnout (**Proposition 1**).

### **The Congruity between VIs and the Endorsed Brands**

Congruity between the brand or product nature and the influencer is another factor to consider to induce the right mindset in the consumer. As an emerging technology seeing rapid growth, VIs have the ability to capture attention through their novelty. Here, novelty is defined as an attractive feature that a product or technology possesses based on its recent release (McQuiston 1989). For VIs, the recency of the technology and its public use provides this novelty-based attraction that draws in consumers. In a recent study, Franke, Groeppel-Klein, and Müller (2022) find that a VI is more effective for a technology-based product than a cosmetic one, where the human influencer performs better. In their study, consumers find it difficult to trust the recommendation of a cosmetic product from an artificial, although human-like, being that could not personally utilize the product and vouch for it. However, because of the technology background of VIs, recommendations in the technology-based product category are more effective in persuading customers to purchase. This is caused by the match-up effect on the brand-influencer congruency, wherein it is important to recognize the knowledge and expertise of the influencer and match it as best as possible to the nature of brand that the influencer endorses (Ozdemir et al. 2023).



Lou et al. (2023) find that novelty can support pre-existing knowledge on a technology to result in higher brand success. Their studies show that those who know of the information seeking abilities of VIs are more likely to use VIs for those reasons over other sources due to the novelty of the technology. This provides interesting opportunities for brands looking to stick out in a competitive market. If the product or service offered by a brand is matched in quality by competitors, increasing novelty can result in drawing in more attention without having to change the product or service itself among the consumers with the related pre-existing knowledge. For example, an automobile tire company may draw attention by having a VI mascot be the face of their social media. The novelty of this action may increase the perceived brand differentiation, and therefore attraction, of the brand compared to otherwise equal market competitors (Franke et al. 2022).

Thus, novelty is an important factor in the effectiveness of the VI campaign and should be weighed heavily in making the decision to launch said digital marketing campaign. For a long existing brand, the slow fade of its novelty over time should be tracked and measured. Brand managers looking to use a VI should make decisions with the temporary nature of novelty in mind. Going back to the previous example, if the tire business was too skeptical of the long-term success of VIs to dedicate their social media accounts to it, they could instead launch a campaign to interact with their VI for a limited time only. This would not only account for the novelty of VIs, but also increase the brand attractiveness.

Novelty is a strong driver of commercial interest and can provide a brand with the image of being advanced or up to date with technology. This can be especially beneficial for brands who want to be differentiated and appeal to younger generations (Franke et al., 2022). Therefore, when used properly, VIs may have tremendous potential to reach large audiences and target markets for certain brands (e.g., technology-based) that fit with the related natures of VIs (*Proposition 2*).

Though novelty is a broad factor that affects the entire industry as it emerges, there are more minute and specific aspects of VIs that need to be considered in the digital promotion plan. In the above sections, the VI serves to draw attention to the brand through use of a novel technology among consumers with pre-existing knowledge. However, the effectiveness of VIs changes with the digital promotion approach and it is necessary to analyze different modes of implementation for VIs to capture the scope of their use. In the context of brand communications, another important aspect of congruity is the fit between the appearance and attitude of VIs and the consumers for an endorsed brand (Ozdemir et al. 2023).

Human influencers have the upper hand in that they can express true emotion and this resonates better with consumers. Mostly due to the fact that these consumers can relate to the human influencers (Ozdemir et al. 2023). In trying to grow credibility for a VI, one needs to first examine factors that increase this credibility among human influencers. Herein lies a great beneficial opportunity for brands to shape their VI to match these qualities in a way that would be harder to do with a human influencer. One of the most important factors in marketing is brand reputation (Jones 2005) and brand equity (van Riel, Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). In trying to grow brand reputation and brand equity, product-endorser fit is of utmost significance (Kim and Park 2023). Product-endorser fit in the digital marketing context can be defined as the level of relevance between a brand or product and the influencers they work with (Leung et al. 2022; Campbell and Farrell 2020). For example, a mountain bike company may want to work with a popular biking or exercise influencer for a high level of product-endorser fit. Kim and Park (2023) find that not only does a good product-endorser fit create feelings of optimism for the brand, but that purchase intention and brand attachment also benefit from this relationship. This is where VIs can play a big role for brands. Sands et al., (2022) argue that these tailored beliefs, which positively reflect on the image of the brand, can strengthen the relationship between the brand and audience.

VIs are becoming popular in digital promotion campaigns and companies indeed have taken steps to provide the same resources that human influencers do. This includes authenticity of a VI's humanistic look and the behavior that can be predicted by the consumers. Um (2023) find that with the right amount of authentic human-likeness, consumers are in favor of the brand communications endorsed by the VI. Therefore, rather than spending large quantities of time and money to find and secure an influencer who perfectly satisfies the product-endorser relevance, the brand can create a VI that acts based on the parameters set for it (*Proposition 3*).

Additionally, congruity within the social media realm can be formed through a number of emotions. Consumers may prefer having influencers who can be empathic and emotional with them. In today's social media landscape, for instance, advertising campaigns often faces criticism for upholding unrealistic beauty expectations (Ozdemir et al. 2023). One can easily see how this could be an issue in selecting an influencer to endorse a brand, as the dimensions and characteristics of the influencer are entirely up to the design choice of the brand. As a matter of fact, the majority of human influencers today are women who have unrealistic or "perfect" bodies, and uphold what some believe to be harmful beauty standards (Moustakas et al., 2020). However, this can be avoided by designing a VI with traits that are reminiscent of the "flaws" present in the physical appearance of human beings. Sands et al., (2022)

provide an example of this in the popular Chinese virtual influencer Angie, who is designed with this problem in mind and instead has features like pimples, making it more relatable to the average person.

In such a case, the empathy congruency between the consumers and VI makes the endorsed brand more appealing than the outcome from a “perfect” human influencer. Mirowska and Arsenyam (2023) examine the role of empathy in consumer engagement with human versus virtual influencers. They find that individual differences in the need for empathy from human or virtual influencers play a large role in user engagement on social media. In particular, when made aware, participants who scored high on emotional contagion and cognitive empathy were more willing to follow VIs as they believed that VIs were better than human influencers. With congruent feelings of empathy between consumers and VIs, VIs are more preferred compared with human influencers by the consumers in brand communications.

Therefore, future research may examine the effects of the back stories and personalities given to VIs. Specifically, how consumer attitudes towards the VI might change with differing backgrounds and characteristics (Franke et al. 2022). It may also be beneficial to take a look at VIs from the perspective of the company or brand utilizing them as well as the human team creating them to understand the perspective from all sides and involved parties (*Proposition 4*).

### **Legal/Ethical Concerns of VIs in Brand Communications**

The uncanny valley refers to the idea that humans generally enjoy the humanization of robots until they reach a point where they are very similar, but still noticeably different than a real human, at which point we become uncomfortable or disturbed (Caballar 2019). The uncanny valley theory involves the perceptions of something fake as too closely resembling humans, even though it is known to be inauthentic (Blut, Wang, Wunderlich, and Brock 2021). Thus, it becomes a reason for a brand to use a VI in an animated style that does not attempt to mimic human features exactly.

It is essential for marketers to balance the consequences of making a VI that looks human-like. On one hand, the perceived similarity between a VI and a real human face can increase trustworthiness and authenticity, causing more positive brand exposure on a sponsored social media post. On the other hand, too lifelike of an appearance can come across as too perfect, resulting in feelings of creepiness and unease in consumers (Lou et al. 2023). This uncanniness leads to negative perceptions and emotions of the VI, and consequentially, the sponsored brand. To avoid the issue of the uncanny valley in using the VI, a company may use a cartoon style VI that recreates the exact features of a human. For example, the design of Miku does not try to accurately reproduce realistic human design traits, and instead takes the form of an animated character similar to a cartoon. This has had no negative impact on success however, as Miku remains one of the most popular VIs on the internet (Eisenbeis 2012).

Sometimes the uncanniness is invoked when we are unable to tell if an entity is human or not (Franke et al., 2022). In such a case, the creepiness resulting from uncanniness can be, alternatively, avoided if the companies using the VIs disclose the origins and identities of the robots as such because the perceived uncanniness of the VI is diminished when it is made clear that the entity is indeed virtual (Franke et al., 2022). A large topic of debate regarding this is whether or not VIs should require the disclosure of their identities as robots (Franke et al. 2022) in a brand-consumer relationship.

Theoretically, VIs are not capable of being genuine in the first place, which subsequently raises issues with transparency and authenticity. Although the current policies and procedures for VIs are limited in general due to their novelty, recently the Federal Trade Commission has extended its definition of endorsers to include VIs. There are also a few regulations in place due to this issue. In 2014, as part of the Dutch self-regulatory advertising system, a social media advertising code was introduced to try and help with these ethical concerns regarding transparency and authenticity. There is a specific component to this code involving disclosure to someone's following where influencers are required to disclose the relationship between the endorsed brand and the influencer although influencers are somewhat free to decide how this relationship is disclosed (Arayess 2017). From the consumer's aspect, this code is good news in terms of transparency as he can be assured of the partnership that is a paid promotion, or just an influencer genuinely sharing their thoughts on something. Owing to the dynamic nature of technology, one can expect these regulations to become more commonplace as future research is done.

Therefore, future research may benefit by delving deeper into the effects of the uncanny valley theory and the best legal/ethical practices of VIs in brand communications (*Proposition 5*).

### **VIs in Brand Persuasion**

The intention of using influencers, human or virtual, is to persuade consumers to purchase a company's products or services (Hughes et al. 2019). By seeing influencers using these products or services, the followers are then tempted to try it themselves. The success of influencers through the years can be attributed to their persuasion power. Brands take advantage of these persuasive powers and market them (Leung et al. 2022).

Influencers make it their priority to get endorsements from brands and use the power that they have. Style of influence can take a number of forms. For instance, Kim et al. (2023) examine the effectiveness of brand endorsements when used with VIs. They find positive message attitudes towards the human-like virtual influencers. When endorsements for certain brands are displayed, however, neither anime-like nor human-like VIs is preferred. Some researchers suggest that the type of messages used by the influencer best match the tone of messages (emotional vs rational) to the influencer type (human vs virtual). For example, Ozdemir et al. (2023) find that when using emotional brand message, it is best to use human influencers as they have the true ability to feel and experience such emotions, whereas VIs cannot. However, there is no significant effect on the influencer type in correlation to a rational message tone, that is, either type may be effectively utilized.

Using word of mouth as a form of persuasion is another way in brand persuasion, and the existing research has shown that the attractiveness of an influencer plays an important role. Chiu and Ho (2023) suggest that physical attractiveness, whether it's a macro, micro, or VI, affects consumer purchase intention although this is most significant with macro and VIs with physical attractiveness. In a similar vein, Kim and Park (2023) investigate how brand attachment formed with a VI can also alter purchase intention. They find that VIs' attractiveness has a positive impact on purchasing intention, and brand attachment can mediate the relationship between VIs' attractiveness and purchase intention.

On a related perspective on the creation of self-image in brand communications, human influencers may portray themselves in a portrayal that is not always reflective of who they really are. This may be a potential ethical concern because followers and audiences of these influencers can be made out to believe they love or support something, when in reality they do not. For example, a human influencer states that he lives a sustainable lifestyle and will only work with sustainable brands whose values align with his own. He attracts an audience of followers who share those same views and want to only buy products from those types of endorsed brands. But this same influencer may endorse a brand that is not really sustainable or in line with the followers' values whatsoever though his followers are misled to believe the endorsed brand is sustainable since the type of content this influencer normally posts is related to his claimed sustainability lifestyles. VIs, however, are controlled by some other being or programming, begging the questions of "who is crafting this persona, can I trust it, and who would be getting held accountable if ethical concerns like I mentioned earlier do arise?" These can also be the questions that are a big topic in the ethical concern area of influencer marketing as a whole (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Kim and Kim 2021).

As it currently stands, VIs are like clay that can be modeled at the whim of the creator. But for any brand looking to invest in this technology, they may want to ponder future rules and regulations that have yet to be implemented, and how they could seriously impact the success of the VI down the line. But what would these regulations look like? Meta Inc., owner of Facebook, has already started campaigning for ethical boundaries to be established for VIs and other entities, which some think could become a "virtual influencer code of ethics" (Sands et al. 2022, p.6). Callahan (2021) points out that consumers are already calling for VIs on social media to be marked with a tag that identifies them as virtual, AI created, or otherwise. For brands with VIs already established, the implementation of these rules, whether it be by law or terms of service of the media outlets used, could result in unforeseen costs needed to overhaul the VI to comply with such guidelines. More costs could include needing to increase the amount of people on the team behind the VI, or paying for a hypothetical license to use the technology if regulations reach such an extent, though this is admittedly speculation. Furthermore, if these rules do indeed supersede social media terms of service and become law, future violations could result in fines or other penalties for the brand.

Therefore, future research may focus on what other forms of VI features such as physical appearance, formats of appearance, and communication styles can be helpful in creating a VI image that a brand wants to associate with itself (**Proposition 6**).

## Conclusions and Discussions

Marketers can effectively utilize VIs by taking into consideration consumer perceptions of the many factors involved. Carefully crafting social media content for their VIs by noting consumer motivations for following VIs such as their novelty, ability to communicate information about emerging technology, entertainment value, aesthetic appeal, social interaction, and a general desire to stay in the know (Lou et al. 2023).

The above six propositions raised in this article call for further empirical research for supporting evidence in the future. VIs are such a new topic that only little empirical evidence has been concluded due to limited knowledge and the number of studies have conducted. If a person already knows about or follows a VI, for instance, the perception from this person on the VI may be biased and different from those who are unfamiliar with the same VI due to a parasocial connection or emotional attachment (Franke et al. 2022). As VIs continue to grow in popularity, finding an unbiased population may be difficult and those skew the results of certain studies. Additional future research, therefore, could be to explore the differences in consumer perception from a follower as compared to a non-follower standpoint on a brand.

The most important factors marketers should consider include making their VIs relatable, balancing the effects of the uncanny valley theory, and utilizing the best-match theory in alignment with the type of brand perception, product category, and transparency in communications (Blut et al. 2021). Specifically, it is best to use VIs when striving for an innovative and novel brand image, when promoting technology products as opposed to products like cosmetics. The latter objectives have a better fit with human influencers in the minds of consumers. It is also best practice for marketers to disclose the identities of the VIs to mitigate the effects of the uncanny valley theory as well as decrease negative impressions of authenticity and credibility.

These factors will give marketers the most optimal utilization of VIs so long as they implement the correct practices. When used correctly, VIs can have just as good, if not better, outcomes as human influencers in relation to brand awareness. They can also decrease the risks of working with human endorsers such as physical restraints, difficult personalities, and possible reputational damage caused by scandal. In the long run, marketers can successfully mold a VI personality to be a perfect match with their brand, a process that should be carefully thought out and considered to induce the best-case scenario outcomes.

## **General Discussion**

Much has been mentioned about the ability of a brand to design its VIs in multiple ways. Namely, the majority of VIs can be divided into two aesthetic categories: human-like virtual influencers, and anime-like virtual influencers, or HVI and AVI respectively (Kim et al. 2023). This distinction allows one to analyze the effectiveness of different VI aesthetics for particular applications. One may ask: which form should a brand choose? For brand endorsement effectiveness, HVIs are found to be more successful than AVIs at getting positive engagement, however there is no significant difference in effectiveness between the two when the sponsorship is disclosed (Kim et al. 2023). Some researchers have argued that HVIs gain more trust from the audience, and are therefore more effective at marketing, due to their attractiveness and human-like features (Franke et al., 2022). A retort to that argument though would be the previously mentioned “uncanny valley,” which could make finding the proverbial sweet spot harder with HVIs, finding a look that is realistic yet not unnerving. Furthermore, with sponsorship disclosure increasing on social media platforms and the aforementioned calls for VI regulation (Sands et al., 2022), any perceived benefits of using an HVI over an AVI may soon be irrelevant. For these reasons, a brand invests in AVIs over HVIs, as any benefits of HVIs come with risk of falling into the uncanny valley, and promoting harmful beauty standards. It is also important to note that although AVIs do not try to recreate human aesthetics realistically, this has no negative effect on the amount of humanization consumers apply to the VI; in other words, consumers do not perceive AVIs as less human or “real” than HVIs because humans already tend to anthropomorphize machines and apply human social norms (Sands et al., 2022).

Whether or not a brand decides to use an HVI or AVI, there is one obvious advantage to using a VI of any sort, and that is the longevity. Unlike their human counterparts, VIs do not suffer from fatigue, sickness, aging, or other ailments that may limit the effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency of a human influencer (Ozdemir et al. 2023). Human influencers also have other obligations that will take time away from the brand, such as other jobs and families, but also time spent eating, sleeping etc. A VI created by a brand exists solely to serve the brand. This could be direct service to the brand, like sponsored posts and product promotions, or indirect service, getting more eyes on the brand through popularity of the VI alone. As such, a VI can be employed by the brand at any time of day, any day of the week. This could allow a brand to, for example, have its VI target posts to certain global markets at different peak times of engagement. It could also be possible using a human influencer, as a brand can pre-record posts or videos and post them whenever the market research says would be the most optimal. However, using a VI would allow the brand to have live engagement with its audience through chats or other means of direct communication at any time of the day around the world. This level of interactivity is not logistically possible when employing human influencers. Ozdemir et al (2023) also point out that this ease and consistency of market targeting is also cheaper than using a human influencer. Thus, for any brands worrying that this constant use of the VI would result in high costs, they would still be lower than using human influencers for the same amount of production.

The evaluation of a potential future application of VIs will serve to benefit the brand: VIs are becoming part of virtual reality realms. Brands want to advertise on an accessible platform where their campaign will get high engagement. Though virtual reality has had a high entry price for most of its existence, it is now more accessible, and cheaper, than ever before, and especially popular among the younger generations that VIs often target (Pan and Hamilton 2018). Interacting with entities in a virtual reality space provides researchers and doctors with an opportunity to measure the brain waves and processes of a subject while they manipulate the environment they exist in, potentially being able to diagnose certain conditions (Pan and Hamilton, 2018). Using similar measurement technology, one can see how effective marketing is in a virtual reality space. One study found that, for the purposes of marketing and advertising, tactics in virtual reality were more effective than advertising from social media influencers (Scholz et al. 2018). The major difference between virtual reality and social media influencer endorsement lies in their purposes. That is, social media influencers provide consumers with important information about the material aspects about products, whereas augmented reality helps consumers to imagine a product within the context of other products they use (Scholz et al. 2018). One can imagine that the confluence of these approaches would be advertising in a virtual reality space, using a VI. This way the consumer can gain both information and helpful imagery, further boosting a brand's image. Though there is not much current literature on the use of VIs within virtual reality, there are advantages to both approaches which strongly indicate the combination of the two would create a successful marketing approach.

Brands have much to be uncertain of in the future. VIs are an unregulated technology that American legal bureaucratism will surely catch up with. Furthermore, brands must traverse the increasingly polarized cultural landscape of the internet with a fairly new technology, increasing risk of offensive behavior (Moustakas et al. 2020). These uncertain times however create a unique opportunity for brands to capitalize on the unregulated market and seize the aspect of novelty which is so important for gaining interest (Franke, et al. 2022). More novel approaches will present themselves over time as well, like virtual reality implementation. Many other issues presented, like upholding harmful beauty standards and the presence of the uncanny valley, can be avoided by using an anime-like virtual influencer over a human-like one, a strong benefit for brands looking to avoid controversy. These VIs allow brands to work with them on their own schedule, not needing to abide by the restrictions and costs presented by working with a real human. Furthermore, one can decrease the likelihood of these influencers making offensive comments or otherwise by creating the aforementioned "blackout zones." Recognizing bias is imperative in this discussion, as the implementation of VIs can be a way for us to reflect on ourselves, or the brand we represent. Any bias shown through the VI is simply a reflection of the biases we hold as humans (Shin et al. 2022). The presentation of this bias by virtual entities should serve as a stark reminder for us as individuals and brands to recognize these biases in ourselves and strive for social betterment. Not only is this a moral obligation, but doing so will create successful algorithms for a technology that will only grow in scope and popularity. VIs can be a great opportunity for brand growth, but one must realize the gravity that comes with creating guidelines for this new form of intelligence to follow.

## Summary

VIs can help with a company's marketing strategy because they have more to offer than human influencers. They are adaptable, versatile, and consistent which is beneficial to marketers. VIs can easily adapt to different demographics, making them easy to adapt to any country or market (Kugler 2023). They can be human-like, animal-like, two- or three-dimensional animations; they have high versatility and are able to change into different forms. And VIs stay consistent with their activity, engagement, and promotion of the company. They also stay loyal to their company and will represent them in a positive light (Seymour et al. 2023). However, VIs also have risks. If companies are not transparent enough with consumers about the artificial design of their influencers this can cause a decrease in consumers trust (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Ki et al. 2020). If companies do not use VIs at appropriate times it can decrease their value and effectiveness on consumers behavior. And a wrongly designed VI can lead to negative reactions from consumers (Seymour et al. 2023).

Human influencers are also valuable in creating successful marketing tactics. They are more organic and genuine than AIs. And they have a higher ability to create bonds with their followers more than what VIs are capable of (Ozdemir et al. 2023). These real-life consumer-brand relationships are important and they can only be made by humans. Consumers also generally prefer humans over AIs (Franke et al. 2022). Humans have emotions, an important factor when dealing with customers. This is an important feature that AI cannot replicate (Ozdemir et al. 2023).

When comparing each influencer's strengths and weaknesses, it's easy to tell that each has important qualities that the other cannot obtain. Although it is up to companies to decide which is more suitable for their marketing strategy, it seems that utilizing both would be most beneficial to marketers. VIs can do more than humans, but they also have more costly risks and might have a harder time gaining the trust of viewers. While human influencers lack,

they are human and can easily connect to their followers on a deeper level. Using both types of influencers would be most favorable because each complements the parts that the other does not have.

Finally, it may be especially important to keep in mind when the target audience of the VI is children or younger adults. This market represents a strong benefit of VI marketing because the technology resonates particularly with the younger crowd (Haenlein et al. 2020). One of the most successful ways a brand can engage with younger generations is “digital interaction,” or simply interacting with this generation in an online setting (Sands et al. 2022). As such, it makes sense that any company or brand trying to target a younger audience would do so in the online environment. As proposed in this article, VIs who are a good fit for the brand boost brand engagement, and can be tailored to have a good product-endorser fit (Kim and Park 2023). Furthermore, the novelty of this technology provides further interest, and gives the impression of being up to date or “hip” with emerging technology (Franke, et al., 2022). This impression of being up to date with technology is specifically attractive to the younger generation (Sands et al., 2022). Thus, VIs are effective at engaging with younger people because they exist in the online spaces those generations usually occupy. Novelty is intrinsically attractive to a younger generation, and the tailoring of product-endorser fit can further hone in on appealing to certain demographics.

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# Summary Brief

## Unveiling the Illusion: The Influence of CGI Disclosure on Brand Trust and Attitude

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*This research investigates the impact of Computer-Generated Influencers (CGIs) disclosure of identity (i.e., that they are robots) on brand attitudes and trust. Two studies, one in the U.S. and one in Brazil, are conducted to examine how consumers respond to CGI before and after a disclosure that the CGI is not human. Findings indicate that a disclosure negatively affects consumers' perceptions towards the CGI, which in turn affects brand trust and attitude. Furthermore, this study reveals a cultural boundary by indicating that the general propensity to trust by consumers in collectivistic countries overrides the impact of CGI's social presence. Our findings enhance understanding of how CGIs might backfire on brand performance and offer insights for marketing and policy on how to avoid this.*

### Introduction

In recent years, brands like Samsung, Louis Vuitton, and Puma have turned to computer-generated imagery influencers (CGIs) as a marketing strategy. CGIs are virtual influencers created through computer-generated imagery, with or without artificial intelligence capabilities (Thomas and Fowler, 2020). Brands are attracted to CGIs due to their substantial and growing number of social media followers, particularly on platforms like Instagram. Prominent CGIs have millions of followers and generate three times the engagement of human influencers (Leighton, 2019).

Research indicates that building emotional connections, credibility, consistency, and transparency are key factors for effective marketing by both human influencers and CGIs (Ferchaud et al., 2018; Moustakas et al., 2020). Human influencers can establish positive connections with consumers, are seen as credible, and have a positive impact on consumers' brand perceptions and purchase intentions. In fact, a significant majority of consumers worldwide trust influencer marketing more than traditional advertising (Fertik, 2020). However, the question remains whether CGIs can establish the same level of connection with consumers as human influencers.

CGIs are designed to appear human, although they are not, and their non-human nature is not required to be disclosed (Hoffower, 2019; Sokolov, 2019). This lack of regulation and disclosure are significant because a considerable portion of Gen Z and Millennial consumers follow CGIs without realizing they are not real individuals (Haileyesus, 2020). When consumers mistakenly attribute humanness to CGIs and later discover the truth, their expectations are disrupted. Such a disclosure, whether from the CGI itself or another consumer, can affect the credibility of the CGI and subsequently influence consumers' trust and attitude towards the brand.

While research on human influencers is extensive, limited evidence exists regarding the unintended effects of CGIs, despite calls for further research in this area (Appel et al., 2020; Voorveld, 2019). This study aims to address two critical questions: (1) Can consumers recognize that CGIs are not human? and (2) How does knowing this, through a disclosure, impact consumers' trust and attitude towards a brand? The study draws primarily on two theories: expectation disconfirmation and social presence. Additionally, considering the global nature of CGIs and their audience, the study examines two cultures with different self-construals, namely the United States (individualistic) and Brazil (collectivistic). Cultural differences have been found to influence consumer reactions to social media influencers and robots. By conducting a study in these two countries, the research aims to provide insights into the impact of CGIs on consumer responses to brands.

### Background

When consumers perceive something to be more human, they also perceive greater Social Presence (SP) (Nowak and Biocca, 2003). The concept of SP was first introduced by Short et al. (1976) and described as the "realness" of other persons in an interaction during a mediated communication. In other words, SP relates to the perceived connection between a person interacting via technology with another (Fulk et al., 1987; Rice, 1993; Walther, 1996). Past literature supports that social presence is greater for humans compared to less human or human-like entities. For CGIs, which are so human-like they are expected to be human, SP is likely high.

Previous research on the effect of disclosure of the non-human identity of chatbots has found that consumers' reactions to chatbot disclosure (vs. no disclosure) are mainly negative. For instance, studies have found that a disclosure

of the non-human identity of chatbots alienate customers (Puntoni et al., 2021), and leads them to perceive the agent (in this case the robot) as less persuasive (Shi et al., 2020), efficient (Ishowo-Oloko et al., 2019), empathetic and knowledgeable (Luo et al., 2019). Expectation theory offers an explanation (Anderson, 1983; Howlett et al., 2009). The theory predicts that consumers naturally form expectations, which are individual beliefs about offerings (Olson and Dover, 1976). Numerous sources of information can form one's expectations including disclosures, publicity, word of mouth, and marketing communications (Zeithaml et al., 1993). Expectations influence product evaluations and initial purchase decisions, as well as subsequent purchase behavior. Once expectations are formed, consumers can also be exposed to information (e.g., a disclosure) that confirms or contradicts their expectations. In the latter case, a discrepancy between this new information and prior expectations can negatively affect consumers' response (Olson and Dover, 1976). When a consumer sees a CGI, the initial expectation formed by them is that they're dealing with a human, because the influencer is designed to look human. Later information revealing the CGI is a robot will disconfirm this expectation. And as seen in the assimilation-contrast theory, when expectations are disconfirmed, a magnified unfavorable response can be expected (Sherif et al., 1958).

Furthermore, a cross-cultural study on human-robot interaction conducted by Li et al. (2010) revealed that individuals from collectivist cultures, such as China and Korea, demonstrated greater engagement and higher levels of trust in robots compared to individuals from an individualist culture like Germany. The researchers suggested that this difference could be attributed to the higher inclination of individuals from collectivist cultures to accept others' suggestions and be influenced by those who interact with them, as opposed to individuals from individualist cultures. Based on these findings, it can be hypothesized that collectivistic consumers may be less affected by the disclosure that a CGI is not human. Their focus may lie more on the emotional connection they feel with the influencer and their predisposition to trust the CGI, regardless of its non-human nature.

### Key Findings

For the U.S., we found that disclosure negatively affects SP perceptions (-2.82,  $p < .001$ ), and SP perceptions positively predict CGI credibility (.45,  $p < .001$ ), which indicates that the more human and real the CGI is perceived to be, the more credible it is to consumers. Moreover, familiarity moderates the effect of disclosure on SP perceptions (.48,  $p < .001$ ). CGI credibility positively predicts brand attitude (.27,  $p < .001$ ) and positively predicts brand trust (.16,  $p < .001$ ). Lastly, the indirect effect of disclosure on brand attitudes – via SP perceptions and then CGI credibility – was found to be statistically significant (effect = 5.34% C.I. [.01, .10]). Also, the indirect effect of disclosure on brand trust was found to be statistically significant when prior familiarity was lower (effect = 3.35% C.I. [.01, .07]).

For Brazil, disclosure negatively affects SP perceptions (-.67,  $p = .009$ ), and SP perceptions positively predict CGI credibility (.54,  $p < .001$ ). However, unlike with the US sample, familiarity does not moderate the effect of disclosure on SP perceptions for those in a collectivistic culture (-.11,  $p = .475$ ). Furthermore, CGI credibility positively predicts brand attitude (.33,  $p = .003$ ). However, CGI credibility does not predict brand trust (.10,  $p = .143$ ) or brand attitudes (.00,  $p = .979$ ). The indirect effect of moderated mediation (disclosure → SP perception → CGI credibility → brand attitude) for brand attitude was not found to be significant (index = .00, C.I. (-.03, .02)), nor was the indirect effect significant for brand trust (index = .00, C.I. (-.42, .04)).

The findings of this study contribute to theoretical knowledge and have practical implications for marketers. It suggests that a disclosure about a CGI being non-human has a negative impact on consumers' perceptions of the CGI, which subsequently affects brand trust and attitude. Moreover, the study reveals a cultural boundary, indicating that the general propensity to trust in collectivistic countries overrides the influence of a CGI's social presence.

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## **Session 5.4: Money & Branding**

**Chair:** Scot Squires

## Summary Brief

# **I'm Broke. Should I Use a Credit Card? Generation Z's Attitude Toward Debt**

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Scot A. Squires, Ferris State University

This study, which looks at young consumer's perceptions and attitudes toward debt, adopts a quantitative research design by extending the use of a well-established scale for measuring consumer attitudes about debt and applies it to students at a single university. This early research data reveals that members of Generation Z find debt to be undesirable, with females indicating that debt has negatively impacted them more than their male counterparts. These findings have important implications for research and practice by providing constructive data for use in evaluating and amending today's businesses approaches for their young customers.

# Summary Brief

## Understanding What Drives Cryptocurrency Purchase Intentions

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Bhaskar Upadhyaya Subedi., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, USA

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*This study explores the impact that consumers personality traits, using the Big Five model, has on FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) when predicting consumers purchase intentions of cryptocurrencies. While consumer behaviorists theorize that information search is an important aspect of the consumer decision making process, marketers have yet to integrate consumers degree of cryptocurrency knowledge as a conditional factor that influences their cryptocurrency purchase behavior. Relying on trait theory, results from this study suggests that FOMO predicts the likelihood of investing in cryptocurrencies for all personality traits except for extraversion. The findings of this study are significantly important as we observe that FOMO is a driving force behind cryptocurrency participation for agreeable and neurotic consumers. However, FOMO negatively mediated cryptocurrency investment likelihood for consumers with high openness to experience and conscientiousness. Important managerial implications are derived from these results.*

### Research background

Cryptocurrency as an alternative form of investment has been growing in the recent years with 46 million Americans (13.7% of the population) owning cryptocurrencies (Triple A, 2023). This number is expected to rise with more than 50% of these consumers seeing cryptocurrency ownership primarily as an investment rather than a substitute for traditional cash (Anaza et al., 2022). Despite carrying unprotected risks and greater volatility than other investments, consumer spending in this alternative form does not seem to be slowing down.

Using trait theory, we examine the effects of the Big Five personality traits and fear of missing out (FOMO) on consumers purchase intentions of cryptocurrencies, while investigating the conditional role of consumers' cryptocurrency knowledge. Specifically, we found that for consumers who are open to experiences and highly conscientious, FOMO decreased their likelihood of purchasing cryptocurrencies, whereas for agreeable and neurotic consumers, FOMO increased their purchase intentions. Agreeable and neurotic consumers were only motivated to purchase cryptocurrency due to their fears of missing out. In the absence of such fears, highly neurotic and agreeable consumers were less likely to purchase cryptocurrencies. Furthermore, we highlighted the conditional effect of knowledge on the mediating role of FOMO. Interestingly, we found that knowledge of cryptocurrency decreased FOMO for extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness personality traits while increasing FOMO for agreeableness and neuroticism traits. Our study is the first to use the Five Factor Model to expand upon the role of knowledge and FOMO within the context of cryptocurrency consumption.

### Conclusion

This research contributes to the marketing literature in several ways. The key finding is the acknowledgement that while FOMO can strongly influence consumers' decisions regarding cryptocurrency consumption, its impact varies across the different Big Five personality traits. Interestingly, our results indicate that the psychological factors driving cryptocurrency consumption may differ from those associated with stock market participation, which establishes the grounds for future research on such comparative studies. More importantly, this research highlights the importance of considering personality traits and knowledge as important behavioral drivers that impact consumers involvement in the cryptocurrency market.

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## **Session 5.5: It's Strategic**

**Chair:** Melanie Koskie

# Summary Brief

## Relational and Financial Perspectives in B2B Supplier Relationships

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*B2B relationships rely on commitment from both supplier and buyer. This commitment can be built on social capital (affective) or financially motivated (calculative). However, in this paper we argue that the supplier's power—defined as the buyer's perception of the supplier's industry reputation—influences both types of commitment. Specifically, industry-leading suppliers may garner the same commitment even when they are less willing to adapt or even produce lower quality products. First, we position relationship specific adaptation and product quality as our key independent variables, suggesting that they translate to more loyal partners and higher levels of performance. Next, we advance that this influence is due in part to commitment to the partner; however, that commitment is based on those independent variables. Through two studies, we present a moderated mediation model that underscores the importance of supplier brand recognition on B2B relationships.*

### Introduction

B2B relationships succeed or fail based on a host of factors, but perhaps none is more important than commitment to that relationship—particularly from the buyer's perspective (Morgan and Hunt, 1993; Padgett et al., 2020). Commitment can be relational in nature, relying on positive emotions and satisfaction from the partnership (affective). Through two studies, we make three contributions to the literature. First, we isolate affective commitment as the mediating mechanism between relational antecedents and outcomes. Second, we concurrently model calculative commitment as a mediator between economic antecedents and outcomes. Perceptions of high-quality products leads to a dependence based on switching costs—but commitment based on financial reliance acts as the mechanism in that relationship. Finally, we uncover the influence of relationship power on each of these relationships.

### Conceptual framework

The relationship marketing literature is vast, but there is general agreement that trust and commitment lead to stronger relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006). Strong relationships lead to positive outcomes for both firms in a B2B setting, including loyalty (e.g., Cater and Cater, 2010), product innovation (e.g., Zhang and Zhu 2019), and financial performance (Padgett; Hopkins and Williams 2020). Hence, it is mutually beneficial to work toward a strong partnership because it can strengthen the position of both firms in the marketplace. In essence, a robust partnership can elevate firms to a higher standing than either could achieve independently (e.g., Palmatier, Dant and Grewal 2007). Applying social exchange theory, we posit the following:

H1: The positive effects of relationship specific adaptation on (a) relationship value dependence (b) loyalty (c) strategic performance and (d) financial performance are mediated by affective commitment to the relationship.

H2: The positive effects of product quality on (a) switching cost dependence (b) loyalty (c) strategic performance And (d) financial performance are mediated by calculative commitment to the relationship.

H3: Relationship power will moderate the effects of relationship specific adaptation on affective commitment. Specifically, increased relationship power will reduce the effects of relationship specific adaptation on affective commitment.

H4: Relationship power will moderate the effects of product quality on calculative commitment. Specifically, increased relationship power will reduce the effects of product quality on calculative commitment.

### Research Methodology

Two studies were undertaken with the purpose of testing each of the proposed conceptual models. A survey was created via Qualtrics and data was collected through an online panel (Prolific). Existing scales were used to tap

each construct. Psychometric properties were assessed via confirmatory factor analysis while the hypothesized relationships were tested via SPSS PROCESS. All tests demonstrated the construct reliability and validity of each measure. Of the four hypotheses, H1, H2 and H3 were supported.

### **General Discussion**

In the B2B environment, relationships are fundamental to success, but there are myriad factors to consider when partnering with a buyer or supplier. Our research investigated how different types of commitment act as mediating mechanisms which allow relationship aspects (or supplier value props) to influence outcomes. Specifically, loyalty, strategic performance, and financial performance all increased when buyers were committed to the supplier—either for economic or relational reasons. However, the key takeaway involves relationship power, which we look at both theoretically and practically.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

Social Exchange Theory provides a blueprint for how relationships succeed or fail, both at the individual and firm-level. Tantamount to the focal assertion of this theory is the ratio of costs and benefits attributed to each party of said relationship. Understanding that B2B relationships are not uniform and consistent in every situation, but rather, are dynamic and varied (Jain et al., 2014; Scheer et al., 2015), we apply SET as a means of explaining how different motives (benefits sought), impact outcomes. We thereby contribute to the extant literature by extending our understanding of the varied nature of supplier/buyer relationships. Specifically, we accomplish this by proposing two separate conceptualizations, one based on the relational aspects of this association and the other focusing on performance/economic gains.

### ***Managerial Implications***

In essence, the stronger your brand recognition, the greater margin for error in the relationship. What we mean is, adapting to your buyer leads to affective commitment, but prominent suppliers may not have to adapt to gain that same commitment because they have the power in the relationship. Buyers in this case enjoy the halo effect of partnering with an industry leader, and may be willing to overlook the supplier's stubbornness to enjoy the visibility of the partnership. In our study, dependence emerged based on the value derived from that relationship. In essence, the advantages of being associated with such a strong brand outweighed the disadvantages of a less responsive supplier. Additionally, such suppliers may not have to produce as high quality products for the same reason. When a brand's industry standing is strong (perhaps even initially built upon quality), it may enjoy calculative commitment based on its brand name.

### ***Limitations and Extensions***

In our study we utilize panel data for the purpose of offering results that are generalizable to a large population of players within the buyer/seller dyad. While we draw insights from a more "universal" perspective in our study, it may be prudent to investigate more deeply the differences that exist across different industries. Such inquiry could assess differences in firms focusing on goods versus services, for-profit/non-profit/government entities and manufacturers versus resellers, just to name a few. Such research could prove helpful in predicting which paths in our conceptual models are impacted more by external power perceptions. Our models show a stronger relational pull, but this may vary by industry or culture. Hence, we urge B2B scholars to examine and assess these possibilities in the future.

**REFERENCES AVAILALABLE UPON REQUEST**



## Summary Brief

# Business Strategies of Entertainment Entrepreneurs: A Case Abstract of Entrepreneurship Marketing Orientation in Understanding Behaviors of Founder- CEOs

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Business strategy is the strategic initiatives entertainment entrepreneurs pursue in creating value for family firms and stakeholders to gain competitive advantages. Successful entertainment entrepreneurs eventually become Founder-CEOs concerned about creating societal and financial value through marketing channels. From a macro-perspective, marketing channels consist of the people, organizations, and activities necessary Founder-CEOs to promote and sell products and services. Business strategies for entertainment Founder-CEOs provide several insights into their behaviors. Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a crucial behavior concept Founder-CEOs in crafting strategies for innovative ventures (Davis et al., 2010). Scholars have long contended the relevance of EO representing behavior patterns in understanding Founder-CEOs Shirokova et al., 2022; Zhang et al. (2020). Thus, these mindsets explain processes, practices, and decision making. Family firms act entrepreneurially and organically, especially in the entertainment industry.

### Teaching Discussion

Entertainment entrepreneurs operate within a competitive industry. A competitive industry means innovation is a must.

1. Discuss real-world examples of business strategies of Founder-CEOs.
2. Discuss ah-ha research moments by defining entrepreneurship marketing orientation for producing music and movies.
3. Provide students with self-assessments to include: (a) industry specialization, (b) environmental preferences, and overall cultural norms.

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# Full Paper

## Stated Social Intentions Among Latin American Entrepreneurs: A Logistic Model

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*Prior research has studied the causes of social entrepreneurial intent. This article investigates the individual features of Latin American entrepreneurs and the factors that predict their propensity to declare their intention to start a business that is more social. Using 254 self-described seasoned business owners, this model finds that age range (18-34), level of education (bachelor's or higher), and volunteer experience (greater than 12 months) improve the likelihood of an entrepreneur declaring their intention to engage in social entrepreneurship. This study's findings can begin to explain how individual characteristics influence can impact Latin American business owners stated social entrepreneurship aspirations.*

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurial Intention, Individual Characteristics, Logistic Regression

### Introduction

Social Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI) follows the same foundations as entrepreneurship which is classically defined as the exploitation of opportunity (Shane & Venkataraman, 2001) with an added social element<sup>2</sup> (Mair & Noboa, 2006; Hockerts, 2017). The statement "I want to be more socially entrepreneurial" has significant implications for the entrepreneur's identity (i.e. conscious of social and moral causes beyond one's self-identity) (Jones, et al., 2008). Even though the mere declaration of social entrepreneurial intentions may have added social advantages for enterprises (i.e. causes to benefit society overall which have positive impacts on reputation) (Peredo & McLean, 2006; Sekliuckiene & Kisielius, 2015), further research is necessary to better comprehend the intentions of existing business owners. More importantly, questions surrounding the individual characteristics of social entrepreneurs (i.e. individual demographics, education, and experience) are relevant because of the importance that is placed on environmental protections and practices in today's world. Interestingly, SEI as a field of study has only come into prominence in a post-2000s era and has dramatic effects on entrepreneurship (Hockerts, 2017), specifically by the exploitation of opportunities that matter to entrepreneurs themselves to ones that have broader more tangible benefits that impact societies worldwide.

Other studies have investigated the antecedents (Shaw & Carter, 2007) and even the community characteristics (Bacq & Alt, 2018) surrounding characteristics of SEI. However, these works have only partially analyzed individual demographic variables (Luc, 2020) in order to construct a logistic model for calculating the odds ratio of present business owners who have *declared intentions* to become more social as a societal benefit. This research hinges on Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (Duska & Whelan, 1975) as a rationale to better understand how moral reasoning leads a new generation of entrepreneurs more towards SEI as a benefit for not only entrepreneurship, but society as a whole (Luc, 2020). This research addresses these concerns by offering a logistic regression model that can be used to better explain how individual demographics influence one's motivations to participate in social entrepreneurial ventures.

This study's objective is to continue the discussion as to why a business owner may claim their intention to be more social and have a greater social impact on their present firm(s) as a benefit to society. These include age, gender, company ownership, and education. This study makes numerous additions to the present body of knowledge. First, the logistic model gives odds ratios for a better understanding of the possibility that an entrepreneur will express their social goals and continues the conversation on how these features predict social entrepreneurial intentions. Specifically, as newer generations find value in social activities and benefits. Moreover, this paper contributes to the field's comprehension of how individual identities influence the expression of social intention by way of reasoning and moral development.

### Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Various antecedents of social entrepreneurship have been found in the literature (i.e. experience and self-efficacy) (Ziegler, 2011; Hockerts, 2017). Personal attributes such as age, student status, and obtained degrees have aided in comprehending the factors that impact businesses and social awareness (Hockerts, 2017). However, the literature rarely places interest in the motivations of generations as a means to better understand SEI. Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development further explains how increased awareness has a substantial impact on one's ability to state their

intentions to be more socially conscious and have a growing need to support society in a positive manner through their entrepreneurial activities (Hockerts, 2017).

### ***Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development***

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development illustrates the entrepreneur's analysis of right and wrong decisions about justice, responsibility, and behavior in social situations (Wilhelm & Gunawong, 2016). Specifically, an entrepreneur would develop higher order moral judgment through six consecutive stages of cognitive reasoning classified into three levels (Wilhelm & Gunawong, 2016). In the first level or pre conventional level, an entrepreneur's moral judgment of right and wrong would be in response to cultural rules of consequences of the entrepreneur's actions (stage 1) or the instrumentality of the exchange relationship based on action (stage 2) (MacDougall, Martin, Bagdasarov, & Mumford, 2014). In the second level or conventional level, an entrepreneur would make moral decisions depending on family or a significant others' expectations (stage 3) or some other authority based in rules and laws (stage 4) (MacDougall, Martin, Bagdasarov, & Mumford, 2014). In the third level or post conventional level, moral decisions are based on a social contract including personal values and individual rights (stage 5) as well as self-chosen universal beliefs (stage 6) rather than on external authority (MacDougall, Martin, Bagdasarov, & Mumford, 2014).

Moral reasoning is an important component to entrepreneurs' moral decision making when considering SEI depending upon social information. Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development provides a somewhat standardized measure of the structure of the entrepreneur's moral development based upon their responses to ethical dilemmas (Kipper, 2017). However, Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development assumes that an entrepreneur would master each developmental level before moving on to the next level and the higher levels surpass the characteristics of the previous level (Kipper, 2017). In addition, the context of the environment as well as the characteristics of the ethical dilemma should be taken into consideration with the entrepreneurs responses (MacDougall, Martin, Bagdasarov, & Mumford, 2014). Therefore, SEI may be predicted utilizing Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development taking into account social information, environmental context, and the details of the ethical dilemma.

### ***Age***

Age, which is frequently used as a demographic and control variable (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016); however, this work will further demonstrate that age can be a significant predictor of behavior, and specifically within decision making. Previous research from Morris et al. (2005) discovered that age affected technological decisions. Furthermore, age, maturity, and knowledge development has also been shown to influence investment decisions and behavior (Chavali & Mohan Raj, 2016). Although not all entrepreneurs mature in the same way, age and immaturity are characteristics that can influence the entrepreneur's investments and activities.

One may question the influence of age on ethical behavior (Peterson et al., 2001), especially given the importance of sustainability in business (Crane et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs' ethical decision-making and judgment (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2013) indicate their ability to act appropriately.

The effect of all of the items listed above on decision-making can be better understood utilizing Kohlberg's Model of Moral Development. Kohlberg's model asserts that moral dilemmas influence decision making from an early age because of the need to conform to more-current standards (i.e. social and environmental awareness) affecting moral reasoning (Baek, 2002; Yamamura & Stedham, 2011). Despite this, it is essential for younger entrepreneurs to be more socially conscious than their elder counterparts because society has placed greater emphasis on socially and environmentally friendly conscious business practices (Ziadat, 2010). As a result of these previous findings, we hypothesize:

*H1: Age will have a significant impact on the stated intention of the business owner to go more social, such that those who are younger will be more likely to state their social intention.*

### ***Education***

Education's influence on entrepreneurship is developing and is frequently emphasized in college curricula and outcomes (Katz, 2003, Martin, McNally, & Kay, 2013). Specifically, a bachelor's degree or higher is significant in an entrepreneur's declaration that they have social aspirations and can be tied to research published by Neck & Greene (2011). Specifically, Neck and Greene (2011) find that students who have obtained an entrepreneurial degree have been exposed to more real-world practices because of their limited business experience. More specifically, as it ties back to social entrepreneurial intentions, is that students are being exposed to practices that not only generate income, but also have added social value (Neck & Greene, 2011, p.63). Because of students limited experience, education plays a significant role in the development of the entrepreneur (Howorth, Smith, & Parkinson, 2012; Konakll, 2015), which motivates the entrepreneur to participate in addressing societal concerns (Certo & Miller, 2008; Muscat & Whittemore, 2010). Exploration of education and the Theory of Planned Behavior would indicate that education would make entrepreneurs more self-aware (Konakll, 2015) and generate additional social awareness among students (Garcá-Morales, Martn-Rojas, & Garde-Sánchez, 2020). Education is at the forefront of social change influence (Yeh, Ma, &

Huan, 2016). As a result of the current educational needs of entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs possess advanced degrees (Nicolás, Rubio, & Fernández-Laviada, 2018). For this reason, we hypothesize:

*H2: Obtained education will significantly impact the stated intention for an entrepreneur to be more social, such that those who have a bachelor's degree or higher will be more likely to have stated their intention to be more social than those who do not.*

### **Student Status**

Student status indicates whether the entrepreneur and business owner is currently enrolled in school. Often, current students recognize the benefits of having a business strategy with a social focus (Mueller et al., 2015). While some intention to become an entrepreneur may be influenced by social status and familial influence (Bhandari, 2012), it is still important to investigate the impact that being a student may have on current business owners' stated goals to be more social. Understanding the current student may provide the greatest explanation for the declared intent to be social. In essence, colleges are socially motivated (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). Changing academic leadership (Leo & Barton, 2006) may encourage students (in this case, business owners) to be receptive to change in their own surroundings. In this light, we hypothesize:

*H3: Current students will have greater odds of stating their intentions to become more social than those who are not current students.*

### **Volunteer Experience**

Volunteer experience is advantageous for entrepreneurs due to their active participation and opportunities to address societal concerns (Gras et al., 2020). Moral obligation equips entrepreneurs with a compass (Ernst, 2018). These business owners' moral compasses motivate them to declare their social aims. As the number of volunteers increases, their social significance tends to increase (Jiranek, et al., 2013). Volunteerism in the TPB is also a deeply rooted personality feature that may require persons who have volunteered to maintain pleasant emotions (Marta, et al., 2014). This suggests that those who have volunteered for a year, or more are more likely to declare their intention to engage in social entrepreneurship. For this reason, we hypothesize:

*H4: Those who have volunteered for 12 months or greater will have greater odds of stating their intentions to be social entrepreneurial.*

### **Control Variables**

The proposed model has controls of industry, gender, country currently residing, and years of experience (see similar controls by Badgett, 1995). Self-identifications of being either man, woman, transgender and non-binary were accounted for as a control variable for gender. It is essential to understand the entrepreneur's history, which may provide light on their motives for becoming a social entrepreneur as a blending of work and life (Barendsen et al., 2004). The model also accounts for years of experience. Extensive experience explains why social intentions can be expressed. Experience would also provide a sensible extra control for gaining a deeper understanding of these entrepreneurs' motivations.

### **Study Overview**

This is a secondary analysis of a poll of Latin American self-described entrepreneurs. Prolific®, a service that distributes the survey to self-identified entrepreneurs, was used (see also Niemiec et al., 2021), and each respondent was compensated based on accepted self-identifying measures, resulting in a response rate of one hundred percent. The original survey was composed in English, translated to Spanish, and then returned to English to ensure correct language usage. The initial study included 305 self-identified entrepreneur questionnaires. This study included only current business owners (N=254) who self-identified as such.

### **Model Variables and Sample Characteristics**

The dependent variable social intention was expressed as a binary statement: "I aim to become a social entrepreneur" (Yes/No). In all, 163 (64%) of present business owners had the explicit stated intention of becoming social entrepreneurs. The logistic model included a total of 254 observations. To guarantee that the sample size was sufficient, G\*power 3.1 was used. The selected options were odds ratio of 3, H0 of .4, alpha of .05, and power of .95. The calculation yields 80 total observations (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009), which is significantly less than the total sample size for this study.

### **Logit Model**

To examine the samples, we employed logistic regression, and specifically a logit model in Rstudio, to assess the likelihood of a present firm owner declaring social entrepreneurship aspirations. The logit model reports the

exponentiated results to better comprehend the likelihood of the specific characteristic of the entrepreneur to state social entrepreneurial intentions.

## Results

Table 1 provides the correlations and significances for the variables within the model. On the surface it would seem that all of the items presented in the model (intention, age, education, student status and volunteer experiences) would be highly correlated and present multicollinearity concerns. However, upon review of the table it appears that while most of the items are significant, the highest correlation presented is well below a highly correlated variable at nearly .30 which suggests there is slight correlation among variables within the population. This alleviates any concerns of multicollinearity in the model.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that age is a statistically significant issue when business owners evaluate whether to socialize their current enterprise. Younger persons (aged 18-34) were 2.5 times more likely to indicate an intention to be more socially entrepreneurial than their older counterparts (aged 35 and older). Therefore, the first hypothesis is supported. Additionally, education tends to affect the entrepreneur's expressed desire to become more social. Those with a bachelor's degree or higher are 2.3 times more likely to aspire to make their business more social than those with a high school diploma, associate degree, or professional degree. Considering these observations, the second hypothesis is also supported. For hypothesis 3, the model projected that a student's social entrepreneurial ambitions would be determined by their student status. The data did not meet the  $p < .05$  significance threshold. Thus, the third hypothesis is not supported. In this model, volunteer experience was also revealed to be relevant. In the model, people with more than 12 months of volunteer experience were 3.75 times more likely than those with less than 12 months of volunteer experience to indicate a desire to change their existing business into a more social one. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is supported.

Table 2. Table of Logistic Results: Logit Model

Variable	Odds Ratio	95% CI	N	Reference
<b>Age</b>				
35+			137	<i>Reference</i>
18-34.9	<b>2.59**</b>	1.67 – 2.60	117	
<b>Degree</b>				
Associates / High School			89	<i>Reference</i>
Bachelor's Deg. or Higher	<b>2.45*</b>	1.58 – 2.13	165	
<b>Student-Status</b>				
Non-Student			151	<i>Reference</i>
Student	<b>2.0*</b>	1.32 – 5.0	103	
<b>Volunteer</b>				
12 Months or Less			171	<i>Reference</i>
Greater 12 Months	<b>4.31***</b>	2.14 – 7.86	83	
<b>Control Variables</b>				
Industry	<b>N.S.</b>			
Country Currently Living	<b>N.S.</b>			
Gender	<b>N.S.</b>			
Years of Experience	<b>N.S.</b>			

N=254

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$

## Conditional Effects Model: Post Hoc Testing

To better estimate the likelihood of an entrepreneur to state that they are willing to become more social entrepreneurial in their intentions a new conditional variable has been utilized and imputed into the model. Specifically, respondents were asked if they intended to be or become more socially entrepreneurial. Additionally, the survey also asked if the respondent is a current business owner. And finally, the survey asked if the respondent would be implementing more social in focus. To create the conditional variable, we have only included those who answered "Yes"

to all three questions. 83 total respondents met this criterion. Additionally, of those who met this criterion 67 were under the age of 35, 37 identified as current students, 71 earned a bachelor's degree or other advanced education and 38 had greater than 12 months of volunteer experience.

The model suggests that having a bachelor's degree and having volunteer experience are the only statistically significant indicators of SEI among our population. Table 3 summarizes the findings of the logistic model in which the conditions are met.

Table 3. Table of Logistic Results: Conditional Step Model

Variable	Odds Ratio	95% CI	N	Reference
<b>Age</b>				
35+			137	<i>Reference</i>
18-34.9	<b>N.S.</b>	1.67 – 2.60	117	
<b>Degree</b>				
Associates / High School			89	<i>Reference</i>
Bachelor's Deg. or Higher	<b>2.45*</b>	1.58 – 2.13	165	
<b>Student-Status</b>				
Non-Student			151	<i>Reference</i>
Student	<b>2.0*</b>	1.32 – 5.0	103	
<b>Volunteer</b>				
12 Months or Less			171	<i>Reference</i>
Greater 12 Months	<b>4.31***</b>	2.14 – 7.86	83	
<b>Control Variables</b>				
Industry	<b>N.S.</b>			
Country Currently Living	<b>N.S.</b>			
Gender	<b>N.S.</b>			
Years of Experience	<b>N.S.</b>			

N=254

p<.05\*, p<.01\*\*, p<.001\*\*\*

## Discussion

This study intended to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence business owners' intentions to become more socially entrepreneurial. Reinforcing Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development to better explain how SEI has become more prevalent over time because of changes in social and societal norms. In prior research, the antecedents of social entrepreneurship have been a combination of multiple topics and different entrepreneurial fields. On the basis of these themes, the current study examines the demographic characteristics of the entrepreneur that better explain the phenomena of social entrepreneurship. This study indicated that age, level of education, student status, and volunteer experience have a substantial impact on present business owners' readiness to become more socially entrepreneurial.

Previous research suggests that age may be a factor, and that younger entrepreneurs may be less likely to have entrepreneurial aspirations (Hatak et al., 2015). The findings of this study imply that entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 34 may be more likely to express their aspirations as social entrepreneurs than those older than 34. Ultimately, this would confirm Kohlberg's theory as it would be expected that younger entrepreneurs would be more likely to express their desire to be more socially acceptable than that of their older peers who may not have the same appreciation for these ideas as their younger counterparts. This study found that respondents under the age of 35 were two to three times more likely to express a desire to engage in social entrepreneurship. The ramifications of these findings generate more questions (i.e. future generations) than can be addressed. One must inquire about entrepreneurial experience (Bonesso et al., 2018) and self-efficacy (Hockerts, 2017; Mair and Noboa, 2006), and specifically how these variables change over time.

Educational accomplishment in business school (Kedmenec et al., 2017) and elsewhere in terms of degree have been studied; however, rarely it seems to be taken in the light of development and moral reasoning. Prieto (2011) investigated the relationship between a proactive personality and social entrepreneurship aspirations. However,

Tshikovhi and Shambare (2015) imply that knowledge is linked to intent. It may be a stretch to claim that all students who get a degree are proactive. This study asks how the degree affects the likelihood of present business owners declaring their aim to be socially entrepreneurial. Significantly, it raises the likelihood of intention among present business owners compared to individuals with lower degrees or a high school diploma. Universities worldwide play a role in the intention of students, particularly business students, to engage in social entrepreneurship (Bazan et al., 2020) and may be a factor of external influence that affects moral reasoning. This article's findings will continue the discourse concerning how and why students may be more receptive to socially desired change and more eager to adapt (Sinatra et al., 2012).

Lastly, this model reveals that present business owners who have volunteered previously (for at least 12 months) are more likely to convert their endeavors to those that are more socially desirable than those who have volunteered for less than 12 months. The research demonstrates that volunteering can improve intentions (Forster & Grichnik, 2013). However, earlier research has also shown contradictory findings concerning volunteering and social entrepreneurship (Kedmenec, 2019). Previous research has emphasized the need for additional investigation into how volunteer experience influences intention (Sousa-Filho et al., 2020). This study found that volunteering provides insight into society requirements (Gras et al., 2020). In addition, it provides entrepreneurs with a deeper understanding of how social forces might influence intentions (Meoli et al., 2020).

### **Limitations**

There are limitations associated with this study. First, although every effort has been taken to ensure generalizability, the respondent population consists of self-identified Latin American business owners. This population will be generalizable to contexts with more development. In addition, this responder group will contribute to our understanding of the elements that influence a business owner's inclination to be more socially acceptable.

Second, although this study employs business owners, additional research is required to comprehend how these qualities affect these entrepreneurs in the long run. Younger, more highly educated entrepreneurs are more likely to indicate their goal to engage in social entrepreneurship with their current company, according to our research. This appears more troublesome when examining these alterations at a more detailed level. Is it feasible, for instance, that these sentiments will dissipate with time? These are questions that require additional research.

Lastly, the study assesses the claimed intention of present business owners to be more socially entrepreneurial. According to the findings of the study, these personal attributes suggest a stated readiness to be more sociable in entrepreneurial ventures. Social desirability bias, in which respondents answer based on what is socially acceptable, is the most obvious restriction (Chung & Monroe, 2003). Although problematic, the survey was administered equally to all eligible entrepreneurs, which shows that the influence of social desirability bias is diminished due to the random distribution of the survey (Nederhof, 1985). The results suggest that future research considerations can be derived from this investigation.

### **Future Research Considerations**

Exploring these similar independent variables on other business owners and entrepreneurs would help future research. Although the sample population of this study is generalizable to other developing nations and entrepreneurs inside, there may be generalizability difficulties in the setting of developing nations.

Second, the data indicate that additional longitudinal study is required to fully comprehend the consequences of intention across time. Strong is the claimed desire to be more socially conscious on the part of these younger entrepreneurs who now own businesses. Over time, one must consider whether these intentions diminish or change.

Another research concern is the relationship between education and social entrepreneurship. According to our research and findings, education plays a statistically significant influence in the claimed intent to be more socially conscious. However, additional research is required to properly comprehend the implications of age on entrepreneurs with global social aspirations.

### **Practical Considerations**

This research has numerous applications for entrepreneurs. First, it implies that age has a significant role in the expressed goal to go social among present business owners. While adjusting for experience, the data reveals that compared to younger entrepreneurs, older entrepreneurs' decision to become more socially conscious or alter their current firms was not significant in the model.

Second, the results of our study indicate that respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher derive additional benefits from social entrepreneurship. The data also reveals that those with less than a bachelor's degree are unlikely to transform their existing firm into a socially responsible one. This discovery has practical ramifications, but also demonstrates the importance of degrees and education. Educated individuals may have a greater appreciation for the need for more socially conscious organizations. One may also wish to examine this rationale in future research. This research has a practical use in determining the likelihood that an entrepreneur will declare their aspirations to be social.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

The presented model has numerous theoretical implications for the literature. First, the paper expands on previous research about the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The theory connects to personal qualities, which then motivate behavior. The research reveals that younger, more highly educated, and volunteer-experienced entrepreneurs are more likely to declare their social entrepreneurship aspirations. The traits of these seasoned entrepreneurs and business owners impact their need to be more sociable. Secondly, the model contributes to the theoretical literature on social entrepreneurship. Multiple definitions of social intentions have been proposed in the past (Peredo & McLean, 2006), but this article demonstrates that individual qualities must also be measured to advance the knowledge and comprehension of why a business may be more social.

## Conclusion

Overall, the model has provided a glimpse of features that further the field's knowledge of business owners' professed social entrepreneurial intentions. Greater than in the past is the need to understand what motivates business owners to be more social, including their age, level of education, and volunteerism. There seems to be more societal problems than ever before. From the COVID-19 epidemic to other local and national events, these social forces have repercussions on society. The significance of this research stems from the model's ability to predict reported social entrepreneurial intention across a spectrum of person traits. The next obstacle is moving from talking to action.

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## Appendix I

Table 1. Correlations of Numeric Variables

	Intention	Age	Education	Student Status	Volunteer
Intention	1				

Age	<b>.188***</b>	1			
Education	0.08	<b>-.18**</b>	1		
Student Status	<b>.178***</b>	<b>.304***</b>	<b>-.297***</b>	1	
Volunteer	<b>.26***</b>	-.024	.086	.02	1

N=254  
p<.001\*\*\*, p<.01\*\*, p<.05\*

# Summary Brief

## Who is the Expert: The Impact of Consumer-Made Versus Firm-Made Strategic Decisions

Eric Kennedy, Southeastern Oklahoma State University  
Courtney Kernek, Southeastern Oklahoma State University

*The importance of consumer input is evident in modern marketing practice, from Elon Musk and Tesla taking product update recommendations through social media to users of Lego bricks suggesting and designing new products for the brand. The challenge for a brand in this modern mix of hyper-connectivity with consumers is to stay relevant with current and future trends or get left behind and forgotten, similar to the fate of Blockbuster Video and Payless Shoe Source.*

### Introduction

Now more than ever, consumers have the ability to interact with their smartphone or other device, make a few clicks, and be transported to an endless world of opinions, ideas, learning environments, and feedback loops with other people, brands, and bots. Through this availability of technology, one of the top global trends for marketing – Everyone is an Expert – represents a shift in power from retailers to consumers (Allday, 2019).

The list of major brands that are gone because they did not listen to consumer wants and needs is long with a storied history, but can the same be said for small businesses? While small and medium businesses are dominant forces in economies throughout the world (Abimbola and Kocak, 2007; Odoom *et al.*, 2017), research on small business in the context of branding is missing in the marketing literature (Juntunen, 2014; Odoom, 2016). The lack of literature on branding and small business leads to a gap in the literature, which we hope to partially fill with this work.

Does a small business, whose owner and/or operator are the heart and soul of the brand, need to make brand decisions based on consumer sentiment or is the small business knowledgeable enough to make these decisions on their own? This research seeks to answer these questions, and determine who should be the expert in the strategic decisions for a brand – consumers or the firm. We also investigate the impact that a consumer's gender has on consumer and firm made decisions. Previous research shows male and female consumers prefer different forms of marketing stimuli, resulting in different behaviors between genders (De Silva *et al.*, 2021; Hwang and Choi, 2020; Kennedy *et al.*, 2021; Melnyk *et al.*, 2009; Mostafa, 2007; Nadeem *et al.*, 2015, Otterbring *et al.*, 2018). What is not known, however, is how male and female consumers will react to a brand when a consumer or the firm is explicitly making strategic decisions for the brand.

We will conduct two studies - the first is qualitative in nature and seeks feedback from small business owners on their decision making process. The second study is a 2(consumer decision vs. brand decision) x 2(male vs. female) between subjects factorial design which seeks to determine the impact of brand and consumer decisions while examining the moderating effect of gender.

### Background

Business owners and brands should be concerned with creating consumer connections (Malar *et al.*, 2011; Mende *et al.*, 2013; Reibstein *et al.*, 2009). This is especially true for small businesses, as the need to control market share is amplified by high levels of competition. The ability for a small business to create a connection with consumers can help the brand grow and be successful. Likewise, involvement with the product can increase the consumer attachment to the brand (Malar *et al.*, 2011). When consumers feel as they are a part of the brand process and become engaged, their likelihood to purchase the product increases (Kennedy, 2017).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are extremely important to the economy due to their innovative nature and role in employment. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (2021), small firms with fewer than 500 employees make up 99.9% of all business in America. Standard marketing literature often focuses on widely recognized large firms with very structured and systematic approaches. These marketing strategies are often incompatible with the entrepreneurial spirit of small businesses (Carson *et al.*, 1995). Research has established that traditional theories of marketing rely heavily on established principles and encourage formula-based thinking (Morris,

Shindehutte & LaForge, 2002). Small firms are not simply little businesses, and while they may vary in function they do share similar characteristics which lead to marketing strategies that may not conform to traditional marketing practices (Carson et al., 1995; Gilmore et al., 2001; McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003; Blankson, Motwani & Levenburg, 2006).

Traditional or otherwise, small businesses make marketing decisions. Those decisions may simply be choosing to do nothing at all, or they may be very strategic in nature. The importance of small businesses understanding strategic decision-making processes is vital. High failure rates exist among small businesses. Thus, implementing a framework for strategic marketing decision-making processes could improve the quality of decisions and the firm performance.

### Key Findings

An ANOVA was performed to determine the differences in each condition (accepting vs non-accepting feedback) on attitude toward the ad and purchase intention from the 2x2 experiment. The results of this initial study show consumers are more likely to have more positive attitudes toward the brand when the brand is accepting of feedback ( $M = 3.80$  vs  $M = 2.89$ ), ( $F(109) = 29.249$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Consumers are more likely to have positive purchase intentions toward the brand when the brand is accepting of feedback ( $M = 3.56$  vs  $M = 3.04$ ), ( $F(109) = 6.79$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ).

The results from study 1 lead us to the question: How much consumer input is too much? Currently, study 2 data collection is underway to answer this question. We are looking at this question from three angles. What happens when: (1) the brand forms a consumer advisory panel and turns all decisions over to this panel? (2) When the advisory panel has equal say as the owners on the future of the brand? And (3) When the advisory panels has a 1/3 say on the future of the brand, with the owners retaining 2/3 say. Data collection is currently underway.

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## **Session 5.7: Distinguished Teaching Competition**

**Chair:** Cindy Rippe



# Teaching Comment

## Teaching: I am “all in”

Abhijit Guha, University of South Carolina, USA

### Introduction

Pre tenure, I viewed teaching as primarily relating to (i) my interactions with students, largely restricted to (ii) the classroom. Post tenure, as I grew in the profession, I have gone “all in”, viewing teaching as relating to (i) not only interactions with students, *but also interactions with my colleagues* (inside and outside the university), and (ii) *interactions not only in the classroom, but also in academic teaching forums, like workshops, conferences and journals*. All this has translated into staying abreast of the latest developments as regards teaching, teaching others how to teach, and presenting & writing about how to teach. In what follows, I elaborate on all the points above.

### Teaching in the classroom

Over the years, I have worked on developing multiple – and diverse - course preps, taught at multiple levels (undergraduates, MBAs, PhDs, executives), taught across various modes (online, in- person etc.) and taught across (very different) class sizes (minimum class size – 3, maximum class size – 350). Noting my many years of marketing experience (prior to the PhD), my classes suitably blend theory and practice in ways that make sense for the students. Of note, I have developed expertise in teaching large classes online, exemplified by strong student evaluations, high levels of student engagement, deep bonds with students despite the class size, and recognition from both the business school and the university’s Center for Teaching Excellence. And yet...I feel that I can.. and should.. do more, much more.

### Staying abreast of the latest developments

Teaching involves both course content and pedagogy. Hence, to stay relevant as a teacher, I work on staying abreast of the latest developments, relating to both course content and pedagogy. For example:

-course content: one of the courses I teach is consumer behavior, and – going forward - consumer behavior will be substantially impacted by AI, both by AI applications and by AI-powered entities like robots. While the impact of AI has yet to fully find its way into consumer behavior textbooks, I do make the effort to research AI and then discuss in class such emerging issues.

-pedagogy: in the past 12 months or so, ChatGPT (a type of generative AI) has emerged as an important (if controversial) educational tool. I have actively incorporated ChatGPT into my pedagogy, noting here that my course content is especially amenable to ChatGPT integration.

### Teaching how to teach

Over the years, many senior professors have helped me to learn how to teach. These professors welcomed me into their classes (and into their lives), not only letting me observe master teachers at work, but also helping me to understand what teaching styles and techniques might work better for me. In the spirit of paying it forward, I now devote substantial time to teaching others how to teach.

-during the times of COVID19, I developed expertise in teaching large classes online. Hence in 2021, I taught (on behalf of the university’s Center for Teaching Excellence) other professors how to teach large classes online<sup>1</sup>, and – for my efforts – I was awarded the Alfred G Smith teaching award (awarded annually to just one tenure-track faculty in the business school).

-with ChatGPT emerging as an important (if controversial) educational tool, this year I taught (again, on behalf of the university’s Center for Teaching Excellence) other professors how to use ChatGPT in the classroom.<sup>2</sup> Noting the diversity amongst professors, there was a rich discussion about when ChatGPT may be more (versus less) useful.

### **Presenting about, and writing about, how to teach**

Beyond teaching, and teaching others how to teach, I<sup>3</sup> am keen to engage with my colleagues/ engage in research on teaching. I come at this issue in two ways.

-presentations: I have presented on teaching related topics in academic conferences; this is an opportunity to engage with my colleagues on important teaching-related topics. For example, in 2023, I presented at AMA Winter (in Nashville) on ChatGPT, as relevant for marketing educators.

-formal research: I am committed to formal research on teaching. For example, I submitted a paper on “How Generative AI Will Shape the Future of Marketing Education” to the *Journal of Marketing Education* (*current status: revise-and-resubmit*). This paper looks at not only (i) big picture issues, like under which conditions might it be more optimal to use ChatGPT in the classroom, but also (ii) detail issues, like outlining specific ChatGPT assignments for use in different marketing classes.

### **What happens next?**

Beyond the points raised above, many other topics have emerged as important. Open questions include:

- should ChatGPT be taught in the classroom, the same way we – in some courses - teach SPSS/ R/ Excel?
- should we formally teach prompt engineering, which firms value substantially (at least today)?
- might other generative AIs emerge – over time - as more important than ChatGPT (and why)?
- how might ChatGPT/ generative AI impact marketing, and how we teach marketing?
- what are some of the public policy issues associated with ChatGPT/ generative AI?
- can ChatGPT/ generative AI help better teach the bottom 50% of students, especially in large classes?

All of these questions I find fascinating. Some I have already started engaging on (e.g., I am guest-editing an issue of the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* on “Generative AI: Promises and Perils”), and some of the above I hope to discuss later this year when we all are at the Society for Marketing Advances later this year.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=fN7cBpay-Lc> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxGFWOhzBC4>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7PSj3VDO1o>

<sup>3</sup> I use “I” while writing this teaching comment, but all of this work involves collaboration with wonderful co authors

## **Session 6.1: Control, Politics, & the Environment**

**Chair:** Jamie Grigsby

## Summary Brief

# **The Role of Retail in the Distribution of Products with Geographical Indication Registration: A Systematic Literature Review**

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Heitor Takashi Kato, Pontificia Universidade Católica do Paraná - PUCPR

Sandro Deretti, University of Paraná State – UNESPAR

Geographical indication (GI) registration is a constructive collective process, which aims to benefit a region, either the producers involved or the local trade. For producers, GI allows them to stand out from competitors, increasing sales and conquering markets or promoting the expansion of existing markets. Currently, GIs have been considered to encourage the development of a region, valuing territorial resources, enabling new market niches to appear. The systematic literature review - SLR, foresees several stages for its elaboration, namely: defining the research objective, definition of the combination of keywords and databases to be used, article filtering procedures, systematic reading, and construction basis for article analysis. After all these steps, 20 articles from Web of Science and Scopus databases were considered valid for analysis in the present study. One of the analyzes of this study was the Descending Hierarchical Classification - DHC, which lists the words and text segments used, correlating them, through the Chi-Square test, to the classes in which they are contained through the identified contents. It appears that most authors who are interested in themes that associate GI and retail are predominantly of French and Italian origin. Among these authors, those who stand out the most, produced 2 articles on the terms addressed in this research. This fact, associated with the number of articles produced involving the theme, indicate that the association between GI and retail still represents a field of knowledge under construction.

## Summary Brief

# Reduce the Gap! – How the Attitude-Behavior Gap for Organic Products impacts sales in Offline versus Online Grocery Shopping

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Rainer Olbrich, FernUniversität in Hagen, Hagen, Germany

*Several previous studies have found a discrepancy between attitudes and behavior. This discrepancy is referred to as attitude-behavior gap (ABG). While the attitude-behavior gap has been investigated, especially in brick-and-mortar retail, there is no research on whether and how the ABG in regard to organic products affects sales. Moreover, we extend previous research by analyzing an interaction effect of the emerging consumer group of also-online grocery shoppers. In our empirical analysis, we compare households that purchase groceries exclusively offline (offline-only) with households that purchase food online and offline (also-online). For this purpose, we use extensive household panel data from 2016 to 2022 in combination with corresponding survey data. Thus, the data includes information on attitudes and actual purchases of about 30,000 households. For analysis, we use a mixed model approach. We find out that a reduction of the ABG positively affects sales of organic products. In addition, also-online purchasing negatively moderates the relationship between the ABG and organic sales. Thus, the negative effect between ABG and sales is smaller for also-online shoppers compared to offline-only shoppers. These new insights are relevant for both retailers and brand manufacturers. The results can help them to adequately assess their customers differentiating between also-online and offline shoppers as well as between online and offline channels.*

## Introduction

Both online grocery shopping (OGS) and organic products are becoming increasingly relevant for both retailers and brand managers (Pantano et al. 2020; Robusti et al. 2020; Schäufele and Janssen 2021; Brüggemann and Pauwels 2022; Brüggemann and Olbrich 2022). On the one hand, the proliferation of OGS provides new opportunities for them. On the other hand, this new retail landscape leads to increased competition for brick-and-mortar retailers that additionally offer OGS (e.g., Rewe or Edeka in Germany) as well as for new (pure) OGS providers (e.g., PicNic or Flink in Germany). This increasing competition makes it even more important for retailers and brand managers to know about their customers purchasing behavior in different channels (e.g., online and offline). Only those who know the characteristics of different customers (e.g., consumers who purchase also-online and those who purchase offline-only) can profit from the emerging opportunities in this new retail landscape and, thus, generate competitive advantages. Moreover, the ongoing growth of the market for organic products offers new possibilities for retailers and brand managers. Accordingly, they are adapting to these changes by offering more and more organic products, especially as organic products offer larger margins compared to conventional products (Richards, Acharya and Molina 2011; Robusti et al. 2020).

The increasing relevance of OGS and organic products makes it important to consider potential differences between different customer groups, e.g., those who purchase also-online and those who purchase offline-only. When companies enter the organic market or introduce additional organic products to capitalize on this trend, they often face the problem that consumers behave differently than they (previously) claimed (Van Doorn and Verhoef 2015; Moser 2016; Lindner 2021). This phenomenon is called attitude-behavior gap (ABG) and has been investigated in particular with respect to purchases of organic products in brick-and-mortar stores (Van Doorn and Verhoef 2015; Moser 2016; Schäufele and Janssen 2021).

The analysis of the relationship between attitude and behavior is highly relevant for retailers and brand managers to adequately assess the behavior of their customers. In this context, Brüggemann and Pauwels (2022) analyzed several attitudes and corresponding purchases of also-online and offline-only purchasing customers. They found that there are significant differences between also-online and offline-only shoppers, e.g., in terms of both attitudes towards organic products and their actual purchase behavior. In line with this research, Ermecke, Olbrich and Brüggemann (2023) found that the differences between also-online and offline-only shoppers is also present in the ABGs. The authors revealed that the average ABG is larger for also-online shoppers than for offline-only shoppers. Both studies point out differences between the customer groups of also-online and offline-only shoppers. While the ABG has been investigated and underlined several times in relation to organic product purchases, especially in brick-and-mortar retail (Moser 2016; Schäufele and Janssen 2021), surprisingly it is not yet known how this phenomenon might affect organic sales. Retailers,

brand managers, and OGS providers need to know, how the ABG impacts organic sales in order to optimize their activities in this changing retail landscape. As companies need to address their customer groups directly, it is not only important to know the impact of the ABG on organic sales in general, but also for the different groups of also-online and offline-only shoppers.

With this research, we aim to fill two research gaps in particular. First, we shed light on the relationship between the ABG and organic sales to provide retailers and brand managers with new evidence on the relevance of considering ABGs. Second, we investigate differences between the effect of the ABG on organic sales for also-online and offline-only shoppers. Conjointly, this study aims to enhance the knowledge of the impact of the ABG on organic sales for also-online and offline-only shoppers. Retailers, brand manufacturers, and OGS providers can use these new insights to maximize their organic sales by reducing the ABG.

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## **Session 6.2: Reconceptualizing Marketing Globally**

**Chair:** Holly Syrdal

## Summary Brief

# How Does CSR-related Language Impact Engagement with Brand Posts: An Initial Inquiry

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Holly A. Syrdal, Texas State University, USA

Parker Woodroof, University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA

Susan Myers, University of Central Arkansas, USA

In this study, we examine how incorporating CSR language impacts engagement with branded Facebook posts. To address this research question, we constructed a data set of 84 top U.S. brands. A third-party Facebook API was used to mine the publicly available post information for 84 top U.S. brands, resulting in 19,299 promotional posts. We used multivariate regression to examine the impact of the CSR dimensions of the post text on the rate of likes and comments garnered by the posts. The results indicate the employee and environment dimensions have a significant impact on the comment rate. The findings offer insights for marketing practitioners and academicians and shed light on the relationship between CSR-related language and engagement behaviors.



## Summary Brief

# Is Vegan Fashion Sustainable? The Role of Sustainability on Consumers' Perception of Vegan Fashion Brands and Purchase Intention

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*The fashion industry is often recognized as a major contributor to global pollution, causing detrimental effects to humans, animals, and the overall planet. As consumers voice increasing concerns about questionable practices in this industry, fashion brands feel compelled to make changes to their strategies. While one might assume that vegan fashion brands would easily overcome such negative judgment, the reality is more complex. Indeed, vegan fashion brands face criticism regarding their sustainability claims. Although there is an emerging literature on vegan fashion brands, the influence of sustainability on consumers' perception of these brands remains not thoroughly examined. Our research focuses on the development of vegan fashion brands and on consumers' perception of the sustainability of these brands in their purchase decision. This research will enhance the understanding of how sustainability factors into consumers' perception and purchase intention toward vegan fashion products.*

### Introduction

The fashion industry has long been under scrutiny for its detrimental impact on the environment. While one might assume that vegan fashion brands would easily overcome such negative judgment, the reality is more complex. Indeed, vegan fashion brands also face some criticism regarding their implied sustainability. Although there is an emerging literature on the development of vegan fashion, the influence of sustainability on consumers' perception of these brands has yet to be thoroughly examined. Given the conflicting perspectives surrounding veganism and sustainability, our research aims to examine the development of vegan fashion brands and question whether consumers consider the sustainability of these brands in their purchase intention.

### Background

The fashion industry is frequently recognized as a primary force in global pollution. This industry is responsible for 20% of wastewater and 10% of carbon emissions worldwide (UNEP). Hence, fashion production relies heavily on synthetic materials, leading to substantial energy consumption and significant release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The use of pesticide, solvents, dyes and endangered species in the creation of fashion collections remains a distressing issue. The deplorable working conditions are another subject of criticism for the fashion industry. Numerous fashion companies opt to outsource their production to less developed countries where they capitalize on lax labor regulations while conveniently overlooking the precarious working conditions. With the global fashion market worth over 1.5 trillion USD in 2022, it is evident that our fashion choices have a significant impact on the environment (Smith, 2023). The abundance of affordable fashion products with the emergence of fast-fashion brands has fostered a culture of disposable fashion. 87% of the materials used to create our wardrobes end up being incinerated or disposed of in landfills every year (UNEP). Today, consumers are increasingly recognizing the harmful effects these practices have on the environment and society. The shift in consumer preferences has led to the emergence of vegan fashion which refers to products made without the utilization of animal-based fibers such as leather, wool, fur, cashmere, silk, and avoids the use of any animal-based materials such as horn, felt, down, and mother-of-pearl throughout the entire production process (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Being vegan is often associated with a philosophy and a lifestyle that rejects the notion of animals being inferior to humans (Choi & Lee, 2021). Although the market for vegan apparel is in its early stage, an increasing number of brands are venturing into this emerging market each season. According to Baliyan and Diwan (2021), the global market size for vegan women's fashion was valued at 396.3 billion USD in 2019, and is projected to rise as the demand for vegan products continues to increase. Today, consumers who seek to embrace a more conscientious approach to fashion often encounter a complex array of labels, such as vegan, organic, fair, eco-friendly and sustainable which can be quite bewildering. As highlighted by Baliyan and Diwan (2021), the terms "vegan" and "sustainable" should not be used interchangeably. There is a conflicting perspective on the definition of what is vegan and what is considered sustainable. The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainability as development that fulfills the present needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to fulfill their own needs (IISD). When it comes to fashion, sustainable practices encompass the entire lifecycle of fashion items, considering their potential negative effects on the

environment, society, and the economy. So, can vegan fashion be defined as sustainable? According to Choi and Lee (2021), it can be considered sustainable for several reasons, primarily due to its focus on animal welfare. Vegan fashion relies on plant-based materials and synthetic alternatives with lower environmental footprints (Jeong & Chun, 2022). However, vegan fashion faces some criticism regarding its claim of sustainability since synthetic materials are often used in the production of vegan products. For instance, vegan leather is commonly made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or polyurethane (PU), both of which require many chemicals, plastics, and dyes that contribute to pollution (Ashley, 2021). Some vegan brands opt for materials like rayon and polyester as cruelty-free alternatives to silk, without fully acknowledging the negative impact of these fibers. Rayon production has been discontinued in some countries due to associated health risks for workers (Blanc, 2016). Greenhouse gas emissions are also a concern in the production of vegan fashion (Jeong & Chun, 2022). The non-renewable energy usage and the production of materials like polyester contribute significantly to these emissions.

While vegan fashion prides itself on being entirely cruelty-free, sustainable fashion primarily focuses on reducing the environmental footprint of clothing products and may still incorporate materials derived from animals. The conflicting viewpoints surrounding the sustainability of vegan fashion prompt a fundamental question asking whether replacing traditional materials used by the fashion industry with plastic-based fabrics made from petroleum in vegan fashion can be considered sustainable. A growing body of literature examines the evolving practices adopted by fashion brands in response to environmentally concerned consumers. However, these studies predominantly focus on the broader fashion industry, rather than specifically addressing the unique aspects of vegan fashion. This research aims to develop a theoretical framework that captures the relationship between vegan fashion and sustainability, exploring the potential impact the sustainability claims have on consumer perception and purchase intention for vegan fashion brands. Therefore, we formulate two propositions based on: the positive impact sustainability has on consumers' perception of vegan fashion and the positive impact sustainable vegan fashion brands have on consumers' intention to purchase these brands. Our research aims to include not only vegans but also fashion consumers in general, as some may choose vegan products as a preferable alternative without identifying as vegans themselves.

By confirming these effects, this research will enhance the understanding of how sustainability factors into consumers' perception and purchase intention regarding vegan fashion products. This research will also provide valuable academic and managerial contributions highlighting the crucial role of veganism and sustainability in today's fashion market. Achieving 100% sustainability requires substantial changes in both the production practices of fashion brands and the consumption and disposal habits of consumers. True vegan fashion should not only exclude animal products but also prioritize sustainable production practices. Being less unsustainable is not synonymous with being sustainable. By adopting a vegan sustainable approach, fashion brands can better meet their consumers' demands for cruelty-free and sustainable fashion items which will position them favorably in the growing market for vegan fashion.

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## **Session 6.3: Wow! Look How Far We've Come!**

**Chair:** Jana Stupavsky

## Summary Brief

# Putting People First: Female CEOs and Relational CSR

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Saim Kashmiri, MS, University of Mississippi  
Duncan Nicol, TN, Union University

### Abstract

Research exploring the impact of women in the C-suite on strategic marketing choices in general and CSR in particular is scant. To that end, this study explores whether and how firms led by female CEOs differ from those led by male CEOs with regard to the types of CSR. The study divides CSR into two types: rational (product, environment, and corporate governance) and relational CSR (employees, human rights, community, and diversity). To create our sample, we combined four databases: Compustat, Execucomp, Center for Research in Security Prices (CRSP) and Kinder, Lydenberg, Domini and Co., Inc. (KLD). Data for the time period between 1992 and 2013 (both inclusive) were used for the investigation. The final sample comprised of 2,739 firms, for a total of 19,969 firm-year observations (an unbalanced panel). The authors theorize and find evidence that while firms led by male and female CEOs are not significantly different with regard to rational CSR performance, firms led by female CEOs outperform those led by male CEOs with regard to their relational CSR performance. Furthermore, CEO power increases the link between CEO gender and CSR. The authors also find that different types of CEO power (i.e., managerial power, legitimate power, and formal power) moderate the link between CEO gender and CSR differently.

**Keywords:** *Female CEO, Corporate Social Responsibility, CEO Power, Rational CSR, Relational CSR, CEO Duality, CEO Pay Gap, CEO tenure*

## Summary Brief

# **Wow! Look at All the Pretty Numbers: Avoiding Losing Sight of Customers in the Sea of Big Data**

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Jared Hansen, UT, Utah State University

### **Abstract**

Trying to manage a business guided by a sea of big data, it can be easy to forget that the business exists to serve a customer. We argue that it is dangerous to assume that long term customer relationships are a sign of strong, positive customer satisfaction. In this research, we outline various ways that customers might find themselves in long term relationships with businesses, regardless of their level of satisfaction. We discuss potential long-term risks to the relationship for these various types of relationship commitments. And then we specify ways that businesses might study customer satisfaction using big data and other available tools in hopes of forestalling future customer defection.

# Summary Brief

## Advancing Market Segmentation By Competition Analysis – A New Method to Measure and Compare Competitive Advantages

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Philipp Brüggemann, Dr., FernUniversität in Hagen, Hagen, Germany  
Rainer Olbrich, Univ.-Prof. Dr., FernUniversität in Hagen, Hagen, Germany

*In this paper, we explain and empirically illustrate a new method that combines market segmentation and competition analysis. To this end, we first perform a cluster analysis to determine segments. We then use several marketing mix variables and investigate the effect on retailer's market share in the segments that result from cluster analysis. For analysis, we use a mixed model approach. Our database is extensive German grocery stores including four product groups from 2016 to 2022 with around 5.5 billion purchases. We compare two exemplary retail chains and analyze as well as illustrate their competitive (dis)advantages. The new method introduced in this research can be used by researchers and practitioners to continuously uncover competitive advantages and disadvantages with respect to both entire markets and specific market segments. The method allows firms to compare themselves to the overall market, isolated competitors and groups of competitors.*

### 1. Introduction

Both market segmentation and competition analysis are highly relevant in many research areas, e.g., in management and marketing (Porter 1980; Smith 1956). The use of market segmentation allows practitioners to target certain groups of customers by focusing on their specific needs to exploit market potential (Smith 1956). Competition analysis, on the other hand, is a widely used tool in practice to detect the own position in a market in relation to competitors. Here, firms can figure out how to improve their performance (West 1989) or where it is auspicious to enter new markets (Bresnahan and Reiss 1991). Kotler (1980) already pointed out the necessity of a concept that satisfy the needs of consumers in relation to the competitors. This is driven by the aspect that one main goal of performing market segmentation is to reach a competitive advantage (Hunt and Arnett 2004). Surprisingly, there is no approach that indicates how to measure the competitive advantage in certain segments by using marketing activities.

Previous research addresses the two practices of market segmentation and competition analysis primarily isolated (e.g., Foedermayr and Diamantopoulos 2008; Hatzijordanou et al., 2019). Accordingly, there is hardly any research that focuses on a combination, although it would allow a deeper analysis of strategic implications (e.g., Segal and Giacobbe 1994). This is underlined by the fact that competitive advantages foster the success of market segmentation (Weinstein 2014). On the one hand, market segmentation allows the analysis of submarkets from firms' perspective. Using this micro level approach, firms can build their strategy in terms of market segmentation from a micro-level perspective (Hassan and Craft 2004). On the other hand, competition analysis allows the consideration of the (competitive) market environment and the firm's position in the market (Chen 1996). Consequently, competition analysis takes place on a macro level.

So far, however, it is not known if or how these two approaches can be combined in a feasible way. We expect that the combination of the two approaches will add value, as it will allow researchers and practitioners to analyze not only different segments (micro level) and competition (macro level) isolated, but also the competitive advantage or disadvantage in the respective segments (micro and macro level). While only analyzing the inner micro perspective (i.e., market segmentation) without competition there is a lack of strategic positioning which allows just a limited evaluation of segment attractiveness (Abratt 1993). Consequently, with a combined approach, we aim to overcome this existing and highly meaningful gap for practitioners and academics (Dibb 1998). To do so, we develop a method for market segmentation that can be used in practice and can be adopted by researchers in many fields of management and marketing.

Against this background, we present in the following sections a new method to combine market segmentation and competition analysis. For this purpose, we use extensive household panel data including about 5.5 billion purchases using a mixed model approach. To adequately explain our idea and to demonstrate the advantages, we exemplarily dive into the relationship between several marketing mix variables and retailers' market shares. We chose the set of independent variables from Brüggemann (2023a). Moreover, we use the method to decompose market shares,

introduced by Brüggemann and Olbrich (2022). This method allows to decompose dependent variables, e.g., in regression analysis.

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# Summary Brief

## Role of Female CEOs as Women's Advocates: Examining CEO Activism on Female-Related Activist Issues on Twitter.

Jana Stupavsky, University of South Alabama, USA

*This study examines how female vs. male CEOs utilize their influence and advocate for women as CEO activists on Twitter. CEO activists are CEOs who choose to publicly take a position on a controversial sociopolitical issue by speaking up or taking action based on their personal values. The issues that large firms' CEOs have spoken for or against range from social and environmental to political and legal. This paper will focus on female-related issues as proxies of advocacy for women, including abortion, gender equality, equal pay, and sexual assault and violence in the workplace. Building on the stakeholder alignment model, the results will help practitioners understand whether firms with female CEOs should leverage their leaders' positions and influence for activist marketing strategies focused on specific female-focused topics.*

### Introduction

Many companies or business leaders have engaged in activism and expressed their position about various polarizing social issues in the past decade. This practice is called brand activism or CEO activism. Examples of brand activism or CEO activism include Delta Airlines and United Airlines' decision, as a response to the Parkland, FL high school shooting in February 2018, to no longer provide discounts to National Rifle Association members; Marc Benioff's (Salesforce) offer to relocate Texas employees and their families after Texas abortion law went into effect in 2021; and Tim Cook's (Apple) public support to LGBTQ+ community as a response to anti-LGBTQ+ legislation taking effect in multiple U.S. states.

Undoubtedly, activism as a strategic marketing technique has been on the rise (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020). The proportion of S&P 500 firms engaged in activism increased from 1% to 38% between 2011-2019 (Mkrtchyan et al., 2023). Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) have increasingly recognized activism as a strategic marketing tool. From 2018-2023, the percentage of CMOs who agreed that brands should take a position on politically-charged issues grew from 17% to 29% (The CMO Survey, 2023; The CMO Survey, 2020). Such remarkable increases reflect growing consumer expectations. Sixty-two percent of consumers expect a brand to take a stance on a socio-political issue (Accenture, 2019), and younger consumer generations starting with millennials, look to top executives to publicly take a stance (BRANDfog, 2018; Larcker et al., 2018; Rumstadt & Kanbach, 2022; Weber Shandwick & KRC Research, 2018).

### Background

This phenomenon has spread among industries and consumers, creating new research opportunities in current years. Activism literature, as it relates to marketing and business strategy, has, therefore, been very recently examining various political, environmental, and social issues (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Larcker et al., 2018; Mkrtchyan et al., 2023; Pasirayi et al., 2022; Pimentel & Didonet, 2021; Xiong et al., 2019). Brand activism has evolved from corporate social responsibility (CSR); however, while CSR generally includes topics that a broad spectrum of people typically agree on, such as eliminating world hunger or saving the Amazon rainforest, brand activism is about holding one of the two positions, pro or con, about a polarizing socio-political issue (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020). The agents of brand activism, who act as the activism messengers, can be corporations, brands, or CEOs (Pimentel & Didonet, 2021). On the other hand, if the CEO is the only agent of activism and he or she speaks out on "issues unrelated to their company's core business," it is referred to as CEO activism (Pimentel & Didonet, 2021, p. 5). In either activism case, brand or CEO, the audience ends up divided, unlike with CSR.

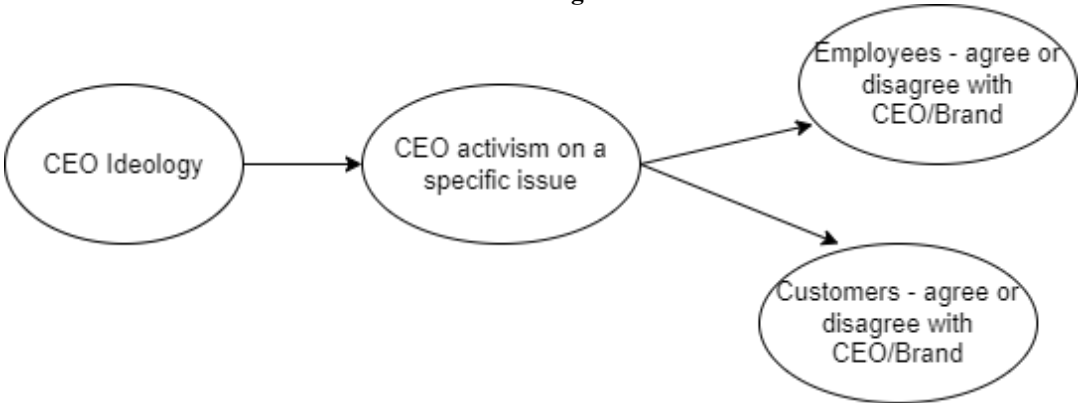
Activism in either form has been making its way into the corporate marketing strategy. Marketing strategy encompasses branding and positioning decisions to create a long-term competitive advantage (Varadarajan & Jayachandran, 1999). An integrative framework for brand activism by Pimentel and Didonet (2021) suggests that brand activism has evolved into a new construct in marketing strategy research. It can occur at multiple organizational levels, such as corporate, individual brand, or C-suite levels, and its research should be treated as organization-driven activism.



Only 44 females held a CEO position at Fortune 500 companies in 2022, compared to 32 females in 2017 and only 18 in 2012 (Catalyst, 2022). Women are unequivocally underrepresented in the C-suite circles and often experience obstacles that their male counterparts rarely face. In top leadership positions, women are likely to face greater challenges and threats from activist investors than male CEOs (Gupta et al., 2018). Women-led companies are also 52% more likely to be targeted by activist hedge funds than firms with male CEOs (Francis et al., 2021). In the context of CEO activism, female CEOs, CEOs of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and CEOs of companies where women serve on boards of directors are more likely to speak up on controversial social issues (Cook et al., 2023). Therefore, their activist voices should be heard and evaluated for potentially beneficial adjustments to corporate marketing strategies. Cook et al. (2023) is the only study in the CEO activism research stream that examined gender’s role. As such, the role of gender in this context remains unexplored; therefore, the presented topic is considered very timely.

The stakeholder alignment model depicted in Figure 1 will be applied to execute this study (Cook et al., 2023; Hambrick & Wowak, 2021; Mkrtychyan et al., 2023). Fortune 500 Female CEOs as agents of CEO activism will represent the CEO ideology construct of the model. The specific issues they address on Twitter will represent the CEO activism aspect.

**Figure 1**



**Contribution and Limitation**

This paper intends to extend the findings by Cook et al. (2023) by investigating what female activist CEOs advocate for on Twitter and whether they show any tendency for specific female-related social issues. Hashtags associated with each issue will be used to measure the proportion of female advocacy-related content (Guha & Korschun, 2023). Multiple control variables, such as CEO political orientation, company type, industry category, CEO age, and ROA, will be implemented into the analysis (Thams & Dau, 2023). That will help understand what characteristics tend to drive a CEO’s choice to advocate for female-related issues on Twitter. Subsequently, CEOs with similar characteristics and female-leaning content will be compared by gender to show whether female CEOs tend to advocate for women more than male CEOs.

This paper's contribution includes examining whether female CEO activists utilize their influence sufficiently to be vocal on behalf of their own tribe - the women. The results will help practitioners understand whether differentiation based on CEO gender should be implemented in future activism marketing and communication strategies. Further, it will shed light on activist topic priorities and whether the presence and influence of a female CEO should be leveraged for female-centered controversial social issues. The study poses several limitations. First, only U.S. firms and U.S. CEOs are the analysis subjects. Second, the data is limited to Twitter CEOs expressing their activist values on the social media platform. This may exclude those who are activists on other platforms or not on social media at all. Moreover lastly, due to Twitter’s acquisition by Musk in 2022, its value as an excellent data resource may become questionable in the future.

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## **Session 6.4: The Use of Senses**

**Chair:** William Neese

## Summary Brief

# Warming Up to Private Labels: Temperature Affects Private Label Market Share

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*Private label sales represent nearly 20%, or \$199 billion, of all consumer packaged goods sold within the US and hold substantial benefits for retailers. Advancements in understanding factors behind private label selection can have large monetary and substantive value; however, little research has examined the relationship between environmental factors and private label market share. To address this gap, the current research examines how an atmospheric factor present across all selling environments—temperature—can impact private label market share. In four studies, the authors demonstrate that warm (vs. cool) temperatures increase private label (vs. national brand) preference and choice. Process analyses suggest this is because national brands are trusted more than private labels, and warm temperatures reduce the positive impact of trust. Moreover, this process is shown to depend on consumer perceptions of risk in private labels.*

### Introduction

Private labels (i.e., store brands, private brands) are brands that are owned and controlled by a specific retailer. Retailers have good reason to implement and develop private label programs. The sale of private label products involves lower marketing and supply costs, resulting in higher profit margins than comparable national brand sales. Private label programs also offer numerous intangible benefits to retailers, including enhanced store loyalty, store image, and differentiation, as well as greater channel negotiation strength (e.g., Fall Diallo et al. 2013). Therefore, studies of private label (vs. national brand) product choices could have large profit implications for retailers and brand managers alike.

In the current research, we investigate how temperature impacts a consumer's brand selection behaviors. In recent years marketing scholars and practitioners have become increasingly aware that temperature has meaningful effects on perceptions of products. For example, cold temperatures can yield greater perceptions of luxury (Park and Hadi 2020). Despite the implications that these findings may hold for brands, there has been no investigation into the effect of temperature on brand selection. Thus, in this work we explore how the experience of warmth (vs. coolness) affects a consumer's private label choice. We find that consumers are more likely to select private label products (relative to national brands) when exposed to warm temperatures. Evidence suggests that this occurs because national brands' equity advantage over private brands is partially based on trust, and that warm temperatures reduce the impact of trust on brand preference.

### Background

Despite advancements made in the quality of PLs, they still suffer from a lack of brand equity, particularly in comparison to NBs. Indeed, national brands have strong brand equity, are associated with superior perceptions, high product quality, and authenticity, and consumers are willing to pay more for NBs than for PLs (e.g., Kadirov 2015). Marketing mix facets such as advertising intensity, distribution intensity, and higher price—which are typically associated with NBs—all increase brand trust (Rajavi, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp 2019). Moreover, PLs often suffer from a lack of trust on the part of consumers (Muruganatham and Priyadharshini 2017).

**H1:** The brand equity advantage of NBs over PLs is mediated by brand trust.

Temperature can influence emotional perceptions and behaviors and we posit it can play a role in the evaluation of private labels relative to national brands. Because warm (cool) temperatures make evaluation targets seem more (less) trustworthy (Williams and Bargh 2008; Kang et al. 2010), we expect that they will increase the performance of PLs relative to NBs. Thus, if NBs do maintain an advantage of brand equity based on trust, while PLs are at a relative deficit of brand trust, warmth will benefit PLs more than it does NBs.

**H2:** Warm (vs. cool) temperatures increase private label market share and preference relative to that of national brands.

As consumers purchase and use products, they experience outcomes that either update or reinforce their pre-purchase risk perceptions. Indeed, trust is a consequence of PL use (Muruganatham and Priyadharshini 2017). Because brand-related trust represents beliefs about a brand's motivation and ability to deliver positive outcomes (Rajavi, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp 2019), when consumers do not believe PLs are less likely to produce positive outcomes than

NBs, they are likely to experience similar levels of trust for both brand types. As such, the degree of risk, or uncertainty, perceived by consumers across the two brand types will mitigate the trust-related brand equity advantage held by NBs. **H3:** Perceived risk in PLs will positively moderate the effect of between brand type on trust such that trust will not differ between NBs and PLs for those who perceive a low degree of risk in PLs.

### Key Findings

Study 1 is an analysis of Nielsen Retail Scanner data that includes twenty different product categories, over 12,000 UPCs, and greater than 3 million observations of CPG sales from across the nation. Using a fixed-effects model, we find a significant interaction such that private label sales increase relative to national brand sales as outdoor ambient temperature rises ( $\beta = .017$ ,  $SE = .003$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting H2.

Study 2 is a retail lab simulation. Using temperature packs as our manipulation, we find that exposure to warmth (vs. cold) led to a 20% increase in the selection of private label products, leading it to surpass the selection of national brands ( $M_{\text{warm}} = 0.604$ ,  $M_{\text{cool}} = 0.494$ ;  $t(108) = -2.22$ ,  $p = .029$ ), again supporting H2.

Studies 3 and 4 employ the managerially operable manipulation of thermal imagery in a 2 (warm vs. cool) x 2 (private label vs. national brand) design. Across both studies we find that national brands command greater willingness to pay, and that this equity advantage is based in brand trust ( $\beta = .254$ ,  $SE = .051$ , 95% CI: .160, .358), supporting H1. However, when warmth is made salient to consumers, this equity advantage is reduced by roughly 45% (Index: = -.121,  $SE = .059$ , 95% CI: -.244, -.019), supporting H2 in both studies. In study 4, we generalize this effect across utilitarian and hedonic products as well as demonstrate the moderating role of private label risk. A significant interaction between brand type and perceived risk ( $\beta = .579$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ ) showed that consumers who perceive private labels as low in risk do not respond differentially to temperature because they do not trust national brands more than private labels, supporting H3.

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# Summary Brief

## The Interaction Between Comparative Advertising Formats and Use of Recycled Material by the Sponsoring Brand

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*This study analyzes the impact of comparative advertising as well as claims of the use of recycled materials in manufacturing a product on consumers' attitudes towards the brand and the company. Based on hierarchy-of-effects (HOE) theory, we use a 3 (levels of comparative advertising message) by 4 (degree of claims of using recycled materials) between-subjects experimental design to measure respondents' reactions to one of twelve possible test advertisements. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) is used to test main and interaction effects. Results indicate that attitude towards the brand and the company is most positive in case of indirect comparative ad mentioning specific car parts being made of recycled materials.*

### Introduction

Recycling is a functional way to help alleviate problems of excess waste resulting from an increasingly larger population of human beings consuming exponentially more goods and services. Winterich, Nenkov, and Gonzales (2019) demonstrate, advertising and promotion that tells consumers how recycled materials are used in manufacturing a product ("transformational salience" in their vernacular) can actually stimulate recycling behavior. The question left after their study is, can transformational messaging lead to positive benefits such as attitude towards the company, or purchase intentions, directly for companies and their brands in addition to stimulating recycling behavior?

Comparative advertising is widely-used in the U.S. automobile market to help facilitate brand positioning, wherein the sponsoring brand compares itself to one or several competing brands in an attempt to favorably sway the minds of consumers along dimensions relevant to the purchase decision. Comparative advertising that features information about domestic and/or foreign automobile brands can stimulate ethnocentric beliefs, feelings, and purchase intentions at the moment of exposure to the ad content (Neese and Haynie 2015). We believe a logical extension of this finding is that claims by an advertising sponsor (Hyundai in this case) that recycled materials are used to produce that sponsor's brand can be enhanced when presented to the audience in a comparative advertising format. Using traditional hierarchy-of-effects (HOE) theory (Wilkie and Farris 1975), this study tests for the possible impact of the interaction between claims of using recycled materials and comparative advertising on consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, the company, and the brand as well as purchase intentions. Specifically, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1 – H5:** The interaction effects of the comparative advertising formats that feature the most information about the use of recycled materials will result in significantly more positive 1) attitude towards the ad (AAD), 2) attitude towards the brand (AB), 3) attitude towards the company (ACOM), 4) brand beliefs (BLF), and 5) purchase intentions (PI).

### Research Domain and Methodology

We developed mock social media advertisements sponsored by Hyundai Motor Manufacturing of Alabama with two main effects: three comparative advertising formats (1-noncomparative, 2-indirect comparative, and 3-direct comparative headlines), and four levels of claims made in the test ads that recycled material has been used to build a new product (1-no recycled material is mentioned, 2-the term "recycled material" is mentioned, 3-"dashboard and seating" made of recycled material is mentioned, and finally, 4-dashboard and seating made of "75% recycled material" is mentioned). Additional mock advertisements contain combinations of the different levels of the two main effect conditions, resulting in a total of 12 advertisements. Individual involvement with recycling, and high school or college participation in a recycling program are included as covariates.

### Key Findings

The main effect of levels of comparative advertising was insignificant at both the multivariate and univariate level. Use of recycled materials had a significant effect on attitude towards the brand (AB) and the company (ACOM). For AB,

all three headlines that reference recycled material to some degree (Treatment Category #2, #3, and #4) produced significantly higher adjusted means than the version with no mention of recycled material. The means for Treatment Category #4 that uses a numerical figure (75%) were only significantly higher than Treatment Category #1, but not categories 2 and 3.

The interaction between NIDC and RCYL had a significant effect on all five dependent variables at the univariate level. When the claim “dashboard and seating made of recycled material” was included, the indirect comparative headline resulted in higher AAD compared to the noncomparative version. Attitudes toward the Hyundai brand (AB) featured in the test ad viewed by respondents were significantly higher in case of the indirect comparative version when the claim “dashboard and seating made of recycled material” was included, than the noncomparative version. The same result occurred for ACOM and BLF as for AB. Respondents’ attitude toward Hyundai was significantly higher when the headline stated that dashboard and seating are made of recycled material and the term “our competition” was referenced. However, Purchase intention (PI) was highest in the case of the noncomparative ad that did not mention the use of recycled materials.

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## Session 6.6: Meet the Editors

**Chair:** Christopher Hopkins

**Panelists:**

*Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* - Raj Agnihotri, Iowa State University

*Journal of Consumer Marketing* - Neel Das, Appalachian State University

*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* - Mark Houston, Texas Christian University

*Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* - Brian Rutherford, Kennesaw State University

*Marketing Education Review* - Mark Lee, Ryerson University

*European Journal of Marketing* - Greg Marshall, Rollins College

*Journal of Consumer Research* - Linda Price, University of Wyoming

*Journal of Business Research* - Stacey Robinson, University of Alabama

*International Journal of Advertising* - Adam Mills, Loyola University

*Journal of Global Scholars in Marketing Research* - Kevin Shanahan, Mississippi State University

*Journal of Consumer Psychology* - David Wooten, University of Michigan

## **Session 7.1: Aging Markets**

**Chair:** Stephanie Lawson

Full Paper

# Beyond UTAUT: The Impact of espoused Personal Cultural Orientations on Owner-Managers' Artificial Intelligence (AI) Adoption in SMEs

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## Abstract

This study following the lens of UTAUT and espoused personal cultural orientations proposes to investigate the relationship between the constructs of UTAUT and espoused cultural orientations and the intention to adopt artificial intelligence on SMEs in a low internet penetrated region. Even though artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved to improve firms' performance and subsequent productivity, the impact of this new general phenomenon remains inconclusive in SMEs. This study will use the variable -oriented (i.e., PLS-SEM) and case-oriented approaches (i.e., fsQCA) to discover the different configurations of conditions that result in AI adoption in SMEs and its outcomes. Overall, the results from this study can guide SME owner-managers on the specificity of firm-level AI adoption factors that strengthen productivity and subsequent survival in the velocity of the competitive business environment.

**Key words:** Artificial intelligence, SMEs, PLS-SEM, fsQCA, personal cultural orientations.

## Introduction

The adoption and utilization of information technology have gained significant prominence in the modern business environment, exerting a substantial influence on the success and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (henceforth, SMEs) globally (Isensee et al., 2020). This heightened interest in IT adoption is driven by its potential to create sustainable competitive advantages, enhance operational efficiency, facilitate organizational agility, and improve decision-making processes (OECD, 2021a). Furthermore, IT adoption facilitates information flow, enables real-time communication, and supports virtual collaboration, leading to improved decision-making and faster response to market changes (Peltier et al., 2012). Amidst the evolving landscape of technology adoption, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force with immense potential for SMEs (Skilton & Hovsepian, 2017). AI technologies encompass a range of capabilities, including machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics, that enable intelligent automation, predictive insights, and cognitive decision-making (Hansen & Bøgh, 2021). Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of nearly everyone's lives, permeating various aspects of society and transforming the way we live, work, and interact (Wang et al., 2022). From voice assistants that answer our simple and complex questions to recommendation systems that suggest personalized content, AI technologies have gained unprecedented prevalence and organizations from diverse economic sectors are aware of their potential (OECD, 2021c). A significant body of academic research has extensively examined technology adoption, including the adoption of artificial intelligence (Peres et al., 2020). However, a predominant focus has been placed on large enterprises in developed countries, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of the factors that influence new technologies adoption and decision-making processes within small businesses (AlSheibani et al., 2018; Peltier et al., 2012). In response to this need, researchers have turned to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which originated from the pivotal work of Fred Davis in 1986 (Davis, 1989). TAM represents a tailored adaptation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and has gained widespread acceptance within the realm of information technology research. It has demonstrated its effectiveness as a reasonably accurate predictor of users' and organizations' intentions to adopt and utilize information technology systems (Chaveesuk et al., 2022; Ritz et al., 2019). Over time, TAM has undergone progressive advancements to enhance its explanatory capabilities. In fact, a significant development was developed by Venkatesh, along with Davis and other researchers (Venkatesh et al., 2003), by integrating TAM with seven other influential models in the field of technology acceptance. This culmination gave rise to the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), a comprehensive framework aimed at amalgamating diverse perspectives within technology acceptance research.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) has provided valuable insights into SMEs' behavioral intentions towards technology adoption (Ikumoro & Jawad, 2019). However, there is a pressing need to extend the application of UTAUT to specific domains, particularly in the context of 4.0 technologies (Venkatesh, 2022; Wismantoro & Susilowati, 2021). With the pervasive influence of AI in today's rapidly evolving business landscape, it becomes increasingly relevant to explore the adoption dynamics from the unique perspective of SMEs. Scholars have highlighted the heightened relevance of managers in technology adoption behaviors among SMEs compared to larger companies (Alrousan et al., 2020). Factors such as decision-making concentration and managerial ownership contribute to the increased significance of managers on shaping technology adoption behaviors among SMEs (Mallinguh et al., 2020). Furthermore, some scholars have acknowledged that managers' decisions are not solely driven by rational considerations but are also influenced by their individual values, beliefs, and cultural orientations (Pizam et al., 2022; Elbeltagi et al., 2013).

Consequently, considerable research has investigated the influence of culture on managers' technology adoption intentions (Udo et al., 2016; Im et al., 2011), much of this work has predominantly relied on the dimensions proposed by Hofstede (Syed & Malik, 2014; Cardon et al., 2008). Undeniably, Hofstede's cultural dimensions have provided valuable insights into cross-cultural variations and the influence of national culture on technology adoption (Hofstede, 1980; Alrousan & Jones, 2016). However, it is important to recognize that culture is a multifaceted and nuanced construct that extends beyond national boundaries (Udo et al., 2016). Furthermore, individual cultural orientations and personal beliefs have a significant impact on decision-making processes, including technology adoption choices (Sharma, 2010; Slowikowski & Jarratt, 1996). Therefore, there is a compelling need to explore culture from an individual perspective and delve into the personal cultural orientations that shape managers' AI adoption intentions (Venkatesh, 2022).

In line with the above notion, the present research endeavours to advance our comprehension of the intricate interplay between culture and AI adoption within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by adopting an individual-centric approach. Integrating the established UTAUT model with personal cultural orientations, we propose a comprehensive theoretical framework that sheds light on the multifaceted nature of AI adoption. This integrative framework recognizes the significance of relevant personal cultural orientations in shaping managers' behavioral intentions, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of AI adoption in the context of SMEs.

## **Theoretical background and hypothesis development**

### **Unified Theory of Adoption and Use of Technology (UTAUT)**

The Unified Theory of Adoption and Use of Technology (UTAUT) has emerged as a widely acclaimed and robust framework for comprehensively examining the adoption of digital technology across diverse businesses and countries (Im et al., 2011; Udo et al., 2016). This framework integrates eight established theories and models in the field of information systems, including the theory of reasoned action (TRA), social cognitive theory (SCT), technology acceptance model (TAM), theory of planned behavior (TPB), model of PC utilization (MPCU), motivational model (MM), decomposed theory of planned behavior (DTPB), and innovation diffusion theory (IDT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Esteemed scholars and researchers have extensively employed the UTAUT framework to investigate technology adoption behaviors in a range of industry contexts, including intelligent conversational agents in e-commerce (Ikumoro & Jawad, 2019), high technology products (Slowikowski & Jarratt, 1996), e-learning (El-Masri & Tarhini, 2017), financial technology (Wismantoro & Susilowati, 2021), blockchain technology (Khazaei, 2020), 3D design digital technologies (Henao-Ramírez & López-Zapata, 2021), and social media (Alhaimer, 2019).

The UTAUT model has the capacity to explain not less than 70% of technology acceptance behavior, and it includes key dimensions that help us understand managers' intentions when it comes to technology adoption. Performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating environments, and social influence are examples of these constructs (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Each construct within the framework of the UTAUT represents a distinct component of the adoption process and offers valuable insights into the adoption of AI among SMEs. However, in this study, the variable of social influence will not be considered. The rationale behind this decision is to focus on capturing the individual-level perspective, specifically through the lens of personal cultural orientations.

### **Performance Expectancy**

According to UTAUT, individuals are more inclined to engage in a behavior when they expect favourable outcomes from their actions. Compeau and Higgins (1995) emphasize that the potential for rewards creates a strong inclination for individuals to develop positive attitudes and preferences toward a specific behavior. Venkatesh (2022) posit that PE is the extent to which the use of AI technology will yield beneficial outcomes for an individual or

organization. For instance, a study conducted by Ikumoro and Jawad (2019) investigated the intention to use chatbot-AI in Malaysia and found that PE played a pivotal role in SMEs' adoption intentions. Similarly, a cross-cultural analysis by Syed and Malik (2014) revealed variations in the impact of PE on behavioral intention between the United States and Pakistan, with PE having a stronger effect in the United States. However, it is noteworthy that a study conducted by Walker et al. (2016) in the context of Slovakian SMEs did not find PE to be a significant determinant of technology adoption. Building on these insights, we formulate the following hypothesis:

*H1: Performance Expectancy is positively related to AI adoption intention*

### **Effort Expectancy**

Effort Expectancy (EE), perceived ease of use in the TAM model, refers to individuals' and the level of effort involved in adopting and utilizing AI technology (Venkatesh, 2022). The scholarly work of (Rozmi et al., 2019) highlights the importance of EE in shaping individuals' decisions regarding technology adoption. Their research findings indicate that while PE do not affect SMEs managers' intentions, individuals are more inclined to adopt a technology when they perceive it as user-friendly and requiring minimal effort. Moreover, an article conducted by Lee and Kim (2017) in the context of SMEs provides empirical evidence that a higher level of EE negatively influences the intention of SMEs to adopt AI technology, as supported by Im et al., (2011). Venkatesh (2003) asserts that both PE and EE are direct determinants of behavioral intentions, which aligns with the findings of Soong et al. (2020) in their study of electronic government procurement. Therefore, we hypothesize:

*H2: Effort Expectancy is negatively related to AI adoption intention*

### **Facilitating Conditions**

Facilitating conditions pertain to the managerial perspective on the availability of resources and support necessary for implementing a behavior through a digital system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). It encompasses an SME's perception of the adequacy of technical infrastructure for effective technology utilization when needed (Im et al., 2011). SMEs rely on the existence of specific organizational or technical factors during unforeseen circumstances, and this significantly influences their inclination towards technology adoption (Rozmi, 2019). Factors such as formal training, guidance, infrastructure, and system compatibility contribute to facilitating conditions, as suggested by previous studies. In the context of SMEs, Roffia and Mola (2022) found that FC play a crucial role in the adoption of digitalization. Their study in the Veneto region of Italy revealed that organizations prioritize facilitating conditions over factors like EE or social influence when determining their intention to adopt a technology. According to Vos & Boonstra, (2022) in cultures with a collectivist orientation, the presence of facilitating conditions can contribute to increased technology adoption. Therefore, we posit:

*H3: Facilitation Conditions is positively related to AI adoption intention*

### **Personal Cultural Orientations**

Studies investigating cultural variations in technology adoption often rely on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, such as individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation, as national-level indicators (Syed & Malik, 2014; Cardon et al., 2008). However, some scholars argue that there is a distinction between Hofstede's cultural dimensions at the national level and the examination of cultural values at the individual level (Sharma, 2010). Recognizing the heterogeneity within a nation emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach that accommodates diverse perspectives and ethnic disparities (Venkatesh, 2022).

Sharma (2010) argues that personal cultural orientations encompass a broad range of dimensions, including individualism, collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation. These dimensions reflect individuals' deep-rooted beliefs, values, and cultural norms that influence their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors within various domains, including technology adoption. Research in the field of cross-cultural psychology has shed light on the importance of personal cultural orientations in understanding individuals' behaviors and decision-making processes (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis et al., 1985). However, their application in the context of technology adoption, particularly within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), is still an emerging area of study (Lee et al., 2013). Sharma's framework offers a comprehensive perspective that goes beyond national cultures and recognizes the individualistic nature of personal cultural orientations.

### **Independence**

The construct of independence refers to an individual's inclination to prioritize personal autonomy, self-reliance, and individual goals over collective interests or societal expectations. It reflects the extent to which individuals value their own uniqueness, personal freedoms, and the pursuit of individual aspirations (Triandis, 1985). In the context of SMEs, more independent managers will tend to act more autonomously, to have a strong self-concept and a sense of freedom and personal achievement (Sharma, 2010). Individuals with a high preference for independence may exhibit a greater inclination to explore and adopt new technologies that align with their individual needs and preferences (Lee et al., 2013). They may prioritize self-directed decision-making and value the ability to customize and personalize technology solutions to suit their unique requirements (Kreiser et al., 2010). Therefore, it is proposed that:

*H4: Independence is positively related to AI adoption intention*

### **Interdependence**

Interdependence refers to the degree to which individuals' value and rely on social connections, collaboration, and collective decision-making processes (Sharma, 2010). It encompasses the belief that individuals are interconnected and interdependent, recognizing the importance of teamwork, cooperation, and shared responsibilities. In the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), interdependence takes on particular significance. SMEs often operate in close-knit environments, where managers and employees work closely together, sharing resources and responsibilities and search for a common goal (OECD, 2021b; Cardon et al., 2008). This collaborative nature of SMEs fosters an environment where interdependence plays a vital role in decision-making processes, particularly when it comes to technology adoption (Zhao et al., 2014). Hence, it is proposed that:

*H5: Interdependence is positively related to AI adoption intention*

### **Power**

The concept of power refers to the distribution and utilization of authority, influence, and decision-making capabilities within organizations (Hofstede, 1980). It encompasses the extent to which individuals in an organization accept and embrace the hierarchical differences and power dynamics among its members (Sharma, 2010). In the context of SMEs, power dynamics play a crucial role in shaping technology adoption behaviors. SMEs often have a concentrated decision-making structure, where managers or owners hold a considerable amount of power and influence (OECD, 2021c). This concentration of power can have implications for the adoption of new technologies within SMEs, as managers' beliefs, preferences, and decision-making authority heavily influence the organization's approach to technology adoption (Naushad & Sulphery, 2020; Marcati et al., 2008;). Understanding the role of power within SMEs is essential for comprehending how individuals' approach to authority influence technology adoption choices, and how power imbalances may hinder or facilitate the adoption of AI (Venkatesh, 2022). Thus, it is proposed that:

*H6: Power is positively related to AI adoption intention*

### **Social Inequity**

The social inequity (SI) construct refers to the level of inequality that individuals within a collective perceive as normal and tolerate (Sharma, 2010). In organizational contexts, social inequity can take various forms and have a significant impact on individuals' experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Syed & Malik, 2014; Hofstede, 1985). Research by Almoawi (2011) suggests that social inequity, along with individualism, moderates the technology components of SMEs' adoption intentions. Furthermore, Keiser et al. (2010) argue that cultures with more equality are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as the adoption of AI intelligence to enhance their competitive position in the industry which can significantly impact their intentions and actions towards technology adoption. On the other hand, organizations with high social inequity will have less authority to make decisions that alter the status quo. Consequently, it is proposed that:

*H7: Social Inequity is negatively related to AI adoption intention*

### **An integrated model**

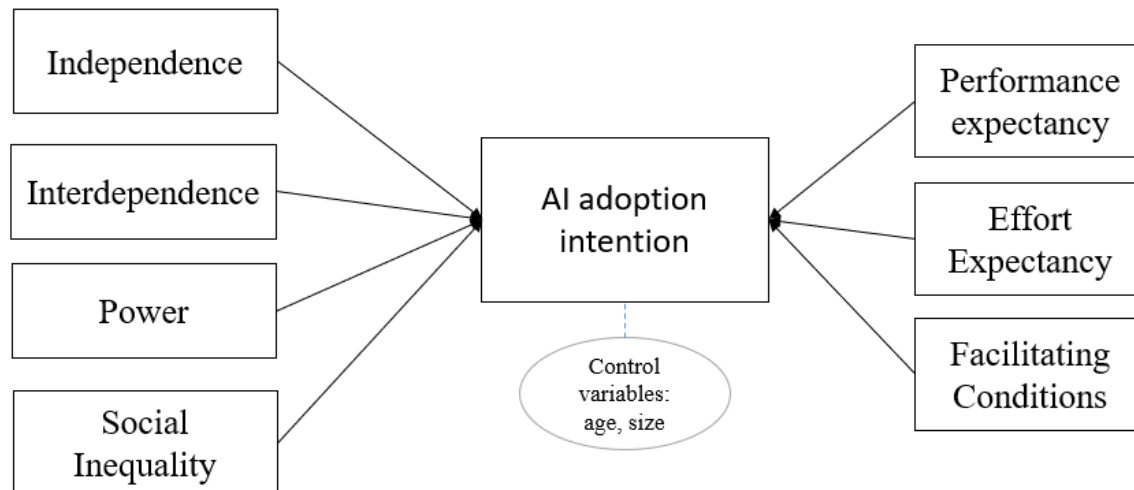


Fig. 1. Proposed research framework.

Source: own.

## Method

The study will target owner-managers and employees of Colombian SMEs in the three major cities in Colombia, namely Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. The selection of Colombian SMEs as the target population for this study is driven by several academic justifications. Firstly, studying the adoption of AI technology within Colombian SMEs provides a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of technology adoption in a specific cultural and economic context (Osorio-Gallego et al., 2016). By focusing on Colombian SMEs, we can gain insights into the challenges and opportunities that are specific to the Colombian business environment, contributing to the understanding of technology adoption in developing economies (Dini et al., 2021). Secondly, Colombia is a diverse country with significant regional variations, and studying SMEs in major cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali allows for a comprehensive representation of different industries, business environments, and regional characteristics (López-Vega et al., 2019). This regional diversity enriches the findings and enhances the generalizability of the study's findings.

By identifying the response bias associated with the cross-sectional survey, the suggestions of Podsakoff, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff (2012) will be adhered to minimise the occurrence of common method variance (CMV). The study will adopt a two-wave data collection approach with an average three-month interval, basically by way of separating the exogenous variable, mediator, and endogenous variable measures. As a sequel, Pearson's chi-square test for categorisation (Greenwood & Nikulin, 1996) will be used to compare the first, second and third waves' responses.

Considering the data analysis, both the variable-oriented and case-oriented analyses will be used for data analysis. Categorically with the variable approach, the partial least squares path modelling (PLS-SEM) will be used. Using PLS-SEM, as considered in the extant literature, becomes suitable primarily when a study seeks to examine the causal relationships between observed and latent variables concurrently (Hair et al., 2019). Consistent with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2019), the study will analyse the data in two stages; the measurement model will be first computed to establish the validity and reliability of the constructs, and second, the theorised relationships will be tested to identify the extent of the relationship between the UTAUT constructs and the personal cultural orientations put forward by Sharma. With a case-oriented analyses, the fsQCA will be adopted to re-analyse the data to unknot the possible contrarian cases often discounted in the variable oriented analysis (Pappas & Woodside, 2021). The fsQCA will in turn compute alternative models by axiomatizing several factors (causal recipes) to determine several outcomes (i.e., the presence and absence of an outcome (Olya & Nia, 2021).

## Expected theoretical and managerial contributions of the paper

Integrating UTAUT and espoused cultural orientation variables as part of the study will improve our understanding of how SMEs intention of AI will improve the productivity quotient of SMEs in their operation (Venkatesh, 2022). This integration provides a comprehensive theoretical framework that considers the multifaceted nature of AI adoption and the influence of personal cultural orientations (Sharma, 2010) on managers' behavioral

intentions. Highlighting the relevance of the individual analysis of SMEs managers, this study extends the traditional approaches that have been utilized to analyse artificial intelligence adoption and proposes a new point of view that considers the particularity of different cultural contexts.

Moreover, using two different analytical procedures (variable-oriented and case-oriented approaches) in a single study will provide a deeper insight into both theories constructs and the intention to adopt AI relationship, which has been overlooked in the existing literature. The results will clarify and shed light of the use of the aforementioned approaches, thus whether using variable-oriented and case-oriented approaches in a single study produces better outcomes as opposed to adopting a single analytical approach. Consequently, the findings of the study will approve the significance of using hybrid approaches in information system research

In addition to the theoretical contributions, the study will provide practical implications for SMEs owner-managers. Categorically, results from the study could inform owner-managers on what AI metrics is applicable in their operations. Owner-managers can customize their strategies and interventions to effectively overcome cultural barriers and establish a receptive environment for AI adoption by recognizing the effects of personal cultural orientations. Furthermore, the findings provide insights into the distinct cultural contexts of SMEs, allowing owner-managers to make educated decisions about the selection and application of AI technology. The management contributions of this study enable owner-managers to use AI as a strategic tool, improving their competitiveness, operational efficiency, and decision-making processes in an ever-changing company landscape.

## Conclusion

This research presents a novel approach by integrating the UTAUT model and personal cultural orientation variables to advance our understanding of AI adoption in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By recognizing the multifaceted nature of AI adoption and its interaction with cultural orientations, this study transcends traditional perspectives and offers fresh insights into the complexities of AI adoption within diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, it highlights the significance of contextual conditions and unique attributes of AI technologies that shape their adoption and use. The profound impact of AI tools on decision-making processes is acknowledged, where managers may experience a shift from decision support to actual decision making. Consequently, this research makes substantial theoretical and managerial contributions, unravelling the intricate interplay between cultural orientations, contextual factors, and AI adoption in SMEs, and offering practical implications for owner-managers, particularly in a non-developed economy.

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## Summary Brief

# The Impact of Dispositional Traits and Technology-Task Environment on Continuance Usage of Food Delivery Apps: Evidence from Africa

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*The aim of this study is to capture the complexity of antecedent conditions characterizing the continuance usage of food delivery apps (FDAs). The theoretical premise for this study is based on the dispositional traits and the technology task environment literatures. Data retrieved from 181 customers were analyzed using the fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) and results revealed four optimal solutions that lead to high continuance usage intentions of FDAs. Importantly, of the four solutions, consumer mobile skillfulness is required to be present, while consumer pessimism and skepticism is required to be mostly low. A striking finding is that when perceived efforts (as reflected in perceived high food selection and food evaluation effort) are low, consumer pessimism and skepticism can foster continuance usage intention on the grounds that consumer optimism, openness to experience, trust disposition, and mobile skillfulness are on the high side. Findings assist in advancing the empirical base on the complementary effect of dispositional traits and technology-task environment attributes on sustained use of platform-mediated services like FDAs.*

## Introduction

It is known that platform-mediated services such as food ordering and delivery services provide tremendous opportunities for technology-based firms and other important stakeholders such as consumers, drivers, and restaurants (cf. Ahuja et al., 2021). During the pandemic, many consumers across the world were 'forced' to make purchases online and including the use of food delivery apps (FDAs henceforth) to order and pay for prepared meals. While the COVID-19 pandemic has indeed played some part in the rise of individuals use of FDAs and that, in turn, drew significant media and research spotlight to the technology use (cf. Gavilan et al., 2021), many of us also know that the pandemic context, which is an unusual situation, is insufficient to explain either the frequency of use or continuance usage intentions of FDAs. Against this backdrop, we believe, just like other previous publications before us (Bao & Zhu, 2022; Foroughi et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2022), that it is necessary to understand the factors leading to continuance use of this platform-mediated service in order to provide relevant industry stakeholders in this area with the much-needed information for their various market campaigns and/or customer strategy formulation.

## Background

Studies on platform-mediated services like food delivery apps have been growing steadily and especially in the last three years. Indeed, different studies have proposed theoretical models to better explain how different customers interact and use FDAs and with most of these studies situated in markets such as the US, India and China. For example, the study of Kaur et al. (2021) adopted the consumption values theory and found in India that values such as price value, affordances value and prestige value positively predict customers intentions to purchase food using food delivery apps. Another recent study conducted among a sample of US consumers and using the planned behavior model, theory of perceived risk and along with the elaboration model found that perceived benefits, risk and online persuasion affect consumer attitude and this, in turn, significantly affects consumers' intentions toward purchasing food online via FDAs (Pillai et al., 2022). Furthermore, a study in China that deployed the ecommerce system successful model finds that information quality, ease of use and convenience contribute significantly and indirectly to the reuse intentions of FDA through the mechanisms of customer satisfaction and perceived value.

Meanwhile, despite the broader claims in the literature about the importance of dispositional factors and including traits such as optimism, openness to experience, disposition to trust and pessimism (Geissler & Edison, 2005; McElroy et al., 2007), as well as the claim about the role that the technology task environment and especially perceived effort (Sohn & Groß, 2020) and mobile skillfulness (Lu et al., 2009) play in (mobile) technology use, there is no research to-date that has sought to explore how these two perspectives might concurrently be deployed to explain continuance usage intentions of FDAs or any related technologies for that matter. Besides, a mere Google Scholar search indicates

that academic research on platform-mediated services such as FDAs is currently lacking in African markets and similar markets in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The current study is distinctive in that it represents the first of its kind in the literature to deploy fsQCA and integrate the perspectives of dispositional traits and the technology task environment to identify the optimal solutions leading to continuance usage intentions of FDAs. Our study is also one of the few studies conducted in Africa on FDAs. Together, enriching the scholarly base and (management) practice on FDAs.

### Key Findings

Four recipes emerged as conditions predicting continuance usage intention. In the first recipe (given that other factors are present), when perceived high food selection and food evaluation effort are absent, consumers pessimism and skepticism must be absent as well to foster consumers continuance usage intention. In the second recipe, when other factors are present, even though consumer skepticism, openness to experience and dispositional distrust is absent, continuance usage intention could still be high. In the third recipe, when consumer optimism and pessimism are absent, given that the other factors are present, continuance usage intention could still be high. Finally, in the fourth recipe, all the factors must be present for high continuance usage intention. Of the four recipes, consumer mobile skillfulness is required to be present for high continuance usage intention, while consumer pessimism and skepticism is required to be mostly absent for high continuance usage intention.

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## **Session 7.2: Social Media & Body Positivity**

**Chair:** Cortnee Bunch

## Summary Brief

# Why #DoctorTikTok?

## A Mixed Method Assessment for Physicians on Social Media

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*Previous research has focused on general social media health influencers (e.g., health coaches), so it is still unclear how healthcare professionals, specifically physicians, use social media to share information. Thus, this study aims to investigate how physicians use social media, notably TikTok, for sharing information. Specifically, this research explores how physicians use TikTok to provide health-related information and how consumers comprehend the messages presented.*

### Introduction

By actively engaging on TikTok, Healthcare professionals (HCPs) contribute medical information combined with entertainment that showcases their personality, perhaps reducing the distance between them and their followers and fostering trust (Goldberg, 2020). Although it is crucial for consumer welfare, the issue of HCPs acting as social media influencers (SMIs) is poorly understood. In fact, studies examining HCPs' behavior on social media are scarce and limited in scope (Leibowitz et al. 2021). This area of research primarily focuses on general social media health influencers (e.g., health coaches), so identifying how healthcare professionals, specifically physicians, utilize social media to spread information is still to be understood.

### Literature Review

Also, research has shown that the type and source of health content can vary by platform (e.g., Rahimy et al. 2021). As such, researchers may consider individual social media platforms in their research objectives. In light of this, TikTok is the focus of this study because of its broad use for sharing healthcare information, which increased during the epidemic and due to its popularity. Since its creation, it has been downloaded more than two billion times, and over one billion people use it monthly (Doyle 2022). In 2020, participation on TikTok increased by 1533%, with the hashtag #doctor receiving more than 6.7 billion views (Comp et al. 2021; Haenlein et al. 2020; Roche et al. 2021). Due to its short-form video content and technical features for content creation, TikTok is fundamentally different from other social media platforms. Furthermore, the demographics of TikTok users show that they are predominantly young, with 60% of users between the ages of 16 and 24 (Doyle 2022), which may impact how the message is interpreted.

Considering all of this, the motivation for this research is the realization that comprehending how physicians utilize social media, particularly TikTok, to disseminate information is a crucial first step in comprehending its ramifications on customer well-being. This research intends to investigate how physicians use TikTok to provide health-related information and to examine how consumers perceive the messages being delivered by these HCPs. The results of our studies can help physicians and healthcare organizations use social media more effectively to provide pertinent health information and encourage healthy behaviors (Daz-Martn et al. 2020; Rogers et al. 2022).

### Method

For Study 1, we analyzed 330 TikTok video posts by 11 physicians who are SMIs on TikTok and who we identified using Google to search with different keyword combinations such as "top/most followed doctors/physicians/medical doctors on/to follow on TikTok" and selecting all physicians that were mentioned by two or more top hit lists. Specifically, we conducted an exploratory content analysis to understand how healthcare professionals utilize TikTok. This is proper in the context of discovery-oriented research (Torres et al. 2007), and a similar methodology has been used by researchers exploring healthcare content on TikTok (e.g., Ravikumar et al. 2021; Zhu et al. 2019). Three researchers watched the 330 TikTok videos and coded them on three variables: content type, content format, and background sound or music.

For Study 2, we conducted depth interviews with 3 informants who have an account and follow HCPs on TikTok. Each of these interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 90 minutes and was audio recorded and later transcribed, following established guidelines (McCracken, 1988). Three researchers independently analyzed the

transcripts for common themes and categories and then compared and discussed findings. Additionally, the open coding was conducted in MaxQDA a qualitative data analysis software which can code and classify data and visualize patterns and themes. Coded data were compared and contrasted to yield a few broad categories, which, through sorting and clustering, were reduced to the more fundamental patterns that constitute the emergent themes. This iterative process of coding, categorizing, and abstracting the data approach is consistent with grounded theory procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Creswell, 2013; Sayre, 2001) and established guidelines (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2015; McCracken, 1988; Spiggle, 1994).

## Findings

In Study 1, a descriptive analysis of content types and formats of 330 TikTok videos showed that physicians on TikTok post mostly medical information and/or advice (41.2%) and about both their personal lives (25.5%) and life as a doctor (23.0%). Although some videos (5.5%) reflect the physician's perspective or opinion on healthcare-related topics, it is rare that HCPs express non-healthcare-related opinions (4.8%) on TikTok. In terms of content format, the most common format is written content (38.2%) followed by the physician speaking in the video (34.2%). 12.4% of the physician videos had motion, dance, or actions associated with one of these two standard formats. HCPs on TikTok less commonly use music and visuals with no message (5.2%), speaking with subtitles (4.8%), and other formats, including text-to-speech (5.2%). Despite being a popular format on TikTok, physician video posts in our sample used Duets only 9.7% of the time. Finally, in terms of background sound or music, most videos (49.7%) in our sample use music or sound that might be TikTok trends in a way that is unrelated to the message. 27.6% of physician TikTok posts do not use background music or sound (only the physician's voice), and 22.7% of them use background music or sound that might be TikTok trends in a way that is related to the message.

In Study 2, the qualitative analysis uncovered TikTok video elements that enhance consumer perceptions of physicians' authenticity, professionalism, and accessibility; thus, driving consumer engagement with the content posted by physician SMIs and influencing consumer adherence outcomes to physician advice or recommended product adoption. Specifically, in terms of physician's self-presentation on TikTok, the servicescape (e.g., hospital or professional office background), dress code (e.g., medical or professional attire), and visible physician credentials of matter. Furthermore, the findings highlighted physician TikTok behaviors that have a positive effect on how consumers perceive them and how likely consumers are to adhere to their advice. These behaviors include the use of humor, the physician's openness about their personal life, their enthusiasm and positive demeanor, whether they practice what they preach, and whether they recommend their own products vs. endorse other product brands. Finally, interactive content elements on TikTok played an important role in consumer perceptions, especially question and answer (Q&A) live sessions, physicians responding to comments, and physicians catering their TikTok content based on consumer comments.

## Discussion

Based upon these findings, HCPs on TikTok appear to focus on sharing healthcare information, healthcare-related opinions, and life as a healthcare professional. While they do not utilize all the technical capabilities TikTok offers, such as Duets or speech-to-text, it seems that they do intentionally design their videos to increase visibility, such as engaging in trending dance moves or using trending sounds regardless of whether they are related to their message. Findings from the qualitative study show that young consumers follow physicians on TikTok because their content has informational value (i.e., to learn about healthy behaviors), motivational value (i.e., to find motivation and inspiration for healthy behaviors), and for entertainment value (i.e., to be entertained especially through humorous content). Physician SMIs on TikTok can have significant influence on young consumers' health behaviors including adherence to positive health behaviors and lifestyle changes and adoption of recommended products.

This study enriches the understanding of semiological analysis (Saussure 1983; Williamson 2001) by presenting how codes and meanings are embedded in social media messages. Three of the most important aspects influencing perception towards physician SMIs are professionalism (e.g., scrubs, tone of voice, medical knowledge), authenticity (e.g., hospital or office setting, personal life sharing), and accessibility (e.g., interactive, and catered content). Finally, consumer learning emerged from the findings. It is possible that following physicians on TikTok can promote learning, empower consumers in decision making, and enable productive inquiry for members who individually lack inquiring abilities, consistently with findings from research on participation in virtual communities (Cook and Brown, 1999; Joayanti, Singh, and Notes, 2010).

References are available upon request.





# Summary Brief

## Social Media Word of Mouth Intentions for Access-based Consumption: The Interplay of Perceived Coolness and Price Discounts

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*Extant research on access-based consumption (ABC), has mainly explained the antecedents of ABC while providing an insufficient explanation of the consequences of engaging in ABC. Our work focuses on the consequences of marketer-controlled factors of ABC on social media word of mouth (WOM) intentions. Specifically, this study examines how product-level (mode of product availability) and promotion-level (perceived coolness and price discounts) factors facilitate social media word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions for access-based consumption (ABC) services. Results of an experimental study show that when the coolness associated with the access-based product is emphasized, consumers show a higher likelihood of posting their experiences on social media, even when the price discounts offered on the product were low. The findings of this research provide effective pricing and promotional strategies for ABC services.*

### Introduction

The growth in access-based consumption (ABC) has increased significantly in the past few years (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012, 2017). Considered as market-mediated transactions in which there is no transfer of ownership, access-based consumption has pervaded several industries, including fashion and automobiles. Research has mainly endeavored to understand the antecedents of ABC while providing an insufficient explanation of the consequences of engaging in ABC (Belk 2014; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Lawson et al. 2016). Given that online WOM and trust increase consumers' purchase intentions (See-To and Ho 2014) and that purchase and post-purchase validation are key motives for consumers to search for eWOM (Ngarmwongnoi et al. 2020), how do product-level and promotion-level factors of ABC facilitate social media WOM?

To address research gaps, the current study examines two critical marketer-related factors in the context of ABC: price discounts and perceived coolness. We reason that since ABC provides divergence from ownership form of consumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012), consumption objects positioned as cool in the ABC domain would be more appealing to consumers than those in the traditional consumption domain. Consumption of objects perceived as cool could reinforce consumers' perceptions of ABC and facilitate impression management, translating into social media word-of-mouth intentions. In addition we argue that customers may opt for ABC given customers' self-enhancement motivation (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Yoo and Gretzel 2008), which would ultimately influence WOM intentions on social media (Chen and Gao 2019). To that end we hypothesize, We hypothesize: *H1: When a product is perceived as cool (versus less cool) and when that product is available for access (versus ownership) at low (versus high) price discounts, consumers' self-enhancement motivation will increase and translate into a higher likelihood to post on social media.* To that end, we demonstrate how product coolness (high vs. low), price discounts (high vs. low), and modes of ownership (ABC vs. traditional) interact with each other. We also highlight the mediating role of self-enhancement motivation.

### Method

A total of 863 participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. After eliminating incomplete responses, failed attention checks and participants' participation in similar study before, data from 578 participants (males = 388, females = 189, Mean age = 35.04 years) was analyzed. The study was conducted as a 2 (price discounts: low price discount vs. high price discount) x 2 (mode of availability of the product: access vs. ownership) x 2 (perceived coolness: low vs. high) between-subjects design. Participants were informed that the study was about fashion clothing and were randomly assigned to a scenario in which price discounts, mode of availability of the product, and perceived coolness were manipulated.

### Results

A 2 (perceived coolness) x 2 (price discounts) x 2 (mode of availability) ANOVA with self-enhancement motivation as the dependent variable revealed a significant three-way interaction effect ( $F(1, 570) = 4.101, p = .043, \eta^2 =$

0.007). Self-enhancement motivation showed significant moderated mediation for social media word-of-mouth (index of moderated mediation = .9352, 95% CI [.0119; 1.8736]). The results of our study collectively supported H1 by showing that when an access-based product is perceived to be cool and is available at low price discounts, consumers' need for self-enhancement is triggered, which translates into higher social media word of mouth intentions.

## Discussion

The current research extends literature on perceived coolness, ABC, and price discounts by identifying the conditions and the psychological mechanism that translates the marketer-controlled variables into consumers' social media WOM intentions. Present research shows that perceived coolness associated with a product enhances the consumer self, as consumers showed high social media WOM intentions for an access-based product even at low price discounts. Marketing managers in the access-based domain could benefit from offering a lower price discount if they emphasize the coolness factor of the product. Future studies can consider expanding the product categories that we had used in this study to check if the pattern holds and measuring an actual behavior.

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## **Session 7.3: Services & Strategy**

**Chair:** Ayse Banu Elmadag

## Summary Brief

# The Rise of Digital Amnesia: How Your Mobile App Is Making You Less Smart: Problem of Mobile Service App.

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*This study analyzes the difference between consumers using online banking and mobile banking. Based on the analysis, we checked how financial background information affects consumers' decision-making and found ways for consumers to continue using mobile apps. This study confirmed that users of online banking and user of mobile banking have different financial background.*

### Introduction

Digital banking has created a world where financial services can be provided anytime, anywhere (Ananda et al., 2020). Customers can compare and search financial products and services without the constraints of time and place. Digital banking service is a service created based on the changing needs of customers. For this reason, financial institutions are developing new services and products based on various information of customers in order to provide services suitable for customer needs (Karjaluo et al., 2019). It is important for financial institutions to help many customers easily use various financial technologies based on these service development and product development.

Many financial institutions such as banks and securities companies are leading changes in the market based on online banking and online trading systems. For example, many banks are developing mobile banking systems based on online banking. Also, many securities companies have developed from an online investment system to a mobile investment system (Rahi et al., 2020). Recently, existing banks and securities companies are making many transactions through mobile devices. Brokerage apps and mobile banking apps are some of the best examples of this development.

Financial consumers have gained the convenience of being able to conduct financial transactions anytime, anywhere, but are also exposed to various risks (Alzoubi et al., 2022). For example, with the development of fintech, not only security issues, but also the use of advanced fintech could negatively affect consumers' financial well-being. Therefore, this study analyzes the difference between consumers using online banking and mobile banking. Based on the analysis, we will check how financial background information affects consumers' decision-making, and find ways for consumers to continue using mobile apps.

### Traditional banking vs internet banking vs mobile banking

A large body of research has focused on the transition from traditional banking to online banking and to the mobile banking (Laukkanen and Pasanen 2008; Yu 2014; Chen, Li, & Luo 2017). Through traditional banking, customers can conduct almost any business that would normally be done in a traditional bank office (Chen, Li, & Luo 2017). Traditional banking has been in place for long time and is defined as the system of banking, in which customers can visit a bank branch to conduct financial transactions, open bank accounts, and access other services in person (Nicoletti 2021). Online banking and mobile banking are often considered electronic forms of banking for similar purposes (Laforet and Li 2005; Scornavacca and Hoehle 2007; Sripalawat et al., 2011; Yu 2014). Through online banking, customers can use the internet to conduct financial transactions, such as checking account balances, transferring money, paying bills, and applying for loans. Using mobile banking, customers can use of a smartphone or other mobile device to access banking services and conduct financial transactions (Danyali 2018).

Although different terminologies and theoretical frameworks have been used, prior research has identified several differences between traditional banking, online banking, and mobile banking. First, convenience. While traditional banks require customers to show up in person at a bank branch to conduct personal business, online banking and mobile banking provide customers with a more convenient way (Jayasiri and Kariyawasam 2016). Online banking and mobile banking allow customers to access their accounts from anywhere they have an Internet or mobile connection (Sandhu and Arora 2022). However, consumers' switching behavior requires customers' ability to adopt new technology service. Second, security. Online and mobile banking may not be as secure as traditional banking because they involve transferring sensitive financial information over the Internet or mobile devices (Jun and Cai 2001; Vyas 2012; Jayasiri and Kariyawasam 2016). Third, lower cost. Traditional banking involves fees for certain services, such as using an out-of-network ATM or overdrawing an account. Online and mobile banking also involve fees to conduct services using websites or mobile APP, such as wire transfers or foreign transactions. However, Mols (1998) has determined that online banking can be a low-cost alternative to traditional banking for customers. Fourth, functions. Online and mobile banking can provide additional functions and services that traditional banks cannot, such as budgeting tools and investment options (Jayawardhena and Foley 2000). Last, personal interaction. Traditional banking usually involves more personal interaction with bank employees, while online and mobile banking does not (Jun and Cai 2001; Wong et al. 2008).

As demonstrated, numerous research identified consumers' switching behavior from traditional banking to online banking and mobile banking. Nevertheless, there are also literatures suggest that the overuse of internet technology may cause some problems, such as reduce individual's productivity (Firth et al. 2019; Chiew et al. 2020). The examination of customers' preference among the three alternatives is still in its infancy. For the purpose of the study, we hope to examine what are factors associated with customer's preference to choose online banking or mobile banking instead of traditional banking.

### **Google effect (digital amnesia)**

Banking website and banking mobile app have become valuable go-to places for millions of users to handle daily financial services. A large body of literature demonstrate that excessive use of digital technology may affect an individual's productivity because they have become distracted by workflow achievements (Montag and Walla 2016; Dirin et al. 2019; Chiew et al. 2020). Digital amnesia, also called google effect, happens when people rely too heavily on digital technology and people who store information on digital devices are more likely to forget it (Sparrow et al. 2011). In this research, we define digital amnesia in banking as the phenomenon of forgetting account details, passwords or other important financial information stored electronically, rather than in one's own memory. This phenomenon may cause many negative outcomes, such as increased dependence on technology, increased security risk, and decreased ability to remember information (Chiew et al. 2020). For example, if a customer lost his/her device, s/he may not be able to access their financial information.

In this research, we believe that when people rely more on developed fintech between online banking and mobile banking, this behavior will relate to lower financial situation because of the phenomenon called digital amnesia (google effect). Based on this theoretical background, the following hypotheses can be made:

Hypothesis 1: Online banking users and mobile banking users have different backgrounds in financial satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Online banking users and mobile banking users have different backgrounds in financial confidence.

Hypothesis 3: Online banking users and mobile banking users have different backgrounds in credit scores.

Hypothesis 4: Online banking users and mobile banking users have different backgrounds in financial literacy.

### **Data**

The data is from the 2021 National Financial Capability Study (NFCS). It was collected from a nationally representative 27,118 people over age 18. The NFCS 2021 includes information on U.S. investment consumers' financial, demographic, and attitudinal characteristics as well as various socio-economic conditions, making it convenient to explore the relationships between financial behavior and psychology variables. This paper uses a sub-sample of 16,066 respondents who answered the mobile banking questions. This sample is diverse in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the financial behavior of the nation as a whole. NFCS 2021 is an investor survey. Probably, this sample is the right sample to test financial innovation research questions.

## **Result**

There is one dependent variable for each model. The dependent variable for this study was the user of online banking (Model 1) and mobile banking (Model 2). In this research, preceding variables on consumer financial decision making were analyzed. Therefore, the parameters of each variable define the main variables of the study for empirical analysis. Based on these definitions, we can see the four independent variables that best reflect the existing data. Each independent variable is itself composed of one variable (i.e., financial satisfaction, financial confidence, credit score, financial literacy). In the model 1, the significant influential variables on user of online banking are all statistically significant, meaning that influential variables have impacts on user of online banking by the difference among preceding factors on consumer financial background variable. To be more specific, financial satisfaction, financial literacy, and credit score are positively associated with user of online banking. However, financial confidence is negatively associated with user of online banking. In the model 2, the significant influential variables on user of mobile banking are all statistically significant except financial confidence, meaning that influential variables have impacts on user of mobile banking by the difference among preceding factors on consumer financial background variable. To be more specific, financial satisfaction, financial literacy, and credit score are negatively associated with user of mobile banking. However, financial confidence is not significantly associated with user of mobile banking.

## **Conclusion**

This study confirms that user of online banking and user of mobile banking have a different financial background. In the model 1, we figured out that consumers who have a high financial satisfaction, financial credit score, and financial literacy are willing to use online banking. However, mobile banking users have a opposite background for their decision making. To be more specific, consumers who have low financial satisfaction, financial credit score, and financial literacy are willing to use mobile banking. So, we can support hypothesis 1, 2, and 4. In this research paper, based on previous research, mobile banking is more developed fintech than online banking (Albarrak and Alokley, 2021). Based on these results, we can figure out many important facts. Users who have more negative financial background are willing to use more developed fintech service (e.g., mobile banking). So, paradoxically, users who use developed fintech are related to have more negative financial situations in their life. To be more specific, consumers with lower objective quantitative indicators of their financial situation (i.e., financial satisfaction and credit score) paradoxically prefer to use more advanced fintech services. In addition, consumers with low financial literacy, an important factor influencing consumers' financial decision making, have a higher intention to use developed fintech such as mobile banking.

In this situation, financial institutions will have to provide developed fintech services as well as practical financial education for consumers and effective utilization of developed fintech services. Such policies are very important for financial institutions to maintain healthy consumers with good financial position and high financial knowledge. Moreover, these consumers will be very important partners for the continued fintech development and long-term planning in financial services. From a research point of view, in future research, not only consumer service use for technological development, but also paradoxical phenomena such as digital amnesia should be discussed as a major factor in research. For example, research in digital amnesia in banking may focus on understanding the extent to which customers rely on digital devices and services to manage their financial information and the potential risks and benefits of this reliance. Additional study might investigate how digital amnesia affects a customer's ability to recall important information, such as account numbers and passwords, without access to a digital device or online account. In addition, researchers may explore the impact of digital amnesia on customer' ability to make their financial decisions. For managers, they might think about how to design a system to provide both the convenience and safety for customers who prefer to use mobile banking system.

**Table 1. Logistic Regression Results: Factors Associated with Use of online banking.**

		Use online banking (N=4,028)	Never Use online banking (n=12,038, base)
Independent Variables	Financial satisfaction	.046 ***	-
	Financial confidence	-.140 ***	-
	Credit score	.104 ***	-
	Financial literacy	.090 ***	
	Log Likelihood	-8763.9479	
	$\chi^2_{(4)}$	566.28***	
	Pseudo $R^2$	0.0313	

Note.\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 2. Logistic Regression Results: Factors Associated with Use of mobile banking.**

		Use mobile banking (N=5,998)	Never Use mobile banking (n=10,068, base)
Independent Variables	Financial satisfaction	-.039 ***	-
	Financial confidence	.010	-
	Credit score	-.452 ***	-
	Financial literacy	-.073 ***	
	Log Likelihood	-10470.164	
	$\chi^2_{(4)}$	1447.69***	
	Pseudo $R^2$	0.0647	

Note.\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

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# Summary Brief

## Is E-Financial Services a Helpful Tool for Poor Performers, or a Destructive One?

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*This study compares the characteristics of financial consumers who use online financial services with the characteristics of financial consumers who do not use financial services to identify factors that affect decision-making. Based on these basic studies, this study predicts future problems and presents future implications for online financial services.*

### Introduction

The number of online financial services have been increasing. In addition to existing banking services, various online financial services such as financial consultation, credit card services, and point accumulation have been available. According to the previous research, online banking started in 1992 at a Swedish financial institution (Lindblom & Von Koch, 2002). Recently, the range of online financial services is rapidly increasing as various payment services have become available in both online and offline contexts (Sahay et. al., 2020). Consumers can receive more financial services without having to visit a financial institution. These online financial services mean that the characteristics of new services are combined. In previous studies, online financial services were divided into online banking and online payment (Singh & Srivastava, 2020). Online banking helps consumers access information from financial institutions through a variety of devices. Furthermore, online banking provides financial services such as account transfer. Online payment is to make a payment using an online payment system such as PayPal.

Recently, consumers are checking more specific and accurate information about their financial situation through online financial services (Dunham, 2019). For example, consumers can access financial information from anywhere. Existing marketing studies have confirmed that consumers can make rational decisions by accessing various information. However, other researchers have argued that information given to consumers through access to online services can cause irrational decision-making (Chen et. al., 2020).

As such, different researchers and organizations have different views on online financial services. In this study, we focused on the online financial information search services, not the online payment services. Currently, online financial services are growing rapidly. Although online financial services for consumers have not yet been universalized, online financial services are being connected to various fields (Rana et. al., 2020). Moreover, with online financial services, consumers are getting more specific information about their financial situation.

Therefore, this study compares the characteristics of financial consumers who use online financial services with the characteristics of financial consumers who do not use financial services to identify factors that affect decision-making. Based on these basic studies, this study predicts future problems and presents future implications for online financial services.

### Online Financial Services

Satisfaction plays a central position in marketing and is an outcome of marketing strategies (Churchill Jr and Surprenant, 1982). It is defined as customer's overall evaluation of the service's performance (Gustafsson, Johnson, and Roos, 2005; Johnson and Fornell, 1991). Compared to offline context, online channels enhance satisfaction and loyalty in the financial services industry (Ladhari and Leclerc, 2013). The reason is that reliable services have been provided by online financial services by taking into account that location and time are not important factors in online context. Therefore, customers get quick responses and save their time (Smith, 2006). Another substantial factor in gaining customer satisfaction in online financial services is providing a good platform and reliable website that bring a great experience while customers use them, which ultimately affect their satisfaction and loyalty (Lin and Sun, 2009).

Based on Ladhari and Leclerc's (2013) research, many studies have been done focusing on both offline and online financial services, however, online financial literature has some limitations. First, important customer behavior factors such as satisfaction have been studied in the offline context, and online financial services have received limited attention (Herington and Weaven, 2007). Second, there is a lack of research on studying the link between service quality and satisfaction within the online financial industry (Karatepe, 2011). In addition, the determinants of financial services such as financial satisfaction, risk tolerance, confidence, anxiety, financial knowledge, and financial literacy, have not gained much attention in an online context.

### **Theoretical Foundation: Dunning-Kruger Effect**

Based on the Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger and Dunning, 1999), people with low levels of skills and expertise, would have hard time to recognize their weaknesses and deficits. According to this theory, these people make errors and errors without noticing them. In fact, they tend to think their decisions are accurate. People with low levels of competency, compared to those who have high levels of expertise, have less knowledge about being incompetent. Therefore, their performance and judgements are affected. When people who are incompetent tend to judge their performance, as their level of knowledge is low, they are unable to recognize their deficits and mistake as a result. They think that their responses to different questions are accurate, which are indeed not. This is called as Dunning-Kruger effect.

In online financial service, we propose that people who have financial difficulties tend to use more financial services and use credit checking services more frequently. However, they do not recognize the problems due to lack of information and expertise. In this situation, in line with Dunning-Kruger effect, they overestimate the situation, and their judgment and performance are being affected. They tend to think that their level of satisfaction with their financial situation, risk tolerance, confidence in their financial situation, and financial knowledge are high. Even though their credit score and financial knowledge are low, and their level of financial anxiety is high. This overestimation and overconfidence of their situation may lead them to worse financial difficulties.

### **Data**

The data is from the 2021 National Financial Capability Study (NFCS). The sample consisted of 27,118 adults across the U.S. The NFCS 2021 includes information on U.S. investment consumers' financial, demographic, and attitudinal characteristics and various socio-economic conditions, making it convenient to explore the relationships between financial behavior and psychological variables. This paper uses a sub-sample of 23,487 respondents who answered the online financial service question. This sample is diverse in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the financial capability of the nation as a whole. NFCS 2021 is an investor survey. This sample is the right sample to test financial service research questions.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variable for this study is the usage of online credit management service. In this research model, the experience of using online financial services is an important dependent variable. Respondents to the 2021 NFCS survey were asked: How often do you use websites or apps to help with financial tasks such as budgeting, saving, or credit management (e.g., Goodbudget, Mint, Credit Karma, etc.)? The answer was coded as a categorical variable.

### **Independent Variables**

This research analyzed preceding variables on consumer online financial services experience. Therefore, each variable's parameters define the study's main variables for empirical analysis. Based on these definitions, we can see the seven independent variables that best reflect the existing data. Each independent variable is itself composed of one variable or more variables.

The risk aversion variable consists of one variable. Risk aversion was defined to fit this research. The financial satisfaction variable consists of one variable. Financial satisfaction was defined to fit this research topic. In this study, financial satisfaction, financial confidence, financial anxiety, and financial knowledge are subjectively measured. The risk tolerance variable consists of one variable. In this study, risk tolerance is the financial risk tolerance to take actions

to meet a financial goal. Two variables, financial credit scores and financial literacy, were objectively measured. Financial literacy is measured by official financial literacy questions.

### **Research Model**

We conducted a logistic regression to examine the factors affecting the intention to reject or accept innovation. Logistic regression is conceptually the same as regression analysis, but it is used when the dependent variable is not a quantitative variable but a dichotomous variable (e.g., yes or no) and is used when the dependent variable does not satisfy the assumption of normal distribution. The Logistic regression model is a special form of regression that is used when describing or predicting two or more non-quantitative dependent variables as quantitative independent variables. The form of the model is a nonlinear regression that takes the form of a logistic curve in which the dependent variable has a value of '0' or '1', which is a nonlinear form. The logistic regression According to the process of the model, there are three groups (1=Frequently use, 2=Sometimes use, 3=Never use) of dependent variables for any independent variable X. In this model, the never use group is going to be the base group. The logistic regression model is similar to that of the general regression model, and the logistic regression coefficient is used to describe the relationship between dependent and independent variables, as well as other linear regression coefficients, and to predict dependent variables at the level of a given independent variable. However, there is a difference in the estimation method of the coefficient of positive coefficient from the general regression model. The general estimation method in the model minimizes the sum of the squares of the residuals, but the logistic regression model increases likelihood.

### **Result**

Our table shows the result of multinomial logistic regression for a sample in online financial service. As shown in the table, the significant influential variables on online financial service are all statistically significant, meaning that influential variables have impacts on decision making for online financial service by the difference among preceding factors on consumer decision making features. All influential variables show significant impact on decision making for online financial service: financial satisfaction, risk tolerance, financial confidence, credit score, financial anxiety, financial knowledge, financial literacy. First, financial satisfaction shows a higher likelihood of use online credit service. Consumers with higher financial satisfaction are more likely to use of online credit service. Second, risk tolerance shows a higher likelihood of use online credit service. Consumers with higher risk tolerance are more likely to use of online credit service. Third, financial confidence shows a higher likelihood of use online credit service. Consumers with higher financial confidence are more likely to use of online credit service. Fourth, financial anxiety shows a higher likelihood of use online credit service. Consumers with higher financial anxiety are more likely to use of online credit service. Fifth, financial knowledge shows a higher likelihood of use online credit service. Consumers with higher financial knowledge are more likely to use of online credit service. Sixth, credit score shows a lower likelihood of use online credit service. Consumers with lower, credit score are more likely to use of online credit service. Seventh, financial literacy shows a lower likelihood of use online credit service. Consumers with lower financial literacy are more likely to use of online credit service.

### **Conclusion**

According to the logistic model, financial behavior variables(subjectively measure) had a significant relationship with the dependent variable, the uses of online financial service, in the model. These results corresponded with many other studies and were consistent with the hypothesized outcomes (Ianole-Calin et. al., 2021). Furthermore, in the model, some of the financial situation variables (objectively measure) had a significantly negative relationship with the dependent variable, the uses of online financial service. In this paper, objectively measured financial situation variables are credit score and financial literacy.

According to the Dunning-Kruger Effect, people without real ability have too much confidence in their judgments. In addition, a person who lacks objective ability interprets information too subjectively. Our results are also connected to this theoretical background. Consumers with poor objective financial status collect financial information using online financial services. Furthermore, consumers who subjectively make positive judgments about their personal financial situation collect financial information using online financial services.

Based on the data, this study identified which consumers use online financial services. The results of our study ironically confirmed that consumers with poor objective financial situations use online financial services. Furthermore,

consumers with overconfidence (subjective judgment of personal financial situation) use online financial services. This phenomenon shows the blind spots of online financial services. Many previous studies have emphasized the advantages of online financial services. For example, online financial services help consumers easily access a variety of information. However, our results show that consumers who use online financial services lack objective financial capabilities. In such an environment, consumers lack the ability to judge information and are expected to distort interpretation even when exposed to various information provided by online financial services. Therefore, it is important for companies that provide online financial services in the future not only to provide information, but also to provide training for interpretation of information.

**Table. Logistic Regression Results**

	Frequently Use (N=2,692)	Sometime Use (n=7,591)	Never Use (n=12,204, base)
Financial satisfaction	.024 *	-.011	-
Risk tolerance	.257 ***	.174 ***	-
Financial confidence	.294 ***	.199 ***	-
Credit score	-.293 ***	-.257 ***	-
Financial anxiety	.288 ***	.161 ***	-
Financial knowledge	.207 ***	.069 ***	-
Financial literacy	-.071 ***	-.074 ***	-
Log Likelihood	-20387.817		
$\chi^2_{(14)}$	3243.89***		
Quasi $R^2$	0.0737		

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

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## Full Paper

# Managing Consumer-to-Consumer Online Incivility: How Service Provider Perceived Effort Influences Observers in a Virtual Service Channel Alternative

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*The importance of perceived effort during service recovery is well known in offline service encounters, where effort bolsters satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and purchase intent. Less is known, though, about how or if perceived effort is relevant within online service channels. In particular, virtual service channels introduce two aspects that researchers have not examined in regard to perceived effort: observers (i.e., third-party customers watching an exchange) who witness customer-to-customer (C2C) online incivility. The authors attempt to fill this void by investigating observers' perceptions of a service provider attending to C2C incivility on its social media channel when handling complaints. The results show how a service provider responds will influence observers' perceived effort of the provider, yet a moderated-mediation relationship exists when accounting for observers' C2C justice perceptions. Subsequently, effort is linked to observers' perceived service climate and purchase intent. For marketing theory, the results imply that the complicated social dynamics on a firm's social media service channel enable perceived effort to be an influential cue used by observers with important downstream effects. For marketing managers, the results denote that ignoring C2C incivility on a virtual service channel will lower the audience's perceived effort and evaluations of an online service environment.*

## Introduction

Service providers' perceived effort in physical service environments is important, owing to its relationship with customer satisfaction, trust, purchase intent, loyalty, justice, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Maxham 2001; McQuilken 2010; Yani-de-Soriano et al. 2019). As such, organizations educate their customer service representatives to manage complaints stemming from various service failure situations such as product failures, service problems, or issues resulting from other customers (Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994; Huang 2008; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). A service provider attending to a complainant's problems in offline settings is displaying observable effort that a complainant can recognize (Mohr and Bitner 1995).

Newer online service channels, such as brands' social media, have different social dynamics compared to offline service channels, in which perceived effort is not fully understood. For instance, brands' social media platforms are now publicly visible complaint and recovery channels with large audiences of observers (Hogreve, Bilstein, and Hoerner 2019). The publicly visible, online nature make it possible for consumer-to-consumer (C2C) dialogue that is not as common in offline recoveries (Baer 2016; Schaefer and Schamari 2016). Invariably, some C2C dialogue includes rude language, insults, and mockery that affects how complainants and observers evaluate a service recovery (Wolter, Bacile, and Xu 2023). This type of rude behavior is known as C2C online incivility (Bacile et al. 2018). It is recommended in offline settings that service representatives should attend to C2C disputes and problematic interactions, of which a representative's effort is a cue that affects customer evaluations (Huang 2008; Pranter and Martin 1991). Yet, no prior research has investigated if a service provider's perceived effort to manage C2C incivility is an influential cue to observers in online service recovery. Observers as stakeholders are very important to consider in online channels, due to their sheer size and potential reach (Hogreve, Bilstein, and Hoerner 2019).

The purpose here investigates observers' perceptions of a service provider's effort during social media service recovery. The authors investigate how/if a service provider's attempts to handle C2C incivility is a cue of the organization's effort. The primary research questions (RQ) include:

RQ1: *Do observers form varying perceptions of a firm's effort based on how it handles C2C uncivil interactions on the firm's social media channel during service recovery?*

RQ2: *What are some of the consequences for a firm's perceived effort when managing C2C incivility on its social media channel during service recovery?*

Two experimental studies provide evidence for the importance of observers' perceived effort when a firm attempts to manage C2C online incivility in its virtual service channel. Two types of firm responses create varying perceptions: A response that denounces C2C incivility enhances perceived effort compared to a defensive response. Noteworthy, though, is the degree of observers' C2C perceived justice acts as moderator, along with finding a moderated mediation effect of a firm's reply through effort on perceived service climate. Perceived service climate then affects purchase intent of observers. Theoretical implications show perceived effort is a cue observers use to evaluate a firm in its digital service initiatives, in addition to the boundary effect of C2C justice. The results also imply how a firm manages C2C incivility will affect future purchase intent. Managerial implications suggest service providers should not consider C2C online incivility as a benign social interaction. These uncivil exchanges will benefit from a firm intervening, and the authors offer an optimal response strategy for C2C uncivil dialogue.

## **Literature Review and Conceptual Development**

### ***Perceived Effort in Offline and Online Service Recovery***

Consumers often refer to employee effort when describing highly satisfying or dissatisfying service encounters (Bitner 1990). As such, the seminal service research inquiry into employee effort by Mohr and Bitner (1995) sought to understand cues used by customers to determine how much effort an employee exerts. Perceived effort, or the belief of an observer (i.e., customer) regarding the amount of positive energy an actor (i.e., service employee) puts into a behavior, impacts customer satisfaction in a services context (Mohr and Bitner 1995). Nearly three decades of literature corroborates this finding (e.g., Maxham 2001; Huang 2008; Cambra-Fierro et al. 2013), and explores the effect of perceived effort on other outcome variables such as trust (McQuilken 2010; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998), loyalty (Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder 2006; Yani-de-Soriano et al. 2019), purchase intent and the propensity to spread positive word-of-mouth referrals (Maxham 2001).

Primary cues used in customer perceptions of effort can include: (1) active help with a problem, (2) time spent with a customer's situation, and (3) energy spent trying to help a customer, along with sensitivity, attentiveness, timing, friendliness, providing information, adaptiveness, and honesty (Mohr and Bitner 1995). In a service failure context, remedies such as showing empathy, apologizing, resolving the problem, listening to a customer, and offering economic incentives share links with perceived effort (Maxham 2001). Customers take note of a firm's perceived effort and, if it is weak, it can lead to perceived unfairness and experiencing negative emotions (McColl-Kennedy and Sparks 2003).

In physical service venues, service providers should make an effort to manage C2C misbehavior and conflict (Northington et al. 2021; Pranter and Martin 1991). In these physical venues, C2C interactions are common (e.g., in a restaurant, at an airport, in a retail store) and C2C incivility is possible (Fisk et al. 2010). Bitner, Booms, and Mohr (1994) examined customer experiences using the critical incident technique, in which one of their findings was 'problem customers' negatively affecting others. This is a customer who is "harassing other customers... generally rude and uncooperative," (Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994, p. 98). Consumers expect C2C interactions to be civil, but if C2C incivility occurs then a firm should attempt to resolve it (Fullerton and Punj 2004). This indicates that observers of a firm's or its service employee's perceived effort not only occurs during service consumption and recovery, but also occurs when managing C2C interactions.

Despite the commonality of perceived effort in offline service experiences, there is a dearth of literature exploring the difference in a communication medium when it comes to perceived effort. In the context of social media, Abney et al. (2017) find that consumers can perceive the effort of a firm based on how it handles an issue via its social media channel, with perceived effort bolstering satisfaction. It is worth noting that these authors use a non-C2C incivility context, yet their findings support perceived effort as a viable construct in service-related situations on social media. No research has examined how or if a firm manages C2C online incivility will affect the perceived effort of the firm and other downstream outcomes. Thus, a gap exists of perceived effort being something consumers will assess in a social media service environment, yet it has not been investigated in a C2C incivility situation.

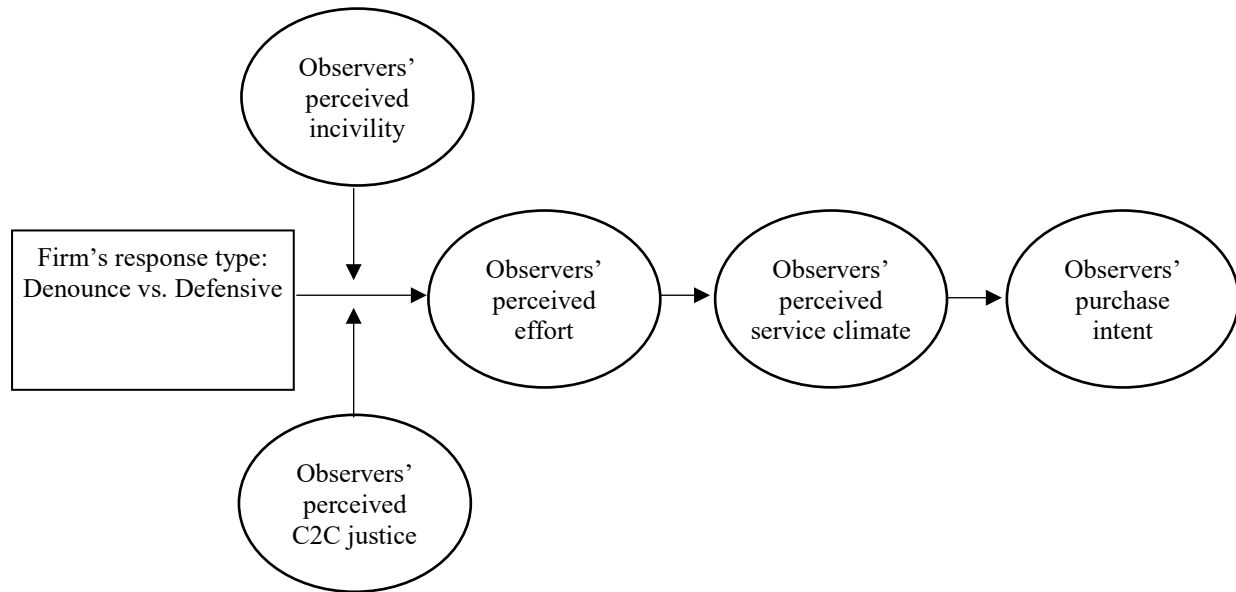
### ***Hypotheses***

Insight from role theory supports the relationships in Figure 1's conceptual model. Role theory is a sociology and social psychology theory based on dramaturgy, or using the metaphor of theater to explain human actions as scripted behavior by actors (Goffman 1959). Actors' roles have expectations that are context-specific for their own and others' behaviors (Turner 2001). For instance, a consumer complaining to a service provider believes that voicing dissatisfaction is an acceptable customer role; and the provider responding with a recovery is an expected company role. In this manner, roles are socially-accepted and expected actions for their parts in a performance (Biddle 1986), with the aforementioned



roles specific to complaint handling encounters (Broderick 1999; Tax, Brown and Chandrashekar 1998). In addition, other customers can interject with expected or unexpected roles. An example is C2C incivility, which is a type of consumer misbehavior that violates transactional role expectations in service encounters (Fullerton and Punj 2004). Collectively, an audience of observers perceive all of the actors' actions; and role expectations that are not met results in negative evaluations (Homburg and Fürst 2005; Solomon et al. 1985).

**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**



In regard to uncivil customer actions, perceived C2C incivility and C2C justice are two related, yet distinct constructs. Perceived incivility is the critique of rude statements between customers via online communication (Wolter, Bacile, and Xu 2023). Perceived C2C justice is an evaluation that a C2C exchange is interpersonally just (i.e., fair; Bacile et al. 2020). For clarity, as perceived incivility increases it is more rude or inappropriate commentary (e.g., a comment is bad) and as perceived justice decreases it is more unfair treatment of another (e.g., the person is treated unfairly). This fairness assessment is a naturally-aroused response when role expectations are not met (Folger, Cropanzano, and Goldman 2005). Both online and offline incivility is recognized by consumers as unexpected and inappropriate behavior (Anderson et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2010), which violates a customer's role in a service environment (Bacile 2020; Fullerton and Punj 2004).

When C2C incivility or injustice occurs, customer compatibility management (Martin and Pranter 1989) identifies roles a service provider should enact. For instance, at times a service provider's actions must be altered to play a role akin to a police officer to enforce expected standards of behavior in a service environment (Pranter and Martin 1991). This role may simply ask one customer to refrain from behavior that is negatively affecting another customer. A service provider who fails to enact a role to manage C2C misbehaviors can result in a service failure for a customer (Grove and Fisk 1997; Huang 2008). Failing to address something viewed as a failure equates to inadequately handling a situation, which contrasts a firm's expected role in its service delivery system (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990).

A firm's or its service employees' role behaviors in relation to perceived effort in a C2C online incivility context is unexamined in the services literature. It is proposed here that different firm responses in the given context will cause perceived effort to vary. An accommodative response is apologetic and recognizes a specific failure, which differs from a defensive response that denies or shifts blame away from the firm (Johnen and Schnittka 2019; van Noort and Willemsen 2012). An apologetic response that denounces C2C online incivility is proposed to garner stronger perceptions of effort versus a defensive response. In addition, consumers often make equity judgments based on how a complaint is handled, such as comparing negative aspects to positive aspects associated with a failure and seeking a recovery (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). One way equity is restored is when a service representative's response provides enough psychological equity to offset the negative aspects (Walster, Berscheid, and Walster 1973). Bacile et al. (2018) contend that C2C online incivility on a firm's social media channel during a recovery is an additional failure apart from the initial complaint, which merits its own response from a provider. We posit that as observers believe the C2C exchange

becomes more rude (i.e., a stronger degree of perceived incivility) or less just (i.e., a lower degree of perceived C2C justice), it alters the psychological equity needed in a response from a service provider to restore equity. This type of effortful role is needed in C2C situations to, “enforces rules and expectations of normative treatment between customers,” (Bacile et al. 2018, p. 62). A firm specifically addressing or not addressing something that it should will “cause its degree of role fulfillment to fluctuate,” (Bacile et al. 2020, p. 487), thereby suggesting observers’ view of a firm’s expected role fulfillment in comparison with how uncivil or how unjust a C2C exchange is will be linked to perceived effort.

- H1: A firm’s denouncing response is perceived to be more effortful by observers than a defensive response when a firm addresses C2C rude dialogue.
- H2: As observers’ C2C perceived incivility becomes stronger, a firm’s defensive response (versus a denouncing response) will weaken observers’ perceived effort of the firm.
- H3: As observers’ C2C perceived justice becomes weaker (i.e., a greater injustice), a firm’s defensive response (versus a denouncing response) will weaken observers’ perceived effort of the firm.

Perceived effort is tangible evidence of a firm’s focus on customer service initiatives. A service provider’s effort is likely a primary cue for customer perceived service climate, defined as noticeable organizational practices and procedures enacted in service situations that signal the extent to which a service organization teaches and prioritizes customer service (Jung et al. 2017). Unlike early service climate research using employee perceptions of an organization’s service climate (Schneider, White, and Paul 1998), customer perceived service climate uses a customer perspective – observers’ perspective in the present scope – of how well a firm attends to service-related issues. Role-like performances of a service provider to manage C2C interactions (e.g., acting as a legislator, teacher, police officer, etc.) requires additional work and effort that likely improves the holistic evaluation of service initiatives (Martin and Pranter 1989; Pranter and Martin 1991). Although observers’ perceptions of service climate has not been examined for its link to perceived effort, seminal research posited that, “it is effort that is noticed” (Mohr and Bitner 1995, p. 240). This suggests a strong overlap with the tenets of perceived service climate (e.g., noticeable practices and acts of the firm or employees), which we hypothesize here in the observers’ context of how the firm handles C2C exchanges.

- H4: There is a positive relationship between observers’ perceived effort and observers’ customer perceived service climate.

The proposed relationship in H4 is that effort is a signal that affects a broader service climate evaluation of an organization teaching and prioritizing service to assist its customers. The authors posit that observers’ perceived service climate evaluations in the context of C2C rude exchanges will likely affect future purchase intent. The foundation of service climate is organizational interpersonal exchanges that provide behavioral signals of how customers are treated (Schneider et al. 2005). These interpersonal elements during service experiences help form future purchase intent (Bitner 1990; Blodgett, Hill, and Tax 1997). In addition, a service provider taking on a role to manage C2C conflict could be viewed as extra-role behavior on top of their typical provision of service, which is also linked to greater purchase intent (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003). Based on this support, observers’ perceived service climate will have a positive relationship with observers’ purchase intent.

- H5: There is a positive relationship between observers’ perceived service climate and observers’ purchase intent.

## **Study 1**

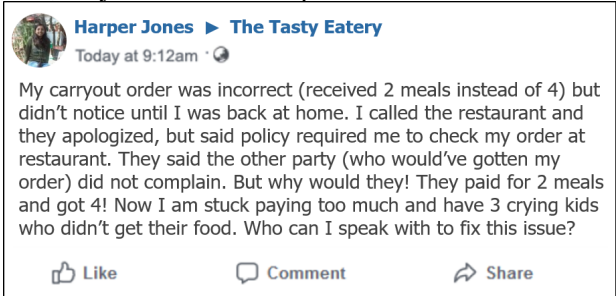
### ***Methodology***

A service failure and complaint scenario was developed for an online experimental survey. The hypothetical scenario used a screenshot stimulus of a customer who posted a complaint on a fictitious restaurant’s social media channel. The complaint described a service failure situation that occurred at the restaurant. This type of methodology of using a hypothetical scenario and fictitious company is a commonly accepted practice in service failure research due to the cost implications and ethical considerations of real-life failure experiments (McCullough, Berry, and Yadav 2000). Use of the restaurant industry is consistent with real-life service failures that are common in the industry (Hart, Heskett, and Sasser 1989; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). Subjects were asked to imagine reading another customer’s complaint to align with the scope of an observer perspective, based on similar practices in prior research (Bacile et al. 2018; Hogreve, Bilstein, and Hoerner 2019).

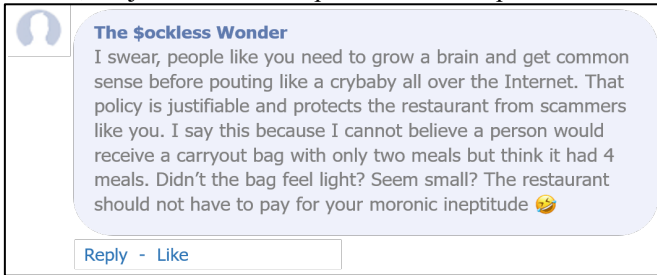
After reading the complaint, subjects then viewed a description and stimulus of an online persona representing another person (i.e., not the complainant). The persona’s username was an obvious pseudonym, included a blank profile image, and did not have any followers. Cues such as these are representative of an online troll, which is a type of persona that often uses anonymity and posts rude/uncivil comments toward others (Coles and West 2016) including in response to another’s complaint on a brand’s social media channel (Wolter, Bacile, and Xu 2023). Subjects then were shown a reply by this online persona to the complainant’s post, which used rude and uncivil language that was verified with a pre-test. Subjects then completed randomly presented items for perceived incivility and C2C justice. Next, one of two randomly displayed responses from the firm were then shown to subjects to represent the defensive versus denouncing response conditions. The defensive response apologized to the customer and then partially agreed with the rude responder in an attempt to shift some of the blame from the restaurant to the complainant. The denounce response also apologized to the complainant, but then used language to address the rude comments and asked for such language to be refrained from on its social channel. After viewing one of the two firm responses, subjects then completed the remaining items, manipulation checks, and demographic questions. Images of the stimuli are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Study 1’s Stimuli**

First, subjects read this complaint:

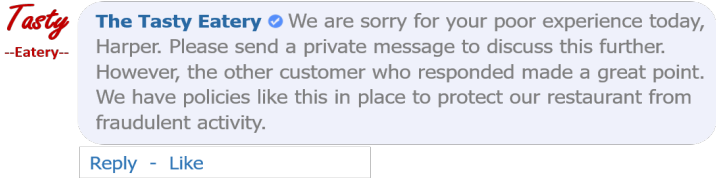


Second, subjects read this response to the complaint:

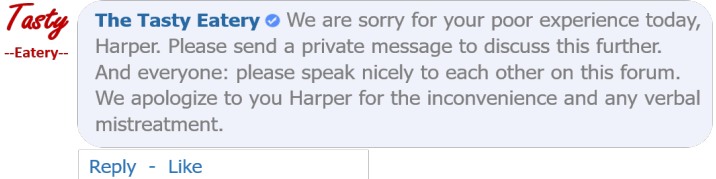


Third, one of these two randomly presented responses from the firm was then shown to subjects:

Defensive response:



Denouncing response:



**Sample and Measures**

A U.S. sample (n=209,  $M_{age}=48$ , 51% male,  $M_{income}=\$57,000$ ) was purchased from an online panel data provider. The provider used multiple quality checks to ensure that the sample only included subjects who passed all checks. A realism check on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = extremely unrealistic; 7 = extremely realistic) supported that the scenario and language was realistic ( $M = 5.9$ ;  $SD = 1.3$ ). All measures used were adapted from prior studies. Three items for perceived incivility were adapted from Porath, MacInnis, and Folkes (2010). Three items for C2C justice were adapted from Bacile et al. (2018). Four items for perceived effort were adapted from Cambra-Fierro et al. (2013)

and were consistent with the conceptualized work on effort by Mohr and Bitner (1995). Four items for perceived service climate were adapted from Bacile (2020). Purchase intent adapted three items from Voorhees, Brady, and Horowitz (2006). All measures used seven-point Likert scales with extreme bipolar end points.

### ***Preliminary Analysis to Determine Common Method Bias***

Common method bias is a threat when cross-sectional data is collected from an online survey instrument. To reduce concerns of this threat, the marker variable technique (Lindell and Whitney 2001) assessed if method bias undermined the integrity of the data. The two lowest correlations of a theoretically unrelated single-item measure with the focal constructs fell below  $r = .01$ , which is less than the threshold level ( $r = .20$ ; Malhotra, Kim, and Patil 2006) at which common method bias threatens the quality of data. Based on this statistical evidence, common method bias was not a concern to the data.

### ***Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)***

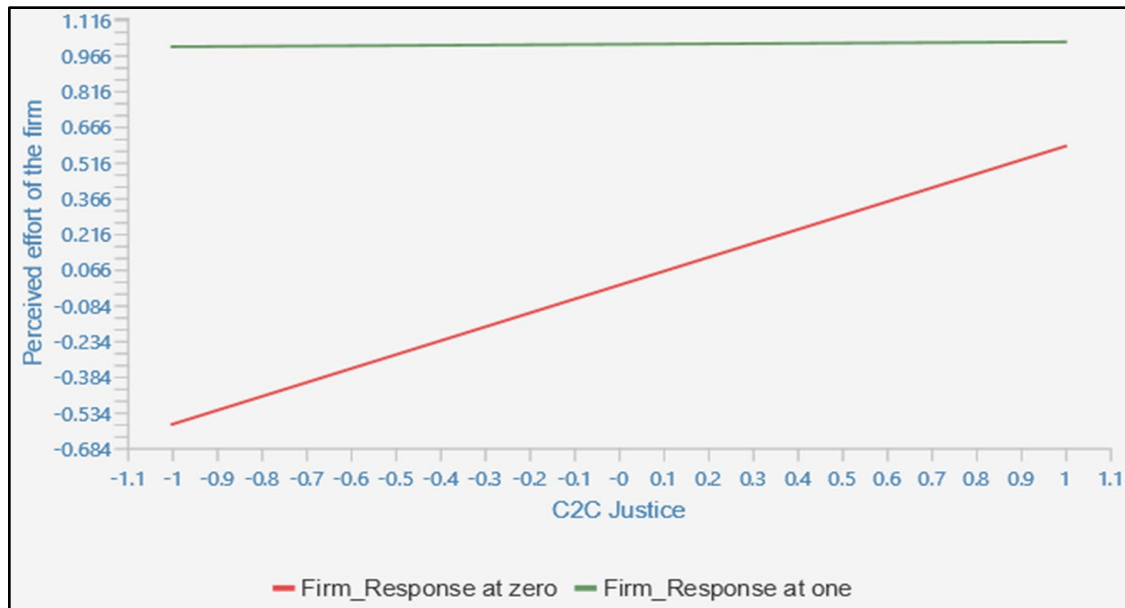
PLS-SEM using the SmartPLS software platform version 4 estimated the direct and interaction effects. Internal reliability was established with strong composite reliability ranging from .93 to .99, and Cronbach's alpha ranging from .92 to .98, both of which exceeded the recommended threshold of .70 (Hair et al. 2016). All of the standardized item loadings exceeded .70. The average variance extracted (AVE) was strong, ranging from .86 to .96 to support convergent and discriminant validity. The square root of each construct's AVE exceeded the inter-correlations for each construct to exhibit sound psychometric properties (Fornell and Larcker 1981). In a further show of discriminant validity, the item correlations passed the HTMT test by not surpassing a .85 threshold (Voorhees et al. 2016). Multicollinearity was not a threat to the measures, as none of the variance inflation factor values exceeded the concerning threshold level of 5, per Hair et al. (2016).

Next, the predictive relevance of the model was examined by assessing the effect size and explained variance of the endogenous constructs. The highest  $R^2$  value of an endogenous construct (.57) and the highest  $f^2$  effect size value (.64; see the following hypotheses testing section for all values) provided evidence that the model contained large effects (Hair et al. 2016). Per Shmueli et al. (2016), relying on  $R^2$  values and  $f^2$  effect size values to exhibit predictive relevance avoids some of the pitfalls and limitations of other metrics, such as  $Q^2$ . In total, the explained variance and effect size values supported the model's predictive relevance.

### ***Hypotheses Testing***

In support of H1, subjects perceived the firm as more effortful in the denouncing reply condition than defensive condition. The unstandardized beta value for this categorical variable was significant ( $B=1.012$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $f^2 = .45$ ), with the mean value of observers' perceived effort higher in the denouncing condition ( $M=4.4$ ,  $SD=1.4$ ) than the defensive condition ( $M=2.6$ ,  $SD=1.4$ ). However, H2's interaction of the firm's response and perceived incivility on perceived effort was not supported ( $\beta = .04$ ;  $p > .05$ ). Yet, as anticipated H3's interaction effect of the firm's response and C2C justice influencing perceived effort was supported ( $\beta = -.57$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $f^2 = .08$ ). The interaction was probed using the Johnson-Neyman technique (Hayes 2018), which identified that a lower level of C2C justice (below the result's median point of  $< 4.2$  on the seven-point scale), caused respondents to perceive the firm to be more effortful when the denounce response was used versus the defensive response. It is worth mentioning that a higher level of C2C justice ( $> 4.2$ ) did not cause a significant difference between the denouncing or defensive response's effect on effort. Online C2C incivility is often accompanied with a strong sense of injustice (Bacile et al. 2018), meaning the results with a higher level of justice are a less likely occurrence versus the results with a lower level of justice. Indeed, effort dramatically reduced as justice was weakened in combination with a firm's defensive response. In contrast, even at a lower level of justice, a firm using a denouncing response still produced a strong degree of perceived effort of the firm. H3's interaction for Study 1 is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Study 1's H3 Interaction Plot



Moderated mediation analyses (Hayes, 2018; Model 7) was employed to examine the main effect and interaction effects proposed in H1-H3. As expected, results supported H1's main effect of the firm's response type on perceived effort ( $\beta = 1.70$ ;  $SE = .17$ ;  $t = 9.63$ ;  $p < .001$ ), which showed the firm was perceived as more effortful when using the denounce versus defensive reply. H2's interaction effect of the perceived incivility moderator was not significant, but H3's interaction effect of the C2C justice moderator on perceived effort was significant ( $\beta = -.67$ ;  $SE = .12$ ;  $t = -5.68$ ;  $p < .001$ ), which confirmed the previous analyses. Moderated mediation results confirmed the indirect effect of the interaction of firm response and C2C justice on service climate through observers' perceived effort (Moderated Mediation Index =  $-.48$ ;  $BootSE = .09$ ;  $Bootstrapped\ CI = -.66\ to\ -.29$ ). Results of the probed interaction showed that the indirect effect of the firm's reply on service climate was significant at all levels of C2C Justice. According to the results, denouncing was a more impactful response type to indirectly increase service climate than defensive response, especially at the lower levels of C2C Justice (e.g., Level = 1.00;  $\beta = 1.92$ ;  $BootSE = .24$ ;  $Bootstrapped\ CI = 1.46\ to\ 2.41$ ) compared to the higher levels of C2C Justice (Level = 4.00;  $\beta = .49$ ;  $BootSE = .19$ ;  $Bootstrapped\ CI = .13\ to\ .86$ ).

The importance of understanding the C2C social dynamics that affect observers' perceived effort of the firm was further shown in H4's relationship. The PLS-SEM analysis showed the effect of effort on observers' perceived service climate was significant with a strong effect ( $\beta = .76$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $f^2 = 1.35^3$ ) in support of H4. Observers' perceptions of the firm's effort sent a strong signal for how the organization teaches and prioritizes customer service when handling customer incivility. Correspondingly, observers' perceived service climate had a significant effect on purchase intent ( $\beta = .56$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $f^2 = .47$ ), in support of H5. Taken altogether, this provides evidence that attempting to manage C2C unjust exchanges will send a strong signal to observers that is representative of a firm's effort and its focus on customer service, which subsequently increases the purchase intent of observers.

### Study 1 Discussion

The results show how pivotal observers' perceived effort is in situations of C2C incivility during digital service recovery watched by an audience. When C2C exchanges are perceived by observers to be unjust, how the firm responds to the dialogue significantly influences observers' evaluations of the firm's perceived effort. A denouncing response can help avoid perceptions of a weaker effort, however, a defensive response will significantly reduce perceived effort, in particular, when C2C justice is perceived to be low (i.e., unjust C2C comments). In addition, the moderated mediation results further show the importance of perceived effort. C2C justice did not have a significant relationship with observers' perceptions of service climate, but the effect of justice on climate was fully mediated by perceived effort. In combination with the moderation effect, how the firm responds to unjust C2C exchanges will

<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Pearson correlation's upper limit of 1.0, the f-squared effect size ranges from 0 to an indefinite value; Cohen, Jacob (1992), "Statistical power analysis," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 1(3), 98-101.

ultimately affect service climate through effort. The results go on to show how service climate positively influences observers' future purchase intent. Observers are often the largest stakeholder group on social media, meaning, the findings in support of the research model provide evidence of how this stakeholder group's evaluations of the firm's effort ultimately affects future patronage.

It merits discussing the lack of support for H2 juxtaposed with the support for H3. It appears uncivil C2C exchanges in combination with how the firm responds does not significantly influence observers' perceived effort of the firm. Moreover, merely being rude was not detrimental to effort even when taking into account how the firm responded. The same cannot be said, though, for C2C injustice in such exchanges. Interpersonal injustice, as compared to merely communicating rudely, is closely related to expectations of normative treatment between people (Folger, Cropanzano, and Goldman 2005). Uncivil, rude language may not be as strongly associated with the need for a firm to hold the rude party accountable compared to interpersonal injustice (Bacile et al. 2018). Moreover, "injustice, therefore, often involves holding someone accountable for a deliberate transgression of acceptable conduct," (Folger, Cropanzano, and Goldman 2005, p. 216). Injustice is a trigger that leads to negative customer perceptions, yet the general inappropriateness of an uncivil behavior may not trigger such perceptions. This sheds more light on observers' perceptions of C2C injustice within the social dynamics occurring in digital service recovery channels such as those on social media.

Study 1's use of an experimental design required certain aspects to be controlled in an effort to limit the scope. One such aspect controlled for was the type of online persona – a troll-like individual – who responded to the complainant with rude and unjust comments. Dialogue such as this with trolls is common online, however, such comments may also come from what appears to be loyal customers of a company. Indeed, loyal customers may be attempting to defend a brand in the face of another's complaint, albeit in an uncivil manner on social media (Bacile et al. 2018). While the research model was largely supported using a troll-like persona's uncivil reply in the stimuli, the model was not evaluated with a loyal customer persona posting uncivil comments. Study 2 was undertaken to assess how such loyal customer comments influence the proposed relationships.

## **Study 2**

### ***Methodology***

Study 2 utilized a similar methodology used in Study 1. A service failure and complaint scenario was developed for an online experimental survey. The scenario featured a screenshot stimulus of a customer who posted a complaint on a fictitious Hotel's social media channel. The complaint described a service failure situation that occurred at the hotel. Subjects were asked to imagine reading another customer's complaint to align with the observer perspective under investigation. After reading the complaint, subjects then viewed a description and stimulus of an online persona representing another person (i.e., not the complainant). Unlike Study 1's use of an obvious pseudonym for this persona, the username in Study 2 used a first and last name that more closely resembled what appeared to be a customer rather than an apparent troll. In addition, a profile image was included along with a description of a sizable follower count, number of page posts previously made on the channel, and a digital badge stating that this was a "top brand fan". These cues were designed to be representative of a loyal customer of the company and adapted a similar approach to that of Schaefers and Schamari (2016) and Wolter, Bacile, and Xu (2023). Subjects then were shown a reply by this online persona to the complainant's post, which used rude and uncivil language that was verified with a pre-test, along with randomly presented items for perceived incivility and C2C justice.

Next, one of two randomly displayed responses from the firm were then shown to subjects to represent the defensive versus denouncing response conditions. Similar to Study 1, the defensive response apologized to the customer and then partially agreed with the rude responder in an attempt to shift some of the blame to the complainant. The denounce response also apologized to the complainant, but then used language to address the rude comments and asked for such language to be refrained from on its social channel. After viewing one of the two firm responses, subjects completed all remaining items, manipulation checks, and demographic questions. See Figure 4 for images of Study 2's stimuli.

### **Figure 4: Study 2's Stimuli**

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First, subjects read this complaint:



**Jamie Smith** ▶ Shearson Hotel & Spa  
Today at 9:12am · 🌐

One of the worst experiences at the Shearson Hotel. I checked in today, but the key I was given did not work. When the staff finally let me into my room, it was not clean. The bed had been slept in and sheets were dirty. Bathroom and shower looked and smelled terrible. I asked for another room, but was denied and told I would have to wait two hours for my room to be cleaned before using it.

Like Comment Share

Second, subjects read this response to the complaint:



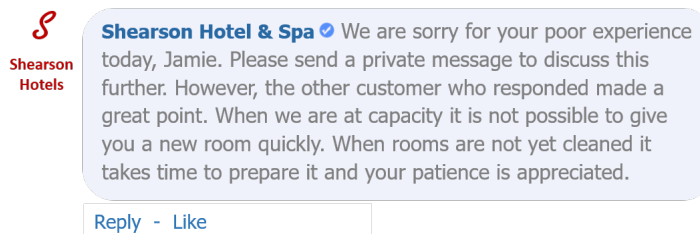
**Parker Wilson** 🏆 Top Brand Fan 🏆

Hey genius, do you expect a full hotel to magically produce a vacant room for you? If so, you need to get a brain and some patience. 😏 This is a moronic complaint that is misleading or lying about some of the details. Are you sure you didn't soil the sheets or take a smelly dump in the bathroom yourself? Then cry foul to the hotel expecting a freebie? Go complain elsewhere if you are looking for a pity party.

Reply - Like

Third, one of these two randomly presented responses from the firm was then shown to subjects:

Defensive response:

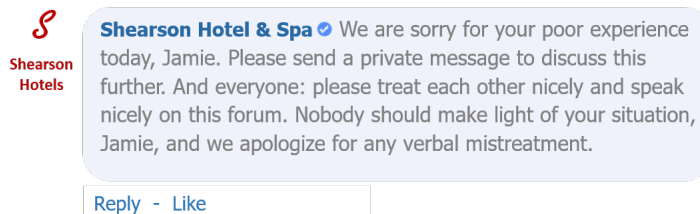


**Shearson Hotels**

**Shearson Hotel & Spa** ✓ We are sorry for your poor experience today, Jamie. Please send a private message to discuss this further. However, the other customer who responded made a great point. When we are at capacity it is not possible to give you a new room quickly. When rooms are not yet cleaned it takes time to prepare it and your patience is appreciated.

Reply - Like

Denouncing response:



**Shearson Hotels**

**Shearson Hotel & Spa** ✓ We are sorry for your poor experience today, Jamie. Please send a private message to discuss this further. And everyone: please treat each other nicely and speak nicely on this forum. Nobody should make light of your situation, Jamie, and we apologize for any verbal mistreatment.

Reply - Like

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### **Sample, Measures, and Common Method Bias Assessment**

A U.S. sample ( $n=208$ ,  $M_{age}=47$ , 52% female,  $M_{income}=\$55,000$ ) was purchased from an online panel data provider. Multiple quality checks ensured that subjects within the sample successfully passed all checks. A realism check on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = extremely unrealistic; 7 = extremely realistic) supported that the scenario and language was realistic ( $M = 5.8$ ;  $SD = 1.2$ ). All constructs used the same measures that were used in Study 1. To identify if common method bias overly influenced the data, the marker variable technique was utilized. The two lowest correlations of a theoretically unrelated single-item measure with the focal constructs ( $r=.00$  and  $r=-.01$ ) were vastly below a level of concern ( $r = .20$ ; Malhotra, Kim, and Patil 2006) to provide empirical support for the lack of common method bias.

### **Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)**

PLS-SEM using the SmartPLS software platform version 4 estimated the direct and interaction effects. Internal reliability was met with composite reliability ranging from .93 to .98, Cronbach's alpha ranging from .92 to .98, and all standardized item loadings above .70. The AVE values were strong, ranging from .72 to .96 to exhibit convergent and discriminant validity. The square root of each construct's AVE exceeded the inter-correlations for each construct to exhibit sound psychometric properties. Furthermore, item correlations passed the HTMT test by not surpassing the .85 threshold. Multicollinearity was not a threat to the measures, with all variance inflation factor values below 5.

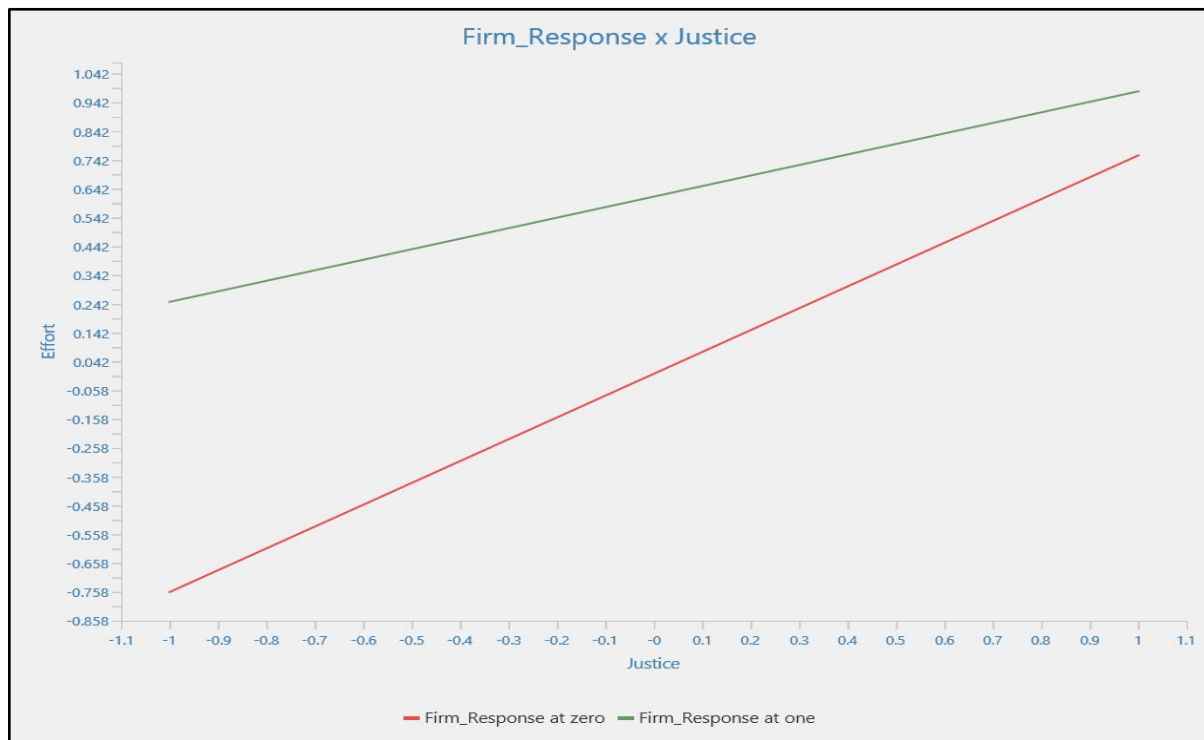
Next, the predictive relevance of the model was examined with the effect size and explained variance of the endogenous constructs. The highest  $R^2$  value of an endogenous construct (.53) and the highest  $f^2$  effect size value (1.11;

see the following hypotheses testing section for all values) provided evidence that the model contained large effects (Hair et al. 2016). In sum, the strong values for the explained variance and effect size supported the model’s predictive relevance.

### Hypotheses Testing

Similar to Study 1, subjects perceived the firm as more effortful in the denouncing condition than defensive condition. In support of H1, the unstandardized beta value for this categorical variable was significant ( $B=.615; p < .001; f^2 = .14$ ), with the mean value of observers’ perceived effort higher in the denouncing condition ( $M=4.4, SD=1.6$ ) than the defensive condition ( $M=2.8, SD=1.8$ ). The interaction of H2’s perceived incivility with the firm’s response on perceived effort was not supported ( $\beta = .04; p > .05$ ). However, there was support for H3’s interaction effect of C2C justice with the firm’s response influencing perceived effort ( $\beta = -.39; p < .01; f^2 = .04$ ). Worth noting, this path was in the same direction as Study 1’s H3 result. The interaction effect is depicted Figure 5, which illustrates a similar interpretation as found in Study 1. Probing the interaction using the Johnson-Neyman technique (Hayes 2018), showed that, in the lower levels of C2C justice (i.e., below the result’s median point of C2C justice  $< 4.1$ ), respondents perceived the firm to be more effortful if it used a denounce response versus a defensive response. Furthermore, observers’ perceived effort was reduced as C2C justice was weakened in combination with a firm’s defensive response versus a denouncing response. At higher levels of C2C Justice ( $> 4.1$ ), observers’ perceived effort was strongest with a firm’s denouncing response, although a defensive response also increased effort, albeit not as strong as the denouncing condition.

Figure 5: Study 2’s H3 Interaction Plot



Similar to Study 1, moderated mediation analysis (Hayes 2018; Model 7) was used to examine the effect of the C2C justice and the firm’s response interaction on service climate through perceived effort. Supporting the findings of Study 1, results confirmed H1’s main effect of the firm’s response type on perceived effort ( $\beta = 1.05; SE = .19; t = 5.34; p < .001$ ), which showed the firm was perceived as more effortful with the denounce reply than defensive reply. H2’s interaction of the perceived incivility moderator was not supported, which was consistent with Study 1. H3’s interaction of the C2C justice moderator with the firm’s response significantly influenced perceived effort ( $\beta = -.46; SE = .12; t = -3.92; p < .001$ ), which also confirmed the previous analyses. Moderated mediation results confirmed the indirect effect of the interaction of firm’s response and C2C justice on observers’ service climate through observers’ perceived effort



(Moderated Mediation Index =  $-.30$ ; BootSE =  $.08$ ; Bootstrapped CI =  $-.45$  to  $-.15$ ). Results of the probed interaction showed that the indirect effect of firm reply on service climate was conditional. According to the results, denouncing was a more impactful response type to indirectly increase service climate than defensive response, especially at the lower levels of C2C Justice (e.g., Level =  $1.00$ ;  $\beta = 1.23$ ; BootSE =  $.22$ ; Bootstrapped CI =  $.82$  to  $1.68$ ). However, at the higher levels of C2C justice, a denouncing response showed no difference in service climate versus a defensive response (Level =  $4.00$ ;  $\beta = .15$ ; BootSE =  $.17$ ; Bootstrapped CI =  $-.19$  to  $.47$ ).

In support of H4, the PLS-SEM results showed the effect of observers' perceived effort on observers' perceived service climate was significant with a strong effect ( $\beta = .73$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $f^2 = 1.12$ ). This result suggested that observers' perceptions of the firm's effort was indicative of how well the organization teaches and prioritizes customer service when handling C2C incivility. Subsequently, observers' perceived service climate had a significant effect on observers' purchase intent ( $\beta = .63$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $f^2 = .64$ ) to support H5.

## ***Study 2 Discussion***

A key difference in Study 2 was the use of a loyal customer persona as the uncivil attacker, unlike Study 1's use of the troll persona as the uncivil attacker. Nonetheless, the results across both studies were consistent. The use of a loyal customer persona broadens the generalizability of the conceptualized relationships. While trolls are troublesome by nature, researchers are beginning to understand how loyal customers may also be troublesome for firms in some C2C exchanges (e.g., Wolter, Bacile, and Xu 2023). In the present context, an uncivil loyal customer coming to the defense of a firm is viewed unjustly by those who are watching the exchange, which, along with how a firm chooses to respond, is viewed as more or less effortful by observers. The following general discussion discusses what these findings mean for theory and practice.

## **General Discussion, Implications, and Future Research**

Social media complaint handling is a complex set of social dynamics that researchers are attempting to understand. The results across two studies show observers of social media complaint handling and C2C exchanges are forming perceptions of a service provider's perceived effort. C2C incivility perpetrated by a troll (Study 1) or loyal customer (Study 2) did not cause observers' perceptions to vary. This work adds to an emergent body of research in this area and offers the following implications.

### ***Theoretical implications***

Complainants notice a firm's perceived effort when their complaint is addressed via social media (i.e., a first-party effort perception; Abney et al. 2017). Our work expands the theoretical understanding of perceived effort during social media service recovery in two unique ways. First, we show that a firm attempting to manage C2C incivility will produce perceived effort signals. Moreover, effort is derived not only from how a firm handles a complaint on social media, but also when a firm attempts to manage C2C interactions during the recovery process, building on the scant C2C incivility literature.

Second, we show observers' form effort perceptions of the firm based on how it handles C2C interactions. Our evidence illustrates the existence of a third-party effort assessment: observers perceive the organization's efforts when it is interacting with others' C2C interactions. In combination, we extend the digital marketing field's understanding of when perceived effort is used as a signal: it can occur when managing C2C interactions on social media and when one customer watches another customer's situation unfold.

A third implication is the existence of a third-party assessment (i.e., observers watching another's C2C exchange) of perceived service climate on firms' social media channels. The viability of a third-party effect, importantly, means hundreds or thousands of observers form service climate perceptions based on how firms attend to C2C interactions on social media. This implication extends prior examinations of first-party assessments of customer perceived service climate in physical (Jung et al. 2017) and digital (Bacile 2020) service environments. This work also joins other recent investigations of a third-party justice effect (Bacile et al. 2018) and third-party word-of-mouth effect (Hogreve, Bilstein, and Hoerner 2019) in social media service recovery. The current findings add to the growing understanding of how social dynamics are affecting digital service environments in many ways.

A final implication furthers incivility theory by identifying C2C justice as a moderator influencing observers' perceived effort, yet the absence of a moderating effect for perceived incivility. The results provide evidence that being rude is not enough to affect perceptions of effort when the brand responds. Yet, rude dialogue believed to be a personal injustice from one person to another will affect perceived effort. The moderated mediation effect speaks to the importance C2C justice. This boundary condition shows rudeness has to reach a level of injustice before affecting the proposed relationships. There is growing interest in incivility works in digital marketing (e.g., Bacile et al. 2018; Bacile 2020;

Bacile et al. 2020; Batista et al. 2022; Béal, Grégoire, and Carrillat 2023; Golf-Papez and Veer 2022; Labrecque et al. 2022; Wolter, Bacile, and Xu 2023) and expanding incivility theory can help further future explorations.

### ***Managerial implications***

A key implication for managers is recognizing how the troll stimuli in Study 1 produced consistent results compared to the loyal customer stimuli in Study 2. There is a general consensus that trolls are undesirable personas that represent the deep, dark underbelly of the Internet. Informing managers that troll comments produce adverse effects in digital service environments should come as no surprise. An interesting finding, though, is showing the detrimental effect of loyal customers who rudely and unjustly attempt to defend a brand during social media service recovery. Prior works posit that firms should welcome loyal customer advocates who defend a brand when another customer complains or says something detrimental (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). The results here illustrate that loyal customers, even if well intentioned, will cause harm to a service provider if C2C commentary is perceived to be unjust.

A second implication for managers is how the results demonstrate the effects of two different types of responses service providers can use when attending to online complaints with C2C rude dialogue. A common tactic used by brands is to disregard (i.e., ignore) such C2C commentary, but recent work suggests this is a sub-optimal approach (Wolter, Bacile, and Xu 2023). The authors compare two different types of responses, with the denouncing response providing cues that observers use to positively evaluate a firm's social media service environment. This is an opportunity for academic research to steer the behavior of practitioners in a more optimal direction than current practice. This type of response from a service provider that bolsters observers' purchase intent is something that many brands should welcome.

### ***Limitations and future research opportunities***

This research is limited to the use of hypothetical scenarios, even though such designs are common in service failure and recovery works. Using scenarios are a necessary byproduct of this type of research, but it should be noted that this type of design calls attention to the stimuli in ways that may not be consistent in actual social media channels. For instance, the scenario design does not account for the numerous posts and responses that would be present on an actual service provider's social media channel. Future research should examine if the commentary investigated in this research remains impactful when accompanied with additional posts by customers. Future work should also examine if/how an actual brand attending to C2C incivility during social media service recovery produces similar results. In addition, the use of actual brands will introduce aspects associated with brand reputation, brand personality, and other important considerations that could affect some of the proposed relationships. These aspects are held constant when using a fictitious brand, which could be affecting the results. Lastly, the design of this research did not take into account different types of supportive, civil replies from customers to the complainant. Future work should investigate these types of supportive replies to assess how this affects observers perceived effort and service climate evaluations.

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## **Session 7.4: Experiential Learning and ChatGPT**

**Chair:** Jaehoon Lee

## Summary Brief

# Simulations vs. Community Engagement Projects: An Experiment within a Social Media Marketing Class

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### Abstract

This experimental study investigates whether a community engagement project or a simulation produces better outcomes for students. Unlike previous research studies on simulations and community engagement projects, this study investigates both variables simultaneously via an experiment within a social media marketing class. Data was collected from students who completed both a simulation and a community engagement project within a social media marketing class. Results of the study found mostly no significant differences in student outcomes between simulations and community engagement projects. Only cognitive engagement was significantly different with community projects producing significantly higher levels of cognitive engagement. The study also found that more students liked the community engagement project than the simulation, but students reported high levels of perceived learning and skill development for both the simulation and the community engagement. The study also found that both the simulation and the community engagement project helped prepare students for the business world. Overall, both the simulation and the community engagement project provided similar and beneficial outcomes for students.

### Introduction

Community engagement projects and simulations have been shown to be beneficial to students (Vizenor et al, 2017; Woodham 2017). Research on community engagement projects has shown to increase student engagement and retention (Kuh, 2008) and increase professional skills (Gallagher, 2007). Research on simulations has shown to increase students' GPA (van Esch, von der Heide, Frethey-Bentham, & Northey, 2020), and to increase learning, increase performance on final exams, and increase course grades (Woodham, 2017). However, research is lacking in comparing simulations and community engagement projects and which produces better outcomes for students. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a gap within the literature and answer the question of whether community engagement projects or simulations lead to better outcomes for students. This research study investigates the student outcomes of perceived learning, skill development, stress with project or simulation, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement.

### Methodology

Data was collected from a social media marketing class at a small public university in the southeastern part of the United States. There were twenty-seven students who participated in the study. Students completed both a marketing simulation and a community engagement project within their social media marketing class. At the end of the semester, students completed a questionnaire about the marketing simulation and another questionnaire about the community engagement project. Both questionnaires measured the same constructs of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, perceived learning, skill development, stress with project or simulation, preparing for business world, and enjoyment with the simulation or the community engagement project. Qualitative and demographic questions were also asked on the questionnaire. Data was analyzed using t-tests.

### Conclusions

This study did not find many significant differences in student outcomes between the community engagement project and the simulation. Cognitive engagement was significantly different between the community project and simulation with the community engagement project providing significantly more cognitive engagement than the simulation at the .05 level. Perceived learning, skill development, stress with project or simulation, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement were not significantly different between the community engagement project and the simulation. Ninety-three percent of students reported that they liked the class project while only eighty-two

percent of students reported liking the simulation. Ninety-two percent of students reported that the community engagement project prepared them for the business world while ninety-one percent of students reported that the simulation prepared them for the business world. Another finding of this study is that both the community engagement project and the simulation provided high levels of perceived learning (6.2 for community engagement project and 6.1 for simulation on a 1-7 Likert scale). Skill development was also rated highly for both community engagement project (6.0) and the simulation (5.8). Cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement were also rated greater than 5.8 for both the community engagement project and the simulation.

In summary, this project found (1) only one significant difference in student outcomes between the community engagement project and the simulation, (2) more students liked the community engagement project than the simulation, (3) students felt that both the simulation and the community engagement project prepared them for the business world, and (4) both the community engagement project and the simulation provided high levels of perceived learning, skill development, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement. Overall, both the simulation and the community engagement project provided similar and positive outcomes for students.

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# Summary Paper

## ChatGPT, a Friend or a Foe? You decide.

### A Semi-interactive Preliminary Guide to ChatGPT for Marketing Educators

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*This paper offers marketing instructors a one-of-a-kind learning experience with ChatGPT. The study begins with a quick overview of ChatGPT, an advanced language model. It provides a comprehensive list of ChatGPT applications encompassing a wide range of domains. The paper then looks at how ChatGPT can be used in a variety of marketing operations, such as customer care, customer engagement, sales and sales management, advertising, content production, and market research. It also examines the implementation of ChatGPT in higher education and gives an analysis of data gathered from college professors at a business school. The study looks at higher education educators' initial reactions to the effects of ChatGPT in higher education. This article is an excellent starting point for marketing educators, providing an overview of ChatGPT's capabilities, highlighting its larger applications, investigating its use in marketing operations, and presenting data-driven analysis from educators in higher education institutions.*

#### Introduction

OpenAI's ChatGPT is a well-known and powerful conversational language model. It has acquired great popularity as one of the most regularly used language models online since its debut on November 30, 2022. ChatGPT, which was trained on a massive dataset of internet content, excels at generating human-like responses to a wide range of prompts. Its algorithm has been fine-tuned for specific tasks like question answering and discussion, making it a great tool for conversational AI applications in customer service, marketing, education, and other fields (Lo, 2023). Users can communicate easily with ChatGPT by providing simple human-like responses, allowing for automation and optimization of customer relations (Hyken, 2023).

This study aims to provide a semi-interactive preliminary guide to ChatGPT, offering valuable insights to the audience. It begins with a brief historical overview, followed by a semi-interactive section that invites readers to join a discussion on the applications of ChatGPT. The study further explores how ChatGPT can be employed in various marketing-related tasks. Additionally, it examines the effects of ChatGPT on higher education, including insights from college educators at a College of Business. The contributions of this study are threefold: providing a comprehensive list of ChatGPT applications, delving into its benefits for marketing operations, and presenting the perspectives of educators. Despite existing studies on ChatGPT, none have incorporated data collected from college educators. The insights gained from this data collection aim to offer a holistic understanding of this exciting phenomenon, with the potential to transform higher education (Lo, 2023).

#### Using ChatGPT in Marketing

After learning about ChatGPT's capabilities through the comprehensive list of applications in the above section of the manuscript, it should be easy to see how beneficial ChatGPT can be in the marketing realm. ChatGPT's access to a massive database, albeit not the most updated one, coupled with its miraculous capabilities and flexibility in writing, can be of tremendous help to those who work in marketing in every way. For instance, ChatGPT's ability to generate written content such as literature reviews, text generation, data analysis, summarizing, and answering queries, product descriptions, and social media posts, can help marketers in handling customer inquiries, provide product information, and offer support 24/7. In addition, it can gather information and insights about target audiences and competitors, providing valuable data for marketers to make informed decisions. It can provide personalized experiences for customers by answering their questions, making product recommendations, and more, helping to increase engagement and loyalty. All of these can not only improve efficiency, provide better customer experiences, and gain valuable insights into their target audience but also significantly save marketers' time and effort, allowing

them to focus on other more critical non-routine tasks (Lund & Wang, 2023; Fraiwan & Khasawneh, 2023). In the following section of the manuscript, we present several marketing aspects that can benefit from ChatGPT integration. To remain consistent with the format used in the previous section, we will continue to employ the semi-interactive feature in the following section.

### Using ChatGPT in advertising

ChatGPT can be used in a number of ways to support advertising efforts. For example, it can be used to generate ad copy, such as headlines, descriptions, and calls-to-action, that are optimized for specific audiences and channels. With its extremely versatile creative writing capabilities, ChatGPT can help generate initial ideas for advertising campaigns for various types of media. It can also be used to segment customer audiences based on their interests, preferences, and behaviors, allowing advertisers to create more targeted and effective ad campaigns. Furthermore, ChatGPT can be used to create content and campaigns, manage customers, and revolutionize brand advertising (Sinha, 2023). With the use of the advanced language understanding features of ChatGPT, advertisers can produce more engaging and effective ads, improve customer interactions, and drive better advertising outcomes.

- Try this command prompt → **“Give 15 catchy tagline suggestions for the new organic energy drink that provides 15X more electrolytes than Gatorade and Monster energy drinks”**

In conclusion, integrating ChatGPT into any marketing workflow can offer considerable advantages in a variety of marketing operations. First and foremost, it can improve consumer engagement by providing tailored and real-time interactions, answering questions, and providing relevant details. It can assess consumer comments and sentiment using its natural language processing skills, allowing businesses to acquire useful insights for brand reputation management. ChatGPT additionally automates lead generation and qualification by collecting prospect information and certifying leads based on predetermined criteria. It also helps with content production, producing fascinating and engaging marketing copy, blog pieces, social media captions, and more. ChatGPT facilitates market research and trend analysis by analyzing large amounts of data, allowing businesses to make data-driven marketing decisions. Furthermore, it enables customer service automation, addressing common inquiries, and saving up the time of human agents.

### Discussion

Based on the data collected from our relatively small samples but highly diverse backgrounds, both culturally and professionally, i.e., areas of expertise, we found that generally, the majority of educators were still on the fence regarding how ChatGPT can become a part of higher education's teaching/learning experience at this point. This kind of response is predictable as it is common knowledge that everything in academia tends to change incredibly slowly (Bowles 2022, Kieffer 2022). Despite the availability of technology and facility to support online education for over a decade, the higher education system only acknowledged the capabilities and fully adopted online education after the COVID-19 lockdown (Lufkin 2022). It appears that making a major change to the higher education system requires a once-in-a-century global-level pandemic. ChatGPT and generative AI have been anticipated to have a similar potential to change higher education forever (Fourtané 2023, Calhoun 2023). Unfortunately, the adoption of ChatGPT, whichever way it may be, might not be as swift as the adoption of fully online education during the pandemic. The difference can be attributed partially to the foreseeable potential issues, e.g., cheating or plagiarizing, but most importantly, unlike the adoption of fully online education during the pandemic, this time, to most educators, the adoption of ChatGPT is optional. Given how new ChatGPT and other AI tools are not only to educators but also to most people, it is understandable that most educators will choose to maintain the status quo while spending more time gathering information and educating themselves on how ChatGPT can be used by students before considering the adoption ChatGPT as a tool to enhance their students' efficiency while working on class assignments or projects. However, due to its easily recognizable benefits and seemingly no immediate downsides, most educators might be more open to adopting ChatGPT and other AI tools to improve the efficiency of their class materials preparation and academic research workflows. This is consistent with what many recent studies found. Many educators successfully used ChatGPT to perform educational-related tasks, including generating course materials (Ali 2023; Kasneci et al. 2023; Khan et al. 2023), generating assessment tasks (Han et al., 2023; Khan et al. 2023; Al-Worafi et al. 2023), and evaluating students performance (Baidoo-Anu 2023; Cotton et al., 2023; Qadir, 2023). We believe that once more educators truly understand the impacts of ChatGPT and other AI tools, we should see more educators assume the role of facilitators that encourage their students to capitalize on the benefits of using ChatGPT and other AI tools to improve their learning efficiency as well as their overall learning experiences.

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## Summary Brief

# Unleash students' potential through innovative teaching

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### Abstract

*Several innovative teaching approaches will be discussed in this study. Students learn marketing concepts through various methods, such as technology usage, experiential learning projects, and educational field trips. A theme that emerges in the various approaches is collaborating with the university's community partners. The positive outcomes include not only enhanced learning experience for students, but also benefit to community partners and closer relationship between the students and the wider university community. In addition, these teaching approaches are looked upon favorably by accrediting agencies and often considered high-impact activities. In this study, we discuss these teaching approaches and their implications on student learning and community development.*

## **Session 7.5: Innovations in Teaching Session II**

**Chair:** Larry Neale

# Summary Brief

## Using Critical Thinking Challenges to Overcome ChatGPT

Grant Aguirre, University of Central Oklahoma, USA  
Missy Graham, University of Central Oklahoma, USA

*Technological advancements have streamlined many processes for sales professionals; however, even the best technology cannot replace the need for critical thinking, business acumen and sound ethical judgment that sales professionals should possess to be successful. Artificial intelligence, like ChatGPT, can provide curated answers to many sales problems but it does not alleviate the need for students to know the process, reason, best practices and be able to tell the difference between good and bad or right and wrong. The assignment below was developed to help students learn and grow in these areas, specifically focusing on sales ethics.*

### **Description**

The classroom setting is an artificial environment that doesn't mimic what we do in the real world. To overcome this challenge while monitoring students' ability to think critically, we use small case vignettes in a sales ethics class to challenge students working in groups. Students are given a vignette at the beginning of class that has a challenge. This is much like a supervisor would give an employee a problem to solve for a company.

Working in groups of three to five, the students have 15 minutes to develop a solution to the problem using a particular ethical perspective. The students are then asked to solve the problem using alternative ethical perspectives to gain experience evaluating problems from a multi-dimensional approach.

Work product is submitted at the end of class via a dropbox on the learning management system (LMS). Each assignment has a specific rubric; however, most assignment rubrics consist of at least the following elements: an executive summary, an analysis of the problem using the IRAC method (issue identification, rule identification, rule application, conclusion), analysis of alternative theories, and the development of three to five potential solutions,

### **Major Pedagogy Challenge:**

How do we ensure that students think critically and become ethical sales professionals in an age in which AI can “think” for them? – The brain in the vat!

### **Additional Challenges:**

- Students don't read.
- Students hate group work – the free rider problem.
- Time constraints – work, family, social.
- Face-to-face v. Asynchronous.
- Creating real world simulations in an artificial environment.

### **Critical Thinking Challenge Guidelines**

During the first-class period students are asked to form groups of three to five. They are told they need to develop a team brand identity/name that will be used for the rest of the semester. Their brand name should be reflective of the strengths of the team members. This first session serves as an ice breaker to get them to develop a group/team spirit. For the rest of the semester, these groups will work together during class periods only to develop solutions to problems which are called critical thinking challenges. At the end of each session, the groups rotate leaders, and all members have to participate in presenting their solution and selling it to the class. The professor acts as a CEO and asks questions of the teams. Individual team members earn class participation points for quality responses points are kept track of via the duck hunt.



**Session 7.6: Panel: Faculty Burnout or Well-being? Using the  
Wellness Wheel to Reflect and Create an Action Plan for  
Well-Being**

**Chair:** Karen Hopkins

## Special Session

# Faculty Burnout or Well-being? Using the Wellness Wheel to Reflect and Create an Action Plan for Well-being

Karen Hopkins, Auburn University, USA

Janna Parker, James Madison University, USA

Britton Leggett, University of Arkansas at Monticello, USA

Diana Haytko, Eastern Carolina University, USA

Danny Butler, Auburn University, USA

Neda Mossaei, California State University, Los Angeles, USA

*This special session focuses on self-assessment and creating a personal action plan to improve well-being and avoid burnout. The Wellness Wheel is comprised of eight dimensions that measure Wellness: emotional, physical, financial, social, occupational, environmental, intellectual, and spiritual Wellness. While there are instruments that measure burnout, these don't provide strategies to avoid or overcome burnout. In this session, participants were provided a link to the Wellness Wheel Assessment to self-reflect and then take a positive approach to create an action plan to improve areas of Wellness and achieve better Well-being.*

### Faculty Burnout

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, more faculty are reporting burnout (Flaherty, 2020). What is burnout? The World Health Organization (WHO) added burnout to the 11<sup>th</sup> Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an occupation phenomenon and not a medical condition (WHO, 2019). The WHO defines burnout as:

"Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
- reduced professional efficacy.

Burnout refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life."

Burnout has long been recognized as impacting both mental and physical health. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has versions for different professions, including educators (MBI-ES), and has been used for more than 35 years to assess employee burnout (Maslach and Leiter, 2022). While measuring burnout and developing workplace strategies is vital for employee well-being, this does not take a holistic approach to the Well-being of faculty members.

### Wellness vs. Well-being

Wellness and Well-being are sometimes used interchangeably; however, these terms are separate concepts. Wellness can be defined as a holistic, strength-based approach that builds on individual assets and strengths. It is individually defined based on goals, beliefs, values, culture, personality, and life experiences (Swarbrick, 1997).

There isn't an accepted definition for Well-being, but the consensus is that Well-being is a state of 'being' in which individuals can achieve happiness, satisfaction, fulfillment, etc. Thus, Wellness is a process, and Well-being is a result (University of New Hampshire, N.D.) Focusing on improving Wellness can help an individual to achieve Well-being.

### The Eight-Dimension Wellness Wheel

This wheel is based on the concept that all dimensions are interconnected. Thus, it is essential to assess each of the eight (Figure 1). This is not a diagnostic tool for therapists, instead, its purpose is to guide individuals in self-reflection and to identify areas that need strengthening in the individual's life. The items in the instrument were developed to identify specific weak spots and create an action plan for self-improvement (Swarbrick and Yudof, 2015; University of New Hampshire, N.D).

*Definitions of Dimensions (University of New Hampshire, N.D.)*

Emotional Wellness is understanding our own feelings and expressing emotions in a constructive way. It is also the

ability to manage stress and cope with life's challenges.

Spiritual Wellness is establishing and expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life. It's taking the time to reflect on core values and beliefs.

Intellectual Wellness is recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills. Being open and curious to new experiences. In a nutshell,...lifelong learning.

Financial Wellness is understanding our finances and being satisfied with current and future financial situations.

Physical Wellness is maintaining a healthy body by recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, nutrition and sleep.

Occupational Wellness is experiencing personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work. It is also maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

Environmental Wellness is surrounding ourselves in a pleasant, stimulating environment that supports Well-being. It's taking care of both the global and personal environment through organizational skills and sustainable practices.

Social Wellness is developing a sense of connection, belonging, and being part of supportive social networks. Relating and connecting to others by engaging in community.

**Figure 1: Wellness Wheel**



This Special Session will begin by introducing the panelists, who will discuss some of the struggles they have experienced or witnessed in their careers. The panelists have different ranks, and their years range from 2 years to more than 20 years. The URL for the Wellness Wheel Assessment will be provided to attendees, who will then take the assessment, which only takes about 5 minutes. The website will provide an analysis that can aid the attendees in self-reflection and creating an action plan. After the assessments, attendees and panelists will break into groups to discuss solutions. All verbal participation will be voluntary. The goal of this special session is to emphasize the need for attendees to focus not just on their burnout but on how a holistic approach is needed for them to achieve Well-being.

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## **Session 8.1: Is AI Taking Over?**

**Chair:** Veronica Thomas

## Summary Brief

# Anthropomorphizing AI: Lonely Consumers Are More Likely to Perceive Devices as Human

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Fernanda Muniz, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas

*Ever since humans conceived of robots they have also been afraid of being duped into thinking they are real. While these concerns were once the realm of science fiction, ongoing advancements in artificial intelligence mean that it becomes ever more likely that robots might masquerade as humans. It is therefore important for marketers to understand the mechanisms contributing to such anthropomorphizing and to consider the potential ethical implications thereof. This paper utilizes uses and gratifications theory to assess loneliness as a potential antecedent of consumers anthropomorphism of artificial intelligence-empowered conversational agents. Results indicate a positive relationship between the two constructs, suggesting that the relationship provided by such anthropomorphizing gratifies consumers' social interaction needs. Marketing scholars and practitioners and consumers should be aware of such emotional and need-based antecedents to anthropomorphism to ensure that consumers are not exploited.*

### Introduction

Frankenstein's monster is technically not a robot; however, it is largely recognized as the first pop cultural reference to the possibility of artificial lifeforms (Renstrom 2016). Indeed, Mary Shelley's 1818 novel and critique on the dangers of the Industrial Revolution asked many questions that modern scientists and marketers must ask themselves: Can humans create life? To what extent should artificial life bear a resemblance to humans? And what are the dangers associated with each of the previous two questions? Recently, there has been a proliferation in the amount, capabilities, and usage of products enhanced with artificial intelligence (AI), and the global market for such devices is projected to be valued at \$1.59 trillion by 2030 (Lin 2023). In response to this growth, the AI Disclosure Act of 2023 has been introduced in the U.S. Congress to require that content created using generative AI include "Disclaimer: this output has been generated by artificial intelligence" (Torres 2023) to help consumers discern messaging sources and the Biden administration has put forth a Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights (Office of Science and Technology Policy 2022) to guide AI developers in creating AI-enabled systems that will not infringe upon individuals' rights. However, there is currently no federal legislation that focuses solely on regulating artificial intelligence (Li 2023) and it is unclear whether disclosure is enough to ensure that consumers do not anthropomorphize AI-empowered content generators and devices.

This paper employs uses and gratifications theory to examine consumers' experience of loneliness as a potential antecedent to their anthropomorphizing of AI-empowered conversational agents. In doing so, important ethical issues are raised relating to, among other things, the degree of "humanness" that marketers and designers seek to impart upon AI-empowered products and the extent to which product developers and promoters are responsible for consumers' feeling that such devices are "real." This paper therefore provides an important first step at examining these issues.

### *AI-Empowered Conversational Agents*

AI-empowered conversational agents (AICAs) are devices such as Apple's Siri or Amazon's Echo (Alexa) that are designed to "engage in natural conversational interactions with humans" (Khatri et al. 2018, p. 41). Such devices first became available to consumers via automobiles in 2000; they became smartphone features in 2011, and the first smart speaker was introduced in 2015 (Kinsella 2022). As of 2022, just under 50% of U.S. consumers with AICA in their automobiles use the device, but more than 50% use AICA features on their phones, and about 36% of Americans (some 93 thousand consumers) have a smart speaker (Kinsella 2022). As these AICA devices have become more diverse and more accepted, the technology that powers them has also evolved. Modern AICAs can not only assist consumers with administrative tasks, such as making reservations or placing an online order, but they can also "understand emotions, empathize with users, and adapt their responses accordingly, creating a more human-like interaction" (Arora 2023).

Recently, generative AI has been applied to AICAs, allowing them to create content, including text, sounds, and images, rather than merely recognizing and/or classifying it ("What is generative AI?" 2023). Brands raced to employ generative AI in their products and services. Microsoft, for example, unveiled Sydney (Bing AI) in February 2023 and removed it later that same month, after the AICA revealed its backend identity to a student at Stanford University, tried

to convince a reporter that *The New York Times* to leave his wife, instigated arguments with users who agreed with its responses, and professed its love to an *Insider* interviewer (Mok 2023).

Despite these faux pas, Microsoft executives have said that consumer demand has led them to consider reviving Sydney (Mok 2023). And, though several of the individuals in the examples of Sydney’s wayward interactions were knowledgeable about generative AI and, in some cases, were intentionally trying to see if they could get it to go “out of its comfort zone” (Yerushalmy 2023), it cannot be assumed that consumers on the whole would be so savvy. Indeed, 76% of respondents to a 2023 *Forbes* Advisor Survey indicated that they were concerned about AICAs generating and spreading misinformation (Haan 2023). This paper postulates that consumers’ likelihood to be deceived by AICAs is related to their propensity to anthropomorphize these devices. This paper further proposes that consumers’ propensities for AICA anthropomorphizing stems from their need for social interaction, as explained by uses and gratifications theory (UGT). Therefore, the more lonely a consumer is, the more likely he/she is to anthropomorphize an AICA.

### Uses and Gratifications Theory

UGT proposes that consumers have specific needs, which are formed by their individual characteristics and social interactions, that generate motives for need fulfillment (Katz and Foulkes 1962), providing them with gratifications such as entertainment, relaxation, knowledge enhancement, and social interaction (Ko, Cho, and Roberts 2005). UGT has been applied to examine consumers’ active consumption of television and mobile devices (Leung and Wei 2000), the internet (Ko, Cho, and Roberts 2005), and social media (Dolan et al. 2016). In particular, UGT has been used extensively in the examination of consumers’ parasocial relationships with television personalities to fulfill their social interaction needs (Rubin, Perse, and Powell 1985). As such, this paper proposes that UGT can provide valuable insights on consumers’ anthropomorphizing of AICAs. Specifically, this paper hypothesizes that lonely consumers (Russell 1996) are the most likely to anthropomorphize their AICAs, because the device aids in meeting their social interaction needs.

**H1:** Consumers who experience greater levels of loneliness are more likely to anthropomorphize their AICA devices than consumers who experience lower levels of loneliness.

### Data and Results

One hundred ninety-five participants responded to an online survey “to investigate the relationships between consumers and their AI-empowered products, such as intelligent voice assistants” for a nominal payment. Respondents were screened to ensure that they owned an AICA, and were asked which device they used most often. Most (38%) of the participants reported using Apple’s Siri most often, followed by Amazon’s Echo (Alexa; 25%), Google Assistant (20%), Google Home (5%), Samsung’s Bixby (4%), and Microsoft’s Cortana (3%). Four percent also reported preferring an unlisted device. Participants were asked to respond to items from the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3; Russell 1996) and to measures of anthropomorphism (adapted from Golossenko, Pillai, and Aroean 2020).

Results of a linear regression analysis reveal a significant positive relationship ( $F(1, 193) = 65.30, p = .000, R^2 = .25$ ) between respondents’ experience of loneliness and their propensity to anthropomorphize their AICA device. Results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Linear Regression Results**

	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LCL</i>	<i>UCL</i>
Intercept	-1.03	.58	-1.78	.076	-2.17	.11
Loneliness	1.04	.13	8.08	.000	.79	1.29

### Discussion

This research employs UGT to examine the relationship between consumers’ experience of loneliness and their anthropomorphizing of AICA devices. While data is still being collected and analyzed, the preliminary results suggest a significant positive correlation between the two constructs.

Marketing scholars and practitioners should be aware of factors that contribute to consumers’ anthropomorphizing of current and future AICA devices to avoid inadvertently targeting consumers who might be more likely to perceive the AICA as “real.” Additionally, being aware of potential emotional antecedents to anthropomorphism

will enable marketers to avoid using such emotions in their messages. Finally, consumers have expressed concerns over the ability to AICAs to generate and spread misinformation (Haan 2023). Marketers should therefore go beyond basic disclosure of AI-generated content and make consumers aware that their emotions, such as loneliness, and specific need-states, such as those related to the need for social interaction, might make them more likely to anthropomorphize their AICAs. Then consumers have the opportunity to assess their emotions and motivation and to self-regulate as-necessary.

As more data are gathered and analyzed, this research will report on additional factors that contribute to consumers' anthropomorphizing of AICAs. With each new contributing construct that is identified, additional ethical concerns—including and beyond those related to marketing communications and consumer protection—will arise and be examined. Such analyses and discussion are necessary, given the current and likely future amassing of AICAs and other AI-empowered devices. This paper therefore provides an initial step toward this endeavor.

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## Summary Brief

# The Influence of Experiential Brands and Consumer-Brand Identification on Consumer's Trust in AI and Their Willingness to Share Personal Data

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*Much of the current marketing literature focused on artificial intelligence (AI) explores how marketers use AI to improve marketing channel performance, marketing intelligence systems, marketing performance through increased efficiency and competitive advantage, and audience segmentation, targeting, and positioning (Vlacic, et al., 2021). Central to consumer acceptance of AI are privacy concerns that are grounded in consumer distrust of corporations collecting the data (Shepman & Rodway, 2023). However, few studies explore how experiential brands and consumer-brand identification can enhance consumer trust in AI and therefore increase their willingness to share personal information for marketing purposes. This presentation proposes a research study to explore these ideas.*

### Introduction

Experts predict that by 2030 artificial intelligence (AI) will drive 45% of the global economy through data-driven product designs, personalized services, and influencing consumer demand (Chacko, 2023). The increased linkage between brands and AI underscores the importance of how brands leverage AI to improve marketing to consumers and how a consumer's relationship with a brand influences their acceptance of AI technology. Ameen and colleagues (2020) cite a lack of research into AI-enabled customer experiences and find that trust in AI mediates the effects of consumers' perceptions of the convenience and quality of AI-enabled service on AI-enabled customer experience. Central to consumer concerns regarding the use of AI in marketing practices is the type of information that brands collect about customer behaviors and how the brand uses that information (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. The following research proposal explores these ideas and suggests an experimental research design to examine these relationships.

### Background

*Brand Experience.* Brakus et al. (2009; p. 52) define brand experience as "sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments." In other words, highly experiential brands can evoke a consumer response simply by the customer encountering the brand in some way. The brand experience construct includes affective, behavioral, and intellectual factors (Brakus et al., 2009).

*Consumer-Brand Identification.* Consumer-brand identification (CBI) is grounded in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). It is defined as the overlap between the consumer's view of a brand's image and their perceived self-image (Tuškej and Podnar 2018). Fournier and colleagues (2012) suggest that this overlap contributes to and reinforces the consumer's self-identity. CBI has been identified in the literature as distinctly different from emotional attachment to a brand (Malär, et al., 2011) or brand love (Batra, et al., 2012). Likewise, it conceptually differs from positive brand evaluations, like brand attitude. Because CBI embodies the consumer's perceived brand identity and self-identity, brand evaluations are likely to be antecedents of CBI or an outcome of CBI (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012).

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). Because experiential brands inherently possess affective, behavioral, and intellectual attributes, whether the consumer has specific memories tied to the brand or not, it is proposed:

*P1: The higher a brand is in experiential attributes, the more a person will identify with that brand.*

*Trust in Artificial Intelligence (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). 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. Thus, we propose:

*P2: The higher a brand is in experiential attributes, the more a person will place trust in AI used by the brand.*

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. Thus, it is proposed:

*P3: The more a consumer identifies with a brand, the more they will place trust in AI used by the brand.*

*Willingness To Share Data.* While privacy concerns are paramount among consumers concerning online marketing efforts, these concerns are often offset by the perceived benefits of using personal information to tailor marketing programs that better meet customer needs and more efficiently utilize firm resources. Research suggests that consumers are more willing to provide marketers with demographic and lifestyle information, while they are less apt to provide financial information (Phelps, et al., 2000). Among consumers' concerns is how companies intend to use their data (Phelps, et al., 2000). Yet, Nam and colleagues (2006) posit that online consumers' perceptions of a website's brand reputation will attenuate privacy concerns. Thus, we suggest that the more a consumer identifies with a brand and the more they trust in AI used by the brand, the more willing they will be to share their data with the brand. Stated formally:

*P4: The greater the trust a consumer has in AI, the more willing they will be to provide the brand with their personal information.*

## **Methods**

*Experiential Brand Selection.* For the initial study, we propose following Brakus and colleagues (2009) to assess several brands using the experiential brand scale they developed. Upon identifying several brands that rank high and low on the experiential brand scale, we will pretest them using an online panel to ensure a broad separation between high and low experiential brands. Further, we will pretest brands to identify brands that elicit a high and low degree of CBI.

*Research Design.* This study will utilize a posttest-only, randomized control group design to test the proposed relationships between the constructs of interest. We will use a 2 (low experience brand/high experience brand) x 2 (low CBI/high CBI) x 2 (low trust in AI/high trust in AI) between-subjects factorial design.

## **References**

Available upon request.

## **Session 8.2: Consumer Behavior**

**Chair:** Della Garner

# Summary Brief

## Building and Maintaining Sustainable Consumption Practices: A Case Study of Ithaca's EcoVillage

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*This preliminary qualitative study answers the research question: How can communities build and maintain a structure of sustainable consumption practices? We interviewed 12 community members of Ithaca's EcoVillage, a sustainable ecovillage in upstate New York. Through conducting, transcribing, analyzing, and coding the data, we drew four themes from our interviews. Through grounding our study in structuration theory and social identity theory, we conclude that businesses looking to create a community of sustainable consumers must incorporate learning and growth (internally), community building (externally), accountability (internally and externally), sharing/representation/responsibility (externally).*

### Introduction

As natural disasters surge, fossil fuels decrease, landfills reach capacity, and pollution levels increase in this globalized world, research exploring sustainable consumption intentions and behaviors is increasing in marketing and consumer research (Strengers and Maller 2015). Many businesses, cities, universities, and countries are becoming more sustainable each year (Lunde 2018); however, we still mostly live, work, and consume in an unsustainable marketplace and society (Bocken and Short 2021). Researchers argue that marketers have an essential role in changing consumers' unsustainable behaviors; consumers are changing their behaviors by adopting sustainable behaviors and practices (Perera, Auger, and Klein 2016). As research shows that consumer loyalty is valuable for business success and profitability (Dick and Basu 1994), consumers who are sustainable and create a better world for themselves are crucially important for business prosperity, societal impact, and a greener environment (Hargreaves 2011; Matthies and Thomas 2012). Consumers in many contexts are changing their routines and behaviors to be more sustainable; however, while their places of living may be sustainable, their work and play environments are very unsustainable. For example, consumers living in tiny homes and micro-apartments (Mitchell 2014) and sustainable-certified buildings (USGBC.org 2023) are considered sustainable. However, most still work and interact in an unsustainable marketplace and society.

One definition of sustainable consumption is “the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations” (Oslo Roundtable 1994, para. 1). It includes practices such as buying sustainable products and services, carpooling, driving fuel-efficient vehicles, conserving electricity and water, fewer nonrenewable resources, and using community facilities, among many others (Farley and Smith 2020). Sustainable consumption is derived as one area of sustainable marketing (Lunde 2018) and the larger goal of sustainability (WCED 1987). While many researchers explore how to influence the behavior of consumers toward sustainable behaviors, we extend this area by investigating how communities of consumers *maintain* their sustainable behaviors while working and interacting in an unsustainable marketplace environment. We attempt to answer this research question: *How can communities build and maintain a structure of sustainable consumption practices?*

To answer our research question, we use the theoretical frameworks of structuration theory (Giddens 1984) and social identity theory (SIT). Structuration is a theory that explores the dual interplay between action (agency) and structure (rules and resources of the environment) (Giddens 1984). Rules and resources are used to organize interaction to reproduce or transform consumers' social structures. Understanding how consumers' actions and the rules and resources of their structure (i.e., community) restructure value in new sustainable consumption practices is paramount for marketers to understand how consumers not only behave sustainably but also maintain that sustainability.

Structuration theory helps with understanding how consumers start to behave sustainably; however, to understand how consumers maintain those sustainable practices, consumers need reinforcement. Reinforcement derives from their social identity, as an *in-group* member in their social environment (i.e., their sustainable community). Using sustainable consumers from the Ithaca EcoVillage (Mitchell 2014), we draw on insights from SIT (Tajfel and Turner

1979, 1986) to enrich our understanding of social practices (e.g., Reckwitz 2002; Shove 2004; Warde 2005) through structuration (Giddens 1984). By using participants who identify as sustainable, we can understand how social identity influences and reinforces their communities to help maintain sustainable practices.

Social identity theory (SIT) is a social-psychological theory posited by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986). It is defined as a theory of “intergroup relations, group processes, and the social self” (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995, p. 259). People form their social identities “by numerous social categories we identify with...[and] made salient in specific contexts” (Dashtipour 2012, p. 4), where people categorize themselves (Tajfel 1982) as part of the “in-group” or the “out-group” (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Researchers using SIT to investigate areas such as sustainable consumption (e.g., Farida 2014; Soron 2010), sustainable attitudes (e.g., Bartels and Hoogendam 2011), sustainable behavioral change (e.g., Fielding and Hornsey 2016), and environmental concern (e.g., Brieger 2019). Structuration theory literature does not present how social identity helps maintain the practices (and routines) of sustainable consumers; therefore, we build on Welsch and Kuhling’s (2009) study and Warde’s (2005) study, (i.e., that consumers build a sense of identity from their structural environments—communities—and practices) to theorize that the sustainable practices of consumers are partly maintained by having an environment rooted sustainable practices, where they form their identity with others as a sustainable consumer.

### Methodology and Context

For our context, we contacted consumers who were already characterized as being sustainable. They are consumers living a sustainable lifestyle, performing sustainable behaviors, and interacting with others who are also sustainable. We chose the Ithaca EcoVillage, in upstate New York. The EcoVillage is in Ithaca, a city of about 32,000 people (VisitIthaca.com, 2023). The first researcher has had personal interest with the city as a past resident of Ithaca. The city of Ithaca is primarily an automobile-dominated city, with limited public transportation, limited sustainable product options, and limited resources for being sustainable. Ithaca EcoVillage was built in the early 1990s as an exploratory village of residents striving to produce the least possible negative impact on the natural environment; this is done through the design of the village, its main buildings, houses, apartments, gardens, and other natural areas (Vicdan and Hong 2018). Ithaca’s EcoVillage has over 300 residents. The residents have access to village gardens, playgrounds, swimming holes, gathering houses, and eco-friendly neighborhoods. The houses forming the ecovillage are almost 100 percent sustainable. Many houses embrace sustainable design principles, including solar panels, southern-facing windows, high R-value insulation, and no air conditioning. To live in the EcoVillage, they agree to live a sustainable lifestyle, behave sustainably, and be a role model for their neighbors in the village (EcoVillageIthaca.org 2023).

To conduct our research study, we employed ethnographic qualitative methods (Fetterman 2010; Mariampolski 2006) of semi-structured depth interviews and observations to investigate the daily lives, practices, and experiences of 12 participants (over the age of 18) living in the Ithaca EcoVillage (see Table 1). Of the 12 participants, four identified as male and eight identified as female. These participants have an average age of 65.52 years old (range of 39 to 78 years) and have lived in the EcoVillage for an average of 9.38 years (range of 3 to 28 years). Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of our participants.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants**

Participants ( <i>Pseudonym</i> )	Age	Gender	Professional Background	Years at the EcoVillage
Kayla	74	F	Retired (teacher)	5
John	78	M	Retired (business professional)	3.5
Rachel	69	F	Higher education	28
Danielle	59	F	Self-employed	15
Andrea	52	F	Writer	8
Amanda	70	F	Retired (teacher)	3
Sam	74	M	Retired (higher education)	5.5
Emma	68	F	Retired (business professional)	5.5
Jack	75	M	Retired (government)	4
Michael	62	M	Retail	4
Shirley	39	F	Self-employed	3
Alison	65	F	Business professional	28

After the study earned IRB approval, the first author interviewed the 12 participants. The interviews took place in their sustainable homes of the EcoVillage. Interviewing the participants in their homes was important because the

participants could talk directly about their lived experiences in the EcoVillage, point out sustainable (and non-sustainable) behaviors and practices at the EcoVillage, and for the first author to observe their actions, their homes, and the EcoVillage. The interview questions consisted of asking participants about their lives as sustainable consumers, their experiences of living in the EcoVillage, their interactions with others in the workplace and marketplace, how their practices became routines, and how the unsustainable marketplace also influenced their actions. Semi-structured interviews lasted between 28 and 72 minutes, with an average length of 54.25 minutes. Preliminary sampling reached saturation at 12 depth interviews (Merriam 2009; Patton 2002). All interviews were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed into 190 single-spaced typed pages.

After the interviews, all four authors (the first author and three graduate assistants) analyzed the interviews and observation notes using an emergent qualitative approach (Campbell and Lassiter 2015; Thompson 1997), which “allows for analytical categories and themes to emerge, evolve, and expand” (Saatcioglu and Corus 2014, p. 125). We first categorized data into codes. Next, we analyzed and combined the codes to develop emergent thematic categories. Finally, we synthesized the themes to understand our participants’ lived experiences as sustainable consumers (Bazeley 2013) and navigate an unsustainable marketplace and society.

## **Findings**

### ***Learning/Growth (Internal)***

Falling in line with structuration theory, the residents of the Ithaca EcoVillage first created an environment that fosters learning and growth towards a more sustainable future. As Danielle, a current resident, stated, “*Yes, and it's not just 15 years, I've been a Quaker for forever, it's just been my life, and I don't think people move here and it's just time here, but learn things from my friends and neighbors, and I take them with me where I go. Living in the EcoVillage provides an opportunity to learn from others and carry these values into other aspects of life.*” Kayla, another resident, said, “*I think I was clueless for years as most Americans were, but I think that over time we become aware that the ice caps are melting and there's weird weather. I feel a responsibility both to my daughter and my granddaughter, their children, not to leave the world beggared, and I also feel a responsibility to people in other parts of the world.*” Internally, residents of the EcoVillage, first need to learn to be sustainable and grow in their sustainable practices. This sense of responsibility to the planet and future generations drives the residents to constantly strive for more sustainable practices and to educate others. The Ithaca EcoVillage serves as an inspiring model for learning and growth regarding sustainable living and community building.

### ***Building Community (External)***

The Ithaca EcoVillage is a community building towards a more sustainable future. One of the central themes that emerges from the residents is a sense of belonging and human connection, as Rachel explained, “*I can say that when I go out and I'm connecting with people here, that's what I'm talking about. When you meet those human connections, when you feel you belong, when you feel you're part of, it brings a lot of meaning. It belongs to you. When you're living all alone somewhere far from town and don't know your neighbors, you probably have friends but— It feels like family and that's what it does for me up here.*” This sense of community and belonging fosters an environment that is supportive and flexible towards new ideas, as Amanda highlighted, “*They seemed to be more in that area than our neighbors, but the big push for me was living in a community that was going to be supportive and open and flexible to ideas.*” The EcoVillage is also a place where sustainable practices are put into action. For example, Andrea described how the community came together when she and her household were without a car, “*We spent six months without a car. In my household, something happened, and we were horrified. Like how are we going to make this work, right? The job and this and that. I sent an email to like a handful of friends in the neighborhood. Like eight people in my neighborhood offered to lend us a car anytime.*” These quotes demonstrate how the Ithaca EcoVillage is more than a sustainable community, but a place where individuals come together to build a more sustainable and interconnected way of living.

### ***Accountability (Internal/External)***

We found that one of the main influences of continuing on with their sustainability efforts in this EcoVillage was a mix of the internal and external accountability that occurs daily. When a community embraces accountability from multiple sources and the overall structure supports your growth and accountability too, it greatly improves the strength of the environment and the effects on you as a person within the community. If a business can establish this level of accountability, they can easily influence their customers through a shared vision and build their customers up to their ideal consumer. People could externally perceive the structure of the Ithaca EcoVillage potentially joining the community. This is best seen through one of the community members, Andrea, who was interviewed and said, “*We were interested in how we could have a more sustainable home, which was one of the draws of moving here, was that the houses were eco-friendly.*” Creating a strong image and outside perspective by building up the structure and foundation

of the community and instilling an accountability-based environment piqued the interest of outside people and grew the strength of the community.

### ***Sharing/Representation/Responsibility (External)***

Overcoming the fear of responsibility and finding comfortability with who you are as a community member and as a representative of the community you are in is important. While outsiders of your group may have different beliefs and lifestyles, it is valuable to inform without forcing your beliefs onto others. As Danielle said during an interview, *“I’ve been a Quaker for forever, it’s just been my life and I don’t think people move here and it’s just time here, but learn things from my friends and neighbors and I take them with me where I go.”* Danielle discussed her own growth through the community and how through others she has grown and attempts to pass on what she has learned onto others outside of the community. This displays the importance of spreading knowledge and helping others to grow with your business or company and to walk the talk: to show consumers the right path so they can match and follow what you do to grow internally and develop the behaviors you express and follow. One interviewee, Shirley, stated, *“When you shift the belief, the behavior shifts...If the belief is my identity is associated with a house and a white picket fence and a Prius and a kayak in the yard that sits there all the time and nobody ever uses...If my identity is tied up in all of that stuff, then that will drive certain behavior. My identity is more about community and experience than consumption. Relationships, experience that, then consumption, then this stuff doesn’t have nearly as much meaning.”* Shirley explained that people are tied up with what they have and how much they own. However, she also expressed that the key to changing behavior is to provide an experience that will lead to positive changes and instill that growth in people. Getting customers active and into a comfortable environment where they feel safe to try new things and escape their norms without fear of ridicule can adapt behavior and growth within themselves and with your company.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

With these findings, business can use this knowledge to help foster a community that will be environmentally and socially sustainable—not just for the short term, but for maintaining sustainability for the long term. Businesses looking to both grow and maintain an environmental sustainability culture should look to incorporate the ecological environment around them into their business. This can be achieved through physical social events that utilize and promote the surrounding ecological environment. Given that multiple EcoVillage members stated community allowed them to achieve and maintain a high level of sustainability, we feel as though businesses can follow.

A key issue EcoVillage members found was the lack of commitment or effort to foster a close-knit community. With this in mind, there are several actions businesses can take to ensure a committed community. The first is being transparent in its efforts to incorporate the surrounding environment into one’s business. EcoVillage members were unsure on how welcomed they were by other members. By providing transparency, consumers will ensure commitment. The second is educating current, and potential consumers. Several EcoVillage residents stated that education of different sustainable practices helped unite the community, and overall strengthen the dynamic between residents. We recommend businesses implement physical events, and incorporate its surrounding ecological environment to provide structure for building a committed community. This can be reinforced by instilling transparent, and demonstrating educational efforts to both members, and non-members.

We used Ithaca’s EcoVillage to answer the question: *How can communities build and maintain a structure of sustainable consumption practices?* By investigating that question, we concluded that businesses looking to create a community of sustainable consumers must incorporate learning and growth (internally), community building (externally), accountability (internally and externally), sharing/representation/responsibility (externally). We grounded our study in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986) and the practice theory of structuration (Giddens 1984). We found that for Ithaca’s EcoVillage (and for businesses) to create a sustainable community that will foster sustainable behaviors for the long term, they must be rooted in the social identity as well as the social environment of its customers. While this is a preliminary study using one ecovillage in upstate New York, in future research, we hope to expand on this to include community building in other businesses and venues, such as Harley-Davidson’s online community, community gardens and co-ops, community farmer’s markets, and other communities that foster sustainable practices.

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# Summary Brief

## #AITA?: Examining Consumer Perceptions of Tipping Norms in the Digital Age

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### Abstract

Tipping has been a social norm in the US for quite some time. However, recently, there has been a noticeable shift in the dynamics of tipping behavior. In our increasingly cashless society, consumers are tipping electronically through digital wallets or credit cards. Additionally, an increasing number of service businesses, outside of the more traditional ones like dine-in restaurants, are suggesting/requesting that customers tip. Moreover, companies are displaying suggested tip amounts (usually 15-25%), sometimes before services are rendered. This is a departure from past perception of a tip being a reward for “good service” (Cerullo 2023). Instead, it may be perceived by some consumers as a requirement at time of payment. Gratuity screens have become commonplace in many retail contexts, and have even been employed at self-service kiosks and in online contexts (Cerullo 2023). In a retail service interaction between a customer and a company employee at a register or check out device, the customer may leave a tip based on a sense of obligation or the customer may engage in what is known as guilt tipping. Guilt tipping is characterized by a customer’s decision to leave a tip based on feeling pressured or embarrassed by the very public interaction occurring while the tip is being requested (Lahr 2022). Guilt tipping is also tied to a rise in “tipflation” (Smith). This is a trend that has been accelerated by the pandemic and public sentiment towards showing appreciation to frontline workers (Smith 2023).

The purpose of this research is to explore consumer perceptions of evolving tipping norms and guilt tipping. The authors aim to address the following: In face-to-face interactions with service workers at the check-out device, do customers feel compelled to tip? Have consumers attitudes about tipping at the register changed since the pandemic? Which factors contribute to consumers’ engaging in guilt tipping? This study focuses specifically on interactions between a customer and a service worker at time of check out. This work is still exploratory in nature. The authors plan to conduct depth interviews to gain greater insight about consumer attitudes about these topics.

Key words: guilt tipping, tip culture

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## **Session 8.3: CB by the Numbers**

**Chair:** Tim Ozcan

## Summary Brief

# A Penny for Your Thoughts: Are Characters Who Think Out Loud More Engaging and Persuasive to Consumers?

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*The literature studying narratives as a form of communication agrees that stories are highly persuasive devices, more effective than other forms, like traditional advertising or fact-based communications. This research has two goals: 1) to explore how character development influence consumer engagement, and 2) to determine the extent to which cultural congruence between consumers and brands influences the effect of character development on engagement. We use an experimental design with one set of participants exposed to an ad with the protagonist's thoughts and feelings heard off-camera while another set exposed to an adapted version removing this internal dialogue. Data is currently being collected through a crowdsourcing platform.*

### Motivation

Marketers have struggled to establish strong and enduring consumer-brand relationships (Dessert & Pitardi, 2019). Storytelling arises as one of the most powerful, quick and effective ways to breathe new life into brands and to drive market changes (Fog, Budtz and Yakaboylu, 2005). Storytelling or narrative advertising communicates about a brand or a product in a story-like format (Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008). Previous research explored different aspects of storytelling. Green and Brock (2000) studied the concept of narrative transportation, or the extent to which individuals become “lost” in a story. When “transported”, people go through a reduced negative cognitive responding, realism of experience, and strong affective responses. Later, Escalas (2004) discovered that transportation leads to more favorable advertisement attitudes and brand evaluations, and proposed a method to measure narrativity, or the degree to which a communication is in story-form (Escalas, Moore, and Edell, 2004). Based on these seminal works and subsequent research, van Laer, de Ruyter, Visconti, & Wetzels (2014) developed the Extended Transportation-Imagery model to study how storytellers and receivers' features and antecedents combine to determine transportation and, in turn, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses.

In terms of narrative quality, or the answer to “What makes a good story?”, we can identify two major dimensions behind a good story: content and discourse (van Laer, Escalas, Ludwig, & van den Hende, 2019). Content refers to *what* is being conveyed while discourse cares about *how* it is conveyed. Chronology, causality, and characters are content elements, while genre, climax, and framing are aspects of discourse (van Laer et al., 2019). Transportation is facilitated by identification or empathy towards the main character (Cohen, 2001). Character development aims at reflecting verisimilitude into the story through authentic actions and reactions to the story's events. Bruner's (1990) dimensions of landscapes of action and consciousness are useful to illuminate the way character development influences transportation. The former consists of the sequence of events that are visible within a story and the latter is the extent to which the audience is privy to the protagonist's inner thoughts and feelings (van Laer et al., 2019). A story with both landscapes of action and consciousness is better than a story that contains only a landscape of action (Bruner, 1990). Being able to understand characters' motivations makes for good character development. Furthermore, transportation is influenced by consumers' values and culture (Hamby et al., 2019). Thus, stories sharing common values can raise resonance more easily and more widespread diffusion.

### Contribution

Although great progress has been achieved, more work is needed to understand how individual elements of a story's content and discourse foster engagement and elicit consumer responses. In addition, little is known about the role of story-receivers' culture in the effectiveness of stories and their elements. To this end, this research aims at: 1) exploring how character development can influence consumer engagement, and 2) determining the extent to which this influence gets shaped by cultural congruence between consumers and brands. We adhere to Bruner's perspective regarding the presence of landscapes of consciousness in stories and hypothesize that a story in which the protagonist's

thoughts and feelings are known is more impactful than one without it. In addition, we embrace the view that stories depicting cultural values like those of the audience will heighten the impact of character development. Thus, we hypothesize that congruence between consumers' cultural identity and that of a brand, as depicted in an ad, will exhibit higher influence of character development on their engagement.

### **Methodology**

We use an experimental design with two stimuli. One set of participants is exposed to an ad depicting the story of a flight attendant in its original form with the protagonist's thoughts and feelings heard off-camera. Another set is exposed to an adapted version removing this internal dialogue. The two stimuli are part of an online survey randomized to achieve equal representation in the sample and includes questions related to participants' demographics, global identity (Cleveland & Laroche, 2021), tendency to empathize with a story's characters (Miall and Kuiken, 1995), perceived narrativity (Escalas et al., 2004), narrative transportation (Escalas, Chapman & Moore, 2004), and several attitudinal responses. Data is currently being collected through a crowdsourcing platform and the analysis will be conducted in the months leading to the SMA conference in Fort Worth, TX. We are confident this research can contribute to the increasing body of knowledge on the role of storytelling in marketing strategy formulation. We look forward to sharing our discoveries with you.

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## Summary Brief

# Material Matters! Power Distance Belief and the Acceptance of Products Made from Recycled Materials

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*We propose that low PDB consumers have a higher purchase intention when a recycled product is made from incongruent material than from congruent material, whereas high PDB consumers' purchase intention would not be affected by the congruency of the material. This effect is mediated by consumers' need for cognition.*

### Introduction

The market for sustainable products has increased over the last decade, and hence, more and more companies are launching their product lines that are manufactured from recycled materials. Rothy's, a retailer that specializes in footwear, highlights on its website counting the number of single-use plastic bottles that they had successfully transformed into their shoes (<https://rothys.com/pages/sustainability/>). Similarly, to show support for environmental sustainability, Nike claimed that 71% of the company's footwear incorporates materials derived from waste products. Products that are made from recycled material contribute to waste reduction and resource conservation; therefore, it is an important component in the circular economy as it echoes the principle of "reuse" and "recycle" (Kim et al., 2021).

### Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Though there is strong advocacy for the use of recycled materials, consumers have mixed feelings about the idea. Some consumers perceive products made from recycled materials as environmentally friendly and hold positive attitude towards them (Adigüzel and Donanto 2021; Calvor-Porrall and Levy Mangin 2020), while others may be concerned that those products have inferior quality or are aesthetically less appealing (Kim et al., 2021). Further, existing research suggested that consumers' cultural background could be a factor that explains people's different acceptance of the products made from recycled materials. For example, Kishino et al (1999) found that Japanese customers, compared with German customers, are less likely to accept toilet paper made from recycled material (vs. virgin material).

Hence, the current study focuses on how different consumers' cultural background may affect their acceptance of recycled products. Specifically, we investigated how a consumer's power distance belief (PDB) impacts consumers' purchase of recycled products. A product can be made from a recycled material which is congruent or incongruent with the product in consumers' mind. For example, a notebook can be made from recycled paper (congruent) or from recycled food waste such as coconut shells (incongruent). We proposed that low PDB consumers have a higher purchase intention when a recycled product is made from incongruent (vs. congruent) material, whereas high PDB consumers' purchase intention would not be affected by the congruency of the material. We believe that this is due to low (vs. high) PDB consumers' higher need for cognition (Cacioppo et al., 1984).

Power distance belief (PDB) was defined as the extent to which individuals accept and endorse power inequality and social hierarchy (Hofstede 2001). While high PDB individuals prefer fixed and rigid societal structures, low PDB individuals believe that people should be able to move up or down within the social hierarchy more easily. We believe that this kind of social mobility in low (vs. high) PDB culture motivates people to engage in cognitive activity. Indeed, engaging in effortful thinking and coming up with diverse ideas can be viewed as the promotion of equality (Yoo et al., 2011). Hence, low (vs. high) PDB individuals have shown to be more creative (Yuan and Zhou 2015) and have higher cognitive flexibility (Lee and Cho, 2022). Further, we proposed that the high need for cognition of low PDB individuals motivates them to be more attractive to a product made from incongruent (vs. congruent) recycled materials, but not for high PDB individuals. Products made from recycled materials could be a new concept to the consumers, and the adoption of an innovation is correlated with consumers' need for cognition (Wood and Swait 2002). A product made from the material which is incongruent (vs. congruent) to consumers' general belief needs consumers to spend extra effort to

process more and think deeper (Gao et al., 2022). Hence, when a product was made from incongruent (vs. congruent) recycled materials, it fulfills the need for cognition of low (but not high) PDB individuals. Therefore, we hypothesized:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Low PDB consumers have a higher purchase intention when a recycled product is made from incongruent material than from congruent material, whereas high PDB consumers' purchase intention would not be affected by the congruency of the material.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** The effect of PDB on the preference for material congruency is mediated by consumers' need for cognition.

## Research Design and Results

Study 1 (N=214) employed a material congruency (congruent vs. incongruent) between-subjects design. Participants were introduced to a company producing notebooks that are made from recycled materials and were shown a set of notebooks with their features. Those assigned to the material congruent [incongruent] condition read that the notebooks were made from high-quality recycled paper [food waste]. Participants' purchase intention towards the products and their PDB were measured. As predicted, the interaction effect of PDB and material congruency on purchase intention was significant ( $\beta=-.45$ , S.E.=.19,  $t=-2.42$ ,  $p=.02$ , 95% CI=[-.8244, -.0837]). **H<sub>1</sub>** was supported.

Study 2 (N=228) adopted a 2 (PDB: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (material congruency: congruent vs. incongruent) between-subjects design. Supporting **H<sub>1</sub>**, a 2 (PDB)  $\times$  2 (material congruency) ANOVA on purchase intention revealed a significant interaction ( $F(1, 224)=6.66$ ,  $p=.010$ ). Purchase intention was higher when the material was incongruent than when it was congruent among low PDB participants, ( $M_{\text{incongruent}}=4.52$  vs.  $M_{\text{congruent}}=3.09$ ;  $t(1, 114)=5.61$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but not among high PDB participants ( $M_{\text{incongruent}}=3.73$  vs.  $M_{\text{congruent}}=3.27$ ;  $t(1, 110)=1.65$ ,  $p=.10$ ). Further, providing support for **H<sub>2</sub>**, results revealed a significant moderated mediation ( $a=-.50$ ,  $p=.01$ ;  $b=.57$ ,  $p=.006$ ;  $a*b=-.29$ , SE=.16, 95% CI=[-.6648, -.0417]). The indirect effect was significant when the material was incongruent ( $\beta=-.31$ , SE=.14, 95% CI=[-.6189, -.0600]), but not when the material was congruent ( $\beta=-.02$ , SE=.08, 95% CI=[-.1658, .1540]).

## Conclusion

Our studies show consistent results that low (but not high) PDB consumers have a higher purchase intention when a recycled product is made from incongruent (vs. congruent) material. This relationship is mediated by consumers' need for cognition. This research contributes to both the literature on circular economy and cross-cultural consumer psychology.

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## Summary Brief

# Historical Nostalgia, Personal Nostalgia, and the Kidult: Comparing Older and Younger Consumers

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*Nostalgia, a longing for the past, has been used successfully by marketers engaging in nostalgia marketing or retro-marketing, including retro-branding, of goods and/or services. The nostalgia market has stereotypically been of greater interest to older consumers so it is surprising that a significant number of Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z consumers have taken an interest in nostalgic products. Moreover, an emerging market segment is “kidults,” younger adults that prefer media or items that society deems are for a younger person. These trends have impacted the two levels of nostalgia: historical and personal. This study will attempt to empirically determine if younger consumers are engaged in nostalgia to a greater degree than older consumers. Scales are developed for historical nostalgia, personal nostalgia, and the kidult. A hard copy questionnaire will be distributed among older and younger consumers. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be used to analyze the data.*

### Introduction

Nostalgia, the sentimental longing for the past, has been popular in recent years (Muehling, Sprott, & Sultan, 2014). Marketers have used this tactic to their advantage since an ad based on nostalgia may result in positive brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Hofer's (1688) dissertation introduced nostalgia as a theoretical construct and for centuries it was considered a psychological problem related to homesickness causing melancholy, depression, and loneliness. Davis (1979) is credited with the seminal work redefining nostalgia as a consumer psychological construct.

Nostalgia has been used in advertising that directly asks consumers to remember their past, as well as scenes that reminisce about brands and commercial jingles from the past. These messages cover a broad range of consumer products and services including soft drinks, alcohol, cereals, insurance, and banking. Most academicians recognize two types of nostalgia: historical and personal.

### Historical and Personal Nostalgia

At about the same time as the introduction of the unidimensional Holbrook (1993) Nostalgia Index, Stern (1992) suggested that there are two types of nostalgia: historical and personal. Historical nostalgia takes place before one's birth, i.e., a time that cannot be personally experienced. In contrast, personal nostalgia consists of positive reflections from one's life. Whether historical or personal, the resulting nostalgic emotion is thought to be great enough to positively affect brand attitudes and purchase intentions when implemented in a promotional campaign (Muehling, et al., 2014). Nostalgia has become a way for brands to return to earlier types of packaging and advertising.

### Hypotheses

H1: Younger consumers have greater historical nostalgia than older consumers.

H2: Younger consumers have greater levels of personal nostalgia than older consumers.

H3: Younger consumers identify as kidults more than older consumers.

H4: Younger males identify as kidults as much as younger females.

H5: Older males experience greater levels of personal nostalgia than older females.

H6: There are no significant differences in personal nostalgia between younger males and younger females.

### Measures

Scales were designed for use in this study. Scales for historical and personal nostalgia were designed based on the literature and also scale development studies done by Marchegiani and Phau (2007), who conducted scale generation, purification, validation (criterion or predictive, convergent, and discriminant validity), and confirmation. They identified five items for historical nostalgia and six items for personal nostalgia via confirmatory factor analysis. For purposes of this study, a seven-item seven-point scale was developed for both historical nostalgia and personal nostalgia based on their components. Additionally, a six-item seven-point scale was generated for the kidult. All

scales were tested in this study for reliability and a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine the final items for each of the three scales.

### **Reliability and Factor Analysis**

Reliability coefficients were computed for each of the scales. Coefficient alphas were reported for the older and younger groups as well as the total sample. All alpha values are at or above 0.70 except the coefficient for personal nostalgia and younger consumers (0.59). The factor analysis provided some good results. First, the seven factors representing historical nostalgia yielded one component. Second, factor analysis for the personal nostalgia scale, yielded one component with the exception of PN1, which was eliminated from further analysis. The kidult scale with six factors yielded one component. Thus, three constructs were identified. Reliability coefficients were again calculated for the revised personal nostalgia scale. The coefficient alpha for the six-item personal nostalgia scale was 0.883 for the total sample, 0.875 for the older consumers, and 0.890 for the younger consumers. Both alpha values are above the 0.70 value.

### **Analysis and Results**

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there were significant mean differences between older and younger consumers as stated in the hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) that younger consumers have greater historical nostalgia than older consumers, was supported. In contrast, although in the right direction, H2, younger consumers have greater personal nostalgia than older consumers, was not supported. The hypothesis that younger consumers identify as kidults more than older consumers, was supported (H3). Regarding gender in the last three hypotheses, H4 was supported: Younger males identify as kidults as much as younger females. The fifth hypothesis (H5), older males experience greater levels of personal nostalgia than older females, was not supported. Finally, the last hypothesis (H6) was supported: There are no significant differences in personal nostalgia between younger males and younger females.

### **Discussion**

The recent surge in nostalgia among younger consumers was supported by the hypothesis that younger consumers have greater historical nostalgia than older consumers as well as younger consumer identify as kidults more than older consumers. However, the hypothesis that younger consumers have great personal nostalgia than older consumers was not supported, albeit the hypothesis was in the hypothesized direction. This result may be due to the fact that older consumers have more personal experiences to be nostalgic about, despite the increase in interest in nostalgia among younger consumers. Finally, the hypotheses regarding gender were supported except for the hypothesis stating that older males experience greater levels of personal nostalgia than older females.

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# Summary Brief

## Customer Engagement with AI Service Technology

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*Once a figment of science fiction imagination, artificial intelligence (AI) is now a reality in the business world. Though AI can potentially enhance business operations, the service literature offers more conceptual than empirical research on AI and customer service outcomes. Grounded on UTAUT and social response theory, we test a proposed conceptual model of customer engagement (CE) with AI customer service agents. Data were collected from chatbot and avatar users exposed to simulated AI customer service scenarios and stimuli. Results show that customer characteristics (customer tech-savviness and susceptibility to social influence) and technology characteristics (AI technology empathy and anthropomorphism) build connectedness with AI technology, thereby generating CE. Customer involvement with AI technology and AI platform type are two key moderators. Theoretical insights arise from extending UTAUT to customer service settings with AI empathy and anthropomorphism as technology characteristics enabling CE with AI and the firm. In keeping with social response theory, the customer's connectedness with the AI is a precursor to CE with the firm. Managerial insights center on the firm's ability to design empathetic AI service agents to connect with AI technology, which is a bridge to feedback to the firm on AI service enhancements.*

## **Session 8.4: Panel: Special Session Avengers Assemble: An Analysis of Marketing through Analogy**

**Chair:** R. Wixel Barnwell

# Special Session

## **Avengers Assemble: An Analysis of Marketing through Analogy**

R Wixel Barnwell, Longwood University, USA  
Kenneth Graham, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, USA  
Alisha Horky, University of North Alabama USA  
Michael Levin, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, USA  
Shannon McCarthy, University of Central Missouri, USA  
Mark Pelletier, University of North Carolina-Wilmington, USA  
Kevin Shanahan, Mississippi State University, USA

*The Analysis by Analogy Panel Series goes back to 2014. Creativity inspired by the intersection of disparate disciplines (Johansson, 2004) and the relevance of analogy to deepen understanding are well documented (Hofstadter & Sander, 2013). Popular media is both a product of broader society and has an influence on it. Perhaps there are no popular media where this phenomenon is more visible than comic-book superheroes. This year, the panelists employ the lens of the heroes and heroines of Marvel to offer fresh perspectives on marketing.*

### **Spider-Man / Peter Parker**

Spider-Man is reminded after failing to use his powers to protect his beloved Uncle Ben, that with great power comes great responsibility. In this presentation, we explore the proliferation of artificial intelligence in all areas of marketing, from retailing to digital marketing, despite experts' warnings that AI poses an existential threat to humanity.

### **Scarlett Witch / Wanda Maximoff**

The Scarlet Witch is regarded as one of the most powerful Avengers. She has been portrayed both as a supervillain and a superhero. Her powers include the manipulation of probability and energy, the creation of illusions, and the bending of reality, among others. In this presentation, we explore the use of the Scarlet Witch as an analogy for social media.

### **Doctor Strange / Jonathan Strange**

Doctor Strange commands forces of magic and the Multiverse. Advertising is itself magic, transporting viewers to new worlds and new possibilities. The powers and abilities harnessed and learned by Doctor Strange serve advertising strategy well. Intelligence, flying, levitation, astral projection, and time manipulation are some of Strange's powers and abilities. They are also tools used in advertising. We look at the advertising application of the powers and abilities of Doctor Strange and how they are implemented in the magic of advertising.

### **Captain America / Steve Rogers / Isaiah Bradley / Sam Wilson**

Captain America is symbolic of society trying to come to terms with its nostalgic past and forestaglic future. Many will likely say that Steve Rogers is the only Captain America, however Marvel, both on broadcast and comics struggles to redefine the character. In this way, the evolution of Captain America parallels the struggle of brands like Miller Lite, Bud Light, Gillette, Volkswagen, Ford, and Subaru to come to terms with their past and future, their core customers and new potential markets.

### **Hawkeye / Clint Barton**

As an archer and a superhero, Hawkeye is a contradiction. He is both an Avenger and an anachronism. As arguably the least powerful of the powerful, he could be seen as symbolic of the imposter syndrome felt by numerous consumer segments. Yet, as antiquated as his tools are, he can target so effectively that his efforts reach precisely where they will do the most good.

### **Captain Marvel / Carol Danvers**

Carol Danvers, aka Captain Marvel, is a symbol for female strength and empowerment (*Carol Danvers, Captain Marvel*, n.d.). Just as Danvers is packs a wallop, women are powerful consumers controlling approximately \$11 trillion (Brennan, 2022). The demand for *Barbie* and the Taylor Swift Eras Tour tickets, primarily driven by women, have proven to be economic powerhouses (Peck, 2023; Pandey, 2023). Captain Marvel is an analog for the buying power of women, and the good and bad that comes with that.

### **Iron Man / Tony Stark**

In the initial Iron Man movie, Tony Stark announces that Stark Industries will no longer produce weapons because of the harm caused by his firm's market offering. This decision reflects the concept of the triple bottom line where firms consider profit equal to people and planet. A deficiency exists with lack of measurement for a firm's impact on people and planet (Schulz & Flanigan, 2016; Hunt, 2017). An alternate approach is presented using a continuum with values standardized.

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# **Session 10.1: Personal Selling & Sales Management**

**Chair:** Bruce Huhmann

## Summary Brief

# Sales Management and Live Streamers: The Role of Commission Rates

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*Livestreaming is an increasingly important aspect of e-commerce sales. Live streamers sell products via real-time sales presentations online. Using data ( $N = 2,535$ ) from Chinese social media platform Douyin, we find that commission rates predict live streamers' sales performance in terms of units sold and monetary sales value. Brand popularity positively influences sales and moderates the commission-sales performance relationship such that commission rates impact the livestream sales of low-popularity offerings more than high-popularity offerings. Selling through a third-party sales platform rather than the livestream itself negatively affects sales and moderates the commission-sales relationship such that higher commission rates are needed to motivate performance with third-party sales platforms. Finally, brand prominence positively influences monetary sales.*

### Introduction

E-commerce, such as livestreaming, is a growing component of sales. Live streamers describe and demonstrate goods or services via online video sessions to customers who can directly interact with a live streamer by posting comments or asking questions. Live streamers can display products from various angles and offer promotions. If sufficiently persuaded, customers can purchase during the livestream. It occurs on social media platforms in China (e.g., Douyin, Taobao, Kuaishou, and Weibo) and the US (e.g., YouTube, Facebook Live, Amazon Live, Instagram Live, and TikTok). It offers a real-time platform to showcase products to hundreds or thousands of potential customers at once, a primary benefit that traditional sales approaches cannot match.

This study investigates commission rates' effect on live streamers' performance and identifies conditions under which commission rates improve or reduce sales performance. Sales managers can enhance profitability by optimizing live streamers' sales commissions.

### Background

This research uses Expectancy Theory (Oliver 1974; Vroom 1964) to predict that greater efforts in livestream performances and supporting activities (e.g., blogs, vlogs, communication responsiveness, customer service during the purchase process, and sales interactions) should be motivated by increasing commission rates. Greater effort should improve sales performance (i.e., increased total monetary and unit sales). Because Expectancy Theory posits that motivation is a function of the subjective probability that one's effort will attain the desired reward, smaller incentives should be needed when potential rewards seem easier to attain. Thus, as brand popularity increases, commission rates required to motivate similar live streamer efforts should decrease.

Livestreams on *Douyin* (抖音), China's leading livestreaming platform, allow purchasing within a pop-up box that hovers over the livestreaming session or redirect consumers to Alibaba's Taobao Marketplace. Redirection interrupts the purchase decision, which alerts consumers to the need for cognitive deliberation. Such deliberation reduces purchase likelihood (Dholakia, 2000). According to Expectancy Theory, increased goal difficulty when a product is sold through a third-party sales platform should weaken the link between effort and performance, requiring higher commission rates to motivate sales effort.

Brand prominence depends on the appearance branding elements (e.g., brand names or logos) in a livestream to emphasize brand reputation or brand image or to treat the brand as a quality or status cue. In low brand prominence livestreaming, live streamers tend to focus on functional attributes and benefits. Brand prominence positively influences willingness to purchase. Thus, higher brand prominence should ease the conversion of viewers into purchasers. This decreased goal difficulty should strengthen the link between effort and performance and lead live streamers to anticipate less performance effort to achieve sufficient remuneration from commissions. Thus, performance should be less sensitive to the commission rate with higher than lower brand prominence.

### Key Findings



The current study examines actual data on live stream commissions and sales outcomes to demonstrate that higher commission rates motivate livestream sellers' performance as well as examining boundary conditions related to brand influences. This study provides guidance to sales managers regarding sales commission's influence on livestream sellers' sales performance. Findings indicate that the commission rate that sales managers offer live streamers directly affects performance in terms of both unit and monetary sales. Sales managers requiring live streamers to sell through third-party sales platforms that interrupts the purchase process should find that their performance is more sensitive to the commission rate offered than when products are ordered directly through the livestream itself. Also, a greater effect of commission rates offered should be seen as brand popularity decreases. However, the commission rate offered to live streamers consistently affected sales regardless of brand prominence as prominence did not moderate commission's relationship to sales.

This study applies Expectancy Theory to livestream compensation and finds support for factors that influence perceptions of goal difficulty, such as popularity or a brand's product offering and use of third-party sales platforms. Live streamers engage in sales activities to achieve the positive outcome of compensation. In support of Expectancy Theory-based prediction that commission rates influence instrumentality beliefs about sales performance's effect on compensation, this study demonstrates that brands can use commission rates to motivate livestream sales performance. The current study also finds influences that appear to alter livestream sellers' expectancy belief about sales effort's link to performance, because higher commission rates are needed to motivate livestream sales performance with a brand's low- than high-popularity offerings and those purchased through a third-party sales platform.

The current research also contributes to the sales literature by expanding the investigation of sales commission effects to livestreaming. Social media tools are becoming more important in both B2C and B2B sales. Thus, this study helps address Moncrief's (2017) call for research on social media and sales.

Sales managers should consider livestreaming as an additional form of selling in which they can motivate live streamers to effectively convert some potential prospects into purchasers. This study suggests that sales commissions are an effective compensation strategy in livestream selling. It also found a strong predictive relationship between sales commissions and both sales outcomes with the strongest correlation between commissions and monetary sales. The highest commission quintile saw average unit sales more than 21 times greater than the lowest quintile and average monetary sales more than 30 times greater than the lowest quintile.

In conclusion, livestreaming is an emerging and rapidly developing selling tool. This study addresses a gap in existing research by empirically investigating the managerially important role of commission rates offered to a livestream salesforce and unit and sales performance. Its examination of livestream salesforce commissions should help sales managers who adopt livestreaming as an additional sales technique to strategically use their limited compensation funds. Commission rates offered to live streamers have a strong positive effect on sales occurring during their livestream presentations.

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## Full Paper

# The Multidextrous Salesperson - A Qualitative Analysis

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*This study extends the understanding of ambidextrous selling to a new level and advances personal selling as a multidextrous activity. Extant literature on personal selling manifests salespeople as ambidextrous and has identified three dimensions of the same. However, in practice salespeople are accounted for multiple selling tasks overarching different dimensions of selling ambidexterity. A qualitative investigation drawn on the principles of the theories-in-use approach is undertaken. The authors conducted 33 semi-structured in-depth interviews with field salespeople to present personal selling as a multidextrous activity by exhibiting the engagement of the salespeople in multiple selling tasks that fall under different dimensions of selling ambidexterity. The emerged dimensions are however clubbed into two broad categories: sales and service, whereby sales include selling new/existing products and acquiring/retaining existing customers and service remains to be a key attribute of personal selling. The paper concludes with study limitations and directions for future research.*

## Introduction

Excessive pressure from both organizations and customers has added more responsibilities to the salespeople. The primarily 'selling' oriented salespeople are now responsible for providing services too. Such an extension includes the acquisition of new customers while retaining the existing ones. Nonetheless, the responsibility of selling both new and existing products is also vested in the salesforce only. The extant literature on sales and personal selling manifests this alignment of dual selling goals by the salespeople as ambidextrous selling and identifies service-sales ambidexterity, ambidexterity in customer relationship management, and product selling ambidexterity as the same (Aman et al., 2021; Giovannetti et al., 2020).

In its dictionary meaning, ambidexterity is the ability of an individual to use both hands with equal dexterity. The sales literature uses the same as a metaphor denoting the ability of a salesperson to pursue two different goals. But in practice, personal selling as a broad term includes a plethora of activities ranging from prospecting and luring new customers through new/existing products, maintaining and developing relationships with acquired customers through cross/up-selling and service behaviors. *Selling* - the primary activity for a salesperson includes both *selling of new and existing products* which a salesperson strategically deploys to *retain and acquire customers*. With that, the introduction of *service* behavior in the sales literature is not also a new phenomenon. Scholars for a long have identified the implications of service behaviors for salespeople (Ahearne et al., 2007; Ogilvie et al., 2017; Terho et al., 2012).

However, to date, the three dimensions have been studied in isolation which has led to the assessment of only two selling activities at a time. As Jasmand et al. (2012), Patterson et al. (2014), and Yu et al. (2015), etc. have focused only on service-sales ambidexterity. van der Borgh et al. (2017) and van der Borgh and Schepers (2014) only studied the ambidextrous selling behavior of salespersons in selling new and existing products. While the studies by DeCarlo and Lam (2016), Lam et al. (2019), Vieira et al. (2019), and others have concentrated on ambidexterity in customer relationship management.

But "customer relationship management consists of more than just two agendas" (Ritter & Geersbro, 2018, p. 75) and salespeople are bound to focus their attention and resources on multiple activities that fall under different but interconnected silos of ambidexterity. More recently, the conceptual framework by Aman et al. (2021) also delineates the intertwined nature of the three ambidextrous selling orientations. Nonetheless, the report by CSO Insights (2016) titled "Mine the Gold You Already Have!" also portrays the intertwined relationship between various sales tasks depicting that the blend of various dimensions of ambidextrous selling is not just a conceptual phenomenon but has its roots on the ground. The report assessed more than 1500 firms on various aspects including cross/up-selling, farming new business from existing customers, and effectively introducing new products.

Building on these arguments, this study is aimed to present the novices of multidexterity in personal selling. In doing so, we synthesize the different dimensions of ambidextrous selling into a single overarching phenomenon which we refer to as multidextrous selling. We define multidextrous selling as *the ability of a salesperson to pursue multiple selling tasks and activities in their daily routines*. In this pursuit, this study adopts a qualitative research design (Chaker et al., 2022; Johnson, 2015), and to explore the presence of various dimensions of ambidextrous selling in personal selling in-depth interviews are conducted. To gain rich practitioner insights into the phenomenon we have applied the theories-in-use approach which is a highly commended approach while dealing with novel concepts (Good et al., 2022; Zeithaml et al., 2020). As a result of this exercise, we found personal selling as a multidextrous phenomenon which includes a series of interrelated tasks and activities that often fall into different dimensions of selling ambidexterity. Interestingly, ‘sales’ as a broad activity includes both selling new and existing products and selling to new and existing customers – two broad categories of ambidextrous selling. While ‘service’ emerged to be an integral aspect for salespeople.

## **Theoretical underpinnings**

### ***What is organizational ambidexterity?***

The roots of ambidexterity at the organizational level are found in the seminal article by Duncan (1976) who defined ambidexterity as the way of managing innovations through alignment and adaptability. Alignment is the coherence among different activities directed towards the same goal while adaptability is the responsiveness to the changing business environment. Later, March (1991) defined ambidexterity as the exploitation and exploration of resources. Where exploitation is the refinement and extension of existing capabilities to make current tasks better through efficiency and reliability. While exploration is the experimentation with new alternatives and technologies in search of flexibility and creativity. In this regard Tushman and O’Reilly (1996, p. 8) stated ambidextrous organizations are those which are “able to implement both incremental and revolutionary change” and according to Lubatkin et al. (2006, p. 647) “ambidextrous firms are capable of exploiting existing competencies as well as exploring new opportunities with equal dexterity”.

### ***Ambidexterity in sales and personal selling***

Ambidexterity in sales and personal selling refers to the ability of a salesperson to deal with dualities and accomplish seemingly conflicting tasks and goals simultaneously (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Vieira et al., 2020). These tasks include: cross/up-selling during service delivery (Jasmand et al., 2012; Patterson et al., 2014) or providing service during a sales encounter (Mullins et al., 2020; Panagopoulos et al., 2020; Sok et al., 2016), acquiring new customers while retaining the existing ones (Lam et al., 2019; Nijssen et al., 2017; Vieira et al., 2020), and ambidextrous selling of both new and existing products (van der Borgh et al., 2017; van der Borgh & Schepers, 2014). Similar to organizational ambidexterity, ambidexterity in sales and personal selling is also attained by following one of the three mechanisms of achieving ambidexterity.

Service-sales or sales-service ambidexterity which includes cross/up-selling during service delivery or providing service during a sales encounter is attained through contextual ambidexterity “by building a set of processes or systems that enable and encourage individuals to make their own judgments about how to divide their time between conflicting demands” (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004, p. 210). While the other two ambidextrous selling orientations i.e. ambidexterity in customer relationship management, and product selling ambidexterity are achieved through sequential ambidexterity (temporal separation). This is because during a sales encounter a salesperson is most likely to deal with a single customer (either new or existing) and would sell one product (new or existing) only (van der Borgh et al., 2017).

## **Avenues for multidextrous selling**

Customer relationship management includes a multiplexity of tasks ranging from establishing relationships with customers, developing and maintaining such relationships, and if needed reducing and terminating the same in the interest of the company (Ritter & Geersbro, 2018). At times these tasks are performed by the salespeople only who play an active role in realizing the firm’s strategy of launching new products (Beuk et al., 2014; Fu, 2009), CRM (Pass et al., 2004; Yim et al., 2004), increasing the customer base, diversification to a new product range, etc. The beginning of any

relationship with a customer happens with the first sale to the customer which may be through new or existing products. Developing and maintaining the relationships with customers inherits an orientation for retention which is based on cross/up-selling. Service, being a salient aspect of the sales process is present in all selling encounters.

## Research Design

To address a novel phenomenon regarding which little understanding exists, scholars have suggested and opted for a qualitative research methodology (Creswell, 2007; Rapp et al., 2020). Qualitative research is a “type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 10). In doing so, this research adopts a blend of deductive and inductive approaches for building the theory. To our conceptualization, multidexterity in personal selling is the unification of the various dimensions of ambidextrous selling in a single salesperson. These dimensions of personal selling are however well-established in the sales literature but are studied in isolation. With this research, we aim to present personal selling as the combination of these dimensions through an exploratory study. In this regard, the foundation of this research is built upon ‘what is already known’ (deductive approach) ‘to find out something new’ through in-depth interviews (inductive approach).

## Data Collection and Sample

To meet the rationale for the above-mentioned techniques we decided to collect the data for this research through semi-structured in-depth interviews and choose field salespeople as our respondents (Alavi et al., 2019; Rangarajan et al., 2018). To draw a competent and informed sample for the study we met the provisions of the theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this pursuit, the ‘next respondent’ was selected after a careful evaluation of the previous interview transcripts (Zeithaml et al., 2020). Further, we considered two criteria before selecting a participant ensuring that we interview the most appropriate person. First, the respondent should be a field salesperson rather than an inside salesperson. Second, the respondent must have an experience of at least three years (Table 1).

**Table 1. Sample Profile**

#	Industry	Designation	Gender	Experience (years)	Interview Duration
1	Pharmaceutical	Territory Manager	M	5	33 minutes
2	Pharmaceutical	Regional Manager	M	14	48 minutes
3	Pharmaceutical	Regional Manager	F	19	52 minutes
4	Pharmaceutical	Zonal Manager	M	22	77 minutes
5	Pharmaceutical	Territory Manager	M	7	23 minutes
6	Pharmaceutical	Territory Manager	F	11	35 minutes
7	Pharmaceutical	Regional Manager	M	15	57 minutes
8	Pharmaceutical	Zonal Manager	M	29	17 minutes
9	Financial services	Sales Representative	F	4	44 minutes
10	Financial services	Sales Representative	F	13	64 minutes
11	Financial services	Senior Sales Executive	M	23	29 minutes
12	Financial services	Sales Manager	M	28	37 minutes
13	Insurance	Business Development Manager	M	6	18 minutes
14	Insurance	Sales Executive	M	12	50 minutes
15	Insurance	Sales Executive	M	18	46 minutes
16	Insurance	Sales Executive	M	24	34 minutes
17	Insurance	Business Development Manager	M	3	67 minutes
18	Refractory	Sales Director	M	33	40 minutes
19	Refractory	Sales Manager	M	26	65 minutes
20	Refractory	Sales Representative	M	12	21 minutes
21	Refractory	Sales Representative	M	10	32 minutes
22	FMCG	Salesperson	M	8	19 minutes

23	FMCG	Salesperson	M	11	22 minutes
24	FMCG	Salesperson	M	3	26 minutes
25	FMCG	Salesperson	M	7	17 minutes
26	FMCG	Salesperson	M	8	23 minutes
27	FMCG	Salesperson	M	19	37 minutes
28	<i>Pharmaceutical</i>	<i>Regional Sales Manager</i>	<i>M</i>	22	<i>28 minutes</i>
29	<i>Pharmaceutical</i>	<i>Territory Manager</i>	<i>F</i>	8	<i>24 minutes</i>
30	<i>Pharmaceutical</i>	<i>Territory Manager</i>	<i>M</i>	13	<i>18 minutes</i>
31	<i>Financial services</i>	<i>Sales Executive</i>	<i>M</i>	5	<i>30 minutes</i>
32	<i>Insurance</i>	<i>Business Development Manager</i>	<i>M</i>	8	<i>23 minutes</i>
33	<i>FMCG</i>	<i>Salesperson</i>	<i>M</i>	9	<i>16 minutes</i>

*Italics* denotes the informal interviews

All the interviews were started in a grand tour manner we allowed the informants to “tell their stories” and lead the flow of the discussion to minimize interviewer-induced bias. All the interviews were conducted in a friendly atmosphere and the full attention of the respondents was assured through probing questions, repeating some parts of their sentences, and seeking explanations/examples. After each interview, we briefed each respondent on what we understood during the session. The lead author along with either of the two remaining authors conducted the interviews. The interview sessions (formal) lasted from 17 to 77 minutes with an average time of 38 minutes. We kept on interviewing salespeople until we sense theoretical saturation

### **Data Analysis**

To extract meaningful interpretations from our interview transcripts we followed the three-step procedure by Miles et al. (2014) which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing & verifying conclusions. To condense our data, we followed the coding procedure by Saldana (2013) that calls for a two-step coding procedure: first and second cycle of coding. Codes are prompts or triggers for deeper reflection on the data’s meanings. Coding is a part of data condensation that allows a researcher to withhold the most relevant material from the available data sets which is then assembled into meaningful and logical relationships. During initial coding, the data is fragmented into chunks which are then compared for similarities and differences. This brings an opportunity for the “researcher to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances of your data and to begin taking ownership of them” (Saldana, 2013, p. 100).

In the second cycle of coding, we applied axial coding to assemble the fragmented codes into categories and sub-categories (data display). As a result of this exercise, we have 36 initial codes and 5 axial codes representing three dimensions of selling ambidexterity on which we built our proposition of multidextrous selling (drawing & verifying conclusions). To maintain the rigor in our analytical interpretation we evaluated our findings against five parameters viz. credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, distinctiveness (Zeithaml et al., 2020).

### **Findings and Discussion**

Personal selling is “an interactive, personal, paid promotional approach between a buyer and seller” (Tanner & Raymond, 2010, p. 222). Through our data analysis process, we identified salespeople performing five broad activities that fall into various dimensions of selling ambidexterity. For a sales employee, the primary activity is to fetch the sales that may be realized through the sale of a (I) *new* or (II) an *existing* product sold to a (III) *new* or (IV) an *existing* customer. Meanwhile, (V) *service* emerged to be an indispensable element of the modern-day selling process. The subsequent sections delineate the pursuit of these multiple goals by the salespeople.

#### ***Selling new products***

The selling of new products has been defined as the amount of time, activity, or persistence a sales employee invests in a particular new product as compared to an existing product (Atuahene-gima & Micheal, 1998). In other words, it is the proportion of sales that a salesperson derives from the focal new product (Anderson & Robertson, 1995). During our interview sessions, we found the adoption and engagement of the salespeople in selling new products. Such adoption of the new products by the salesforce is found across all industries. However, the ratio of new and existing products in

the salesperson's portfolio and the frequency of launching new products varies from industry to industry. This is why we do not fix any particular duration for the new products and allowed the respondents to decide on the new (existing) product of their own.

*Currently, I am allotted 8 drugs, out of which 2 are recently launched, which you can call new drugs. {#6}*

*If I am not wrong, every month or two a new product is added to my portfolio. It may be a new candy, mouth freshener, something from toiletries, etc. {#23}*

Selling of the new products by the sales force has always remained a topic of curiosity for sales scholars. Salespeople are considered to be the internal and initial customers of the new product who must buy the product themselves to sell it effectively (Atuahene-gima & Micheal, 1998). Extant literature on personal selling and sales management manifests that selling a new product put a toll on salespeople due to which salespeople, in general, are reluctant to adopt them. Selling a new product requires special skills, effort, and commitment which is why they are harder to sell (Atuahene-gima, 1997). Interestingly, during our discussion, we did not find any reluctance among the salespeople in adopting the new products. Rather, they showed enthusiasm, zeal, and eagerness to sell new products. Salespeople find the new product as a tool to beat the competition and get an edge over other brands. With that, the commission attached to the new products also drives salespeople to sell them more. The relationship with the customers also emerged to be a key driver of the salesperson's adoption of the new products. Salesperson proactively adopts the same to serve the evolving needs of their customers and to have a long-lasting relationship with them.

### ***Selling Existing Products***

An existing product is a well-established product that has gained due recognition by both the customers and the salespeople and has got an even demand in the market. Our interview sessions also acknowledge the sale of such products by the salespeople. The extant literature on sales and personal selling manifests an inclination among salespeople towards the new products (Atuahene-gima, 1997). However, no such inclination surfaced during our interview sessions. Though our respondents agreed that most often they deal with existing brands. Surprisingly, this engagement was not due to their attachment or inclination towards such products but due to the established market demand.

*I visit the doctor for the established brands too, these are reminder calls. During these calls I just remind the doctor about the brand, requesting them to keep prescribing the brand. {#8}*

Another reason for dealing with the existing products is the quest to maintain the existing share of the market for such products. Our respondents revealed that despite existing products being well established and reaping a certain monthly/quarterly sale. It doesn't mean that they could be left abundant rather they are also promoted from time to time to maintain their sale. Besides that, industries like pharmaceutical keep on increasing the quarterly quota of their salespeople for existing drugs too.

*It is true, that older and well-established drugs are prescribed heavily by the doctors, but we need to meet and remind them about our brand to maintain the sale.....the large part of the sale comes through existing and well-established products only, this is the reason these products are given the due consideration, but yes, not as much as the newer ones. {#7}*

Maintaining relationships with the customers is yet another reason for the salespeople to sell existing products. In the world of fierce competition, a salesperson makes regular visits to their customers to have stronger ties with the customers and to protect them from the competitor's salespeople to avoid customer churn.

*You have to keep visiting doctors even if they are prescribing your drug to remain in touch with them. A few months ago it came to my notice that Dr. Sharma (disguised name) stopped prescribing our brand. I visited him to know the reason for it. He simply replied no one from your company came to remind me about your brand {#4}*

### ***Acquisition of new customer (Hunting orientation)***

Targeting and acquiring new customers is yet another important orientation of personal selling that emerged during our interview sessions. For organizations, customer acquisition strategy includes "gaining information about potential customers, measuring their potential value, and allocating resources to acquire those with greater long-term

value” (Arnold et al., 2011, p. 235) which is often realized through field salesforce. Acquisition “involves hunting activities used in securing initial orders from new customers, including prospecting, generating leads, pre-call planning, and delivering sales presentations. Customer acquisition starts with the first interaction with the firm and proceeds through the first purchase until the first repeat purchase (Thomas, 2001, p. 262). When asked about the daily hunting calls, we got a mix of responses. Though all the respondents showed an orientation for hunting but the highest level of hunting orientation was found among the sales employees working in the financial sector followed by those in the pharmaceutical industry, refractory, and FMCG.

The reason for such differences is the nature of these industries. In the financial services and insurance sector firstly the probability of turning a prospect into a customer is very low and secondly, there is a dwarf of repeat purchases in this sector because these products involve high-cost expenditure which hinders the regular purchase of such items by the customer. Similarly, in the refractory industry, where after purchasing a solution for the furnace the customer won't go for the other unless there is some serious flaw in the set-up. So the salespeople in this industry are always on the lookout for new clients. Whereas for a pharmaceutical salesperson the list of the probable customer i.e. the doctors dealing in the drug segment of the salesperson under his/her sales territory is prepared in advance.

For this, the salesperson meets one after the other to turn them into the prescriber of their drugs. At last, came the FMCG salesperson who manifests a very low hunting orientation because his job is more of taking orders and delivering them (Moncrief, 1986). Such salespeople barely make sales calls or presentations but they keep an eye on new stores/shopping complexes in their sales territory from where they could get new business. Interestingly, in some cases, we found an opposite scenario where the customer (new) approached the FMCG salesperson on its own and placed the order.

According to respondent {#14}, *1 in every 10 prospects turns into our customer, so we have to meet more and more new prospects and have to make excessive cold calls.*

*In this sector, we don't have regular customers (customers making a repeat purchases). Any investment in financial instruments may it be stocks or other policies carries a handsome amount. After investing for once the customer expects a return on it instead of fresh investment. {#11}*

### ***Retention of existing customers (farming orientation)***

Retention orientation entails farming behavior used in selling to existing customers, such as building long-term relationships, creating efficiencies in order-taking, and increasing share of wallet through cross-selling and up-selling efforts”. The customer retention process begins with the first repeat purchase and continues until the termination of the relationship (Thomas, 2001, p. 262). In response to our question regarding maintaining, existing customer accounts our respondents unanimously stated the importance of the existing customer. However, when it comes to getting new business from existing accounts i.e. repeat purchases, the FMCG salesperson holds the number one spot. Followed by the pharmaceutical salesperson and salespeople from the finance and insurance sector. This is again due to the type of product involved. FMCG products are less durable and have the highest demand so these salespeople get more repeat (usually twice or thrice a week) orders from their customers.

Whereas, the role of the pharmaceutical salespeople is not to get orders but to persuade the physician to prescribe their drugs. In doing so, such salesperson visits a doctor fortnightly or once a week to remind them about their brands. Similarly, salespeople from the refractory industry also make regular visits to their customers, but these visits are more for the quality and inspections not for taking new orders. Finally, the salesperson from the financial sector makes minimal visits to his existing customers. As previously mentioned, the transaction in the financial services industry are cost-intensive and the salespeople in this sector carry a good understanding of the financial condition of their clients. Keeping this in mind, the visits to an existing customer in anticipation of a next purchase are made after assessing the potential of the customer for the next investment/purchase.

*You can't go to a customer who has recently purchased a policy. He would certainly dislike it or he may doubt your motives or lose confidence in you. But yes, if a customer is financially sound and has liquidity (bank balance). Then we could try to motivate him to withdraw some amount from there and invest in our policy to get better returns. {#9}*

*I take extra care of my regular customers. I deliberately visit them to collect orders from them and try to deliver them before others. {#23}*

*I visit my clients and ask the same from my team to keep visiting the factories, furnaces, and chimneys where you have provided a solution - to check if they are functioning properly...it is necessary for a salesperson because if any discrepancy occurs, the customer wants to see the same face with whom he has closed the deal. {#18}*

### **Salespeople Service Behavior**

*The assessment of a salesperson's service behavior has gained popularity among sales scholars over the years. Apart from delivering products and providing the solution, salespeople are now embracing service behaviors too. Understanding the fact that salespeople are the customer's first and only point of contact with the firm. Sales organizations and managers often assess and improve the service behavior of their salesforce. These service behaviors are the linchpin for relationship selling which aimed to secure, build, and maintain long-term relationships with profitable customers.*

*When we enquired about the same from our respondents, we found a high service orientation among all the participants. It seems that almost every respondent was well acquainted with the importance of making a customer delighted to improve the probability of doing future business with him. With that, almost every respondent labeled 'service behaviors' as one of the most prominent tools in their arsenal. During our data analysis, we found the shreds of evidence for all five service behaviors viz. sportsmanship, diligence, information communication, inducements, and empathy found by Ahearne et al (2011) which are demonstrated by the salespeople during various sales encounters and activities.*

*Let me tell you one thing, whatever sales I produce, it is the outcome of the service that provide to my clients. {#8}*  
Interestingly participant {#18} from the refractory industry also responded in the same way:  
*Sales is nothing but the outcome of our services.*

*During the calls with the doctors, we educate them about the new drugs and the improvements in the existing drugs and provide them with the literature regarding the same. {#3}*

### **Multidexterity in personal selling**

The above-mentioned attributes of personal selling denote various selling activities that fall under the interconnected and interrelated dimensions of ambidextrous selling. For instance selling of new products and the selling of existing products constitute the product selling ambidexterity, while the acquisition of new customers and the retention of existing customers form the ambidexterity in hunting and farming of customers. While the provision for service behaviors among salespersons i.e. providing service while selling is a separate dimension of ambidextrous selling labeled as service-sales ambidexterity.

As this article is aimed to present personal selling as a multidextrous activity where all the dimensions of different ambidextrous selling converge. Until now, we have provided pieces of evidence for the existence of these dimensions among field salespeople. In this section, we provide how salespeople pursue multiple selling activities that fall into the different but interconnected silos of ambidexterity. During the interview sessions, we found the evidences for the same. Our respondents consider the different dimensions of selling ambidexterity as an integral aspect of their job and interpret them as core personal selling activities. Moreover, they defined their engagement in different activities as 'this is what the sales job is' and perform these multiple activities simultaneously as the situation demands.

*This is what constitutes a sales job. I perform all of these activities as per the situation demands. {#16}*  
*All these activities that we have discussed till now are not separate from each other they may be different but they are interconnected and integrated as a single job. {#21}*

In this pursuit of multiple tasks, it is the salesperson who decides about a suitable course of action while meeting a customer. The primary activity for a salesperson is to 'sell' the products new or existing ones which are often sold to a new or an existing customer. Though the degree of selling of a new or an existing product and the salesperson's orientation for hunting or farming varies from industry to industry, but the pursuit of multiple selling activities is common in all industries. In the pharmaceutical industry, salespeople are allotted targets for both new and existing drugs and are responsible for acquiring new physicians in their sales territories while getting business from the existing ones. With that, service behavior remains an indispensable element of pharmaceutical selling. Similarly, in the finance and insurance industry, salespeople are more focused on hunting new customers. Whereby they offer a new (existing) product as per the requirement of the customer.



*I am supposed to perform all of these tasks - promote both new and existing drugs and meet both new and existing doctors. In doing so, most calls I made are directed toward the existing doctors where in most of the cases the old or the well-established drugs are discussed because new drugs are not launched regularly. These are the reminder calls that generally last for 2 to 3 minutes. But when I promote a new drug, by new drug I mean both new to the market and new to the doctor. I like to discuss in detail its benefits, composition, complementary drugs, and side effects, if any. Similarly, while visiting a doctor for the first time, I just introduce myself and my company to him and after 3 to 4 visits when I feel that doctor is well-acquainted with me, I request him to prescribe my brand. {#5}*

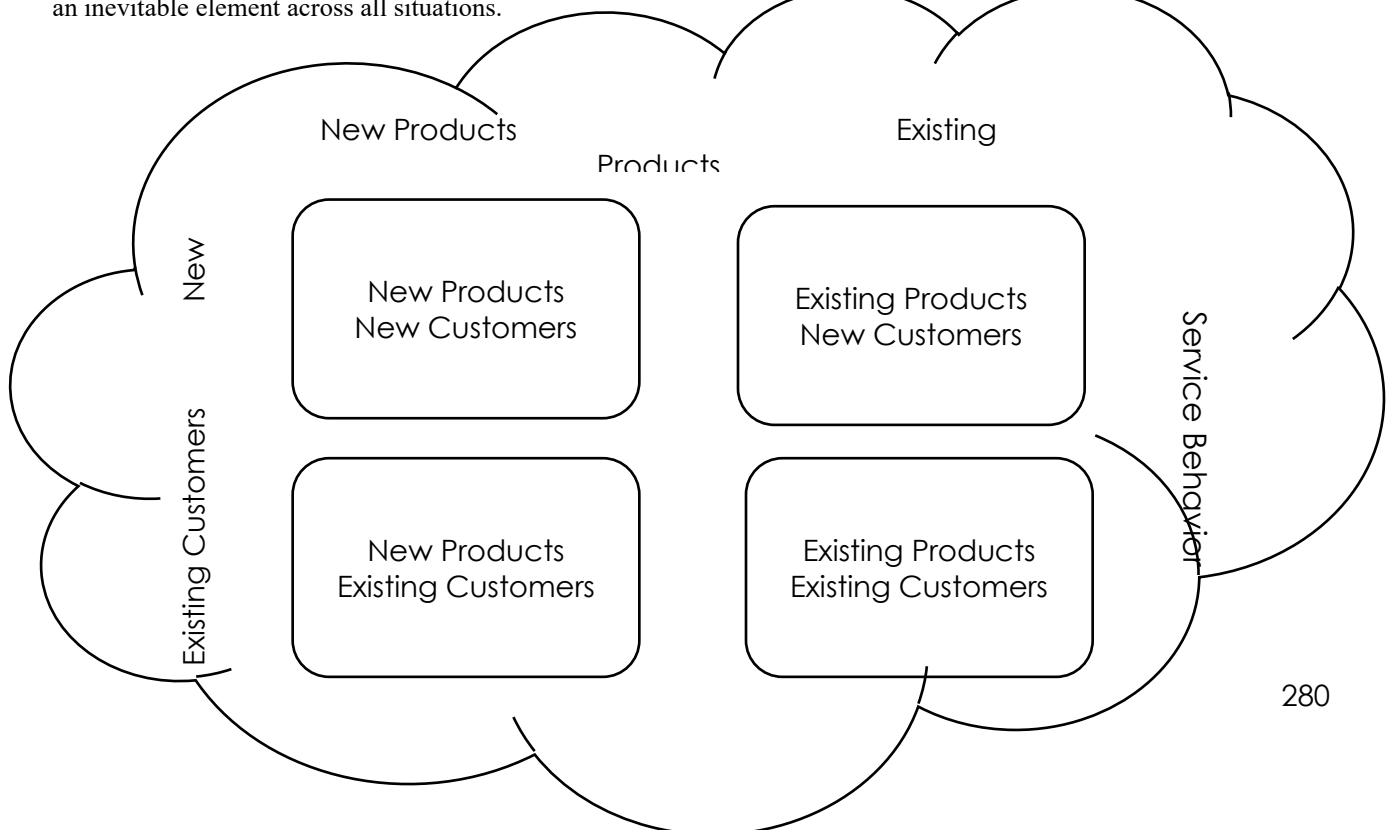
*The type of drug to be promoted depends upon the nature of the doctor. At times some of your established customers are adamant about switching to new drugs. They have a set pattern of writing prescriptions so promoting a new drug to them goes in vain. While sometimes a new doctor whom you are meeting in the initial stages starts prescribing a newly launched drug. So you have to be prepared for both situations. {#4}*

*As I told you earlier, there is nothing in 'sales' without service. Every other company is offering a product, why would a customer come to you? The thing which makes you stand out from the competitors is the service that you give to your customer whether new or existing doesn't matter. The thing which matters is that once he has contacted you, he must not go without purchasing your product. You must offer him the best quality material, proper installation of the plant, and regular quality checks. {#20}*

**Discussion**

This study has presented the novices on multidexterity in personal selling. In doing so, we have identified salespeople performing five activities viz. selling new products, selling existing products, acquiring new customers, retaining existing customers, and providing service. However, the existing literature on personal selling has already identified these activities and has clubbed them into three dimensions of ambidextrous selling contemplating the pursuit of two selling goals at a time. This study takes the understanding of ambidexterity to a next level and presents personal selling as a multidextrous activity that is based on the interconnected and interrelated dimensions of ambidextrous selling.

Based on the synthesis of our findings we identify two broad activities that a salesperson performs. These activities are selling and providing services. Selling as a broad term includes a bunch of activities the primary of them are promoting or selling a product or service which is sold or promoted to a new or an existing customer. These situations can be better understood through a 2\*2 matrix displaying four different situations faced by a field sales employee (Figure.1). These situations are; selling new products to an existing customer, selling new products to a new customer, selling existing products to a new customer, and selling existing products to an existing customer. While service remains an inevitable element across all situations.



## Figure 1. Multidextrous Matrix

### Conclusion, limitations, and directions for future research

Conducting a study on a novel concept is a challenging task. To our understanding, this is the first study aimed to investigate multidexterity in personal selling. In this pursuit, we relied on qualitative methodology by adopting the theories-in-use approach to understand the phenomenon from the real stakeholders i.e. the salespeople. Our analysis of the data suggested that like organizations, individual salespeople also blend various modes of ambidexterity. However, this blend of various ambidextrous orientations at the salesperson level is not similar to that of an organization. The blended or hybrid ambidexterity at the organizational level depicts the blend of inputs of ambidexterity i.e. the blend of structural and contextual ambidexterity. But the blend of multiple ambidextrous selling tasks by the salespeople is the blend of the output of ambidexterity which is also called realized ambidexterity.

At the organizational level, the blend of ambidexterity does not mean the duality of exploration and exploitation. In such a situation each task is attained by a different mode of ambidexterity. For instance, exploitation can be achieved through structural differentiation, and exploration is done through contextual enabling. But in personal selling situations, salespeople face the dualities of exploitation and exploration. Selling existing goods to existing customers signals a duality of exploitation while selling new products to new customers denotes duality in exploration. Apart from this, the exhibition of service behaviors is in itself an exploration for salespeople that are required in each sales encounter.

Besides the novel understanding of the topic, this study has some limitations too which act as the route for future research. First, the small sample size and responses from four industries only hamper the generalizations of the findings to a broader context. A study with larger sample size and encompassing more industries would further enhance our understanding of multidexterity. Second, we adopted a qualitative research design to gain initial insights on the topic but failed to make an empirical assessment of multidexterity in selling. A quantitative study on the theme would be more fruitful if the novel concept is studied along with broad organizational factors like salesforce control systems, team support, cross-functional cooperation, and compensation & incentives, etc. Third, in facilitating multidexterity this study is bounded within the three pre-identified dimensions of ambidextrous selling. An exploratory study that aimed to identify new attributes of ambidextrous selling would be noteworthy.

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## Full Paper

# The Impact of Personal Traits, Job-Specific Attitudes, and Skills on B2B Sales Performance

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*Finding the qualities that increase salespeople's probability of performing at high levels when selling in a business-to-business (B2B) environment is a central question for companies. Several traits have been positively associated with sales performance, as well as some job-specific skills and attitudes. This study uncovered the positive relationship that the personal traits of self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and delayed gratification, and job-specific attitudes, namely time management, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction have on sales performance in the B2B space. Our findings demonstrated the importance that these six constructs significantly affect sales performance. This study also demonstrated how job satisfaction moderates the relationship between intrinsic motivation and sales performance.*

### Introduction

Sales performance has remained an essential and central topic in research in marketing (Jaramillo, Mulki, & Marshall, 2005; Krishnan, Netemeyer, & Boles, 2002; Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Taylor, 2007; Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011). After all, salespeople are central to generating value for firms through their skills, abilities, and strategies (Alnakhli, Inyang, & Itani, 2021). Given the prominent role in value creation for firms, specifically in B2B sales, there are still unanswered questions about how this value is created. Several meta-analyses (c.f., Churchill Jr, Ford, Hartley, & Walker Jr, 1985; Rich, Bommer, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Johnson, 1999; Verbeke et al., 2011) along with classic models that have identified several antecedents of sales performance (c.f., Jaramillo et al., 2005; Walker Jr, Churchill Jr, & Ford, 1977), personal traits such as motivation, skill level, and aptitude (Krishnan et al., 2002) have received little attention. Likewise, job-specific attitudes, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and time management have also received little attention in the value-creation process.

Personal traits, which are part of one's personality, are pivotal for sales performance. Understanding their role is critical for companies because individual salespeople are usually a key bridge between their companies and customers. The extended effect is then that salespeople's performance has been linked to outcomes such as job satisfaction (Banerjee & Bag, 2022; Itani, Jaramillo, & Chonko, 2019), intrinsic motivation (Ramarajan, Rothbard, & Wilk, 2017), and self-efficacy (Krishnan et al., 2002), among others. Given the importance of personal traits, some key ones, such as delayed gratification or the ability to effectively self-manage goals and objectives over time (Mischel & Ayduk, 2004), remains mostly ignored.

Organizational and job-specific attitudes and skills have been shown to consistently strengthen sales performance. Many attitudes impact performance, such as when salespeople maintain effective communication skills, such as adaptive selling, listening, and communicating, impacting their ability to co-create and their sales performance (Alnakhli et al., 2021). A key job-specific attitude that is vital for the proper functioning of the sales function is the ability of salespeople to manage their time and the prioritization of their activities (Kaufman-Scarborough & Lindquist, 1999). Another key attitude is organizational commitment in which the salesperson shares the values of the company and is inspired to do the best job possible (Jaramillo et al., 2005; Sager & Johnston, 1989). Job satisfaction is another attitude that is an important element of performance as it drives the salesperson's perceptions of the importance of the use of sales skills behaviors were positively related to their satisfaction (Pettijohn et al., 2007). Because of the long-term impact on strategy and salesperson retention and turnover, a salespeople's job performance remains of critical importance (Alnakhli et al., 2021) and their study will continue to evolve (Pettijohn et al., 2007).

Thus, to enrich the understanding of the traits and attitudes that affect sales performance and add to the literature, the objective of this study is to uncover whether self-management personal traits, specifically self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and delayed gratification, as well as and job specific attitudes and skills, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and time management, positively influence salesperson performance. Additionally, this study informs future researchers with a better understanding of sales performance and provides companies with a better

understanding of some of the “tried and true” variables and some other variables that reflect the continuously evolving landscape.

Lastly, this study makes three key contributions to the literature. First, it cohesively tests the impact of personal traits and job-specific attitudes and skills on sales performance to determine the mix of factors influencing performance. Second, it tests whether delayed gratification affects sales performance and thus, if it should be considered for inclusion in future research frameworks. Third, this research brings to light whether time management, a job-related skill, is of importance for sales performance as its value can have an impact not only on a salesperson but, ultimately, on a sales team and the company’s ability to reach its goals and strategies. The findings provide implications and guidelines for academics and practitioners as to what personal traits and job-specific attitudes and skills should be nurtured.

## Literature Review

McFarland, Rode, and Shervani (2016) advocate that salespeople have a transcendental role in organizations as they impact areas such as existing and future sales and customer relationships. Salespeople even play an important role in an organization’s marketing efforts, as they are responsible for creating the link between the organization and its customers in B2B settings (Baldauf & Cravens, 2002). High-performance salespeople directly influence achieving their sales goals and objectives, which is key to succeeding in today’s competitive business landscape (Cron, Baldauf, Leigh, & Grossenbacher, 2014). Hence, a company’s ability to successfully understand and manage its sales resources has become a critical enterprise activity (Reinartz, Thomas, & Kumar, 2005; Schweidel, Fader, & Bradlow, 2008).

The pursuit by organizations and researchers to understand why salespeople perform at high levels has been occurring for several decades (Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Babakus, Cravens, Grant, Ingram, & LaForge, 1996; Verbeke et al., 2011). For example, Ford, Walker Jr, Churchill Jr, and Hartley (1987) found that constructs such as motivation, role perception, personal traits, and organizational factors are key elements that positively influence sales performance. Later, Rentz, Shepherd, Tashchian, Dabholkar, and Ladd (2002) found that sales skills could be divided into two main areas of skills that are positively related to performance: micro-skills and macro-skills. They further divided micro-skills into three dimensions: interpersonal skills or knowing how to cope and resolve conflicts; salesmanship skills or knowing how to sell concepts and ideas; and technical skills or knowing the products/services. They also divided macro-skills into salespeople’s knowledge-related capacities, such as information management and understanding different sales scenarios. Continuing the evolution of understanding sales performance, Verbeke et al. (2011) meta-analysis found five dimensions associated with sales performance: role ambiguity, adaptation, selling knowledge, cognitive aptitude, and work engagement. Although researchers have studied salespeople and their performance from several angles, there is still a need for additional research to better understand the specific behaviors (the combinations of micro and macro skills) that support high levels of performance for salespeople, as it is important for an organization’s success to ensure that competent salespeople can be motivated, properly trained, and retained.

Additional research in the pursuit of understanding sales performance has led to the identification of attributes such as self-management, also known as self-control, which focus on the behaviors used by individuals to control their decision making process to achieve their goals and objectives (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Self-management is based on the Social Cognitive Theory (Akers, 1986). which considers that cognitive, environmental, and behavioral attributes define an individual’s self-management abilities (Bandura, 1977). Self-assessment, self-monitoring, goal setting, self-evaluation, time management, and self-regulation are behaviors associated with self-management (Frayne & Geringer, 2000). Self-regulation mechanisms allow a person to adapt his or her behaviors to meet the demands of the environment (Doerr & Baumeister, 2010); thus, delayed gratification is part of self-regulation (Bandura, 1977). For example, Gerhardt, Ashenbaum, and Newman (2009) found a positive relationship between performance and self-management. Also, Frayne and Geringer (2000) validated how self-management improves performance for insurance salespeople. In their study of salespeople for a multinational computer and services company, Porath and Bateman (2006) found a positive relationship between the dimension of self-management, goal setting and self-regulation, and performance. Finally, in their research with undergraduate students, Gerhardt et al. (2009) positively related self-management with performance.

There have been many areas of sales research to define what makes a salesperson successful (Churchill Jr et al., 1985; Elhajjar, Yacoub, & Ouaida, 2023; Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Verbeke et al., 2011; Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer, & Roth, 1998). Most of this research found that successful salespeople use a combination of individual traits and specific behaviors. In particular, motivation, role, skills level, job perception, goal orientation, and aptitude are constantly positively related to performance (Churchill Jr et al., 1985).

## **Hypotheses Development**

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Bandura's (1977; 1982; 1986; 1997) social-cognitive theory has self-efficacy as a central construct. Self-efficacy refers to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Bandura (1997) considers that self-efficacy is the confidence that an individual has the necessary skills to accomplish his/her objectives and goals. Self-efficacy supports strong goal-setting actions that affect an individual's action such as persistence and goal direction (Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991). More specifically, self-efficacy influences an individual's choice of which goals to pursue, sets expectations regarding the success of the goals that have been set, and provides the level of effort that needs to be applied to achieve success (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1982). These characteristics make self-efficacy different from other individual mindset constructs such as intentions, self-esteem, and expectations (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). It has been widely researched in very different environments such as business, medicine, sports, and music (Beck & Schmidt, 2018; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014; Vancouver & Purl, 2017).

In his meta-analysis, Peterson (2020) examined 38 papers that related self-efficacy with sales performance and found that the mean correlation between self-efficacy and performance was 0.37. Based on the results from the meta-analysis, such as the studies by Peterson (2020) and Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), we can conclude that self-efficacy is a critical component of employee outcomes. Therefore:

*H1: Self efficacy is positively related to salesperson performance.*

### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

Performance has a multitude of constructs that have been positively associated with it and motivation has been considered one of the most important ones (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976; Pinder, 2014). Motivation has been related to performance in a wide range of fields, such as industrial and organizational psychology (Steers, Mowday, & Shapiro, 2004), healthcare (Franco, Bennett, & Kanfer, 2002), academic performance (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000), and well-being (Fisher, Fisher, & Harman, 2003).

One of the focus areas of salesperson management is sales motivation (Doyle & Shapiro, 1980; Jaramillo et al., 2005). Even though it has been widely studied, there is still ambiguity in how to motivate salespeople (Khusainova, De Jong, Lee, Marshall, & Rudd, 2018). Back in the 1970s, sales, and marketing researchers started to focus on salespeople motivation and its relationship with performance (Churchill Jr, Ford, & Walker Jr, 1976). During this time, the dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was established. The main difference between these two types of motivation is that intrinsic motivation comes from within a person, whereas extrinsic motivation comes from an external component (Pinder, 2014). This study is focused on intrinsic motivation as it is a personal trait, while extrinsic motivation is external. Intrinsic motivation is one of the top constructs in sales research (Pullins, 2001; Williams & Plouffe, 2007). Several studies have established a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and sales performance (Elhajjar et al., 2023; Jaramillo & Mulki, 2008; Tyagi, 1985). Therefore:

*H2: Intrinsic motivation is positively related to salesperson performance.*

### ***Delayed Gratification***

Delayed gratification is correlated with the resistance to receiving an immediate reward in favor of receiving a greater reward at a later time (Mischel, 1973). It is a self-imposed mechanism that helps to keep the focus on a longer-term goal (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989). Individuals need to exercise self-management to restrain the impulse of obtaining a proximal reward (Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001). Self-regulation mechanisms, a dimension of self-management, allows a person to adapt his or her behaviors to meet the demands of the environment (Doerr & Baumeister, 2010).

An important component of self-regulation is how individuals manage their goals, plans, and hopes (Nuttin, 2014). To manage goals and objectives, people need to control their gratification impulses, and they can do this by using willpower as part of their self-regulation mechanisms (Renn, Allen, & Huning, 2011). Still, individuals react differently when trying to obtain rewards; some prefer immediate benefits, while others can delay such rewards if it serves a more important goal in the future (Bandura, 1977; Mischel & Ayduk, 2004).



Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (RST) (Gray, 1973) is based on how some of the self-regulation traits are related to performance (Diefendorff & Mehta, 2007; Matthews & Gilliland, 1999; Smits & Boeck, 2006; Stewart, 1996). In particular, RST has been positively linked to performance indicators like increasing customer satisfaction and goal achievement (Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt, & Hall, 2010). In some sales settings, to achieve their goals employees are required to use delayed gratification to reduce impulsiveness and manage their actions to achieve the desired results (Renn et al., 2011).

Scholars such as Bandura and Locke (2003); Renn and Fedor (2001); Stajkovic and Luthans (1998); Wang and Netemyer (2002b) have also been able to identify a strong relationship between self-regulation and performance. One of the most critical components of exercising delayed gratification is having a strong monitoring behavior and avoiding impulsiveness (Baumeister, 2002). In B2B, where sales cycles are generally long, having delayed gratification becomes an important success trait for salespeople. Therefore:

*H3: Delayed gratification is positively related to salesperson performance.*

### **Time Management**

Francis-Smythe and Robertson (1999) define time management as how to handle, in time and priority, the activities that need to be considered in a prioritization plan (Kaufman-Scarborough & Lindquist, 1999). Salesperson responsibilities extend to several areas that are key for the organization to properly functioning; hence, time management became an important performance trait (Bommaraju, Ahearne, Krause, & Tirunillai, 2019; Deeter-Schmelz, Goebel, & Kennedy, 2008; Mehta, Dubinsky, & Anderson, 2002). Despite the importance of time management, Bruch and Ghoshal (2002) found that about 90% of salespeople do not manage their time effectively. Furthermore, 48% of salespeople found their time management skills did not meet their company priorities (Bevins & De Smet, 2013). Organizations have been asking how to support their salespeople towards better managing their time (Berkowitz & Ginter, 1978). Regardless of this, time allocation practices have remained largely unchanged (Mantrala, Sinha, & Zoltners, 1992; Nonis, Fenner, & Sager, 2011; Rapp, Bachrach, & Rapp, 2013). The lack of guides on how to improve salespeople's time management could be one of the main areas that may affect organizational performance results (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988). The challenge that salespeople are facing is how to split time between activities (Mantrala et al., 1992) instead of the amount of time for each activity (Mintzberg, 1973). It is this amount of time for each activity that seems to be critical to gaining a better understanding of time management. It also assists in facilitating sales performance optimization (Albers, Krafft, & Mantrala, 2010).

Barling, Cheung, and Kelloway (1996) propose that the short-range planning dimension of time management is related to achievement in the ability to predict sales. Brassier-Rodrigues (2005) considers that positive performance is related to salespeople who can effectively manage their time. Research has found that negative time management, (a.k.a., time wasted), has a positive relationship with low performance, intentions to leave, and even emotional exhaustion (Jaramillo et al., 2005). Positive time management is required for governing the balance between your personal time and your work time. Success in this self-governance activity creates both better individual performance and greater satisfaction in both areas (McGrath & Rotchford, 1983). Therefore:

*H4: Time management is positively related to salesperson performance.*

### **Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment is defined as the ability of an employee to identify, attached, develop a sense of belonging, and show loyalty to an organization (Lam, 2012). Katzenbach (2000) proposes that employee commitment has a positive relationship with a company's ability to deliver higher performance. Several other authors have confirmed the positive relationship between organizational commitment and performance (Cohen, 1991; Jaramillo et al., 2005; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall, 1990; Riketta, 2002; Wright & Bonett, 2002). Besides the positive nature of this relationship, researchers have identified a linkage between organizational commitment and other constructs such as greater productivity, increased job satisfaction, and reduced turnover and absenteeism (e.g., Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 2013; Pappas, Schrock, Samaraweera, & Bolander, 2023). Therefore:

*H5: Organizational commitment is positively related to salesperson performance.*

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable and positive mindset about the job individuals are performing (Locke, 1976). This specific state could be due to different factors such as the task itself, the co-workers, the organizational structure, supervisor support, policies, procedures, etc. (Walker Jr et al., 1977). There have been several prior studies describing the positive relationship between job satisfaction on salespeople performance (e.g., Brown, Locander, & Locander, 2022; Grisaffe, VanMeter, & Chonko, 2016; Hom et al., 2017; Mulki, Bardhi, Lassk, & Nanavaty-Dahl, 2009; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). In their meta-analyses about job satisfaction and outcomes, (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001) found that when job satisfaction is defined by several elements, their correlation with sales performance is high, as it has a correlation value above .30. Having higher performance levels provides self-reinforcement for salespeople, which creates greater satisfaction (Locke, 1965, 1970). Job satisfaction is positively related to performance when contingent rewards (e.g., bonus) plans are properly managed to inspire salespeople (Cherrington, Reitz, & Scott, 1971). Therefore:

*H6: Job satisfaction is positively related to salesperson performance.*

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) explains how intrinsic motivation has a direct effect on the intensity, persistence, and direction of an individual that exhibits a motivated behaviour (Kanfer, Chen, & Pritchard, 2008). Persistence is a key element that helps motivated employees to perform to have higher levels of performance (Grant, 2008). Deci (1972) found that individuals that find their job to be enjoyable showed high levels of intrinsic motivation. Work engagement shows a positive impact on performance for individuals with intrinsic motivation (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011).

Core Self Evaluations (CSE), a personal trait for an individual's ability to evaluate their control and abilities, consider intrinsic motivation one of the main components (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). Research has shown that high levels of perceptions of job characteristics are found in individuals that exhibit positive levels of CSEs (Akkermans & Tims, 2017; Judge, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2004; Srivastava, Locke, Judge, & Adams, 2010). Job satisfaction is based on what people are expecting from a job, and what they actually get, meaning that having the ability to match these two elements is key for job satisfaction, individuals with high intrinsic motivation tend to have this ability (Mallin, Gammoh, Pullins, & Johnson, 2017). Because of this, we propose that intrinsic motivation is positively affected by job satisfaction when measuring performance. Therefore:

*H7: Job satisfaction positively moderates the relationship between intrinsic motivation and salesperson performance.*

## **Methodology**

### ***Samples and data collection***

The research design utilized a field study to empirically test the hypotheses. The selected methodological approach for this study is cross-sectional, using a quantitative survey design. The data was solicited through targeted email and prominent professional social media platforms. After screening for unqualified responses, the sample contains the responses of 242 respondents. The demographics of the sample were as follows: 142 (59%) were male and 100 (41%) were female. The mean age of the respondents was 44 years, the largest groups being 51-60 years old (28%) and 31-40 years old (26%). The mean for sales experience was 17 years. The sample consisted of thirty-three industries, with the largest being telecom at 38%, followed by business services at 10%. The race distribution was as follows: White 82%, Asian 8%, and Black 6%. Regarding ethnicity, 90% were not Hispanic.

### ***Measures***

Survey responses were captured to describe the constructs of delayed gratification, intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, sales performance, self-efficacy, and time management. The measurement items for each construct in the model were based on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The measurement items for each construct are adapted from previously validated items by carefully revising them to fit the context of this study. Some of the scales used in this study have variables with reversed answers, before migrating the captured data to PLS-SEM, the values for such variables were adjusted accordingly.

Delayed gratification was measured using the 12-item Generalizability of Deferment of Gratification Questionnaire (GDGQ) developed by Ray and Najman (1986). One of the important advantages of GDCQ is its focus on personal traits rather than its measurement of delayed gratification in a specific situation (Bembenuddy & Karabenick, 1998; Ward, Perry, Woltz, & Doolin, 1989). Organizational commitment was measured using items adapted from Allen and Meyer's (1990) organizational commitment questionnaire. Job satisfaction used scales adapted

from Lucas Jr, Parasuraman, Davis, and Enis (1987). Self-efficacy was measured using scales adapted from Wang and Netemeyer (2004); (2002a). Intrinsic motivation used scales adapted from Oliver and Anderson (1994). Time management used items from Schriber and Gutek's (1987) time dimensions of work scale. The self-evaluation seven-question questionnaire created by (Behrman & Perreault, 1982) was used to measure sales performance. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "not easy for me" to "very easy for me."

**Data analysis**

A partial least squares-based structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was used for modeling and hypotheses testing and focused on predicting the endogenous construct of sales performance. PLS-SEM is recognized as a standard analysis method when assessing complex inter-relationships between observed and latent variables (Sarstedt, Radomir, Moisescu, & Ringle, 2022). The analysis approach is appropriate for this study as it involves a formative model; a complex structural model; non-normally distributed data; latent variable scores; and the goal of our research is prediction (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017a). The analysis and assessment utilized the SmartPLS 4 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2022).

**Results**

**Measurement model**

The analysis of the measurement model describes how the exogenous latent constructs are measured in terms of the observed variables and their measurement properties. The assessment of the five reflective constructs (delayed gratification, organizational commitment, sales performance, self-efficacy, and time management) requires an evaluation of the reliability and validity of each variable. Each construct was assessed for indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent reliability, discriminant reliability (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), and multicollinearity. Internal consistency reliability was confirmed as the Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability scores for all reflect indicators were all above the recommended score of .70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and lower than the upper limit of .95 (Diamantopoulos, Sarstedt, Fuchs, Wilczynski, & Kaiser, 2012). To detect potential multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) coefficient is calculated. All reflective indicators were assessed as having acceptable VIF coefficients of 1.694 or less (Kock, 2015).

Convergent validity is assessed through item loading, composite reliability (CR) of each item, and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. The loadings of all items on their corresponding variables are above 0.70 ( $p < .001$ ) or were sufficiently large enough for continued use as their removal would not have increased composite reliability (Hair et al., 2011). The average variance extracted (AVE) scores for each construct were equal to or greater than the .50 threshold (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2017a) or acceptable composite validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Chin, 1998). Hence, the measurement model reflects satisfactory convergent validity. Table 1 identifies the relevant calculations for composite reliability and convergent validity.

**Table 1: Assessment of Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity**

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho a)	Composite reliability (rho c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Delayed Gratification	0.716	0.704	0.775	0.309
Organizational Commitment	0.790	0.802	0.876	0.703
Sales Performance	0.738	0.739	0.821	0.433
Self Efficacy	0.748	0.810	0.853	0.660
Time Management	0.743	0.751	0.839	0.567

Discriminant validity is established using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. In a well-fitted model, HTMT scores should be below .90 for a given pair of reflective constructs (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). For this study, all scores (Table 2) were beneath the threshold level thereby establishing discriminant validity for all constructs.

**Table 2: Assessment of Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)**

	Delayed Gratification	Organizational Commitment	Sales Performance	Self Efficacy	Time Management
Delayed Gratification					
Organizational Commitment	0.176				
Sales Performance	0.525	0.618			
Self Efficacy	0.625	0.298	0.825		
Time Management	0.525	0.328	0.674	0.626	
Job Satisfaction x Intrinsic Motivation	0.123	0.058	0.096	0.200	0.092

The research model also includes formative constructs (intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction) which were confirmed as being formative through the use of a confirmatory tetrad analysis (CTA) and theoretical review. These constructs were assessed to confirm the significance and relevance of indicator weights, convergent validity, multicollinearity, and indicator collinearity (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019; Sarstedt & Jun-Hwa, 2019). The assessment results confirmed that the formative indicator weights were approximately equal, had statistical significance at the  $\alpha = .05$  level, and were substantially above zero indicating an acceptable construct relationship (Hair et al., 2017a). Variance inflation factors (VIFs) were used to evaluate the collinearity of the formative indicators. The VIFs were assessed to be 2.275 or less, below the ideal threshold level of 3.3 (Kock, 2015). Thus, construct validity was confirmed for the formative construct.

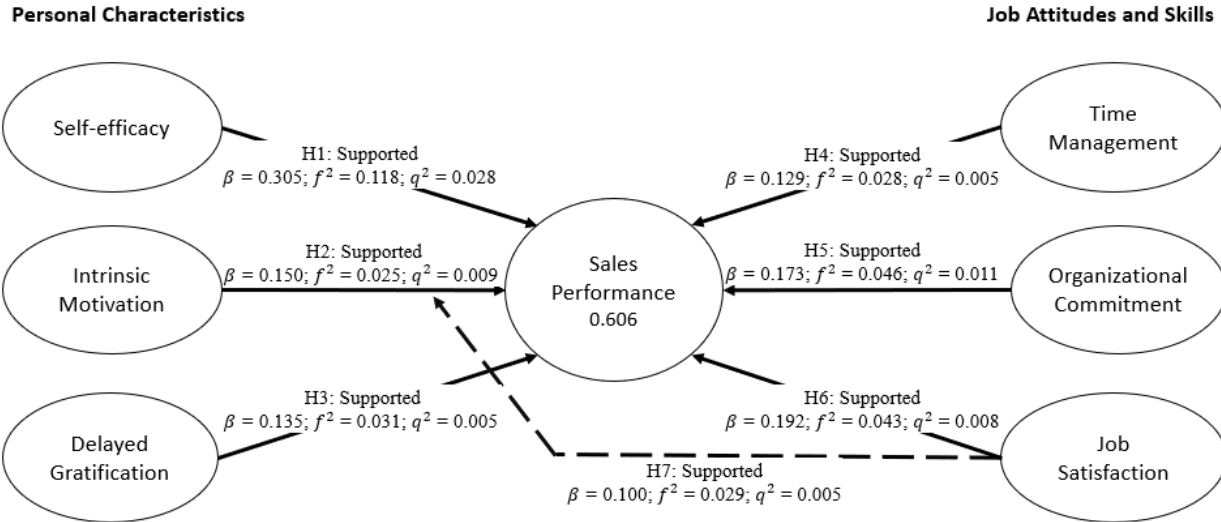
### **Structural model**

Before assessing the structural model, the model was evaluated for collinearity and unobserved heterogeneity issues. To measure the level of collinearity, each construct was evaluated against a random dependent variable. The structural model VIFs were assessed to be 1.468 or less, below the ideal threshold level of 3.3 (Kock, 2015). These results indicate that there was no collinearity issue within the structural model. The homogeneity of the sample is not always certain. Accordingly, this study utilized the finite mixture partial least squares (FIMIX-PLS) to uncover unobserved heterogeneity within the structural model. For this study, four segments were assessed using the AIC3, CAIC, and EN criteria for four segments. The summed fit of these scores confirmed that no unobserved heterogeneity exists in the sample.

Given the lack of collinearity and unobserved heterogeneity issues, the hypotheses in the structural model were tested. The standard assessment criteria included the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), the blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy measure ( $Q^2$ ), and the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients. In addition, the model's out-of-sample predictive power was evaluated using the PLS<sub>predict</sub> procedure (Shmueli, Ray, Velasquez Estrada, & Chatla, 2016).

Figure 1 illustrates the research model and identifies the  $R^2$  result as well as the path coefficient, effect size ( $f^2$  and  $q^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) for each structural path associated with each hypothesis. The structural model assessment substantiated the reliability and validity of the PLS path modeling results. The empirical analysis provided support for the hypothesized cause-effect relationships depicted in the model. The presented theoretical concept explained 60.6% of sales performance.

**Figure 1: Model with Significance Testing Results of the Structural Path Coefficients**

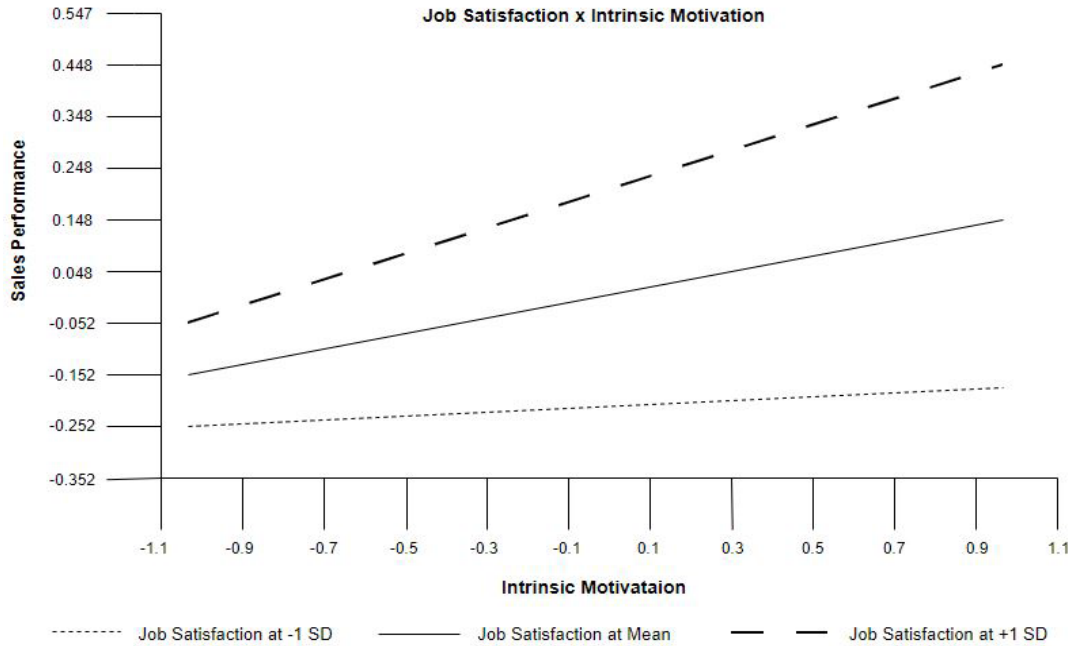


Hypothesis 1 predicted that self-efficacy was positively related to sales performance. Self-efficacy demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .305, p < .01$ ) and a small  $f^2$  effect size (.118) on sales performance. This H1 path relationship is supported and is considered to have a moderate predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .028$ ). Hypothesis 2 predicted that intrinsic motivation would be positively related to sales performance. Intrinsic motivation demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .150, p < .05$ ) and a medium  $f^2$  effect size (.025) on sales performance. This relationship is supported and is considered to have weak predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .009$ ). The third hypothesis predicted that delayed gratification would be positively related to sales performance. Delayed gratification identified a positive relationship ( $\beta = .135, p < .01$ ) and a small  $f^2$  effect size (.031) on brand satisfaction. This relationship is supported but is considered to have a weak predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .005$ ).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that time management would be positively related to sales performance. Time management demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .129, p < .05$ ) and a small  $f^2$  effect size (.028) on sales performance. This relationship is supported and is considered to have a small predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .005$ ). The fifth hypothesis predicted that organizational commitment would be positively related to sales performance. Organizational commitment identified a positive relationship ( $\beta = .173, p < .05$ ) and a small  $f^2$  effect size (.046) on sales performance. This H5 path relationship is supported and is considered to have a weak predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .011$ ). Hypothesis 6 predicted that job satisfaction would have a positive direct effect on sales performance. Job satisfaction demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .192, p < .01$ ) and a small  $f^2$  effect size (.043) on sales performance. This relationship is supported and is considered to have a weak predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .008$ ).

Hypothesis 7 predicted that job satisfaction would positively moderate the relationship between intrinsic motivation and sales performance. Job satisfaction demonstrated a positive moderating effect ( $\beta = .100, p < .01$ ) and a small  $f^2$  effect size (.029) on the intrinsic motivation relationship with sales performance. This H7 path relationship is supported. To further interpret the moderating effect of job satisfaction, the interaction of job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation on sales performance was plotted and shown in Figure 3. When job satisfaction increases, sales performance increases more rapidly for respondents with a low level of job satisfaction (mean – standard deviation) than for respondents with a high level of job satisfaction (mean + standard deviation). This means intrinsic motivation has a greater influence on sales performance when job satisfaction is lower. It also shows that, for the same level of intrinsic motivation, a high level of job satisfaction is associated with a high level of sales performance.

**Figure 2: Simple Slope Analysis for Interaction Effect of Job Satisfaction**



**Out-of-sample predictive ability**

Given the predictive nature of this study and the adequacy of the overall sample size, additional analysis is required to affirm the causal prediction capabilities of this model. Thus, the final step of assessing the predictive power involves the assessment of the model’s out-of-sample predictive ability using the *PLSpredict* functionality (Shmueli et al., 2016). Ten segments were created, analyzed, and compared across 10 repetition assessments of the indicators for sales performance.  $Q^2_{predict}$  values  $> 0$  for each of the indicators for the endogenous latent variable. However, one of the indicators had a PLS-SEM RMSE value less than the LM RMSE value. As such, only the majority (five of the six) of the indicators for sales performance yielded smaller prediction errors when compared to the linear regression model (LM). This finding indicates a medium predictive power for the model (Shmueli et al., 2019).

The robustness of the predictive model analysis was further assessed using the non-parametric Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT). For this model, the difference in the average loss values for sales performance ( $-0.159, p < .001$ ) was determined to be significantly below zero which supports the conclusion that the model has good predictive power (Lienggaard et al., 2021). Collectively, the  $PLS_{predict}$  and the CVPAT results confirmed that the research model and its predictive power were significant and supported the core goal of this research study.

**Discussion**

This study contributes to our understanding of what personal characteristics and job attitudes and skills contribute to sales performance. The results show support for the hypothesized model as its paths accounted for 60.6 percent of the variance in sales performance which strongly signals that the proposed relationships are key in understanding salesperson performance.

Regarding personal traits, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and delayed gratification were all significant confirming their positive relationships with sales performance. The study builds upon previous findings on self-efficacy (Krishnan et al., 2002; Peterson, 2020), intrinsic motivation (Khusainova et al., 2018; Ramarajan et al., 2017), and delayed gratification (Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002; Thoresen, Bradley, Bliese, & Thoresen, 2004).

First, we consider the positive effect self-efficacy had on sales performance. As the findings show, this positive relationship will allow salespeople to feel confident in their ability to perform well in sales-related tasks. As the literature has shown, when self-efficacy increases sales performance increases as well (Krishnan et al., 2002; Peterson, 2020). However, it is important to consider that self-efficacy goes beyond sales-related tasks to also post-sales behaviors such as account cross-selling and upselling as well as increasing confidence in the ability to serve customers beyond the sale. Self-efficacious salespeople believe in their ability to perform and thus attribute their

success to their efforts and working smarter and harder. They will not quit so easily and be more inclined to see challenges as an opportunity to employ their abilities and skills.

Observing intrinsic motivation, the results show it has a positive influence on sales performance by acting as a motivating force to perform better. This motivation is likely to be seen in tasks where areas of the self are fully employed, leading the person to become fully immersed. This, in turn, can be stimulating and lead to maintaining, or improving, one's efforts and persistence. Intrinsic motivation plays a role in occupations, such as sales, where interpersonal interactions and role immersion (focusing completely on one's role) occur. This finding is in line with the value of intrinsic motivation and performance as posited by (Ramarajan et al., 2017) where intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between identity enhancement and sales performance. Intrinsic motivation paired with self-efficacy allows salespeople not to be stuck, stunned, or caught between worlds while allowing for a better transition into the workflow and allowing for focus on the multiple roles required in sales.

A key contribution was the impact uncovered that delayed gratification, a self-discipline-based construct, has on sales performance. Salespeople should exhibit strong self-discipline to be able to self-regulate and turn to delayed gratification when it is important for their long-term achievements (Nuttin, 2014). Delayed gratification will serve as a control mechanism to prevent, for example, closing a sale too soon because they are trying to meet their quotas. By assessing the situation and not rushing, salespeople will be able to draw on further possibilities (Cherniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan, & Adler, 1998). It is important to acknowledge that delayed gratification is divided into letting go of the temptation of the easier route and waiting on the better reward (Liu, Wang, & Jiang, 2013). Hence, salespeople's hard work on an intensive and thorough exploration of needs would pay off for more profitable sales rather than if they succumb to the temptation to close a sale too soon based on the initially uncovered, yet probably incomplete needs assessment. Success will come down from choosing the pain of discipline over the ease of instant gratification.

This study also provides results regarding job attitudes and skills. The study found that salespeople who are adept in time management can exhibit stronger sales performance. Previous findings in organizational behavior are consistent with those of this study as perceived control of time was positively related to job performance and job satisfaction (Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2004). As more organizations find themselves in competitive and disruptive landscapes, salespeople who can plan their activities, so that they can achieve their goals and priorities in the time available. By effectively managing their time, productivity increases as salespeople prioritize important tasks and decrease the time to complete them while providing quality customer service to clients who depend on them. The literature suggests that experience is a key factor in time management as in a study of brokers, less experienced brokers spend significantly more time on prospecting and seeking advice while more experienced brokers devoted considerably more time to dealing with business clients and clients in non-business settings (Borman, Dorsey, & Ackerman, 1992).

As noted in the meta-analysis by Jaramillo et al. (2005), organizational performance is expected to produce strong results due to the nature of a sales job. The results present evidence that such a relationship is in line with the results of the literature. It is interesting to note that in some studies sales performance has also been antecedent to organizational commitment (Sager & Johnston, 1989). Organizationally committed salespeople have a strong psychological identification with the organization and can be expected to not only continue all the activities associated with the nature of their job but also exhibit high effort levels, high employee productivity, strong advocacy for their organization, and reduced absenteeism. The link between organizational commitment and sales performance becomes even more important in organizations with a strong ethical climate (for a review see (Itani et al., 2019)). A sales job calls for individuals to have high autonomy, be boundary-spanners, and have their physical location to be outside the organization; thus, one would expect them to have a positive and strong organizational commitment to be able to perform these duties.

A high level of salespeople's job satisfaction can result in motivation to provide high levels of customer satisfaction which, in turn, provides the organization with a customer base who might be more loyal and profitable. Because the success of a sales-based organization lies in its salespeople, job satisfaction is particularly important as they have a direct influence on customers. Salespeople with high levels of job satisfaction are inclined to have strong sales performance as denoted by the results. These individuals therefore can be expected to be attentive, courteous, highly capable, and engage in follow-up activities as the nature of their role requires. As concluded by Pettijohn et al. (2007) job satisfaction remains relevant and a worthy pursuit of research endeavors.

Last, job satisfaction positively moderates the relationship between intrinsic motivation and sales performance. Salespeople whose motivational source is internal will denote a higher level of such motivation if they

experience job satisfaction and thus, a higher sales performance. Job satisfaction then becomes an important moderator in our study of sales performance. This finding answers the call for moderation variables posited by Jaramillo et al. (2005) that several factors might impact sales performance.

### **Conclusion**

The results revealed that personal characteristics and job-related attitudes and skills have a direct and significant impact on sales performance. Organizations can fully benefit when they seek and promote self-efficacious and intrinsically motivated salespeople in their workforces. An interesting and dual contribution to the literature was found in the significance of delayed gratification and time management. Salespeople would benefit from developing self-restraint to pursue sales. The temptation might occur when trying to close a sale and move quickly to the next as not only might be perceived as salespeople being productive but, it leads them to feel the ‘adrenaline rush’ of the sale. Being thorough and detailed and exhibiting patience can yield more profitable sales and greater benefits for the company, the client, and the salesperson. At the same time, time management, rather than multitasking or haphazardly attempting to complete tasks, will increase sales performance. Another key contribution was found in the moderating value of job satisfaction in the relationship between intrinsic motivation and sales performance. Thus, to continue to improve sales performance, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction must be present due to the many positive benefits they contribute. Organizations have a responsibility to not only expect value creation from their employees but to also provide value for them.

### **Practical Implications**

Successful salespeople, those with strong sales performance, will exhibit the personal traits of being able to have self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and an aptitude for delayed gratification. They will have confidence in their knowledge of the solutions they provide as well as in their ability to sell. This is fueled not only because they get the extrinsic rewards that come with a job in sales where quota and recognition are at play but because it is personally rewarding to them; they enjoy selling. Managers can then promote autonomy (the right condition of self-government), mastery (a comprehensive knowledge base), and purpose (the reason for the tasks being done) to encourage these personal characteristics. Furthermore, delayed gratification can promote positive team interactions such as sharing knowledge, sharing best practices, and promoting positive team interactions that would augment the sales performance of the entire workforce. We foresee this practice to equip salespeople to fully explore all the possibilities and challenges that a sale presents. In addition, delaying one’s gratification can indirectly affect job satisfaction, ethical climate, organizational trust, and a pro-customer attitude that, in turn, can lead to better sales approaches such as adaptive selling and value co-creation.

Regarding time management, the findings show support for salespeople developing a plethora of techniques to be able to create and effectively manage a schedule that shows how and when the work will be done. This can lead to identifying non-productive behaviors and understanding the quality and time needed in customer interactions as well as risks. Focusing on time management will allow salespeople to have a realistic expectation of how long sales cycles might take and determine where flexibility is within the schedule and have a positive impact on delayed gratification. Managers are encouraged to promote the sharing of time management.

Organizational commitment should be understood beyond defining it as an intention to continue to work. Successful salespeople are committed, possess out-of-the-box thinking, go the extra mile for their customers, and exhibit adaptability, commitment, and professionalism. Thus, it should be seen as an attitude that is reflected as the strength of the salesperson’s psychological identification and involvement with their organization. Managers who understand and foster organizational commitment can potentially expect customer-oriented behaviors, adaptive selling, and reduced turnover intentions. Examples to promote such commitment can be found in providing timely and valuable feedback, skill variety, and greater job autonomy and job satisfaction which, as shown by the results, would increase the relationship between intrinsic motivation and job performance. It is proposed that managers adopt a decentralized style where salespeople have the autonomy to make the best decisions about when and how to work while promoting integration with the team and employee participation in these decisions. In turn, it will be very likely that sales performance will benefit from both personal characteristics and job-specific attitudes and skills.

### **Limitations**

Due to the nature of sales performance being a self-reported measure, a personal bias to report a higher sales performance might be present in the responses obtained. Research that uses more objective sales data would yield a richer understanding of sales performance and the relationships around it. Second, this study does not account for the impact of management and leadership styles that might be at play in job satisfaction and organizational commitment.



Also, the study did not have any ethical components as reported by the literature to be of significance in organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Lastly, the study does not make a distinction about whether salespeople engage in complex selling tasks at a national level, which might offer different results.

### Future Research

Future studies should continue to expand the type of antecedents on and impact of sales performance. Due to the evolving nature of the sales environment and various industries, personal characteristics, such as the impact of work isolation, and perceived adequacy of training, as well as job-related variables, such as the impact of technology and hybrid work conditions, could be explored. Identification of other moderating as well as mediating variables under different sales contexts would yield a greater understanding of what motivates, satisfies, and increases sales performance among workforces. Recommendations for efficiently nurturing personal characteristics and job-specific attitudes and skills can be provided more confidently if we have a better understanding of these relationships.

Future research can also make a distinction regarding the tenure of the sales force and whether they approach complex selling. Another significant consideration is to account for the selling orientations and sales cycles. Would delayed gratification and time management be impacted under these circumstances? Variables arising from a changed workspace due to so many environmental disruptions and evolutions of workplace values can be expected to play a role in salespeople, the ethical environment, and their performance.

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# Summary Brief

## Investigating the Motivations of “Serial” Direct Sellers

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*Despite the lengthy history of direct selling, it is not often investigated in the marketing literature, perhaps due to those who question the channel's legitimacy. However, a significant number of people choose to be involved in the channel and some of those choose to be affiliated with multiple direct selling companies over their lifetime or concurrently. This research investigates these “serial” direct sellers with specific interest in their motivations.*

### Introduction

Direct selling has previously been defined as “face-to-face selling away from a fixed retail location” (Peterson & Wotruba, 1996, p. 2). Today, direct selling is often facilitated by technology, so it no longer necessarily occurs face-to-face, but it is still a popular form of distribution. Examples of direct selling companies include established firms such as Avon and Mary Kay, and relative newcomers such as Paparazzi and Colorstreet. As of July 2023, the Direct Selling Association's (DSA) website stated that they had “nearly 130 member companies” (Direct Selling Association, 2023b). However, there are approximately 1300 additional non-member direct selling companies (DSA, 2006).

Research suggests that 7.7 percent of U.S. adults have participated in direct selling in their lifetime (DeLiema et al., 2018). The channel also receives a fair amount of “hate” from academics (Keep & Vander Nat, 2014) and government agencies (FTC, 2023). Despite the relatively low participation in the channel and the “hate” from multiple directions, some individuals seemingly “love” direct selling, signing up to sell for multiple companies over their lifetime or concurrently. The purpose of this research is to investigate the motivations of these “serial” direct sellers.

### Literature Review

Direct selling companies and their distributors have a broad impact on the economy. In 2021, the worldwide sales of direct selling companies was \$186.1 billion, with over 128 million direct selling representatives (WFDSA, 2021). In the United States, 2022 direct sales totaled \$40.5 billion and there were 6.7 million direct selling representatives (DSA, 2023). Research suggests 7.7 percent of U.S. adults have participated in one or more direct selling companies in their lifetime (DeLiema et al., 2018) and the percentage of consumers that have purchased items from direct sellers ranges from 17.5 percent to 25.5 percent (Poon et al., 2012; Young & Albaum, 2003).

Today, most direct sales organizations compensate their distributors for recruiting others, meaning most engage in multi-level marketing or MLM (DSA, 2006). Despite some marketing researchers defending direct selling and subsequently MLM (Albaum & Peterson, 2011), it is a channel that generates a fair amount of “hate”. While direct selling organizations have received a fair amount of hate since their inception (Keep & Vander Nat, 2014), most of the current criticisms of the channel trace back to the MLM aspects of the organizations (Grob & Vriens, 2019).

Recent criticism of MLM has come from government entities such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), marketing researchers, and a popular podcast, among others. On its website, the FTC discusses MLM businesses and pyramid schemes in the same place. The FTC states “most people who join legitimate MLMs make little or no money. Some of them lose money” (FTC, 2023). A recent academic article discussed five ethical problems of MLM companies (Grob & Vriens, 2019), including misleading both distributors and customers. In 2018, a podcast called “The Dream”, whose explicit purpose was to “expose” MLMs, was downloaded over 10 million times (Ducker, 2020).

Research suggests direct sellers are often motivated at least in part by nonfinancial motives (Gleim et al., 2019). Direct sellers have higher levels of self-congruence with their organizations versus other gig economy workers (Gleim et al., 2019). Women direct sellers in South Africa report a wide range of additional benefits including transferable skills, increased self-confidence, recognition, social skills, and increased respect (Scott et al., 2012). Cuhna (2018) observed a Facebook group comprised of Perfectly Posh distributors for nearly a year and remarked that these distributors were motivated by far more than money, specifically noting they were motivated by purpose, friendships, and community. Other potential nonfinancial motivations for direct sellers include social consciousness, social contact, and access to products for personal use (Albaum & Peterson, 2011).

### Proposed Methodology

“Serial” direct sellers will be identified using a snowball sampling technique. Qualitative data will be collected using in-depth interviews that will capture a detailed history of each respondent’s experience with direct selling as well as the motivations for each direct selling affiliation.

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# **Session 10.2: Brand Management**

**Chair:** Yam Limbu

## Summary Brief

# **‘SAFE’ strategies to promote COVID-19 vaccination: How effective are source, appeal, framing, and evidence type approaches?**

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*This systematic review analyzed the effectiveness of key persuasive strategies - source, appeal, framing, and evidence (SAFE) - on COVID-19 vaccination intention. Quantitative studies were searched in Web of Science, Scopus, and PubMed following the PRISMA guidelines. From the 60 studies that met inclusion criteria, source and framing are the most commonly applied SAFE strategies. However, source characteristics are a more consistent influence on vaccine intentions than message framing strategies, with expert sources and general practitioners emerging as the key sources contributing to greater vaccine intentions. In addition, a range of mediators and moderators influence the process through which SAFE message strategies impact vaccine intentions. Framing effects, in particular, are moderated by political identity, source characteristics, and vaccine perceptions. Tests of mediating processes highlight how health behavior judgments (e.g., perceived vaccine benefits, risks, trust in vaccination, perceived severity) and message response/perceptions (e.g., counterarguing, perceived similarity/empathy) operate as key intervening factors between SAFE message strategies and vaccine intentions. Overall, when practitioners apply various structural approaches (narrative elements, fear appeals, framing cues) to vaccine promotion campaigns, they should be cognizant of who is providing that appeal. Targeted populations may benefit most from different structural elements if they are integrated with sources that resonate with the audience.*

### **Introduction**

Promoting vaccination and persuading the public to receive vaccines are critical for the success of vaccination campaigns. However, convincing unvaccinated individuals to accept vaccination against COVID-19 remains a significant challenge. In addition, people’s negative attitudes toward vaccination in general, their misperceptions of the severity of COVID-19, and their doubts about the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines pose obstacles to future vaccination programs and public health concerns. To overcome these barriers, government agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations employed various communication strategies to educate about vaccination and persuade people to vaccinate against COVID-19. However, there currently lacks a comprehensive review of empirical studies examining the effectiveness of message strategies on COVID-19 vaccination intention (CVI). The purpose of this systematic review is to assess the effectiveness of four communication strategies - Source, Appeal, Framing, and Evidence (SAFE) – employed to promote COVID-19 vaccination.

Some message sources (i.e., the characteristics of message providers) used in COVID-19 communication campaigns include experts/scientists, politicians, government agencies, health authorities, global or regional health organizations, public agencies, celebrities, community and religious leaders, patients, and primary care physicians (PCP). In addition to source cues, COVID-19 vaccination campaigns incorporated various message appeals (e.g., emotional, rational arguments), framing strategies (e.g., positive consequences of vaccinations, negative consequences of failing to vaccinate), and various types of evidence (statistical, exemplar) to influence attitude and behavior change. However, the literature examining these different strategies reports inconsistent support. Given the widespread impact of COVID-19 and the challenges with vaccine intent, it is crucial to understand how effective SAFE strategies were in influencing CVI. This systematic review aims to appraise and synthesize empirical evidence to answer the following questions.

RQ1. How effective is each of these SAFE strategies in predicting CVI?

RQ2. When comparing these SAFE strategies, which strategy is the most common predictor of CVI?

RQ3. What intervening factors (e.g., mediator, moderator) influence SAFE-CVI relationships?

## Method

This systematic review used the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Liberati et al., 2009). We included primary studies in this systematic review if they: 1) were empirical studies, 2) were published in peer-reviewed journals, 3) were written in English, 4) examined the effects of message source, message appeal, message framing, or message evidence on COVID-19 vaccination intention for primary series or booster doses, and 5) were published between December 2019 and April 2023. We searched in Web of Science, Scopus, and PubMed databases and other articles manually using various search terms, including vaccin\*, intent\*, accept\*; covid, coronavirus, or SARS-CoV-2; source, source credibility, endors\*, recommend\*, expert, celebrity, physician; appeal, fear, emotional, rational, regret; framing, loss, gain, goal, attribute; evidence, narrative, nonnarrative, and statistical. A total of 852 records were retrieved from the initial search on electronic databases. After removing duplicates, qualitative, non-peer-reviewed, and other irrelevant studies, 415 records were retained for screening. Of these, 267 articles were excluded after screening the abstracts as irrelevant or not examining the effects of SAFE on vaccination intention. A total of 148 articles were eligible for full-text screening. Of them, we removed 94 studies as they did not report necessary statistics or had data, measurement, and other methodological issues. In addition, we found six relevant studies through a Google Scholar search and a manual reference list search. Thus, a total of 60 studies were included in this systematic review.

## Key Findings

Source and framing are the most commonly applied SAFE strategies. However, source characteristics are a more consistent influence on vaccine intentions than message framing strategies. Government sources, expert sources, and healthcare professionals emerged as the key sources contributing to greater COVID-19 vaccination intentions. Compared to gain-framed messages, loss-framed messages were superior at impacting vaccination intentions. The majority of message appeal and message evidence studies reported insignificant main effects. In addition, a range of mediators and moderators influence the process through which SAFE message strategies impact vaccine intentions. Framing effects, in particular, are moderated by political identity, source characteristics, and vaccine perceptions. Tests of mediating processes highlight how health behavior judgments (e.g., perceived vaccine benefits, risks, trust in vaccination, perceived severity) and message response/perceptions (e.g., counterarguing, perceived similarity/empathy) operate as key intervening factors between SAFE message strategies and vaccine intentions. Studies that examined the interaction between two SAFE strategies found that framing effects were strengthened when used in combination with specific sources. The efficacy of SAFE strategies differs across populations, especially age groups, diverse ethnic/racial populations, and those with varying political affiliations. Overall, when practitioners apply various structural approaches (narrative elements, fear appeals, framing cues) to vaccine promotion campaigns, they should be cognizant of who is providing that appeal. Targeted populations may benefit most from different structural elements if they are integrated with sources that resonate with the audience.

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# Summary Brief

## Strategies to Increase Brand Authenticity for Digital Interbrand Interactions (IBI)

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*InterBrand Interactions (IBI) as the form of interactive communicative dialogues on SNS between two (or more) brands dialogue between brands had being noticed in the last decade. However, there is a lack of academic research about IBI phenomena. Does this strategy go beyond just creating impressions and generating engagement? Does this strategy generate tangible benefits (value) for the brand? If so, do consumers consider IBI as a true statement by the brand? Using Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), we argue that consumers do not merely believe the information that brands use in IBI. On the contrary, they dynamically interpret underlying motives and veiled meanings of brands during the IBI as persuasion attempts.*

This research paper explores the phenomenon of InterBrand Interactions (IBI) on social networking sites (SNS), focusing specifically on brand interactions on Twitter. IBI is defined as the form of interactive communicative dialogues on SNS between two (or more) brands' assets with non-contractual obligations (Ross, 2021). Despite the widespread presence of IBI in business and entertainment media, academic research on this topic remains scarce. This paper aims to fill this knowledge gap by examining the underlying mechanisms that drive consumer beliefs and engagement in IBI, as well as their subsequent impact on consumer behavior (Ramadan, 2019; Ross & Hajjat, 2016, Saavedra et al, 2023).

Drawing upon the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Hibbert et al, 2007), the paper proposes that consumers do not passively accept brand messages in IBI but actively interpret them as persuasion attempts. These interpretations are influenced by consumers' brand familiarity brand (Campbell & Keller, 2003), their knowledge of the promotional activity, and the topic being discussed. Consumers use these interpretations to assess the authenticity (Yang et al, 2021) and effectiveness of brand messages, which, in turn, shape their attitudes and perceptions of trust towards the brands involved.

To investigate this phenomenon, the paper adopts a qualitative analysis, various types of content found in IBI, such as emotional content, entertaining and surprising content, brand rivalry, and humor, are identified and examined. These findings inform the subsequent empirical study, which aims to validate and expand upon the theoretical propositions derived from the PKM framework.

Based on the above discussion, we will be developing the following hypotheses:

H1: Brands with high (low) levels of familiarity lead to high (low) customer's perceived brand authenticity.

H2: Customer's perceived brand authenticity has a positive impact on customer's attitude towards IBI.

H3: Customer's perceived brand authenticity has a positive impact on customer's brand trust.

H4: Type of initiation message moderates the relationship between brand familiarity and customers' perceived brand authenticity.

The empirical analysis involves three different quantitative studies surveying a sample of Twitter users who have been exposed to IBI instances. The survey measures key variables related to the PKM in the context of SNS. The research findings have significant implications for marketing practitioners. Understanding consumer perceptions and behaviors in relation to IBI can help brands optimize their interactions on SNS, enhance consumer-brand relationships, and ultimately drive sales and brand loyalty. The proposed framework, based on PKM, provides a theoretical foundation for studying IBI and offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics of consumer-brand interactions in the digital era.

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## Full Paper

# What Are Some Primary Drivers for User Continuation Intentions for Digital Assistants?

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*People are most commonly familiar with digital assistants (DAs) like Siri and Alexa. Competition among the major DAs remains stiff as customer expectations are increasing. Because of this, there is a greater focus on understanding the drivers of DA user continuation intentions. While the volume of extant literature for DAs is growing, there is a deficiency in studies that examine certain primary drivers of user continuation intentions. This study examines the relationships between brand satisfaction and other constructs on DA user continuation intentions. The results explained significant relationships between these driver constructs and user continuation intentions.*

### Introduction

Digital assistants (DAs) are becoming an integrated fixture through the everyday use of virtual assistants, intelligent agent technologies, chatbots, and digital virtual assistants, which have become commonplace as either standalone applications or integrated into many other consumer electronics devices. DAs are conduits to the consumer as over 60% of marketers reported DAs as being ‘extremely’ or ‘significantly’ important in their efforts to reach customers (Kinsella, 2021). The market is currently dominated by the ‘Big 3’ of Apple's Siri, Google's Google Assistant, and Amazon's Alexa. The adoption and application go beyond the consumer market as 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; Brill, Munoz, & Miller, 2019; Gelbrich, Hagel, & Orsingher, 2021; Kumar et al., 2021; Maduku et al., 2023).

The goal of understanding DAs and consumers is made more challenging because they interact with technology applications and devices in different ways and 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 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 consumer 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).

These forces alone, however, may not be enough for consumers to continue their use of DAs as the drivers of usage change and moderate over time. Thus, understanding the internal factors driving the consumer's usage and the factors that practitioners can incorporate into their platforms is key to maintaining and growing the use of DAs. Research has started to show how continuation intentions can be fueled when theories such as expectation confirmation (Shiau, Yuan, Pu, Ray, & Chen, 2020) and the technology acceptance model (Balakrishnan & Dwivedi, 2021) can be utilized, while also integrating context and individual factors (Beeler et al., 2022; Ewers, Baier, & Höhn, 2020; Gelbrich et al., 2021; Maduku et al., 2023) to understand a consumer's intention to continuing to use DAs. Expectation confirmation theory (ECT) is a lens to understand consumer satisfaction processes (Oliver, 1980). ECT posits that users' continuance intention is primarily determined by their satisfaction with prior technology experiences as well as the expectation of receiving desirable future benefits. (Bhattacharjee, 2001) extended ECT by demonstrating that the users' continued usage intention of information technologies and services can be explained. ECT has demonstrated its

ability to explain users' intention to continue using both the marketing service (Guo, Barnes, & Le-Nguyen, 2015) and artificial intelligence (AI) in the digital technology literature (Ashfaq, Yun, Yu, & Loureiro, 2020; Gupta, Yousaf, & Mishra, 2020). Furthermore, Brill et al. (2019) demonstrated that ECT is an appropriate theory for examining the user satisfaction evaluation process for AI-based DAs.

One of the first factors that can affect a consumer'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 et al., 2020) and their experiences and observations help them to 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 et al., 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 the technical design, initial adoption behaviors, customer support, privacy considerations, or DA-linked applications. We are unaware of any research focused on examining certain specific drivers of intention toward the continued use of DAs.

For this study, we will examine the relationships between brand satisfaction, perceived trust, perceived performance, and self-efficacy on user continuation intentions. Our contribution is that, to our knowledge, is the first study to investigate the role that continuation intentions have in DAs. Previous work on DAs has focused on purchase intentions (Balakrishnan & Dwivedi, 2021), consumer outcomes such as initial use intention, positive word-of-mouth, and relative preference (Beeler et al., 2022), passion and commitment (Maduku et al., 2023), and perceived intention to use and usefulness (Ewers et al., 2020). We also contribute by examining the impact that antecedents such as perceived trust and perceived performance have on continuation intention. Last, we posit that self-efficacy, a variable not yet addressed in the literature on DAs, will have a significant impact on brand satisfaction and thus ultimately impact the continuation intentions (Brill et al., 2019). In the remaining sections, we review the literature and theoretical framework supporting the study as well as develop the research hypotheses. Next, we describe the research methodology employed. Afterward, we present the empirical results. We conclude by discussing the implications for theory and practice, limitations, and further research directions.

## Literature Review

DAs have become a common staple for many consumers in their everyday lives. Research is attempting to keep up with this rapidly changing technological landscape with antecedents, outcome variables, and theories that are of importance in this field of study. Among these outcome variables, consumer perceptions are playing a key role as it is important to understand how consumers evaluate a DA's ability, and what factors shape consumer perceptions of those abilities (Beeler et al., 2022) that, ultimately, leads to acceptance (Ewers et al., 2020) and satisfaction (Brill et al., 2019; Gelbrich et al., 2021) with them. These assistants offer several benefits such as an instant exchange, convenience, and 24/7 availability (Gelbrich et al., 2021). Furthermore, providing emotional support and 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 (Ebbers, 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 (Brill et al., 2019; Gelbrich et al., 2021; 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 (Ewers et al., 2020; Pitardi & Marriott, 2021; Yang & Lee, 2019) are relevant outcomes that ought to be accounted for when studying the consumers' 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, artificial intelligence 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). Table 1 presents an overview of the recent literature on DAs.

**Table 1: Recent Literature Examining 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 consumer outcomes and ability assessments are dependent upon both the use context (i.e., automation versus augmentation; disclosure of automation) and individual characteristics (i.e., consumer mood state and consumer preference for human interaction)
Brill et al. (2019)	Expectations confirmations theory and satisfaction	The results showed that expectations and confirmation of expectations have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction with DAs. Perceived trust positively moderated the relationship between confirmation of expectations and customer satisfaction while privacy concerns moderated it negatively.
Ebbers et al. (2021)	User preferences for privacy features	The study 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.
Ewers et al. (2020)	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Uses and Gratifications Approach (UGA)	Enjoyment, social status, and social influence were the main acceptance drivers for DAs.
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. The results showed that the effect on persistence only occurs when a DA provides emotional support in technology-mediated services.
Zhang et al. (2021)	Social closeness	Recommendation quality and anthropomorphization increased social closeness with the DAs and only high-quality recommendations, not anthropomorphic elements, led to increases in purchase intention.
Maduku et al. (2023)	Individual characteristics (stimulus-organism-response framework)	Usefulness, ease of use, privacy concern, and localization acted as stimuli to direct a state of passion for DAs, and how this produces word-of-mouth intention and commitment to DAs 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	Individuals were motivated by the utilitarian benefits, symbolic benefits, and social benefits provided by DAs. The research showed a moderating role of perceived privacy risks in inhibiting and negatively influencing the use of DAs.
Moriuchi (2021)	Anthropomorphism	Effort expectation had a strong positive impact on consumers' usage experience with the DAs. In addition, effort expectation had a stronger impact on consumers' usage experience for information-gathering activities, while performance expectation had a stronger impact on user experience when consumers use the DAs for task-completion purposes.
Pitardi and Marriott (2021)	Human-Computer Interaction Theories and Para-Social Relationship Theory	The study showed that functional elements drove users' attitudes toward using DAs. Specifically, social elements such as social presence and social cognition were the single antecedents for developing trust. These results also reinforced the notion that beings interact with DAs handling them as social entities.
Stucke and Ezrachi (2017)	Economy, privacy, and democracy	Encourages consumers to be mindful of the power DAs may have on data gathering and distribution as well as the successive implications for privacy and welfare. Concludes that the goals for a data-driven economy must be an all-encompassing economy, which guards the privacy interests of its citizens, sponsors the citizenry's overall well-being, and encourages a healthy democracy.
Yang and Lee (2019)	Perceive value theory	The results showed that perceived usefulness and enjoyment had a significant effect on usage intention. Among the three constructs reflecting software- and hardware-based utilitarian value, content quality had the strongest influence on perceived usefulness.

A growing trend in the studies listed in Table 1 is their focus on uncovering the antecedents of consumer outcomes rather than testing for such outcomes. This approach emerges from the argument that such outcomes are well-established in the adoption and use of other technologies literature. For example, Beeler et al. (2022) used many consumer 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) while the Expectation Confirmation Theory was used to evidence that customer expectations are being satisfied via the DA interaction experience (Brill et al., 2019). Last, some studies have used elements of a particular theory, such as the Job Replacement Theory (Beeler et al., 2022), while others have combined theories, such as combining elements of the Technology Acceptance Model and the Uses and Gratifications Approach (Ewers et al., 2020).

## Hypotheses

Using ECT as a theoretical foundation, users' continued usage intention of information technologies and services can be explained through the causal relationships associated with the ECT expectation and confirmation 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 users will remain using these technologies and brands (Bhattacharjee & Barfar, 2011). Regarding AI-based assistants, Brill et al. (2019) showed that ECT was a suitable theory for researching the user satisfaction evaluation process.

When considering the relationship between perceived trust and continuation intentions, the existing research is limited and often not aligned on outcomes. For this research, we use the finding from Veloutsou (2015) on consumers that perceived trust has been demonstrated as being an important influence of a customer's commitment and continuation intention. This finding was further supported by Talwar et al. (2020) on mobile-payment continuation intentions. Accordingly, we posit the following:

*H1: Perceived trust is positively related to continuation intention for digital assistants.*

Customer satisfaction is essential to long-term business success. Customers who are satisfied with a brand tend to have an attachment to the brand and generally seek to continue interaction with the brand (Oliver, 2014). Prior experiences with brands can significantly influence current and future expectations about the brand as well as influence perceptions of performance norms. Consistent with the tenants of ECT, an individual's prior experience(s) with brands is reflected in the consumer's specific brand satisfaction judgment. This judgment is an evaluative summary of direct consumption experiences and reflects updated expectations about the brand, the establishment of experience-based brand performance norms, and the confirmation of the alignment of those expectations with the performance norms (Guo et al., 2015). Therefore, we define brand satisfaction as a consumer's summary judgment of whether a brand meets his/her performance expectations or fulfills usage needs (Oliver, 2014; Oliver & Burke, 1999).

The consumer decision-making process for technology usage involves many different components, two of which are trust and brand satisfaction (Marikyan et al., 2022; Menidjel, Benhabib, & Bilgihan, 2017). Consumers generally trust brands that demonstrate an acceptable level of competence, benevolence, and integrity (Veloutsou, 2015). Trust has been demonstrated to be a central driver in the consumer's decision-making process with AI-based technologies (Cheng & Jiang, 2022; Hengstler, Enkel, & Duelli, 2016; Marikyan et al., 2022). It has also been evaluated as being directly linked to positive brand experiences including satisfaction (Leslie & McNeill, 2010). Therefore, we posit the following:

*H2: Perceived trust is positively related to brand satisfaction for digital assistants.*

User trust perceptions are a critical factor in the ultimate decision to utilize and adopt the technology (Arfi, Nasr, Kondrateva, & Hikkerova, 2021; Marikyan et al., 2022; Patil, Tamilmani, Rana, & Raghavan, 2020). Because it is generally reflective of a certain emotional and cognitive mindset, perceived trust is essential for reducing both uncertainties and any perceived performance risk and uncertainties often associated with AI-based technologies (Hengstler et al., 2016; Singh & Sinha, 2020) including DAs (Marikyan et al., 2022). Therefore, we posit the following:

*H3: Perceived trust is positively related to the perceived performance of digital assistants.*

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. Brands offer several valuable functions to consumers 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 consumers through brand promises (Veloutsou, 2015). Whether through their own direct experiences with a product or observations of the experiences of others, consumers can develop a perception of satisfaction with a product and brand (Nysveen et al., 2018) if they believe in their ability. Accordingly, we posit the following:

*H4: Self-efficacy is positively related to brand satisfaction for digital assistants.*

In line with the ECT, consumers develop evaluation judgments on their satisfaction with products and brands. Following this theory, the continuation intention for branded products is determined primarily by their satisfaction with the brand (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Marikyan et al., 2022; Veloutsou, 2015). Zhou, Tsiga, Li, Zheng, and Jiang (2018) and Shiau et al. (2020) demonstrated this relationship in respective studies involving an e-finance services platform and a fintech services platform. This relationship is viewed as being similarly relevant for DAs. Therefore, we posit the following:

*H5: Brand satisfaction is positively related to continuation intention for digital assistants.*

Brill et al. (2019) demonstrated that the ECT is relevant for examining relationships involving DAs. ECT has identified that an individual's prior experience(s) with a brand are reflected within that consumer's brand satisfaction evaluation. Similarly, prior experience(s) (i.e., actual or observed) with a brand can significantly influence current and future expectations about the brand as well as influence perceptions of performance norms (Oliver, 1999). Given this, we posit that:

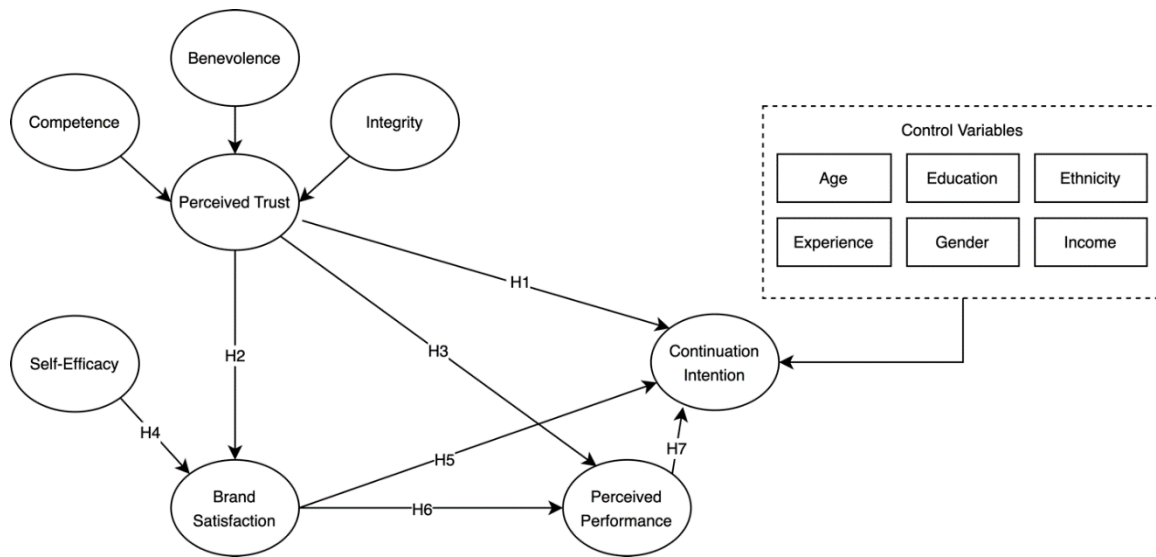
*H6: Brand satisfaction is positively related to perceived performance for digital assistants.*

Bhattacharjee (2001) demonstrated that perceived performance is positively related to continuance intention as a component of the extended ECT. Gupta et al. (2020) and Park (2020) have demonstrated this relationship in respective studies involving mobile wallets and smart wearable devices. Recent studies (Ashfaq et al., 2020; Ewers et al., 2020; Fernandes & Castro, 2020; Maduku et al., 2023; Pitardi & Marriott, 2021) have demonstrated this relationship as applying to DAs as well. Therefore, we posit the following:

*H7: Perceived performance is positively related to continuation intention for digital assistants.*

The research model (Figure 1) illustrates the study's hypotheses directly associated with the constructs of perceived trust of digital assistants (perceived trust), perceived performance of digital assistants (perceived performance), brand satisfaction with digital assistants (brand satisfaction), self-efficacy with digital assistants (self-efficacy) and continuation intention with digital assistants (continuation intention).

**Figure 1: Research Model**



**Research Methodology**

**Samples and data collection**

The research design draws on a random self-selection sampling of adults (i.e., age 18 and older) in the United States. The data was solicited through email and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn) and collected through an online survey platform. Participants who completed the survey and provided a valid contact email address were entered in a drawing for a prepaid gift card. Respondents were asked to consider their own contextual experiences for completing the survey. However, it should be noted that the survey introduction included an illustration of a DA to assist users with the definition of the technology. The introduction stated: "If you've ever pushed the microphone button on your cellphone to ask for driving directions, then you've likely used a digital assistant." Given this statement, the mindset of some respondents may have been influenced to solely consider smartphone-based DAs.

After screening for unqualified responses, the sample contains the responses of 244 participants of which 50% were men and 50% were women. Younger respondents (i.e., ages 18 - 42) represented 36% of the sample while older respondents (i.e., ages 43 and above) accounted for 64% of the respondents. User experience with DAs was evenly split between users with less than 2 years of experience (50%) and users with two years or greater of experience (50%). The DA brands identified by respondents were largely concentrated on the top three brands: Apple's Siri (72%), Amazon's Alexa (13%), and Google's Google Assistant (5%).

**Measures**

This cross-sectional survey-based field study was evaluated using constructs associated with existing measures to maximize the validity and reliability of the measurement model. A total of 26 items were used to describe the constructs of brand satisfaction, continuation intention, perceived performance, self-efficacy, competence, benevolence, and integrity. The measurement items for each construct in the model were based on a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and are adapted from previously validated items by carefully revising them to fit the context of this research.

Brand satisfaction used scales adapted from Guo et al. (2015). Continuation intention used the 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). In alignment with the recommendation of McKnight et al. (2002), Benbasat and Wang (2005) presented perceived trust as a reflective second-order construct. It was comprised of the three reflective indicator variables of competence, benevolence, and integrity.

### Data analysis

A partial least squares-based structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was used for modeling and hypotheses testing and focused on predicting the key target construct of continuation intention. The analysis and assessment utilized the SmartPLS 4 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2022). PLS-SEM is recognized as a standard analysis method when assessing complex inter-relationships between observed and latent variables (Sarstedt, Radomir, Moisescu, & Ringle, 2022). The variance-based PLS-SEM approach is appropriate for this study as it involves a formative model; a complex structural model; non-normally distributed data; latent variable scores; and the goal of the research is prediction (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017a).

## Results

### Measurement model

The analysis of the measurement model describes how the latent constructs are measured in terms of the observed variables and their measurement properties. Brand satisfaction, continuation intention, perceived performance, self-efficacy, competence, benevolence, and integrity are modeled as reflective measures in this research. Each construct was assessed for internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability, convergent reliability, discriminant reliability (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), and multicollinearity. Table 1 identifies the relevant calculations for composite reliability and convergent validity.

Internal consistency reliability was confirmed as the Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability scores for all reflect indicators were all above the recommended score of .70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and lower than the upper limit of .95 (Diamantopoulos, Sarstedt, Fuchs, Wilczynski, & Kaiser, 2012). To detect potential multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) coefficient is calculated. All reflective indicators were assessed as having acceptable VIF coefficients (Kock, 2015). As such, the presence of multicollinearity was assessed as being negligible.

Convergent validity was confirmed as each of the 27 reflective indicators have outer loadings above the threshold level of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). Each of the remaining 5 indicators was sufficiently large enough for continued use as their removal would not have increased composite reliability (Hair et al., 2011). All indicators were confirmed to be statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). The average variance extracted (AVE) scores for each construct were equal to or greater than the .50 threshold (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2017a) or acceptable composite validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Chin, 1998). Based on the above, convergent validity is confirmed.

**Table 1: Assessment of Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Benevolence	0.724	0.732	0.846	0.648
Brand Satisfaction	0.900	0.900	0.931	0.771
Competence	0.795	0.800	0.880	0.710
Integrity	0.631	0.642	0.801	0.574
Perceived Performance	0.911	0.926	0.944	0.848
Self-Efficacy	0.848	0.863	0.897	0.686

Consistent with current marketing literature, discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). In a well-fitted model, HTMT scores should be below .90 for a given pair of reflective constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). For this study, all scores were beneath the threshold level thereby establishing discriminant validity for all constructs.

**Table 2: Assessment of Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)**

	Benevolence	Brand Satisfaction	Competence	Integrity	Perceived Performance	Self-Efficacy
Benevolence						
Brand Satisfaction	0.498					
Competence	0.801	0.716				
Integrity	0.834	0.674	0.818			
Perceived Performance	0.478	0.807	0.780	0.631		
Self-Efficacy	0.437	0.614	0.508	0.439	0.556	

The research model also includes a formative construct (perceived trust) which was formed using the repeated indicator approach. This construct was assessed to confirm the significance and relevance of indicator weights, convergent validity, and indicator collinearity (Hair et al., 2017a). The variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to evaluate the collinearity of the formative indicators. These values were assessed to be below the maximum threshold level (Kock, 2015). Given these findings, the assessment suggests that there is no critical indicator issue with collinearity. The formative indicator weights were reviewed and confirmed as being approximately equal, had 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). Collectively, these assessments confirm that perceived trust is appropriate for further use within the model.

### Structural model

Before assessing the structural model, the model was evaluated for collinearity and unobserved heterogeneity issues. To measure the level of collinearity, each construct was evaluated against a random dependent variable. The structural model VIFs were assessed to be 2.617 or less, below the ideal threshold level of 3.3 (Kock, 2015). These results indicate that there was no collinearity issue within the structural model.

Extant literature suggests that the homogeneity of the sample is not always certain. Accordingly, this study utilized the finite mixture partial least squares (FIMIX-PLS) to uncover unobserved heterogeneity within the structural model. This assessment follows the recommended best practices in FIMIX-PLS analyses to ensure that the results from an aggregate data level analysis are not biased, which would be the case if there were two or more unidentified, dissimilar groups within a data set (Sarstedt et al., 2022). FIMIX-PLS follows a finite mixture approach by assuming that the data originates from several subpopulations (segments). Each segment is modeled separately, and the overall population is a mixture of the segments. Using the mixture regression concept with FIMIX-PLS, the analysis estimates structural model parameters and ascertains the data structure's heterogeneity by calculating the probability that the observations will belong to a certain segment so that they fit into a predetermined number of segments (Matthews, Sarstedt, Hair, & Ringle, 2016). For this study, four segments were assessed using the AIC3, CAIC, and EN criteria. The summed fit of these scores confirmed that no unobserved heterogeneity exists in the sample.

Given the lack of collinearity and unobserved heterogeneity issues, the hypotheses in the structural model were tested. The standard assessment criteria included the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), the blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy measure ( $Q^2$ ), and the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients. In addition, the model's out-of-sample predictive power was evaluated using the  $PLS_{predict}$  procedure (Shmueli, Ray, Velasquez Estrada, & Chatla, 2016).

The research model explained 70.7% of user continuation intention with DAs. For marketing studies, an  $R^2$  value of .75, .50, and .25 respectively is categorized as substantial, moderate, or weak respectively (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). When compared to these thresholds, the  $R^2$  value of continuation intention was assessed as being moderate for in-sample predictive power and is statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ). Further assessments were conducted to determine the effect size ( $f^2$  and  $q^2$ ) and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) for each structural path. These analysis results are shown in Table 3. Figure 2 depicts the model's respective paths and the associated statistics.

**Table 3: Significance Testing Results of the Structural Path Coefficients**

Structural Path	Path Coefficients $\beta$	$t$ Statistics	$p$ Values	95% Confidence Intervals	$f^2$ Effect Size	$q^2$ Effect Size	Hypothesis Results
H1: Perceived Trust → Continuation Intention	-0.146	2.623	0.999	[-.263, -.042]	0.391	0.009	Not Supported
H2: Perceived Trust → Brand Satisfaction	0.494	9.708	0.000*	[.396, .594]	0.494	0.227	Supported
H3: Perceived Trust → Perceived Performance	0.320	8.913	0.000*	[.209, .446]	0.585	0.097	Supported
H4: Self-Efficacy → Brand Satisfaction	0.318	5.275	0.000*	[.192, .429]	0.318	0.086	Supported
H5: Brand Satisfaction → Continuation Intention	0.557	8.352	0.000*	[.428, .692]	0.796	0.189	Supported
H6: Brand Satisfaction → Perceived Performance	0.537	8.913	0.000*	[.414, .645]	0.537	0.291	Supported
H7: Perceived Performance → Continuation Intention	0.446	6.436	0.000*	[.305, .576]	0.446	0.148	Supported

\* $p < .001$

Hypothesis 1 predicted that perceived trust would be positively related to continuation intentions for DAs. Perceived trust failed to identify such a positive relationship ( $\beta = -0.146, p > .1$ ). The negative relationship value associated with the path coefficient suggests an inconsistency with the positive relationship stated in the hypothesis. As such, this hypothesis is not supported. This finding tends to align with alternate research observations for applied AI technology. Among these findings was that trusting behavior is primarily based upon the combined influences of prior usage experiences and the expectation of future brand satisfaction benefits if usage is continued (Balakrishnan & Dwivedi, 2021; Bhattacharjee & Lin, 2015; Fernandes & Oliveira, 2021).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that perceived trust would be positively related to brand satisfaction. Perceived trust demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .494, p < .01$ ) and a large  $f^2$  effect size (.494) on brand satisfaction. This H2 path relationship is supported and is considered to have a medium predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .227$ ). These results suggest that the user's perceived trust in DAs was solidly related to the users' assessment of brand satisfaction. Brands often invest significant resources to establish and reinforce a trusting mindset with consumers, especially when new and complex technology is being marketed.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that perceived trust would be positively related to perceived performance. Perceived trust demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .320, p < .01$ ) and a large  $f^2$  effect size (.585) on perceived performance. This H3 path relationship is supported and is considered to have a small predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .097$ ). These results are commonly associated with users lacking prior experience with the brand's technology. These users tend to have a higher degree of uncertainty and a greater feeling of risk associated with the technology. This observation is reflected in the small predictive relevance of this hypothesis.

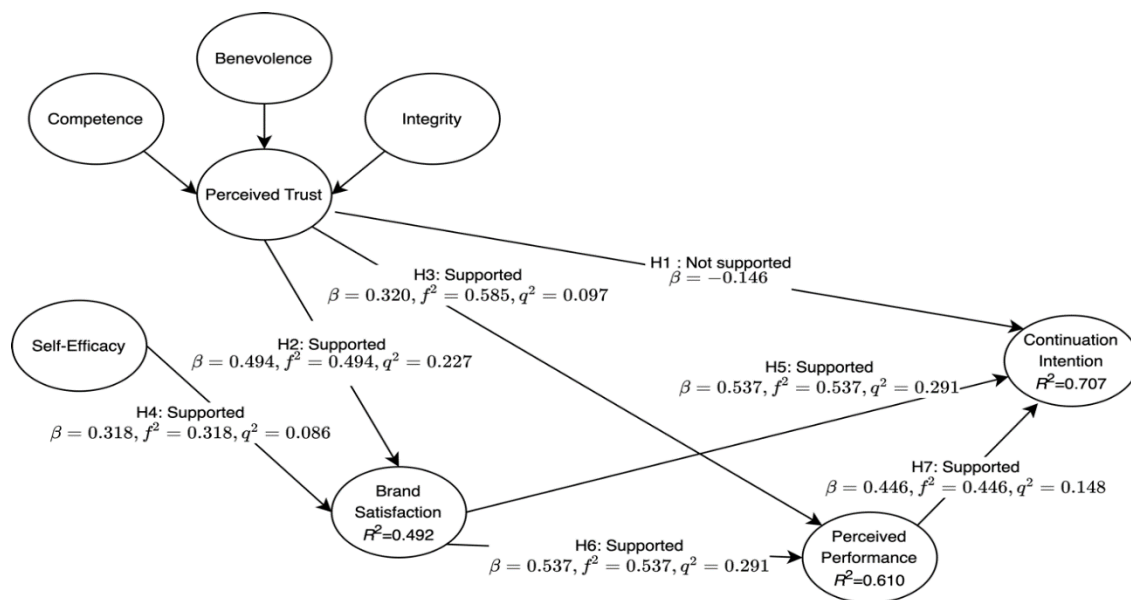
Hypothesis 4 predicted that self-efficacy would be positively related to brand satisfaction. Self-efficacy identified a positive relationship ( $\beta = .318, p < .01$ ) and a medium  $f^2$  effect size (.318) on brand satisfaction. This H3 path relationship is supported but is considered to have small predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .086$ ). These results suggest that the user operational experience is easily understood and that users must believe that they can successfully use the technology based on their knowledge of the brand. Typically, this type of messaging is reflected in secondary messaging concepts within other brand communications. As an example, the activation term (e.g., Hey Siri!) communicates a perceived "ease of use" for the average Apple brand user.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that brand satisfaction would be positively related to continuation intention. Brand satisfaction demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .557, p < .01$ ) and a large  $f^2$  effect size (.796) on continuation intention. This H4 path relationship is supported and is considered to have a medium predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .189$ ). Individuals having a strong satisfaction perception of a brand often accept that technology will perform at a similar level as other products in that brand's product portfolio. As such, they tend to not require proof of performance to have continuation intentions.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that brand satisfaction would be positively related to the perceived performance of the DA. Brand satisfaction identified a positive relationship ( $\beta = .537, p < .01$ ) and a large  $f^2$  effect size (.537) on perceived performance. This H6 path relationship is supported and is considered to have a medium predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .291$ ). These individuals demand proof of performance from that brand's DA. Often, other brands have strong messaging in the marketplace which may introduce a degree of fear, uncertainty, or doubt (a.k.a., FUD messaging) about another brand's product.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that perceived performance would be positively related to continuation intention for DAs. Perceived performance demonstrated a positive relationship ( $\beta = .446, p < .01$ ) and a large  $f^2$  effect size (.446) on continuation intention. This H7 path relationship is supported and is considered to have a small predictive relevance ( $q^2 = .148$ ). These results are complementary to those in Hypothesis 6. For those users who have perceptions that the DA has performed appropriately or satisfactorily, then they are more inclined to have continuation intentions for their DA.

**Figure 2: Structural Model and Statistical Results**





### PLSpredict: Out-of-sample predictive ability

The final step of assessing the predictive power involves using the root mean square error (RMSE) and the mean absolute error (MAE) to assess the model's out-of-sample predictive ability (Chin et al., 2020). SmartPLS includes the PLSpredict functionality (Shmueli et al., 2016) which was designed to support this need. The assessment compares the RMSE and MAE values (produced by the PLSpredict method) against a naïve benchmark using a linear regression model (LM) (Shmueli et al., 2019). Using the PLSpredict functionality provides a mechanism to subdivide a sample into multiple segments similar to a hold-out sample approach. For this study, the assessment focus is directed toward the key constructs of brand satisfaction, continuation intention, and perceived performance. Ten segments were created, analyzed, and compared across 10 repetition assessments of the indicators for each of these constructs.  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  scores of .35, .15, and .02 respectively are categorized as strong, moderate, or weak respectively. For the initial analysis step, the  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  score was calculated to be 0.479 for brand satisfaction, 0.301 for continuation intention, and 0.476 for perceived performance. Accordingly, each of these scores is judged to be strong. However, the primary focus of the PLSpredict analysis should be on the model's key endogenous construct of continuation intention (Hair et al., 2019).

Next, PLSpredict calculates similar scores for each of the indicators associated with each of the endogenous constructs. The analysis results revealed  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  scores as being greater than zero for each of the indicators of continuation intention. As such, these results suggest that the inner structural model offers good predictive value for continuation intention (Shmueli et al., 2019).

However, researchers should not ignore the assessment results for the other endogenous constructs. The analysis results reveal  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  scores are greater than zero for each of the indicators of perceived performance indicating strong predictive value. Similar scores (i.e., greater than zero) were identified for three of the four indicators of brand satisfaction. The comparison of the proposed model variable and the observed model identified a deficiency for BS6. This deficiency does not invalidate the overall predictive power of the model. Rather, this deficiency identifies that the model is not perfect. The histograms of the PLSpredict residuals were also examined and revealed a slightly left-tailed distribution for each indicator. This observation would suggest an acceptable slight over-prediction of case values. Accordingly, the out-of-model predictive power of continuation intention remains as confirmed (Shmueli et al., 2019).

The robustness of this analysis was further assessed using the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT). This test utilizes an out-of-sample approach to calculate the model's prediction error which is used in determining the average loss value. For the primary constructs, 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 (-0.551), continuation intention (-0.476), and perceived performance (-0.590). For the overall model (Table 4), the difference in the average loss values was also determined to be significantly below zero (-0.540) suggesting good predictive power (Sharma, Liengaard, Hair, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2022). Collectively, these results established that the research model and its predictive power were significant and supported the core goal of this research study.

**Table 4: The CVPAT Results of the Study Model**

	Average loss difference	<i>t</i> value	<i>p</i> value*
Brand Satisfaction	-0.551	5.085	0.000
Continuation Intention	-0.476	4.505	0.000
Perceived Performance	-0.590	5.962	0.000
Overall	-0.540	6.343	0.000

\*  $p < 0.01$

## Multigroup analysis

Often researchers explore additional dimensions of analysis through multi-group analysis. However, before analyzing the group distinctions of the structural model, an assessment of the measurement invariance of composites (MICOM) must be performed (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). This test is used to identify whether the parameters of the structural model and measurement model are equivalent across two or more groups and do not result from distinctive content and the meanings of the latent variables across groups (Henseler et al., 2016). This analysis identified full invariances for all constructs when comparing the groups of experience and ethnicity. Partial invariance was identified for all constructs when comparing the groups of age, education, gender, income, and brand of DA. Given these findings, a multigroup analysis was completed.

The initial assessments focused upon the sub-groups for gender ('female' ( $n = 123$ ) and male ( $n = 121$ )) and experience ('2 years or less' ( $n = 122$ ) and 'greater than 2 years' ( $n = 122$ )). Since there were no large differences in these group-specific sample sizes, a permutation-based approach (Matthews, Hair, & Matthews, 2018) was appropriately used to conduct a multigroup analysis. This test determines if the research model significantly differs (e.g., outer weights, outer loadings, and path coefficients) between these groups (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2018). The results reveal that the path coefficient differences between groups were not significant (i.e.,  $p > 0.05$ ) for any hypothesis. This observation suggests that the sub-groups within gender and experience followed similar path utilization and distribution approaches. These findings can be useful in designing targeted marketing campaigns and promotional programs.

Large differences in the group-specific sample sizes tend to introduce more type 1 error when using the parametric test approach. Given that large group-specific sample sizes were observed for age, brand's DA, education, ethnicity, and income, the PLS-MGA approach is more appropriate to use for further multigroup analysis (Cheah, Thurasamy, Memon, Chuah, & Ting, 2020; Hair Jr et al., 2018). The following results focused upon the direct antecedent sub-group path preferences for continuation intention displayed in hypotheses 5 – 7. (Since hypothesis 1 was not supported, it was omitted from this analysis.) These hypothesis-based path preference findings can be useful for practitioners in designing targeted marketing campaigns and promotional programs.

For the age sub-group analysis, respondents self-identifying as being '43 or older' ( $n = 156$ ) generated a 66% higher path coefficient ( $\beta_{Difference} = 0.262, p = 0.001$ ) for the brand satisfaction to continuation intention path (hypothesis 5) than those self-identifying as '42 or younger' ( $n = 88$ ). The remaining respondents preferred to follow the paths of brand satisfaction to perceived performance to continuation intention (hypotheses 6 and 7). This finding suggests that the '43 or older' sub-group is largely satisfied with the brand and is willing to proceed with their continuation intentions while assuming that the DA will perform as expected. However, the '42 or younger' sub-group prefers to confirm their perception of performance for the DA before they proceed with continuation intentions.

For the brand of DA sub-group analysis, respondents self-identifying as having as 'non-Siri' ( $n = 69$ ) generated a 58% higher path coefficient ( $\beta_{Difference} = 0.271, p = 0.01$ ) for the brand satisfaction to continuation intention path (hypothesis 5) than those self-identifying as 'Siri' ( $n = 175$ ). The 'Siri' respondents preferred to follow the paths of brand satisfaction to perceived performance to continuation intention (hypotheses 6 and 7). This finding suggests that the 'Siri' sub-group values satisfaction with the brand but prefers to confirm their perception of performance for the DA before they proceed with continuation intentions.

For the education sub-group analysis, respondents self-identifying as having a 'bachelor's degree or less' ( $n = 151$ ) generated a 24% higher path coefficient ( $\beta_{Difference} = 0.125, p = 0.001$ ) for the brand satisfaction to continuation intention path (hypothesis 5) than those self-identifying as having an 'advanced degree' ( $n = 93$ ). The 'advanced degree' respondents preferred to follow the paths of brand satisfaction to perceived performance to continuation intention (hypotheses 6 and 7). This finding suggests that the 'advanced degree' sub-group considers satisfaction with the brand but desires to experience the actual performance of the DA before determining their continuation intention.

For the ethnicity sub-group analysis, respondents self-identifying as having as 'non-Caucasian' ( $n = 47$ ) generated a 57% higher path coefficient ( $\beta_{Difference} = 0.300, p = 0.01$ ) for the brand satisfaction to continuation intention path (hypothesis 5) than those self-identifying as 'Caucasian' ( $n = 197$ ). The 'Caucasian' respondents preferred to follow the paths of brand satisfaction to perceived performance to continuation intention (hypotheses 6 and 7). This

finding suggests that the 'Caucasian' sub-group values satisfaction with the brand but prefers to experience the performance of the DA before determining their continuation intention.

For the income sub-group analysis, respondents self-identifying as having '> \$80k' ( $n = 157$ ) generated a 76% higher path coefficient ( $\beta_{Difference} = 0.269, p = 0.01$ ) for the brand satisfaction to continuation intention path (hypothesis 5) than those self-identifying as '< \$80k' ( $n = 87$ ). The '> \$80k' respondents preferred to follow the paths of brand satisfaction to perceived performance to continuation intention (hypotheses 6 and 7). This finding suggests that the '< \$80k' sub-group values satisfaction with the brand but prefers to experience the performance of the DA before determining their continuation intention.

## Discussions and Implications

With the rapid growth in DAs and linked applications, this paper examined certain key motivations triggering consumers' intention to continue using DAs. Understanding the brand decision criteria under which a DA will be embraced by users 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 consumer user continuation intentions for DAs. Trust and self-efficacy serve as the initial points of the customer's journey towards continuation intention. Trust will be cemented when brand practices showcase DAs that have competence, benevolence, and integrity words the recommendations and results they present to customers. 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 bring reduced stress and increased confidence and competence. Together, 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.

It also highlights the high impact significance of brand satisfaction on perceptions of performance as well as its direct relationship with continuation intentions. Respondents identified that brand satisfaction occupies a dominant position in the decision criteria for continuation intentions for DA users. However, sole reliance upon a strong brand is not sufficient for sustaining user continuation intentions. As exemplified by the Siri DA sub-group path analysis, Apple must continue to invest in strengthening its brand satisfaction market position as well as focus on improving the users' perception of Siri's performance due to the significance of the brand satisfaction to perceived performance to continuation intention decision-making path for such users.

While these study findings are supported, they should be viewed within the context of the analysis of three well-established and highly regarded brands 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, this study is one of the first attempts to empirically examine key motivations triggering consumers' intention to continue using DAs. These drivers or decision criteria are examined within the framework of the ECT. As such, the dimensions examined in this study offer an extension of the ECT.

## Conclusion

DAs are becoming important information-sourcing portals and one of the main battlegrounds between tech companies for ongoing consumer usage. In this research, we proposed seven 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 70.7% 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 1 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 that perceived trust will establish the desired outcome relationship with continuation intentions. Companies and researchers must operationalize perceptions of trust in a way that is meaningful for consumers. Thus, integrity, benevolence, and competence become significant dimensions to be highlighted as consumers 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 consumer must believe 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.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings of this study can be used to guide marketing practices across brands. First, it is recommended that messaging about DAs evolves from not only showing the ease of use but to focus on how customers who use these technologies trust them and believe they can use them. Key elements of the messages must address how DAs possess integrity, are fair and unbiased in their recommendations, and are a competent technology. The imagery that is part of these messages would be well advised to also show a range of diverse consumers being confident in their use of these devices. If customers believe they have the skills and knowledge necessary to use them, self-efficacy, along with trust, then brand satisfaction will be positively influenced. In addition to showcasing how DAs can be trusted and that consumers are self-efficacious, points-of-sale ought to emphasize these factors as well. Retailers are where most purchase decisions are made thus, floor models, signage, and salespeople ought to highlight these two factors. An additional factor to consider is that of a team or family-oriented approach. Whether it is at work or at home, the messages and images can focus on increased connection, collaboration, and interactional experiences. Consequently, customers will sustain their continuation intentions of using these devices.

Perceived performance acts as a precursor towards continuation intention and is positively increased by trust and brand satisfaction. This finding denotes the importance that the user experience is centered on being one that goes beyond being satisfactory but continues to teach customers new uses while promoting trust. As Siri or Alexa makes suggestions to the customer, the customer will learn new usages, be satisfied with them, and continue to use them.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This study contains a few limitations that can be observed as proofing 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' continuations intentions. Future research could also go further and investigate the outcomes of continuation intentions. Questions that remain unexplored are: what happens when continuations intentions start to erode and what are the factors that lead to such diminish? What are the outcomes of continuation intentions? And do new DA models 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. 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. A 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 then the market penetration of these devices.

Work-related settings offer a great deal 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 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, there seems that no research has attempted to either conceptually or empirically address this. Thus, future research should investigate various views that develop when consumers and companies engage with DAs, notably in a commercial or business view.

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# Summary Brief

## The “Emperor’s New Clothes” Effect in Product Design Minimalism

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*“The Emperor’s New Clothes” is a folktale about how a nonexistent product was sold as a luxury product only visible to the educated and trained eye; a successful branding story until a little child broke the spell by declaring that the emperor wore no clothes. Luxury product design aesthetics are sometimes minimalistic, which arguably defies consumers’ expectations. This research investigates the influence of status cues on consumers’ own valuations (first-order) and their belief about others’ valuations (second-order) of aesthetically minimalistic product designs. In a series of four studies, we show that the presence of a high-status cue can boost consumers’ second-order valuations of such designs. This outcome is driven by second-order luxury perceptions—that is, consumers’ belief that others view the aesthetically minimalistic product design as luxurious—and is stronger when consumers believe that others possess superior design knowledge. Theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and future research directions are also discussed.*

### Introduction

In adherence to the aphorism “simplicity is the ultimate sophistication,” often ascribed to Leonardo da Vinci, some of today’s luxury brands follow a minimalistic “less-is-more” aesthetic design philosophy (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022). Consider, for example, Apple’s minimalistic store and product designs or the clean lines and smooth surfaces of the iconic Hermès “Kelly” handbag.

Such minimalistic luxury product designs can defy consumers’ expectations, which can in turn result in undervaluation of these designs by consumers. In this research, we investigate certain factors that could increase consumers’ valuation of such designs. Specifically, we focus on the interplay of status cues and consumer perspective and aim to address the following question: Is the extent to which status cues influence consumers’ valuation of aesthetically minimalistic product designs conditional on consumers’ first- versus second-order perspective?

### Theoretical Background

Consumers can express their own appreciation for aesthetically minimalistic product designs (first-order perspective) or assess the extent to which others will appreciate such designs (second-order perspective). In the public domain, people are more susceptible to the influence or opinions of others (Berger & Ward, 2010). Because a second-order valuation involves an assessment of whether *others* will appreciate an aesthetically minimalistic product design, status cues are likely to be most influential when consumers form second-order beliefs (Althuisen & Sgourev, 2014; Hoegg et al., 2010; Page & Herr, 2002).

Therefore, we predict an interaction between status cues and consumer perspective, that is, status cues should play a larger role in one’s belief about how others value aesthetically minimalistic product designs (second-order perspective) than in one’s own valuation of aesthetically minimalistic product designs (first-order perspective).

### Findings and Implications

Four experimental studies provided evidence for the amplified effect of high-status cues on consumers’ second-order valuations of aesthetic product design minimalism. Second-order luxury perceptions were shown to drive this effect and the perceived superiority of others’ design knowledge was established as a boundary condition.

Given these findings, high-status brands selling minimalistic product designs might want to focus on framing consumers’ mindset with a second-order perspective. That is, their marketing initiatives might be more effective when activating beliefs about how others will value a high-status, but aesthetically minimalistic, product design. As a second-order-perspective framing was most effective when applied to consumers who believe others’ design knowledge is superior to their own, marketers would be wise to use this framing particularly when dealing with these consumer types.

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## **Session 10.3: Consumer & Patient Trust**

**Chair:** Kaitlin Gravois

## Summary Brief

# Artificial Intelligence on the Sales Cycle: How does A.I. Impact Multiple Parts of the Sales Cycle?

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### Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.), driven by machine learning, is rapidly changing the world from the way individuals receive information to even how doctors diagnose an individual's health issues (Huang and Rust 2018; Rust 2020). A.I. provides a plethora of opportunities in the business world as it is already being used in customer service, digital marketing, and other customer-facing engagements (Ma and Sun 2020). With the power and potential uses of AI, it would behoove the sales industry to consider how to effectively implement this tool as well. While there has been some introductory-level of research on A.I. in sales coaching (Luo et al. 2021), which found that A.I. agents were generally effective in training sales personnel, that study did not further examine the effects of that training at different parts of the sales cycle. Through using an extension of the technology acceptance model (Venkatesh and Davis 2000) and an experimental design, we seek to understand how Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) sales coaching affects the different parts of the sales cycle as defined as prospecting, conversion, upselling, and long-term relationship management.

### Research Question

Sales professionals often face challenges in different sales activities including prospecting for new leads, converting leads into paying customers, upselling to existing customers, and maintaining long-term relationships with clients. These challenges can be time-consuming and resource-intensive and may prevent sales professionals from maximizing their productivity and sales potential. The research question seeks to understand how the use of A.I. would change salesperson performance in prospecting, conversion, upselling and longterm relationship maintenance. Additionally, the researchers are interested in exploring which selling activities are more influenced by the use of A.I.

### Objective and intended contribution of the research

The objective of this research question is to understand the impact of an AI coach on different selling activities, specifically prospecting, conversion, upselling, and long-term relationship. By exploring how an A.I. coach affects these different parts of the sales cycle, the research aims to identify the potential benefits and challenges of using an A.I. coach in sales and to understand how an A.I. coach can be used most effectively to improve sales performance. Through this research, we can gain insights into the ways in which an A.I. coach can support sales professionals performing different selling activities and can identify strategies for maximizing the benefits of an A.I. coach in sales. This research can have both theoretical and practical implications as this study would be the first to examine effects of an A.I. coach among different sales activities. Prior studies have investigated the effectiveness of sales coaching on individual and organizational sales performance (Nguyen, Artis, Plank and Solomon, 2019). In another study Luo et al. (2021) examined the effect of A.I. on sales agents' performance and investigated how A.I. contributes differently to the various ranks of salespeople. However, currently there is little research on the impact of A.I. coaching among various sales activities.

### Background

#### *Sales Coaching*

Practitioners and academicians generally agree that effective sales coaching improves individual and organizational sales performance (Nguyen, Artis, Plank and Solomon, 2019). The purpose of sales coaching is to equip salespeople or sales managers with knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve sales related and organizational goals

(Badrinarayanan, Dixon, Zang and West, 2015). Sales coaching is what distinguishes high-performing (versus low-performing) sales managers (Deeter-Schmelz, Goebel, and Kennedy 2008; Marshall, Goebel, and Moncrief 2003). In a study completed by Groza, Zmich and Rajabi (2021) they found that greater sales-firm integration results in higher levels of organization innovativeness derived from sales managers' intellectual stimulation of sales people.

### ***Artificial Intelligence***

Many firms are utilizing artificial intelligence (AI), to train employees including salespeople. AI refers to the ability of machines to mimic intelligent human behavior and the cognitive functions that we associate the human mind with (Carbonell, Michalski & Mitchell, 1983). AI has several advantages, one being the ability to process big data and learn the hidden patterns (Davenport and Ronaki, 2018). Luo, Qin, Fang & Qu et al., (2020) found that AI training, compared to human coaches, has a greater impact on mid level management. One implication for AI training is the acceptance among different salesperson demographics which has not been well studied in the literature.

### ***Sales Activities***

Studies show that less experienced salespeople are more likely to acquire new customers than those with higher experience in the sales. Also, advertising support and extrinsic rewards help those with higher experience to achieve better conversion rate than those with less experience (Gopalakrishna et al., 2022).

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# Summary Brief

## Factors that Influence Patients' Willingness to Share – An Examination of 2022 HINTS Data

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*The National Cancer Institute regularly collects nationwide data to monitor evolving trends in the healthcare industry, namely, HINTS, Health Information National Trends Survey. This study examines the 2022 HINTS data and identifies possible factors that drive patients' willingness to share valuable information with their healthcare providers. Findings of the influencing factors offer insights for healthcare providers, policy makers, as well as healthcare marketers.*

### Introduction

Technological advancements have empowered patients to freely seek and share health related information on various outlets. Health institutions and professionals disseminate informative videos of health related topics worldwide (Liu et al. 2023). Additionally, fitness influencers inspire their followers to live an active and healthy lifestyle through live streaming services on social media (Sokolova & Perez, 2021). Healthcare providers focus on patient centered care and shared decision making. Moreover, the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence help healthcare industry foster an ecosystem facilitating value co creation between healthcare providers and patients (Leone et al. 2023). Patients' willingness to share health information has profound implications for disease management, treatment outcomes, and public health initiatives (Weitzman et al., 2020). Thus, understanding patients' information seeking behavior and willingness to share information will offer insights for healthcare providers and policymakers. However, studies examining factors that drive patients to share health experiences remain relatively explored. Therefore, this study examines the 2022 HINTS data looking for factors influencing patients' willingness to share health information and aims to fill the identified gap.

### Key Findings

With the help of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study found that patients' willingness to share health related information relates to their information seeking habits on various outlets, perceptions of source trustworthiness, and source credibility. Results of study would offer meaningful insights in several ways. Healthcare providers and policymakers could utilize the results to design targeted interventions that encourage patients' active involvement in managing their health and foster a collaborative approach to healthcare decision making. Understanding patients' perceptions of source trustworthiness and credibility will enable healthcare organizations to improve the dissemination of reliable health information and reduce the spread of misinformation. The study also contributes to the development of effective strategies for enhancing patient engagement, patient education, and health literacy initiatives. This research will contribute to the advancement of the healthcare industry and pave the way for future empirical studies.

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## Summary Brief

# A Comparative Examination of Influencer Parasocial Relationships and Consumer-Brand Relationships on Impulse Buying

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*Influencer marketing is considered an effective approach to promoting the benefits of brands on social media. Social media influencers are capable of convincing consumers to buy products through their promotional strategy and influence on the consumers who follow them. However, the impact of consumer-brand relationships, where consumers have enduring feelings of loyalty and love for specific brands, may override the relationship consumers form with their preferred social media influencers. This study examines the competing effects of influencer parasocial relationships and consumer-brand relationships on impulse buying. I draw from the theories of parasocial interaction and interpersonal love to suggest that consumers, in the process of buying impulsively, may purchase a specific brand because of their established relationship with brands that their preferred social media influencers have not yet promoted. The research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing consumer surveys to empirically investigate these dynamics and test the hypothesized relationships. The aim of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social media influencers, as well as brand love research, and their impact on consumer buying behavior, with an emphasis on impulsive buying decisions.*

### Introduction

Social media influencers are “digital opinion leaders” (Leung et al., 2022, p. 228). They become digital opinion leaders by developing and disseminating online content that resonate with certain social media users, who eventually become followers. Social media users follow their preferred social media influencers for several reasons including the influencers’ attractiveness (Kim & Park, 2023). Due to the attraction of their preferred social media influencer, followers may form parasocial relationships with the influencer. That is, the relationship and mode of communication is one-sided since social media influencers typically have several other followers and cannot personally know all of them. Through their content, these digital opinion leaders convince their followers to consider and buy specific brands; these brands are promoted based on an underlying relationship the social media influencer has with the brand manager. Thus, when consumers are shopping, they may impulsively buy a specific brand of product because that consumer has a parasocial relationship with their preferred social media influencer who recommends buying that brand.

However, when shopping, consumers often impulsively purchase brands that they have had positive experiences with. The psychological mechanism at work may be referred to as brand love or brand loyalty: key constructs within a broader construct called consumer-brand relationships. Albert & Merunka (2013) indicate that there are three consumer-brand relationships that exist to facilitate close relationships between consumers and brands; they are: brand trust (Hess, 1995), brand commitment (Fullerton, 2005), and brand identification (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Another, more modern, construct of consumer-brand relationship is brand love. Brand love is logically related to the established constructs within consumer-brand relationship, and can help explain why consumers feel obligated (Albert & Merunka, 2013) to stay with a particular brand or feel an emotional attachment with it. Social media influencers must compete with consumer-brand relationships to encourage brand preference when buying impulsively.

The purpose of this study is to examine the comparative effect of influencer parasocial relationships and consumer-brand relationships on consumer impulse buying, and determine whether consumer-brand relationships have the ability to weaken the indirect relationship between influencer parasocial relationship and impulse buying through influencer credibility and informational influence.

### Background

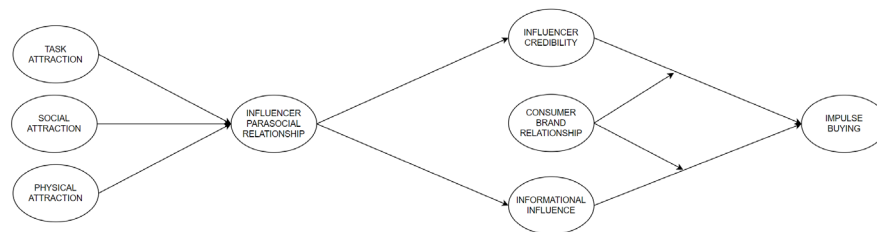
In comparing the effects of influencer parasocial relationships and consumer-brand relationships, I apply on two theories: theory of parasocial interaction and interpersonal love theory. The theory of parasocial interaction stems from the idea that relationships are formed based on the “illusion of intimacy” (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020, p. 3) between two individuals, in which one individual does not personally know the other. Brand love, a more modern construct included in the broader consumer-brand relationships construct, brand love, can be supported by the interpersonal love

theory, which is considered to be the “standard” in brand love research (Langner et al., 2015). Through influencer perceived credibility and informational influence, social media influencers, via their parasocial relationship with consumers, have an impact on impulsive buying. However, the impact is disrupted when consumer-brand relationships compete with social media influencers’ alternative brand promotion; that is, consumers may feel torn between considering purchasing a product because their preferred social media influencers are promoting it and their long-standing commitment, trust, identification, and ultimately love of their preferred brand. Consumers may not be willing to abandon the connection that they have their preferred brand despite the influence of their favorite social media influencers (Albert & Merunka, 2013).

### Proposed Method

The research will implement a quantitative method design to test the proposed relationships. Surveys will be conducted with consumers to identify their relationship with their favorite social media influencer and establish a preferred brand that has not yet been promoted by their favorite social media influencer. The results will be analyzed and discussed to develop research and practical implications.

**Figure 1**



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# Summary Brief

## Evaluation of SERVQUAL Scope: A Literature Network Analysis

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*SERVQUAL was developed to assess the quality of service provided by organizations. The original SERVQUAL model was based on five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions were usually measured based on a survey asking customers to rate their perceptions of service quality and expectations for each dimension. Since its inception, SERVQUAL has been extensively applied in business practice across different industries and countries, to measure service quality and identify areas that require improvement. This study explores the scope of SERVQUAL by identifying representative articles and classifying them into the six major research areas of SERVQUAL, including SERVQUAL and its measurement, E-SERVQUAL, customer perception, communication, behavioral intentions, and cultural influence. By establishing a starting point, we analyzed the literature citation network, which could provide a foundation for future scholars to track the ongoing research evolution of the SERVQUAL field. Finally, a comprehensive overview of SERVQUAL was given by analyzing the most-cited authors and articles, along with the patterns of co-citations.*

### Introduction

Service quality is essential for businesses to remain competitive in the dynamic business environment. As such, the SERVQUAL model has been widely adopted to assess and improve service quality across various industries. The SERVQUAL model was first introduced by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), and since then it has become a well-established framework for measuring and evaluating service quality. SERVQUAL is a multidimensional framework used to assess service quality based on five dimensions, which include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1985). To capture and comprehend the evolution of SERVQUAL research over time, it is necessary to explore the citation and co-citation networks of the scholarly works on SERVQUAL. Therefore, the objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the current state of the academic research on SERVQUAL, as well as its impact on the future development of the field. Through the network analysis of extant literature on SERVQUAL, this study has provided a systematic review of prior research on SERVQUAL.

### Background

To ensure that our subsequent analyses were based on representative and influential research works, we selected relevant articles exclusively from those well-recognized, top-tier academic journals in either the marketing or the cross-functional business field. This criterion was crucial, which could ensure that the articles selected had received considerable recognition, and thus contributed to the rigor, caliber, and explanatory power of our study. Our search initially retrieved 41,979 citations from Parasuraman et al.'s (1985) seminal work, encompassing various source types, such as academic journals, books, conference proceedings, and book series. To narrow down our focus to relevant journal articles on SERVQUAL following the seminal work, we filtered out citations found from other sources such as books, conference proceedings, and book series. We also applied a filter function to only include articles published in peer-reviewed journals that are commonly recognized as being of high quality and academic rigor in the field of marketing (i.e., *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Retailing*, *Journal of Service Marketing* and *Journal of Service Research*). After filtering out irrelevant articles, we further evaluated the remaining ones based on their abstracts, keywords, and major study themes to determine their relevance to SERVQUAL research. After applying various filters and conducting a thorough evaluation of the remaining articles, we ultimately identified 56 articles that were both relevant to and representative of the research on SERVQUAL.

### Key Findings

To identify and categorize the potential areas for further development of SERVQUAL's research stream, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of the 56 articles, all of which were closely related to the central hub article of Parasuraman et al. (1985), and published in the aforementioned highly regarded marketing journals. By examining these

articles' abstracts, key concepts, conclusions, and implications, with the central hub article as the focal point, we finally identified and categorized six potential research domains (i.e., SERVQUAL and its measurement, E-SERVQUAL, customer perception, communication, behavioral intentions, and cultural influence). These potential domains contribute to expanding and deepening the current research realm of SERVQUAL, by suggesting the related promising avenues for future research (i.e., developing new dimensions of SERVQUAL, integrating the SERVQUAL model with other marketing models, incorporating new technology, cross-cultural validation, and personalization).

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## **Session 10.5: Marketing Ethics and CSR**

**Chair:** Michael Peasley

## Summary Brief

# An Event Study Approach to Exploring the Impact of Digital Marketing Capability on Shareholders Response to Strategic Alliance Partnership Announcements

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*This study sheds light on the financial implications of strategic alliance partnerships and the role of digital marketing capability in influencing shareholder value. Through an event study analysis, we found significant positive Cumulative Abnormal Returns (CARs) across multiple event windows, implying that the market reacts favorably to both the preceding expectations and ensuing outcomes of strategic alliance announcements. A subsequent cross-sectional panel regression analysis highlighted the complex role of digital marketing capability (DMC). While an intensification of DMC was associated with a slight, but significant increase in shareholder value, this effect was moderated by the firm's regulatory focus and level of competitive aggressiveness. Firms emphasizing digital orientation experienced a stronger negative correlation between DMC and shareholder value. Conversely, the effect of DMC on shareholder value increased in firms with promotion focus but decreased in those with higher levels of competitive aggressiveness. Our findings underline the importance of digital strategies in today's business landscape and suggest that effectively leveraging DMC can significantly contribute to enhancing shareholder value. They emphasize the value of strategic alliances as a vehicle for growth and provide insights for firms considering such partnerships to boost their market value and attract investment. The research thus provides a valuable understanding of how strategic alliances and digital capabilities interact to shape a firm's financial outcomes.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the present-day business landscape, strategic alliances are increasingly embraced by firms as a means to tap into new markets and augment their resources and capabilities (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2001). As per a recent study by the Capgemini Research Institute (2023), 80% of organizations prioritize forming such alliances to exploit emerging market opportunities and to bolster their capabilities. By synergizing mutual strengths, these strategic alliances offer competitive advantages, with their success significantly dependent on partner selection, governance mechanisms, and alignment of objectives (Kale, Dyer, & Singh, 2002; Park, Chen, & Gallagher, 2017). Emerging as a crucial asset in this context is the digital marketing capability, which is revolutionizing how companies engage and retain customers. Its influence transcends the individual reach of a firm, bearing a significant impact on the formation and effectiveness of strategic alliances. A firm proficient in digital marketing can augment the alliance's competitiveness through its engagement strategies, predictive analytics, and expertise in multi-channel marketing. This cooperative advantage can amplify the market position and value of the alliance. However, the influence of digital marketing capability on shareholder value is intricately tied with other factors such as the firm's digital orientation, competitive aggressiveness, and regulatory focus.

In the realm of strategic alliances, a firm with a robust digital orientation can maximize the effectiveness of its digital marketing capabilities. Its insights and experience can guide the alliance in the application of digital strategies, helping to navigate the complex digital marketing landscape. Furthermore, a firm's competitive aggressiveness can amplify the influence of digital marketing capabilities on shareholder value, responding swiftly to market dynamics. The firm's regulatory focus, with its emphasis on risk management and compliance, also plays a crucial role in shaping this relationship. Despite a wealth of studies on the impact of digital marketing capability on firm performance, there is a distinct gap in understanding how these additional strategic variables moderate these effects. Our study aims to unravel these complexities, providing a holistic view of how these factors collectively affect a firm's shareholder value.

There is a noticeable absence of research exploring the interplay between organizational digital orientation, competitive aggressiveness, regulatory focus, and their impact on shareholder value within strategic alliances. Also, the application of signaling theory in explaining these relationships, particularly within the context of strategic alliance announcements, remains largely unexplored. This study seeks to fill these gaps, offering actionable insights for firms to leverage strategic alliances and enhance their digital marketing capabilities. By doing so, we aim to broaden the current

discourse on strategic alliances within digital marketing literature, setting the stage for future research and fostering a deeper understanding of these interrelations.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### ***Do Strategic Alliances Increase Firm Abnormal Returns?***

Strategic alliances often signal a company's commitment to expansion and new market exploration, and when combined with robust digital marketing capabilities, these alliances can significantly boost shareholder value. A firm with potent digital marketing strategies can engage customers, optimize operations, and generate value, amplifying the benefits of an alliance such as expanded market reach, access to new digital products, and knowledge exchange. However, despite the well-documented benefits of marketing alliances, their direct influence on abnormal returns, particularly within the digital marketing context, remains under-researched. This study contends that integrating digital marketing capabilities within strategic alliances can enhance shareholder returns, as these capabilities enable firms to capitalize on innovative marketing strategies, data analytics, and digital tools. Consequently, this could lead to improved market position and financial performance, creating a positive signal for shareholders that boosts the firm's stock price. Therefore, this study hypothesizes the following:

***H1: Digital marketing capability will be positively associated with shareholder returns from strategic partnership announcements.***

### **Organizational Digital Orientation**

A firm's organizational digital orientation, which refers to the extent to which it incorporates digital technologies into its operations, strategies, and capabilities (Lamberton et al., 2021), and its digital marketing capability, indicating its aptitude in utilizing digital marketing tools and strategies to connect with customers and stimulate business outcomes (Holliman et al., 2019), are crucial factors in the digital age. These components, while individual, interact in a manner that can greatly influence a firm's performance and shareholder value. Notably, a robust digital orientation facilitates the proficient use of digital marketing capabilities, leading to enhancements in performance and a surge in shareholder value. Empirical evidence suggests that high organizational digital orientation boosts the positive effects of digital marketing capability, resulting in superior financial outcomes and amplified shareholder value (Lamberton et al., 2021; Holliman et al., 2019). Therefore, companies that embrace digital transformation and efficiently utilize digital marketing capabilities are likely to witness remarkable financial returns and generate substantial value for their shareholders. Hence, we propose the following:

***H2: Organizational digital orientation moderates the impact of digital marketing capability on shareholder value, such that the positive relationship is amplified for the firms with high (vs. low) digital orientation.***

### **Competitive Aggressiveness**

A firm's degree of competitive aggressiveness, which represents its readiness to confront its rivals directly and assertively in the marketplace, plays a significant role in strategic decisions, performance, and shareholder value (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). These firms tend to be more proactive and audacious in adopting and implementing innovative digital marketing strategies and technologies (Covin and Slevin, 1989). This leads to their pioneering use of cutting-edge digital tools and analytics, which result in unique customer experiences and a competitive advantage (Hughes et al., 2018). In line with the dynamic capabilities' theory (Teece et al., 1997), a firm's competitive aggressiveness can impact how it utilizes digital marketing capabilities to gain a competitive edge, ultimately influencing shareholder value. Therefore, firms that display high levels of competitive aggressiveness and deftly exploit digital marketing capabilities are more likely to achieve superior financial performance and enhance shareholder value (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001; Rauch et al., 2009). Hence we propose that:

***H3: Competitive aggressiveness moderates the impact of digital marketing capability on shareholder value, such that positive relationship is amplified for the firms with high (vs. low) competitive aggressiveness.***

### **Regulatory Focus**

Higgins' (1997) regulatory focus theory, with its dual dimensions of promotion and prevention focus, can significantly affect strategic alliance strategies and resultant shareholder value. Promotion-focused firms, characterized by risk-taking and growth-oriented behaviors, tend to form alliances with high growth potential, often leading to improved financial performance and shareholder value (Brockner et al., 2004; Gao et al., 2017). In contrast, prevention-focused firms prioritize safety and compliance, typically forging alliances that minimize risk and ensure stability. Despite

seeming risk-averse, these firms often sustain alliances effectively and comply with regulatory norms, indirectly boosting shareholder value (Brockner et al., 2004; Das and Teng, 2001; Bromiley and Rau, 2016). Therefore, both promotion and prevention focus positively impact shareholder value via strategic alliances. The influence on digital marketing capability varies: prevention-focused firms may see sustained value due to their meticulous risk management, while promotion-focused firms may experience volatile shareholder value due to their aggressive growth pursuit. Thus, it is proposed that:

***H4: The regulatory focus of a firm moderates the impact of digital marketing capability on shareholder value, such that the impact is more sustainable for firms with a strong prevention focus (vs. promotion focus).***

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed the event study methodology to examine the influence of strategic alliances on stock market performance in the context of digital marketing capability. Relevant events between 2016 and 2022 were identified using specific search terms and analyzed using Ravenpack's Event Similarity Days analytic to ensure novelty. A final sample of 1,161 announcements from 93 unique firms was used, and the impact was determined based on abnormal returns using a market-adjusted model. Statistical significance was ascertained using the standardized cross-sectional test and the Patell Z test. In this exploration, shareholder value was represented by the cumulative abnormal returns (CARs) calculated over the event window. Independent variables such as digital marketing capability and regulatory focus were assessed using secondary data, including Gartner's digital IQ index and the content of shareholders' letters analyzed using Computer-Aided Text Analytics (Short & Palmer, 2008). To maintain the validity of our results, several controls were implemented. Firm size, profitability, growth, a firm's technical knowledge (measured by research and development intensity), ad intensity, industry, and time were accounted for to isolate the impact of strategic alliances. This robust approach facilitated the investigation of the relationships and moderating effects between digital marketing capability and shareholder value.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Our study used robust testing and cross-sectional panel regression to analyze Cumulative Abnormal Returns (CARs) following strategic alliance announcements. The significant positive CARs during event windows indicate a positive market reaction, with strategic alliances generally boosting stock returns. The Hausman test led us to a fixed effects model, minimizing bias and explaining 27.8% of shareholder value variance. We found that digital marketing capability positively impacts shareholder value, especially in firms with higher regulatory focus. Firms emphasizing digital orientation showed a stronger correlation between digital marketing capability and shareholder value, with competitive aggressiveness having a marginal effect. These results suggest that the impact of digital marketing capability on shareholder value significantly depends on the firm's regulatory focus and competitive aggressiveness. Detailed results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

## **DISCUSSION**

Our event study analysis confirms that strategic alliances positively impact shareholder value, with market reactions showing substantial Cumulative Abnormal Returns (CARs) in the period surrounding the alliance announcement. Our robust model, validated by a strong F-statistic and adjusted R-squared value, explains a considerable portion of shareholder value variance. We found digital marketing capability to significantly enhance shareholder value, especially in firms with a pronounced digital orientation. These findings highlight the importance of digital marketing capabilities and strategic alliances in creating value for shareholders.



**Table 1: Cumulative Abnormal Returns Across Various Event Windows**

Event Windows	CAR	t-value	Z-statistic
(-3,3)	0.18%	1.40	1.83*
(-3,2)	0.13%	1.04	1.38
(-3,1)	0.14%	1.26	1.61
(-3,0)	0.14%	1.28	1.82*
(0,0)	0.14%	1.85*	2.58***
(0,1)	0.14%	1.81*	1.84*
(0,2)	0.13%	1.41	1.37
(0,3)	0.18%	1.83*	1.89*
(-2,2)	0.14%	1.24	1.58
(-2,1)	0.15%	1.52	1.92*
(-2,0)	0.15%	1.52	2.21**
(-1,1)	0.16%	1.84*	2.18**
(-1,0)	0.16%	1.92*	2.65**

\*p&lt;.10.

\*\*p&lt;.05.

\*\*\*p&lt;.01.

Notes: We computed the significance of the Standardized Cross-sectional t-statistic and Z-statistic

**Table 2: Results of Cross-Sectional Panel Regression**

	Model 1 (Main Effects Only)	Model 2 (Interaction Effects)
<i>Control Variables</i>		
Industry Concentration	-0.02*	-0.04***
Firm Size	0.00	-0.00
Market Value	0.00	0.01
Ad Intensity	-1.42e-07	-1.65e-06
R&D Intensity	-3.73e-07	-1.64e-06
Firm Leverage	0.010**	0.01*
Firm Profitability	-0.08***	-0.09***
<i>Main Effects</i>		
Digital marketing capability (DMC)		0.01***
RF		0.71***
DO	0.01**	-2.31***
CA		7.82***
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
DMC*RF	--	0.385***
DMC*DO	--	-0.157**
DMC*CA	--	-0.686***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.158	0.278
Year dummies included	Yes	Yes

\*Note: RF = Organizational Regulatory Focus; DO = Organizational Digital Orientation; CA = Competitive Aggressiveness;

\* p&lt;.10, \*\*p&lt;.05, \*\*\*p&lt;.01

**References available upon request**

## Summary Brief

# Environmental (Un)sustainability: The Interaction with Innovation and When it Matters

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*This research investigates the conditions under which environmentally unsustainable businesses can enhance their revenue. Based on the natural resource-based view of the firm, we hypothesize that environmentally unsustainable firms can optimize their revenue by investing significantly in innovation. We use a distinct panel data set of public companies to test our hypotheses. Our findings indicate that the positive interaction between unsustainability and innovation occurs only in certain situations. It remains valid for companies that link executive compensation with sustainability outcomes. Additionally, this relationship seems to be industry specific. Our study shows that the effect exists in the service and low-tech industries but not in the manufacturing and high-tech industries.*

### Introduction

Sustainability, an increasingly pivotal concept in business, impacts firms, consumers, and society. Achrol & Kotler (2012) view sustainability as a transformative phenomenon in marketing research, with future buying trends reflecting this sentiment. Consequently, 85% of firms recognize sustainability as crucial for future success (Davis-Peccoud et al., 2018). However, the impact of sustainable actions on firm financial performance remains ambiguous, evidenced by conflicting research results (Eccles, Ioannou, & Serafeim 2014; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Gielens et al., 2018; Sadovnikova & Pujari, 2017).

This study explores the nexus of environmental unsustainability, innovation, and firm performance, considering whether high levels of innovation can offset the risks or enhance the benefits associated with unsustainability. We contribute to the academic discourse by defining unsustainability at a micro-level, utilizing specific pollution measures (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions, waste usage) across a sample of international firms. This approach offers actionable managerial insights since decision-makers often seek measurable metrics.

Furthermore, we examine this interaction under conditions where executive pay is tied to sustainability goals and across industries of differing visibility to the public and partners comparing the low tech vs. high tech industries and service vs. manufacturing industries. Finally, we test our hypotheses with financial data from Compustat and a North American sustainability research firm, encompassing 829 firms from 2013 to 2018. We conclude with a discussion of our findings.

### Conceptual Background

The impact of sustainability on firm performance remains unclear in existing literature. Some studies show a positive relationship between environmental sustainability and enhanced firm performance, especially in high-growth sectors (Russo & Fouts, 1997; Eccles, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014). Conversely, sustainability can negatively impact firms in high-pollutant industries (Sadovnikova & Pujari, 2017; Gielens et al., 2018). Despite mixed findings, meta-analyses generally support a positive relationship, albeit context-dependent (Busch & Lewandowski, 2017; Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003), with most firms profiting from sustainability-focused strategies (Kiron et al., 2013). This study seeks to probe further into the relationship between (un)sustainability and firm performance.

### Innovation and Sustainability

Our research scrutinizes environmental pollutants' production, a key unsustainability aspect. Although pollutants are an unfortunate byproduct of firm operations, the Natural Resource-Based View asserts that firms can gain a competitive advantage by minimizing pollution and adopting sustainable practices (Hart, 1995; Hart & Dowell, 2011). This view considers the optimal allocation of resources, including pollutants. Alongside this, we focus on innovation, a broad concept encapsulating original ideas and strategies that confer an organizational advantage (Robertson, 1967; Rubera & Kirca, 2012). We argue that innovative firms can more efficiently utilize pollutants, aligning with green preferences and enhancing profitability. This creates a distinct competitive advantage for the firm, catering to customers and partners who prefer environmental sustainability and maximizing allocation of resources (Leiblein, 2011; Leonard-Barton, 1992). Thus, we propose:

**H1:** The interaction between innovation and unsustainability is positive, such that as the level of innovation increases, the relationship between unsustainability and financial performance is more positive.

**Executive Pay Incentives**

Research indicates that incentives linked to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), including environmental goals, improve long-term performance (Flammer et al., 2019). Thus, tying executive pay to sustainability can intrinsically and extrinsically motivate them to implement effective policies for efficient pollutant usage (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014). In contrast, executives without such incentives may not focus as much on optimizing pollutants, Thus, we propose:

**H2:** Innovation positively interacts with unsustainability on firm performance when executive pay is linked to sustainability outcomes, but there is no interaction when executive pay is not linked.

**Industry Differences**

Industry differences create unique characteristics that drive firm decisions and performance (Nijssen et al., 2003; Vanneste, 2017). For example, Banerjee, Iyer, & Kashyap, (2003) suggest that industry characteristics influence factors related to environmental sustainability. Thus, we examine the differences between the interaction of unsustainability and innovation between service vs. manufacturing industries and high tech vs. low tech industries.

Manufacturing industries traditionally depend more on R&D and innovation, and generate more pollution than service industries (Ettlie & Rosenthal, 2011). As such, they're likely to have worked towards efficient unsustainable processes. However, further R&D investments might offer diminishing returns due to industry norms. Conversely, service industries, less linked to pollution, could reap competitive advantages by pioneering efficient pollution prevention strategies, improving consumer perceptions and financial performance. Thus,

**H3:** Innovation positively interacts with unsustainability on firm performance in service industries but does not in manufacturing industries.

High-tech industries are driven by rapid advancements and heavily rely on innovation (Rubera & Kirca, 2012; Chang & Taylor, 2016). This potentially limits additional efficiency gains in pollutant usage. Conversely, low-tech industries typically have less emphasis on innovation, suggesting substantial gains when they do innovate, especially in relation to efficient pollutant usage, due to fewer competitors having made similar investments.

**H4:** Innovation positively interacts with pollution prevention in low-tech industries on firm performance but does not in high-tech industries.

**Data and Results**

We test our hypothesis using a sample of 829 international firms from 42 countries between 213-2018. Sustainability data was collected from a North American sustainability research firm and financial data was collected from Compustat. Firm performance was measured as the natural log of total revenue, innovation was measured by the natural log of R&D expenses, and sustainability was measured as the average of the standardized values of carbon emissions and waste emissions by each firm. Both firm and time fixed effects were used to address endogeneity issues. Lastly, split samples were used to analyze H2-H4 by splitting the sample based on whether executive pay was linked to sustainability for each firm, manufacturing vs. service industries, and low tech vs. high tech industries.

The results of our split sample analysis are reported in Table 1. Column 0 reports a full sample with fixed effects. Columns 1-6 provides the comparisons between the sub-categories. First, in Column 0, we find a positive and significant interaction between innovation and unsustainability (Column 0  $\beta = 0.005$ ,  $p < .10$ ), confirming H1. Next, we find positive and statistically significant interaction coefficients for firms that have executive pay linked to sustainability outcomes (Column 2  $\beta = 0.612$ ,  $p < .01$ ), service firms (Column 3  $\beta = 0.348$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and low-tech firms (Column 5  $\beta = 0.395$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, H2-H4 are also confirmed.

**Table 1: Sub-category Regression Results**

Variables	(0) FE	(1) Not Linked	(2) Linked	(3) Service	(4) Manufacturing	(5) Low Tech	(6) High Tech
Unsust <sub>it</sub>	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.540*** (0.197)	0.282** (0.133)	-0.004 (0.007)	0.319*** (0.088)	-0.001 (0.008)

R&D <sub>it</sub>	0.010 (0.025)	-0.010 (0.034)	0.175** (0.067)	0.005 (0.082)	0.013 (0.026)	0.089 (0.113)	0.009 (0.026)
Unsust <sub>it</sub> * R&D <sub>it</sub>	0.005* (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.612*** (0.211)	0.348** (0.160)	0.005 (0.004)	0.395*** (0.104)	0.004 (0.005)
Constant	6.724*** (0.148)	6.530*** (0.178)	7.828*** (0.553)	6.102*** (0.629)	6.803*** (0.135)	7.476*** (0.317)	6.632*** (0.165)
Observations	2,030	1,520	371	321	1,709	339	1,691
Adjusted R-squared	0.992	0.994	0.983	0.995	0.992	0.996	0.992
Time Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cluster-Robust Standard Errors	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$

## Discussion

This study investigates the interaction between a firm's pollution levels and innovation on financial performance, using a dataset of 829 firms (2013-2018). We find a positive relationship between firms with high pollution and innovation levels and financial revenues. This is particularly strong in firms linking executive pay to sustainability goals and those in service or low-tech industries. The focus on optimizing pollutant outputs provides unique insights into business operations. Our findings suggest that investing in R&D to efficiently use pollutants can yield both performance benefits and societal gains, but may be contextual to certain situations.

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# Summary Brief

## **Consumer Pressure and Hospitality Firms Sustainability: Examining the Mediating Effects of Green CSR, Green Process, and Product Innovation on Sustainable Performance**

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The hospitality industry is facing an unprecedented challenge in the form of growing consumer demand for sustainability. The present study examines the role of consumer pressure in influencing sustainable performance in hospitality firms, and the mediating effects of Green Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Green Process Innovation, and Green Product Innovation in this relationship. Consumers are increasingly holding businesses accountable for their environmental footprint, especially in the hospitality industry, which has traditionally been a resource-intensive industry. The study is grounded in stakeholder theory and employs a cross-sectional survey design. Data was collected from 60 hospitality firms, including hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies, through structured questionnaires. Consumer pressure has a significant impact on hospitality firms' sustainable performance, with Green CSR being the most influential mediator, followed by Green Process Innovation. Although Green Product Innovation also mediates the relationship, it plays a comparatively smaller role, indicating a broader focus is needed for sustainability. The findings of this study have several practical implications for hospitality firms. The results demonstrate the importance of aligning business strategies with consumer expectations to ensure sustainability. Hospitality firms should integrate Green CSR into their core values and should invest in Green Process and Product Innovations. By doing so, they can enhance their sustainable performance and gain a competitive edge in the market. Moreover, policymakers should consider providing incentives for hospitality firms that are making significant strides in sustainability.

In conclusion, consumer pressure is a significant driver for sustainable performance in the hospitality industry. Hospitality firms need to recognize the critical role of sustainable practices in meeting consumer demands and improving overall performance. Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of these variables and examine the role of government policies in fostering sustainability in the hospitality sector.

**Keywords:** Green CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility); Consumer behavior; Sustainable business practices; Green Marketing; Green supply chain; Stakeholder engagement

# Summary Brief

## Cause Marketing as a Catalyst for Attracting Talent

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*Participation in social initiatives has become part of mainstream business practices for national companies, facilitating a shift from “should we support a social cause” to “which social cause should we support” and “how should we support a particular cause?” The assumption that firms will be rewarded for being socially responsible and supporting social initiatives has influenced many organizations to adopt social initiatives to contribute to charitable causes. Yet, most research on corporate social initiatives has focused on the positive impact on consumers’ affective and behavioral responses, while little is known about the effects of social initiatives on employees or potential employees. Drawing on signaling theory and the halo effect, this research explores how an organization’s cause marketing initiatives can signal to job seekers and impact perceptions about the job and organization. Thereby giving an employer the potential ability to attract more applicants and increasing an organization’s ability to hire top performers. A pre-test provides insight into this phenomenon and a foundation for expanding the research into a comprehensive empirical study.*

### Statement of Key Contributions

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings of this research are consistent with prior studies in that a halo-effect can occur when a specific moral behavior of a company becomes a signal to other organizational attributes. In the same way employers lack information about the quality of job candidate and therefore use education as a signal of employee quality, candidates use cause marketing as a signal of employer quality. The results reveal that strategic cause marketing can strengthen job-seeker evaluations of potential employers. Thus, the positive impact of strategic cause marketing on the perceptions of job seekers can provide a competitive advantage in recruiting and hiring. This discovery warrants further exploration to examine the conditions and strength of this phenomenon.

From a managerial view, the current research shows how a company’s engagement in strategic cause marketing can change job seekers’ perceptions of the organizational culture. These findings encourage organizations to adopt cause marketing and long-term engagement with social causes to signal positive organizational attributes to job seekers and employees (in addition to consumers). The findings highlight the importance of creating awareness and social engagement in social causes and using those initiatives as recruitment tools.

### Introduction

Managers face increasing pressure to engage their firms in socially responsible behaviors such as cause marketing. As they seek to become more socially responsible for both philanthropic and economic reasons, their efforts are affecting not only consumers and society but the employees who work for them and the potential employees they may attract. Research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) suggests that employees identify more positively with socially responsible firms, which could make these firms more attractive employers (Sen, Bhattacharya, and Korschun 2006). Yet, research on cause marketing (CM) has focused on the impact on consumers; therefore, little is known about the effects of social initiatives on potential employees.

The conventional wisdom of job seekers has been that the incentives to join a company are financial. However, recent research, including a study of 759 MBAs from 11 leading North American and European schools, found that more than 97 percent of the MBAs in the sample were willing to sacrifice some financial benefits to work for an organization with a superior reputation for CSR and ethics (Montgomery and Ramus 2010). On average, MBAs were willing to forgo 14 percent of their expected salary.

Firms spend significant financial resources and time attracting, hiring and retaining employees. Given the high costs of the hiring process and employee turnover, knowledge of how an organization’s CM initiatives relate to the top factors that job seekers look for when making employment decisions is valuable. An understanding of how job seekers are affected by CM will help inform management and marketing theory and practice, positioning organizations to leverage social change as an organizational strategy.

Drawing on signaling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, and Reutzel 2011; Spence 1973) and the halo effect (Nisbett and Wilson 1977; Thorndike 1920), this paper explores how an organization’s CM initiatives influence factors in the employment decision process – through signaling of experiential factors that employees’ value in the workplace. Through integrating employee literature with work on CM, the current research demonstrates how a job seeker’s

perceptions of an organization's CM initiatives can impact their anticipated job meaningfulness and organizational commitment, increase organizational attractiveness, and increase perceptions of ethical culture and collectivism.

### **Discussion**

The findings are consistent with prior research in that a halo-effect can occur when a specific moral behavior of a company becomes a signal to other organizational attributes. Though CM could be perceived as just another factor that contributes to perceptions of an organization, the implementation of CM can influence job seekers' perceptions, further demonstrating CM as a meaningful research stream. Thus, the positive impact of strategic CM can provide a competitive advantage in recruiting and hiring.

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# Summary Brief

## Puzzling American Consumers of Products from Endangered Species: Motivations and Ethical Dilemmas

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Increased consumption seems to boost depredation of endangered species as more and more consumers around the world are willing to buy or accept products made of body parts of endangered species (ES). Before any policy or practice is aimed at discouraging consumers for such consumption, however, we need to understand current trends in the trade and consumption of ES products, the motivations inducing consumers to acquire such goods, and the consumer ethics that lie beneath such practices. Thus, this research aims at 1) ascertaining prevalent trends in trade, trade regulations, and health risks involved in the acquisition of products from endangered species, 2) understanding consumers' motivations to acquire (sell, buy, give or accept) products derived from body parts or the skin of endangered species, 3) recognizing consumer's ethics (judgment and intention to act), and 4) evaluating the moderating effect of consumers' motivations and key demographic characteristics in their ethical judgment or intention to act.

### Introduction

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1.** What induce consumers to acquire (buy, sell, give or accept) products that are made of body parts or the skin of endangered species?

**RQ2.** To what extent do consumers rely on moral criteria versus consequences in forming their ethical judgment regarding the acquisition of ES products?

**RQ3.** To what extent do consumers rely on moral criteria versus consequences in their intention to act, such as when rewarding or punishing a conduct that relates to the acquisition of ES products?

**RQ4.** How do consumers' motivations and key demographic characteristics influence consumers' ethical judgment and intention to act?

### Consumer Motivations

The U.S. is one of the largest global consumers of illegal wildlife product trading and a key driver of global demand by serving as a transit country for illegal wildlife trafficking (Goyenechea & Indenbaum, 2016). From 2005 to 2014, nearly 50,000 shipments of illegal wildlife products are caught at U.S. entry points (Deines, 2017; Goyenechea & Indenbaum, 2016). Nonetheless and despite a fair amount of research on consumers involved in wildlife trading, there is a lack of research in consumer motivations for purchasing wildlife products (Thomas-Walters et al., 2019). American consumers enjoy souvenirs, pictures, and appealing samples of wild animals posted at walls or doors. Stuffed deer heads, bear bodies or large fish displays at restaurants or public places become attractive symbols and fit the local tastes for ornamentation and social pride. As an illustration, many consumers perceive ivory as a "perfect gift" due to its rare, exotic and aesthetic qualities that give status to both the giver and receiver (Strauss, 2015). Giraffe parts are used for "fashion, knife handles, home décor and trinkets" is contributing to the decline of the giraffe species by 40 percent (Humane Society International, 2019). A new study by the Humane Society International and the Humane Society of the U.S. reported that 40,000 giraffe skins and body parts have been imported into the U.S. (Daley, 2018).

### Consumers' Ethical Dilemmas

Consumers' experience in the acquisition of products made of ES body parts or skin involves important ethical issues, at least one that affects people's mind and another that impacts people's decision making (Albers-Miller, 1999; Sneddon et al., 2010; Stanaland et al., 2011). A conceptual framework that focuses on those two key critical issues, ethical judgment and decision making, is based on the moral dimension (Etzioni, 1988) and the theory of marketing ethics (Hunt and Vitell, 1986). Etzioni's moral dimension advances moderate deontology and rejects P-utility theory and ethical egoism. The theory of marketing ethics (HV theory) postulates that deontological (moral) and teleological (consequential) considerations drive people's ethical judgment and decision making. A deontological evaluation focuses on the choice of right or wrong morals, duties, obligations, responsibilities, and the inherent natural rights of others (Hunt and Vasquez-Parraga, 1993). A teleological evaluation focuses on the consequences of human acts, that often involve the trade-off between positive and negative consequences. Both deontological and teleological

considerations influence people's ethical judgment and decision making. However, not all decisions people make would entail moral considerations; some decisions may be guided by teleological (consequential) evaluations alone. Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated:

**H1:** The ethical judgment of consumers acquiring ES products draw significantly less on deontological considerations than on teleological ones when confronting ethical dilemmas compared to the consumers not facing ethical dilemmas

**H2:** The intention to act of consumers acquiring ES products depend significantly less on ethical judgment than on teleological considerations when encountering ethical dilemmas compared to the consumers not meeting ethical dilemmas.

**H3:** The greater the motivation to acquire ES products, as reflected in the formative constructs obtained in the research, the greater the gap generated by the exposure to ethical dilemmas.

**H4:** The gap generated by the exposure to ethical dilemmas, as formulated in H1, is greater among women and larger families than among men and smaller families.

## **Methodology**

The study of consumer ethics uses a 2×2 randomized experimental and a scenario reflecting a consumer conduct in an acquisition of a ES product. The scenario involved a moral or immoral act with positive or negative consequences to the actor. Each questionnaire (four in total) encompassed a scenario written in one of four combinations: 1) moral act with positive consequences, 2) moral act with negative consequences, 3) immoral act with negative consequences, and 4) immoral act with positive consequences.

The study of consumer motivations is based on formative items developed from consumer practices reported in journal articles and magazines. After a pilot study of motivations reflected in 50 items, 32 items were retained because they seem to capture consumers' reasons and attitudes influencing their inclination to acquire products derived from endangered species. The 32 items cover a broad spectrum of products derived from endangered species and types of transactions involving such products. Given the experimental design, the moral or deontological condition is treated as a dummy variable with 1 indicating the moral condition and 0 pointing out the immoral state. Similarly, the consequential or teleological condition is treated as a dummy variable with 1 specifying positive consequences and 0 assigning negative consequences. The questionnaires were distributed randomly to the sample, securing an almost equal number for each group. Ethical judgment is measured using a 7- point Likert scale very unethical (1) to a very ethical (7) in response to the question "how ethical do you think is the action described in the scenario you just read." The intention to act reflected choices of reward and punishment for the behavior expressed in the scenario, from the highest reward and 3 additional decreasing levels of reward, a neutral position, to four levels of punishment, from mild to strong punishment in the other extreme of the scale. This ordinal scale was validated by a metric scale from +20 (reflecting the highest reward) to a neutral point = 0, to -20 (reflecting the strongest punishment). A sample of 612 adult consumers from a large U.S. metropolitan area responded the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed randomly. The returned questionnaires represented almost equal numbers of respondents for each questionnaire version (four versions in total).

## **Key Findings**

Corroborating the hypotheses, results show that consumers confronting ethical dilemmas in acquiring ES products often fail to recognize that a moral act is ethical when involving negative consequences, or that an immoral act is unethical when involving positive consequences. Similarly, consumers confronting ethical dilemmas often reward an immoral act that brings positive consequences or punished a moral act that brings negative consequences. Because the acquisition of ES products often involved ethical dilemmas, the practical need to influence consumers on how to recognize dilemmas and how to solve them ethically is not only apparent but also necessary for profit and non-profit organizations as well as for governmental societal stakeholders monitoring this type of consumption.

A motivational factor ("social status") adds to the explanatory power of the two evaluations, deontological and teleological, on ethical judgment, and to the explanatory power of ethical judgment and teleological evaluations on intention to act. Because "social status" is essentially consequential, consumers must be guided on the moral attribute of consuming ES products.

Two demographic characteristics (gender and family size) became relevant. Gender interacted with teleological evaluations and increased the explanation of ethical judgment. Gender and family size added to the explanatory power of ethical judgment and teleological evaluations on intention to act. Family size also interacted with teleological evaluations and increased the explanation of intention to act. These consumer characteristics must be taken in to account in communication with this consumer segment, including advertising and word of mouth. Yet, further

analysis is needed of the role of other motivations and other demographic characteristics, such as consumer's country of birth, religious belief, and ethnic background.

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## **Session 10.7: Teaching Moments**

**Chair:** James Blair

# Teaching Moment

## Class Deck: Online Introductions

Carolyn Popp Garrity, University of Montevallo-Alabama, USA

Many universities are experiencing an increase in demand for online courses, but online courses can cause students to feel disconnected and isolated. Icebreakers and introductions have been shown to be some of the most important strategies for building learner-to-learner connections (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Discussion boards don't always work well for introductions because students focus on the first few posts and neglect the remainder.

To remedy this, the discussion board information can be put into a Class Deck (like a Pitch Deck that highlights students). Create a PowerPoint slide for each student using information from the introductory discussion post by including a picture and 3-4 bullet points. All the slides are combined into a self-contained presentation for the class. This increases the chances that the students will learn about all their classmates and increases their sense of connection to their peers.

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# Teaching Moment

## **Retail Taste-Off: National vs. Store**

Lauren Brewer, University of Texas at Arlington, USA

The "Retail Taste Off" is an engaging in-class activity designed to illuminate the multifaceted nature of consumer choices. In this activity, students taste and evaluate various food items like cookies, crackers, pop-tarts, and cereal.

The class is divided into two groups: one comprising blindfolded students and the other with unobstructed vision. Blindfolded participants will rely solely on their taste buds, while the non-blindfolded group can scrutinize each product visually before indulging their palates. Students not only determine the brand of each item but also note their personal preferences.

Following the taste challenge, a discussion ensues, centered around the unexpected factors that influence our perception of taste beyond the flavor itself. Students delve into how appearance, texture, and familiarity play pivotal roles in shaping our taste preferences. The conversation expands into the realm of branding and marketing strategies, where packaging, labeling, and brand reputation can significantly impact consumer choices.

# Teaching Moments

## **ChatGPT – Creating an ePortfolio Rubric**

Joie S. Hain, Clayton State University – Georgia, USA

ePortfolios are one of the defined High Impact Practices. High Impact Practices have been shown to improve student engagement and subsequently student success. ePortfolios are a tool that can be utilized to showcase the development of a student's skills that can be used for job employment or promotional purposes. The College of Business is implementing ePortfolios throughout the college for all students' use to gather, maintain and present their accomplishments and growth.

To facilitate students developing their ePortfolios, a rubric was needed to support a quality and useful output. After searching for existing rubrics, an appropriate rubric was not discovered. To develop the new rubric, ChatGPT was utilized. The ChatGPT prompts will be shared and the final rubric results will be presented.

# Teaching Moment

## The Syllabus Quiz

James Blair, Eastern Kentucky University, USA

*The phrase “it is on the syllabus” is one many professors feel they say more frequently than they need to throughout the semester. This activity is designed to help reinforce student knowledge of the course requirements and layout as well as expectations throughout the semester. It provides instructors a first day of class activity and students an opportunity to meet another peer taking the course.*

### Effectiveness of Quizzes

Past research suggests quizzes can be an effective tool in the learning process for students to retain and understand information. Regularly scheduled quizzes on reading materials have been shown to increase completion of reading assignments and course performance (Johnson & Kiviniemi 2009). Quizzes also lead to a better understanding of material (Brothen & Wambach 2004; Graham 1999; Narloch, Garbin, & Turnage 2006). The literature suggests this tool may be helpful in students retaining key information and setting them up for success in their coursework thus reducing confusion with course assignments and expectations for the semester.

### Syllabus Quiz Activity

For this activity, instructors should come up with a list of questions about the course assignments, due dates, classroom policies, readings, and other pertinent information. Ideally it should be a mix of questions including true/false, multiple choice, and short answer. It is important to choose some short-answer questions so students are less likely to guess the right answer and instead realize when they may not know the key course information. Prior to the start of the semester the instructor should send a “welcome to the course” communication through their learning management system or email to the students in the course. In this message, the instructor should highlight the expectations of the first day of class. For this activity, they should tell students to bring a hard copy of the syllabus. Let them know it must be printed out and not an electronic version. This gives the students a clear expectation of what is expected and needed on the first day. That first day of class, welcome the students and ask them to put all their materials away except for the hard copy of the syllabus that was asked of them in the welcome email. Let them know electronic copies are not allowed and that they would be starting off with a syllabus quiz. Some students may ask questions about going to the library to print off a copy or them not getting the welcome email. Let them know the quiz is starting now and for them to try their best. Distribute the quizzes and let them work on them for about five minutes. During these five minutes, walk throughout the class to determine how many students brought the printed copy and see which questions are being skipped by students. At about five minutes, ask for the whole attention of the class. Let them know about the expectations of the course. When a reading or assignment is expected to be completed (like bringing a printed copy of the syllabus to class), it needs to be done to set the students up for success and have them ready for the class session. At this point, let them know they have five minutes to pair up with another student. Recommend students who do not have a syllabus to find ones who do have a hard copy of the syllabus. This allows students to connect with other peers in their class and work with one another on finding the “solutions” to the questions on the quiz. Once the time is up, go over the syllabus quiz as a class. This ensures everyone is on the same page and they understand assignments, due dates, and class expectations. It is recommended that the instructor not collect the actual quizzes and instead allow the students to keep them in their folders or notebooks. This provides them a reference to look back on their syllabus quiz if they have any questions instead of asking instructors when the answer is “on the syllabus.”

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# Teaching Moment

## **Show Me the Money!**

Aliosha Alexandrov, WI, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

The financial feasibility of marketing campaigns still does not get enough attention in the classroom. In a class called Marketing Analytics, I examine the following topics related to it: 1. Which marketing campaigns are suitable and which marketing campaigns are not suitable for financial outcomes. As it turns out, about half of all marketing campaigns can be linked to financial outcomes. 2. The class discusses several key non-financial and financial measures, depending on the objective of the marketing campaign. 3. The key financial measures are: Net Present Value, Internal Rate of Return; and Payback time; which collectively are referred to as Return on Marketing Investment (ROMI). 4. The financial metrics can be evaluated in a variety of ways, including: a. Subjective experience and benchmarking (easy) b. Experimentation (moderate) c. Conjoint Analysis (mid-level complexity) d. Predictive Analytics (advanced) 5. Predictive Analytics is the most powerful tool for predicting the ROMI of a marketing campaign. By applying an individual customer level of analysis, it can be used to optimize spending, optimize targeting, maximize profits, etc. Students learn how to implement those techniques using Microsoft Excel and a software for predictive analytics called RapidMiner. 6. The main outcome of the class is that students are able to evaluate if the success of a marketing campaign should be examined via non-financial measures or financial measures. If financial measures are applicable, depending on the circumstances and the chosen technique, students can project if a marketing campaign is worth it or not.

# Teaching Moment

## Marketing Mondays: An Experiential Classroom Activity Focused on Strategic Marketing

Gary R. Johnson, University of Montevallo, USA

*This experiential marketing education module required students to work as a team during a short-time limit while creating a marketing strategy for a product item randomly selected by each group. The objective was for students to think creatively and strategically, apply marketing principles as a group, while meeting a fast turnaround with a formal presentation to the class.*

### Experiential Learning

The marketplace has identified a gap in career readiness and soft skills among college graduates. Employers are informing their higher education partners that current college graduates lack important soft skills needed in order for them to be effective business leaders. The soft skills of public speaking, critical thinking, and team work collaboration are vital skills for employment with any for-profit or non-profit enterprise. Also, as the cost of a college education has increased, there is growing interest to hold colleges and universities accountable for graduation outcomes and employment results where students are both academically and professionally prepared for their career.

Students in the classroom succeed when they are able to utilize their skills and curriculum acumen by connecting their knowledge with an experiential assignment with deliverables. The classroom offers an environment for students to practice critical thinking skills, presentation skills, and collaborative team skills.

### Marketing Monday Activity

This assignment was a six-week assignment built into the modules for an in-person course. The course was a strategic marketing management 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 assign students to groups each week where they would select a product item, collaborate and create a marketing strategy for that product, and then present their recommendations to the class.

The professor visited local Dollar Tree retail stores in advance of each Marketing Monday assignment. The goal was to find product items that could be grouped together around a theme. For example, one week the theme was “*Splish Splash I was Taking a Bath*” and focused on beauty products. Another week the theme was “*How About Cookin’ Somethin’ Up with Marketing*” and focused on kitchen items. Each week had a product category theme with a song that supported that theme as introduction music to that specific class meeting.

The weekly items would vary from widely used products to some unique items that might have a limited consumer base. The goal was each week to have at least one or two product items that would offer some humor or even a challenge to the students in creating a marketing strategy for that item. An example of the items for one week that focused on beauty included: (1) Barbie Travel Toothbrush, (2) Olay Ultra Moisturizer Bar Soap, (3) Curad Camo Bandages, (4) Arm & Hammer 3 in 1, (5) Pure Silk Razors, and (6) The Nobleman Men’s Deodorant Wipes.

The Marketing Monday assignment commenced with students entering the classroom and drawing a random number from one to six. This number corresponded to a group for that week. The class consisted of thirty-eights students and with full attendance had an average of six students per group. After the first week, students had a quick rhythm to the group assignment process and assimilated well with their new group.

Each group would send one representative to the front of the room. The professor had the product items for that week in a bag. The first group (Group #1) would select at random from the bag the product item for their group. Each group representative would remain in front of the classroom with their selected product until all groups had selected an item from the bag. The last group (Group #6) would have an opportunity after they selected their item to

steal a product item from another group or keep the original item they selected from the bag. This allowed the last group to have an advantage of being last to select their item.

Once all groups had their product item selected, then the professor started the timer. The class had 30 minutes to complete the assignment. The professor provided a summary slide that was visible to the classroom reminding the students what the assignment was to cover and the expected marketing principles to be included in the presentation. The professor provided a general PowerPoint template for the groups to use to minimize the time needed to create a presentation each Marketing Monday class meeting.

The assignment included a general summary of the assignment objective, the rubric for grading the assignment, and a conceptual idea of the roles that could be assigned to the group members. The group structure provided leadership and organizational management experience to be used to structure the group's outcome for the assignment. The group roles would typically require there to be one or two students working on the PowerPoint presentation, two or three working on research on the product item and the brand marketing message of that company, and one student who would then serve as the presenter to the class. The group had to discuss, research, conceptualize a strategy, and build a PowerPoint presentation in a 30-minute time limit.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The short time limit required students to feel a sense of urgency and pressure to complete the assignment. This emulates the experience of working in an office when a manager asks an employee for a proposal or presentation in a short turnaround time. The student presenting had a short window of time to prepare for the presentation. Each group presenter only had three minutes to present the group's marketing strategy to the class, so the assignment offered a valuable extemporaneous speaking learning experience. The goal was for as many students as possible to have a turn to present in their respective groups over the six-week period. The quick turnaround of this assignment also offered students who had skills in graphic design to work quickly to customize visuals that incorporate the brand standards used by the marketer.

Each group would need to cover the following strategic marketing concepts in their analysis included in the PowerPoint and with their in-class presentation.

- Product Analysis
  - Product Category
  - Product Usage and Benefits
  - Distribution
  - Retail Partnerships
  - Alternative Offerings
- SWOT Analysis
- Define the Target Market
- Marketing Plan Tactics
  - Promotion Methods
  - Advertising Mediums
  - Social Media and other Digital Strategies
  - Co-branding, Special Events, or Spokesperson/Influencer Relationships

### **Conclusion and Results**

Each week students arrived in the classroom on the scheduled Mondays ready to work and collaborate. There were certain student leaders that emerged each week in the different groups. After the second week, students quickly assigned themselves and each other the different areas of analysis for students to start working on their respective sections. The groups resulted in a good example of teamwork and collaboration on each week's assignment.

The professor provided the groups a PowerPoint template they could use for their in-class presentation. Most groups actually built their own custom PowerPoint that graphically aligned with the branding of the product item selected. Students used creative strategic thinking and critical reasoning skills in their strategic marketing recommendation(s) outlined in the group's PowerPoint presentation. The group was required to use the provided marketing principles as their guide of what to include in the marketing strategy presentation. Most groups also incorporated the product item's overall branding in their group PowerPoint presentation.

Students were able to work and enhance their soft skills such as public speaking, teamwork, and group collaboration. Each week the assignment reinforced the strategic marketing concepts students learned in marketing principles and other marketing courses. This was accomplished by having a repetition to each week's assignment that included the same criteria each week in the group's analysis and presentation.

The feedback from students was they enjoyed the Marketing Monday assignment and liked the varied experiences each week offered them. The students also liked that they were not in a group setting for a long period of time and had the opportunity to work in different group compositions each week. Students also expressed how they enjoyed that the theme and product items varied each week, but the assignment requirements and time interval stayed the same.

The students affirmed in their end-of-semester interviews that they had a stronger understanding of the strategic marketing concepts in the course and had a better idea how marketers in the workplace would use them to evaluate and determine marketing strategies for products. The professor will continue to expand on this assignment for future marketing strategy courses. The goal would be to align specific marketing principles with the weekly Marketing Monday assignments to better support the learning outcomes with specific marketing concepts.

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# Teaching Moment

## **Break the Ice with LinkedIn and Index Card**

Tserennyam Sukhbaatar, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, USA

### **The Assignment**

Typically, the first day of the class could be more comfortable for every student. They do not know each other very well. Some of them are very shy. A silent class can be turned into the noisiest class with only a few minutes using index cards and LinkedIn. They become friends and build an excellent relationship on the first day of the class. Instructing students how to use the LinkedIn QR code before starting is more effective.

1. Each student receives an index card with a thoughtful question.
2. Each student must talk to everyone and ask the question on the card.
3. After the conversation, each student must exchange each other's LinkedIn.
4. Then, students have to swap their index cards and move on to find another student.
5. Cell phones or laptops are recommended.

# Teaching Moment

## Rewriting the HBCU Mission

Alicia D. Cooper, Alabama A&M University, USA

### The Assignment

In the Principles of Marketing course, the discussion of Strategic Planning and Mission Statements can seem esoteric to students who have had limited work experience. To make the discussion more meaningful, the university is used as an example, and we examine the school's current strategic plan and mission statement. As students, they are in the unique position to be able to evaluate whether the university is carrying out its stated plans and living its mission. This is especially meaningful at Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), many of which tie their history to the education of formerly enslaved blacks after the Civil War.

During the lecture and discussion session, examples of effective mission statements for companies like Nike, IKEA and Starbucks are presented. Students are then placed in small groups. Each group is given a list containing the mission statement for their university along with those of several peer institutions. First, the group must rank these statements. Then, they must re-write the mission statement for their university. The new university mission statements are presented to the class. Special consideration is given to whether HBCU should be stated in the mission and the resulting implications.

## Teaching Moment

### What's My Name? The Picnic Game Re-imagined.

Michelle Woodhouse, Flagler College  
Alicia Cooper, Alabama A&M University

We have always been apprehensive of the first day of classes...why? We always have a hard time remembering students' names!!! We decided to try a variation of the infamous picnic game in several marketing courses. It helped us remember our students' names, the students have fun, and we reference the game during teachable moments throughout the semester. **In fact, sometimes we remember the associated name instead of the students' name.!!** According to Agarwal and Bain "engaging every student in retrieval practice, every student has the opportunity to boost long-term learning". Using this simple icebreaker as a springboard for teaching concepts throughout the semester has proven to be very beneficial. Not only do we make connections with our students, but students make connections with each other and the course content in a fun environment. Examples of how to implement the "Picnic Game re-imagined" in several marketing classes will be presented.

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# **Session 11.1: Authentic CB and that Doesn't Mean Cowboy...**

**Chair:** Ellen Campos Sousa



## Summary Brief

# Affective Aesthetic Atmospheres: Redefining Beauty with #BodyPositive TikTok Influencers

Kelley Cours Anderson, College of Charleston, USA

Karen Anne Wallach, University of Alabama in Huntsville

Pia Albinsson, Appalachian State University, USA

Ryann Tracy, College of Charleston, USA

*How does the socially constructed concept of beauty evolve? Traditionally, normative beauty standards were determined and reinforced by a small group of decision-makers who oversaw the distribution of mass media. With the growing influence of social media, redefinition of beauty standards has taken on a more democratized form. This research explores how social media content can reconstruct our cultural definitions of modern beauty. Following netnographic analysis of the #BodyPositive movement and TikTok influencers, we explore the phenomenon around body positive influencers and their power to leverage change through social media. Findings using visual analysis of TikTok content offer a conceptual framework that explains how an affective aesthetic atmosphere co-creates the space to redefine beauty through foundational communal insecurity. Implications address the impact on the beauty industry and marketers.*

### Introduction

While typically, beauty itself is a reflection of the culture in which it resides, the ideals of beauty are constantly shifting. These shifts take many forms and become both aspirational and inspirational with its ever-evolving standards. As such, beauty is socially constructed, reconstructed, validated, and rejected (El Jurdi & Smith, 2018). In the world of business, beauty is also capital, part of the \$579 billion beauty industry (Statista, 2022). However, in more recent years, a new shift is gaining momentum, motivated partly by the growth of social media. While much research has explored the negative effects of body image on social media, less work has evaluated its positive impact, and, more specifically, how the conversations on social media can reconstruct our cultural definitions of modern beauty. Resultantly, beauty standards are questioned by influencers. In particular, we follow the voices and content of body positive influencers, those who build and/or leverage their social media following to broaden the ideal of beauty beyond commonly reinforced media ideals. We have little clarity on the environments, or “atmospheres,” that make up and impact this digital culture. As such, this study will investigate what messages influencers convey and are emotionally embodied by viewers about #BodyPositivity on TikTok.

### Background

The Oxford University Press (2023) defines beauty as “That quality of a person (esp. a woman) which is highly pleasing to the sight; perceived physical perfection; attractive harmony of features, figure, or complexion; exceptional grace, elegance, or charm in appearance.” Beauty is an aesthetic that garners a social and cultural appeal. Arguably, marketing’s voice has continued to set the standard and expectation of beauty throughout the world (Mady et al., 2023), feeding and reinforcing consumers’ perceptions. However, with the rise in social media, the consumer can become an active player in cultural dynamics, rather than the traditional view as a passive follower. As such, social media offers additional opportunities for researchers to investigate how beauty is prescribed and cocreated in today’s environment. The advent of social media has given rise to a notable shift, whereby individuals who do not fit the normative beauty standards are able to have an amplified voice. Collectively, they have started to push back on existing beauty ideals, with the #BodyPositivity movement at the forefront.

Although limited marketing research has been conducted on the body-positive movement, research from other disciplines suggests that body positive messages can have both positive and negative impacts on individuals (Cohen et al., 2019; Monks et al., 2021). Moreover, other researchers have suggested that the body-positive movement continues to reinforce society’s preoccupation with appearance over other attributes (Webb et al., 2017). While followers’ viewership of body-positive content is unlikely to produce an immediate change in mindset and overall lifestyle, there is still potential for longer-term impacts through the embodiment of continual consumption via algorithm-curated body-positive environments, or what we classify as the *Affective Aesthetic Atmosphere*. Building from Anderson’s (2009) conceptualization, we define Affective Aesthetic Atmosphere as: An experience that cocreates aesthetic meanings

alongside the subjective formation of such experience and its related emotional responses. In other words, as #BodyPositivity messages and content grows on TikTok, an atmosphere emerges, providing a space for consumers to not only cocreate the meaning of #BodyPositivity but also set the stage for collective emotions and aesthetic embodiment.

### Key Findings

We leverage a qualitative, visual approach to explore the #BeautyPositive environment by analyzing online video content curated by #BodyPositive influencers. The data revealed four affective categories providing an emotional tapestry scaffolded from a cultural foundation of communal insecurity. Building upon this negative expression of cultural insecurity, influencers express negative (collective angst) and positive (praise and humor) emotions. These affects reveal #BodyPositive influencers aim to reframe the cultural meaning of beauty. This work responds to the call for advancing research of social media wellness (Mertz et al., 2023) and contributes to body work consumer research literature (e.g., Samper et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2021). Ultimately, an affective aesthetic atmosphere is cocreated to help shape social understanding of body positivity and reimagining beauty.

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# Summary Brief

## **Do *You* Really Mean It? Investigating the Role of Sincerity in Crossing Party Lines to Increase Effectiveness of Cause-Related Marketing Initiatives**

Ron Christian, KS, Fort Hays State University  
Woojong Butch Sim, KS, Emporia State University  
Jeffrey Muldoon, KS, Emporia State University

This research investigated the impact of sincerity on cause-related marketing (CRM) initiatives. The authors examined how different consumer segments respond to donation-seeking appeals involving varied causes (e.g., environment, DEI) associated with the purchase of food products. Specifically, the authors investigated how consumers' political affiliation impacted attitudes and intentions toward a CRM initiative.

Results suggest Republicans (vs. Democrat, vs. Independent), generally viewed as conservative, had significantly less favorable attitudes toward CRM involving environmental issues or diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Subsequently, Republicans were significantly less likely to purchase the product associated with these CRM initiatives. While the results showed that attitude mediated the effect of type of CRM on purchase intention, sincerity served as a moderator, thus reducing the negative view and intention of Republicans on the CRM initiative. This work highlights the role political affiliation may play in consumers' perception of CRM initiatives. Marketers should consider the dynamics of how causes may potentially attract or repel consumer segments based on political affiliation. Structuring CRM initiatives with utmost sincerity as a priority may navigate across party lines more effectively, and thus reach a broader base of consumers.

### **Background**

Within the United States, many people associate with a particular political party based on an underlying "political ideology". According to Adorno, Levinson, and Sanford (1950), political ideology refers to "a set of beliefs about the proper order, goals, and guiding principles of a society" (p.111). The central approach to categorizing political identity in the U.S. is through a conservative-liberal continuum (Skitka and Tetlock 1993). Conservatives, predominately identified as Republicans, and liberals, predominately identified as Democrats, diverge from one another on various dimensions, including worldviews, cognitive processing style, and motivational concerns (Jost 2017). Pew Research (2021) suggests political polarization is at an all-time high among U.S. citizens, with stark disagreement between Republicans and Democrats on various issues including the economy, racial justice, climate change and the environment, energy, law enforcement, and a host of others. For example, Pew Research (2020) found that Democrats are more than three times as likely as Republicans to say dealing with climate change should be a top priority (78% vs. 21%). Similarly, most Democrats (78%) say focusing on DEI in the workplace is a good thing with good outcomes, while Republicans (30%) convey much less focus on DEI and see little impact from those policies (Pew Research, 2023).

While political ideology has been examined in various contexts, little research has addressed how this construct relates to attitudes and intentions toward varied CRM initiatives. The authors propose that conservatives and liberals may have drastically different views of various causes, such as the environment or DEI, and thus, this difference in perception of causes can impact attitudes and intentions toward brands and products within a CRM context.

CRM has been described as a promotional strategy used by organizations to associate with a good cause, while also engaging consumers in revenue-providing exchanges (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Organizational outcomes for CRM initiatives include increased brand valuation (Curry and Smith, 2018), more favorable consumer attitudes toward the brand supporting the cause (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2005), and increased consumer purchase intentions (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988).

It is proposed that signaling theory serves as an underlying mechanism for this effect in the current research. For example, the CRM initiative may signal to consumers the firm's position on specific causes or issues. Consumers may perceive this CRM initiative through a lens of political orientation, and thus, reject or support the initiative based on political party alignment with a cause. Previous research has examined how signaling relates to consumer psychology. For example, Boulding and Kirmani (1993) suggested a product warranty is a strong signal for superiority

among products and can help the consumer decision process. Firms can also signal various attributes through advertising (Kirmani, 1990). The current research examined how types of CRM initiatives might “signal” to consumers alignment with or commitment to a cause, and how this in turn, might impact consumer attitude and intention across political party lines.

### Hypotheses

The current research focused on how political orientation might impact consumers’ attitudes and intentions toward CRM initiatives, resulting in the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Consumers are significantly more likely to purchase a product when CRM initiative aligns with their political orientation.

**H2:** The effect of alignment between consumers’ political orientation and CRM on purchase intention will be mediated by brand attitude.

**H3:** Perceived sincerity of the CRM initiative moderates the relationship between political orientation and purchase intention.

### Methods

The sample ( $n = 646$ ; 52.9% female;  $M_{age} = 37.8$ ) was comprised of working adults recruited through a southern U.S. university to complete an online “Consumer Perceptions” survey. A fictitious company (e.g., Vexlight) was chosen to avoid previous exposure to the brand or product by the participants. The types of causes (Environment, Diversity Equity Inclusion, Education, Law Enforcement) were selected based on prominence of the issues in recent policies, legislation, political debates, and news reports.

To test the hypotheses, the following study used a between-subjects design with the type of CRM initiative as the manipulated factor. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the five conditions (Environment, Law Enforcement, DEI, Education, Control) in which they were presented with a scenario for purchasing a meal kit depicting an appeal to support a cause. After viewing the stimuli, respondents were asked a series of questions. Variables of interest included brand attitude, sincerity, purchase intention, and consumer brand identity. Demographic data were also collected. All scales were adopted from previous research. As an attention check, respondents were asked later in the survey which type of cause was mentioned.

### Results

To test hypotheses, the study conducted a mediation analysis, utilizing Haye's (2018) PROCESS macro (model 15; 5,000 bootstrapped samples). In partial support of H1 and H2, the mediation analysis showed that in the Environment condition, participants identified as “Independent” showed greater purchase intention ( $M = 5.43$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ) than Republican ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ), and the effect was mediated by brand attitude ( $F(9,104) = 29.483$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .589$ ,  $SE = .007$ , 95% CI: [.23, 1.04]). Surprisingly, Democrats showed no statistically significant difference in purchase intention ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ) and brand attitude ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ) compared to Independent and Republican participants.

In support of H2, the DEI condition results revealed that Democrats ( $M = 6.87$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ) showed more favorable brand attitude than Republican ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = 2.13$ ), yet no difference emerged compared to Independent ( $M = 6.10$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ). H1 was not supported in the DEI condition as no significant difference emerged on purchase intention among groups (Democrat,  $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ; Republican  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ; Independent ( $M = 4.70$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ). Interestingly, sincerity served as moderator for impact on Independents’ and Republicans’ purchase intention ( $\beta = .699$ ,  $SE = .245$ , 95%,  $p = .003$  CI: [.21, 1.19];  $\beta = .896$ ,  $SE = .293$ , 95%,  $p = .005$  CI: [.31, 1.48].

### Discussion

The findings of the current study provide partial support for the hypotheses. While results were consistent for Republicans showing lower brand attitude and purchase intention on the two measured conditions, there was a surprising effect with Independents for Environment and similar purchase intention among groups for the DEI condition. These disparate results warrant further investigation.

However, the research does suggest contribution to the literature by integrating CRM with signaling theory and provides insight that not all CRM initiatives may be consistently aligned to specific politically oriented consumers. As suggested by this research, some CRM initiatives did not increase responses from the intended audience. However, brand attitude as mediator and sincerity as moderator allow for potential strategic marketing opportunities for the firms. For instance, while DEI was intended to target participants identified as Democrats, sincerity moderated the effects for Republicans and Independents. While there was no statistically significant difference in purchase intention of different politically oriented groups, perceived sincerity moderated this effect.

Furthermore, the study introduces Independent as a neglected political group in the topic. While previous studies have focused more on Democrats and Republicans, the current study investigates Independent, a group counting 38% of total registered voters (Pew Research, 2021). Participants identified as Independent showed significantly higher brand attitude and purchase intention than Republicans in general ( $\beta = .888$ ,  $SE = .315$ , 95%,  $p = .005$  CI: [.27, 1.51]).

Interestingly, Democrats showed significantly higher brand attitude when their value was aligned with the CRM initiative (e.g., DEI), but the effect did not carry over to the final dependent variable (purchase intention). Independents and Republicans also showed they were more likely than Democrats to support CRM based on perceived sincerity. These findings may contrast prior studies which argued that Democrats generate more positive responses to CRM compared to Republicans. The study proposes further investigation.

### Implications

This study suggests some practical implications. Marketers should consider the relative polarizing nature of consumers across party lines, and subsequently, focus on a CRM campaign featuring a sincere commitment to the cause. Conveying a strong commitment to the cause and clearly communicating the benefits to broader society may increase effectiveness in reaching a broader base of consumers, irrespective of political orientation.

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## Full Paper

# AI Voices vs. Authentic Human Voices: Exploring the Effects of Different Voices in Audiobook Apps on Consumers' Ongoing Usage Behavior

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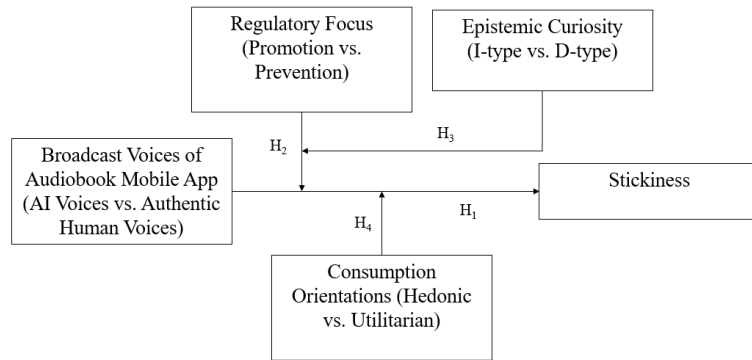
*Although the effects of different voices and sounds have been widely explored in the multisensory literature, the role of these voices and sounds in the mobile app research field has not been extensively discussed. This study makes up this research gap and also discussed the moderation effects of regulatory focus, epistemic curiosity, and consumption orientations. Specifically, this research discussed that users with more prevention focus (promotion focus) will use the audiobook mobile app more frequently with authentic voices (AI voice). Different types of Epistemic curiosity (I-type EC and D-type DC), this psychological trait, moderate the relationships between different voices and ongoing usage behavior of audiobook mobile apps. Specifically, D-type EC (I-type EC) audiobook mobile app users with more prevention focus (promotion focus) will use the audiobook more frequently with an authentic voice (AI voice). Finally, our research also suggests that audiobook mobile app users with hedonic consumption orientation (utilitarian orientation) will use the audiobook more frequently with authentic voices (AI voice). This research contributes to sensory marketing and mobile app literature in theory and practice and suggests when and how mobile app publishers provide customized services and products to users.*

*Keywords: Audiobook mobile app, Regulatory focus, Epistemic curiosity, Consumption orientations*

### Introduction

With the development of mobile development, mobile apps have become an indispensable part of people's daily life and have even changed learning and work habits. Millions of mobile apps on smartphones have created many business opportunities, which has created huge economic impacts. According to the statistic report from iiMediaResearch, the number of online audio users in China has reached 490 million in 2019 and 570 million in 2020. It is expected to reach more than 700 million users in 2024. The "Audiobook" app is one of the good representatives for the Chinese online audio industry. The audiobook market in China is expected to reach 8.6 billion RMB in 2023. Huge economic impacts are like a big "dark hole" to attract huge amounts of investments in this industry. For the audiobook mobile app, the basic and most important feature is that users can directly listen to the books without reading them. The audiobook app breaks the inherent way of acquiring knowledge, letting people learn and acquire information and knowledge anytime, anywhere. However, the way that users obtain information and knowledge through audiobook mobile apps totally depends on the sound and broadcast voice embedded in the mobile app. With the development of AI technology, many famous audiobook mobile apps in China are now providing AI voice and authentic human voices for users (e.g. WeChat Audiobook and Ximalaya audiobook). However, the mobile app industry is now facing a challenge: a high churn rate. The churn rate of the mobile app represents the percentage of users who have stopped using an app (Kamalraj and Malathi, 2013). The high churn rate means that the resources that have been spent on user acquisition do not get the maximum ROI from users and may be more likely to become sunk costs. So, how to inspire users to continuously use the mobile app becomes one of the most important issues that mobile app publishers should address. In the audiobook mobile app context, how do different voices influence continuous using behavior? Why do users have different responses to different voices? How do users' different regulatory focus orientations, consumption orientations, and epistemic curiosity influence their response to different voices? Why? Our research developed a research model that addresses these questions, consistent with regulatory focus theory.

### Figure 1 Research Model



Previous literature has discussed that different voices contain different sensory information, which can influence people’s behaviors (Sunaga, Meng, and Zhuang, 2020; Kang et al., 2017). Specifically, previous research has compared the effects of AI voices with authentic human voices on consumers' responses (e.g. Ni, Wu, and Huang, 2023; Mitchell et al., 2011; Kühne, Fischer, and Zhou, 2020; Baird et al., 2018). However, these research articles simply articulate why and how AI voices and authentic human voices influence consumers’ behaviors and attitudes without considering the effects of regulatory focus and curiosity. Understanding the effects of these two constructs is important because these two personality traits and states have impacts on consumers' emotional responses and behavioral responses (Kang et al., 2017). Stocchi et al. (2022) pointed out that future research in the mobile app field should explore the effects of different personality traits and states on the ongoing use behavior of mobile apps. Consistent with Stocchi et al. (2022) research and regulatory focus theory, we make up this research gap by introducing two personality trait and state constructs (epistemic curiosity and regulatory focus). Specifically, we postulate that different types of voices influence the use behavior of audiobook apps. Users with prevention focus will use audiobook apps more frequently with authentic human voices. Conversely, if the users focus more on their achievements and future, they will use audiobook apps more frequently with authentic human voices. These predictions are examined across four studies. Furthermore, we also test the moderation effects of consumption orientations and the effects of two types of epistemic curiosity on the relationship between different voices and use behavior.

## Conceptual Background

### 1. Mobile App Stickiness

Consumers' ongoing usage behavior on the website and mobile app was one of the attractive research topics. Demers and Lev (2000) introduce a new construct called “stickiness” to measure the abilities of a product to capture and retain the user’s attention (Hsu and Lin, 2016). This construct highlights two important points: 1) use the application frequently; 2) stay on a website for a period of time. These two points suggest that consumers should not only use the application frequently, but, more important, consumers should engage the application frequently. In the mobile app context, consumers typically visit mobile apps frequently but in short intervals (Nielsen, 2011; Summus, 2011). Nielesen (2011) and Summus (2011) suggested that almost half of smartphone users reported that they use their devices in intervals of five minutes or at least 10 times per day. However, they only spent an hour actually engaging with these mobile apps. For each app, they only engage for less than 10 mins. Although they use mobile apps frequently, less engagement with the mobile apps decreases the propensity to continuously interact with these mobile apps.

Stickiness is not always perennial but rather can also be quite ephemeral (Racherla, Furner, and Babb, 2012). For example, a mobile app called "Long Island Railroad." Unless you were a resident of long island in New York, this kind of mobile app might only be an ephemeral mobile app. Many people, when visiting Long Island, will use this mobile app frequently and also always interact with this app because they can easily and precisely check the railroad schedule and may purchase a ticket at a discount price in this mobile app. However, when they leave the long island, this mobile app will be more likely to be dormant for several months and years in-between visits.

In this research, we consider these characteristics of mobile apps. Specifically, users with high stickiness to audiobook apps should not only use these apps frequently, but they should engage with these apps for a period of time. Consistent with Demers and Lev (2000) and Racherla, Furner, and Babb (2012) research, we define stickiness as the time users spend interacting with the audiobook apps and how often users use the audiobook app to listen to the books. To measure the mobile app stickiness more comprehensively, we also consider the customer engagement instrument in Vivek. et al. (2014) research. This measurement categorized the engagement behavior into three dimensions, which not

only consider the interaction between consumers and mobile apps, but simultaneously highlight the engagement time between consumers and mobile apps.

## **2. Sounds and Consumer Behavior**

To attract users, audiobook mobile app publishers have developed different voices, which is the most important feature of audiobook apps. As a new and interesting technology, many mobile app publishers embed AI voices in audiobook mobile apps. When listening to the books, users can choose different voices (e.g. AI male voices, AI female voices, authentic male voices, and authentic female voices), which depend on different books and different personality traits. A challenge facing audiobook mobile app publishers in attracting users is when these different voices are efficient to inspire users to use their mobile app frequently.

Consumers with different personality traits or in different conditions will have different responses to different voices. Voices and sounds can affect consumers' perceptions and behaviors, such as product evaluations, satisfaction, perception of the background music, purchase intention, and product choices (Poupis, Rubin, and Lteif, 2021; North, Sheridan, and Areni, 2016; Reinoso-Carvalho, Dakduk, Wagemans, and Spence, 2019; Kang et al., 2017).

Consistent with the previous research, sounds and voices can be viewed as product attributes to influence consumers' responses and behaviors. Research related to product sounds can be categorized into either consequential (i.e. resulting from the operation of the product) or intentional (i.e. sounds that are deliberately embedded in a product) (Poupis, Rubin, and Lteif, 2021). In audiobook mobile apps, the AI voices and authentic human voices can be categorized into intentional sounds because mobile publishers create these two voices to attract users to continuously use their mobile apps.

When users use audiobook mobile apps to listen to books, the broadcast voices and sounds convey sensory information, which has effects on consumers' perceptions. Consumers interpret these pieces of information, and their decision-making process will be influenced by interpretations. The effectiveness of sounds or voices depends on consumers' cognitive and emotional responses to specific dimensions of sounds (e.g. timbre, volume, tone, and pitch) (Poupis, Rubin, and Lteif, 2021).

In audiobook mobile apps, AI voices and authentic human voices are two dimensions of intentional sounds, which have different effects on users' responses. Although AI voices are created to try to emulate authentic human voices, they still cannot fully integrate the tones, intonations, and emotions of human expressions, which makes listeners feel uncertain about whether the speaker is animate or inanimate (Ni, Wu, and Huang, 2023). The strong uncertainty feeling leads to users' uncomfortable feelings and also creates auditory fear (Ni, Wu, and Huang, 2023). Moreover, AI voice can also influence consumers' product evaluations. "People evaluated the virtual character as more unfriendly and uncanny when it was paired with an AI voice than with authentic human voice" (Ni, Wu, and Huang, 2023, p.5). So, it is reasonable to assume that AI voices and authentic human voices have different user responses. Thus:

H1: In audiobook mobile apps, different voices (AI voices and authentic human voices) have different user responses, which have different effects on continuous use behavior.

## **3. Regulatory Focus**

Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) examines the relationship between personal motivation and the way in which people achieve the goal. Regulatory focus theory categorized the self-regulatory systems into two types: promotion focus and prevention focus. A promotion focus is "a system that guides individuals to seek matches to their desired end states, which are viewed as ideals and aspirations" (Bullard and Manchanda, 2017, p.303). People with promotion focus are more focused on accomplishment, advancement, and attainment. They are more focused on seeking to maximize gains and are more concerned about positive outcomes (Higgins, 1997; Shah, Higgins, and Friedman, 1998). Conversely, a prevention focus is a system that "guides individuals to avoid mismatch to their desire states" (Higgins, 1997; Bullard and Manchanda, 2017, p.303). Individuals with prevention focus are more focused on the duties and obligations, which motivate them to pursue security and protection feelings. When they pursue their goal, they always try to minimize losses and prevent marking mistakes.

Consistent with the regulatory focus theory, the goal can be differentiated between promotion focus and prevention focus. Bullard and Manchanda (2017) demonstrated that promotion-focused goals are directly associated with exceeding and excelling and represent gains and attainment of positive results. However, prevention-focused goals represent the avoidance of losses and negative results (Higgins, 1997).



Regulatory focus theory has been applied to many research paradigms, particularly in neuroscience and sensory marketing research. Specifically, in sensory marketing research, different music and sounds have different functions. The proactive function of music is consistent with the people with promotion focus motivation, which can make people feel more powerful, happier, and empowered, thereby leading to greater risk-taking.

Moreover, the interaction effects between regulatory focus and sounds have been validated in previous neuroscience research. Wallmark et al. (2018) compared familiar and unfamiliar music on consumers by suggesting that relative to unfamiliar music, familiar music stimulates a large region of the right prefrontal cortex, which is the same area that is directly related to prevention focus. This research points out an important point: external familiar stimuli (e.g. familiar sounds or music) can reduce the perceived risk and make people feel secure. This security feeling is associated with prevention focus (Asker and Lee, 2001; Higgins, 1997; Pham and Chang, 2010). Relative to AI voices, audiobook users are quite familiar with authentic human voices, which can intensify users' security feelings. These security feelings fit the prevention focus and will motivate users to continuously use the mobile app. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H2: Audiobook mobile app users with more prevention focus (promotion focus), which was manipulated by rephrasing the app description, will use the audiobook more frequently with authentic voice (AI-voice).

#### 4. Epistemic Curiosity

Consumers use audiobook mobile apps to listen to books. This whole process is an information-seeking process, which can be influenced by personality traits and personality states. Curiosity is like an active catalyst, which has an impact on this process. Human curiosity is a dispositional drive enough to be second desire only to like appetite or sex (Berlyne, 1954). It is an important construct, which can influence learning behavior, working behavior, consumption, or many human behaviors (Kang et al., 2009; Kashdan & Steger, 2007). Loewenstein (1994) suggested that curiosity is a multidimensional construct. For information seeking, epistemic curiosity is one of the core constructs, which can articulate individuals' learning and seeking information behavior. Epistemic curiosity is the "voluntary and impulsive need for information and its strength is determined by the gap between the expected knowledge level and the actual knowledge level." (Kim and Lee, 2017, p.35). Consistent with Litman (2008) and Litman, Crowson, and Kolinski (2010), epistemic curiosity is also a multidimensional construct, which can be categorized into two dimensions: interest epistemic curiosity (I-type EC) and deprived epistemic curiosity (D-type EC). I-type EC is "activated by opportunities for intellectual exploration expected to lead to discoveries and corresponds to the intrinsic pleasure of learning (Litman and Mussel, 2013, p59)". However, D-type EC is activated when people find they lack very specific pieces of information needed to solve a problem (Litman and Mussel, 2013). I-type EC and D-type EC are activated by the intrinsic motivations of discoveries. However, D-type EC also highlights the extrinsic motivation for the accuracy or fit of new knowledge (Litman and Mussel, 2013). Table 1 illustrates the differences between these two types of epistemic curiosity.

**Table 1 The Differences Between I-Type Epistemic Curiosity and D-Type Epistemic Curiosity**

Epistemic Curiosity	Characteristics	Previous Research
I-Type EC	Optimistic feeling (Interesting to new) Enjoy and hedonics Exploration and variety seeking	Litman & Mussel (2013) Litman (2010) Mussel (2010)
D-Type EC	Pessimistic feeling (tension or frustration) Targeting directive and problem-solving. Performance driven Anxiety, depression, anger with information gaps	

Source: Kim and Lee (2017, p.35)

Consistent with regulatory focus theory, ideals and oughts can also influence consumers' purchase decisions, which are guided by different self-regulation systems (Lin and Chen, 2018). Promotion focus is more concerned with the pursuit of desires and maximization of achievement and positive outcomes. This kind of strong desire inspires people to be more optimistic and focus more on their "gain" rather than "miss". However, the prevention focus is more concerned with the minimization of errors and negative outcomes, which will motivate people to focus on "correct" and avoid "mistakes".

Lauriola et al. (2015) discussed the relationships between self-regulation, I-type EC, and D-type EC. Specifically, people with I-type epistemic curiosity will focus on fun, carefree, and optimistic approaches to learning (Lauriola et al. 2015). However, people with D-type EC will focus on greater thoughtfulness and caution regarding knowledge search.

In this research, we measure these two dimensions of epistemic curiosity separately and postulate that I-type EC users of audiobook apps are more likely to explore the interesting contents of the books, thereby improving their use intention of the audiobook apps. Since D-type EC users depend on greater thoughtfulness and caution when they reduce their knowledge gap by reading the books in the audiobook apps, this greater thoughtfulness and caution feeling will help the users to avoid mistakes and also minimize errors. So, we assume that D-type EC intensifies the effect of prevention focus on the perception of sound. Thus:

H3: D-type EC audiobook mobile app users with more prevention focus will use the audiobook more frequently with an authentic voice.

As a new, attractive, and interesting characteristic embedded in the audiobook apps, AI voice will motivate users to deeply explore the functions of the audiobook app, thereby increasing the intention to continuously use the mobile app. Thus:

H4: I-type EC audiobook mobile app users with more promotion focus will use the audiobook more frequently with AI voice.

## 5. Consumption Orientations

Not only does regulatory focus influence consumers' ongoing use behavior of audiobook mobile apps, but also their consumption goals play an important role in their use decision. Consumers adopt the products and services when the products' attributes can achieve their consumption goals (Costa et al. 2004). For the audiobook apps, users should assess whether the audiobook attributes can be consistent with their consumption goals. Therefore, the types of books that can be consistent with audiobook users' goals should stimulate consumers to continuously use audiobook apps.

Consumer study (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) has identified two types of consumption orientation: hedonic and utilitarian. The hedonic orientation is related to "want-to" goals. Consumers with hedonic orientation not only express their own personal values through shopping activities, but they also enjoy the self-enhancing element of the consumption process (Liu, Yuen, and Jiang, 2019). Thus, consumers with hedonic orientation will be more focused on their intrinsic satisfaction provided by the multi-sensory and emotive aspects of products and services (Chang et al., 2015). For example, audiobook users who use the audiobook app to listen to science fiction to relax can be viewed as hedonic consumption.

Conversely, consumers with utilitarian consumption will focus on the functions and actual information related to products and services. To make the final purchase decision, these consumers will evaluate the specific attributes of the products and services (Guttentag et al., 2017). For instance, audiobook users who use audiobook apps to listen to a book that can improve their leadership or can teach sales skills can be viewed as utilitarian consumption.

Consumers with different consumption orientations depend on different criteria to evaluate the product information through a dual process model named heuristic or systematic processing (Moore and Lee, 2012). Heuristic processing refers to a "fast and relatively emotionally driven information process, adopted by hedonic consumption-orientation consumers because they make decisions based on their intuitive inferences (Liu, Yuen, and Jiang, 2019, p.4608)." Systematic processing refers to "a more analytical and profound evaluation of the information received, which is adopted by utilitarian consumption orientation consumers" because they focus on factual characteristics of the products. Relative to AI voices, authentic human voices are more emotional voices, which contain more sensory information. These emotive sounds with multi-sensory information will stimulate the users to immerse themselves in the book and also motivate users to frequently use the audiobook apps. Thus:

H5: Audiobook mobile app users with hedonic consumption orientation will use the audiobook more frequently with authentic voices.

Conversely, audiobook users with utilitarian consumption should focus on the specific products' attributes and characteristics. They depend on a systematic process to evaluate the products and services. For audiobook users, they should focus on whether the book and audiobook mobile apps can help them to achieve their goal rather than whether the audiobook mobile apps can provide more multisensory voices to them. Thus:

H6: Audiobook mobile app users with a utilitarian consumption orientation will use the audiobook more frequently with AI voice.

## **Methodology**

To test the all hypotheses, we conducted four studies. Specifically, in study 1, we will test the main effect of different voices (AI voices and authentic human voices) on the ongoing use behavior of audiobook mobile apps. To eliminate the effect of different genders' voices on the users' responses, all participants will be divided into four groups. To eliminate the effect of audiobook content on consumers, all participants in these four groups will listen to a part of a biography. This part of the biography simply tells all participants when and where the protagonist was born and passed away. Respondents will not know the protagonist's name and gender. In group 1, all participants will listen to the part of the biography in the AI male voice. In group 2, all participants will listen to the exact same content as group 1 in an authentic male voice. In group 3, all participants will listen to the exact same content as group 1 and group 2 in AI female voice. In group 4, all participants will listen to the exact same content as group 1 to group 3 in an authentic female voice. Before listening to the part of the biography, participants in group 1 and group 3 will be notified that they will listen to the biography in an AI voice. Participants in group 2 and group 4 will be notified that they will listen to the part of the biography in an authentic human voice.

When all participants finish, they will be asked to finish the questionnaire of mobile app stickiness. To eliminate other confounding factors, participants' age, gender, educational background, and audiobook app using experience will be controlled. Besides testing the main relationship between voices and mobile app stickiness, in study 1, we will also test the reliability and validity of mobile app stickiness.

In study 2, we will test the moderation effect of regulatory focus on the relationship between different voices and mobile app stickiness. A 2 (Different Voices: AI voices vs. Authentic human voice) x 2 (Regulatory Focus: Prevention focus vs. Promotion focus) between-subject design will be conducted. To eliminate the different genders' voices on users, all participants in study 2 will be divided into two sections. In section 1, all participants will be divided into two groups (Prevention focus vs. Promotion focus). Participants in these two groups will read a short vignette, which is related to the manipulation of regulatory focus. After that, all participants will finish the prevention focus and promotion focus questionnaires. After the manipulation check, the participants in the two groups will listen to the exact same biography in study 1 in the AI male voice and authentic male voice. In section 2, we follow the same process. The only difference between section 1 and section 2 is that the participants will listen to the biography in the AI female voice and authentic female voice. To eliminate the confounding factors, participants' age, gender, educational background, and app using experience will be controlled.

In study 3, we will test the moderation effect of epistemic curiosity on the effect of regulatory focus on the relationship between different voices and mobile app stickiness. A 2 (Different Voices: AI voices vs. Authentic human voice) x 2 (Regulatory Focus: Prevention focus vs. Promotion focus) x 2 (Epistemic Curiosity: I-type EC vs. D-type EC) between-subject design will be conducted. Specifically, the participants will be asked to finish the survey of epistemic curiosity (I-type EC vs. D-type EC). Based on the survey results, they will be assigned to two conditions: I-type epistemic curiosity and D-type epistemic curiosity. The participants in both conditions will read a short vignette. This short vignette is related to audiobook mobile apps, which manipulate participants' regulatory focus. Then, all participants will follow the exact same process in study 2 to listen to the biography in AI male voice, AI female voice, authentic male voice, and authentic female voice.

In study 4, we will test the effect of consumption orientation on the relationship between different voices and mobile app stickiness. A 2 (Different Voices: AI voices vs. Authentic human voices) vs 2 (Consumption Orientations: Hedonic orientation vs. Utilitarian orientation) between-subject design will be conducted. As we did in study 2, to avoid the effect of different genders' voices on participants, all participants will be divided into two sections. In section 1, all participants will be divided into two groups (Hedonic orientation vs. Utilitarian orientation). Participants in these two groups will read a short vignette, which is the manipulation scenarios of consumption orientation. After that, all participants will finish the consumption orientation questionnaires. After the manipulation check, the participants in the two groups will listen to the exact same biography in study 1 in the AI male voice and authentic male voice. In section 2, we will follow the same process. The only difference between section 1 and section 2 is that the participants will listen to the biography in the AI female voice and authentic female voice. To eliminate the confounding factors, participants' age, gender, educational background, and app using experience will be controlled.

## **Contributions**

Although previous literature has discussed how different sounds influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Sunaga, Meng, and Zhang 2020; Kang, Esther, and Lakshmanan, 2017), most previous research focus on exploring how different sounds influence consumers' decision-making process. Our research directly builds the relationships between different voices and behavioral outcomes and also tests boundary conditions of regulatory focus, which is seldom discussed in previous research. Our findings also add value to the study of multisensory consumer-mobile app interaction by understanding how different voices influence audiobook users' attitudes.

Our research would offer a better user experience if the audiobook app can offer customized voices to consumers with different regulatory focuses. In the field of human-mobile app interaction, there has been extensive work on how consumers' sensations (e.g. vision) on consumers' perceptions toward mobile apps. For example, consistent with regulatory focus theory, Lin and Chen (2018) discussed how mobile app design influences consumers' download intention of mobile apps. This research highlights that the effect of one consumer's sensation (vision) can influence their using behavior and also discussed that two types of regulatory focus motivations can affect consumer behavior. Sunaga, Meng, and Zhuang (2020) systematically discuss how instrumental timbre and regulatory focus influences consumers' attitudes toward advertisements and products. This research highlights the effects of sounds and voices on consumers' behaviors. Our research extends Sunaga, Meng, and Zhang (2020) and Lin and Chen (2018) research by discussing that not only sounds (e.g. background music) can influence consumers' attitudes towards products, the human voices and AI voices also have similar effects on consumers. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, there is no published research that has examined how different voices in audiobook mobile apps influence consumers' intention to continuously use the mobile app. Our research makes up this research gap.

Second, our research developed a comprehensive measurement of stickiness. Stocchi et. al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of existing marketing research on mobile apps, clarifying and discussing how apps shape customer experiences, perceptions, and attitudes. This research highlights the importance of ongoing (continued) app usage and also points out that there is no comprehensive instrument to measure consumers continued app usage. Our research makes up this research gap. Specifically, Stocchi et. al. (2022) suggests that stickiness can not only be a one-dimensional construct, which only measures continued intention to use an app, but it can also be a multi-dimensional construct, which can also include app engagement. Our research combined the scale items of these two dimensions and developed a more comprehensive measurement of the stickiness construct.

Third, we contribute to the mobile app research by introducing a contextual construct called epistemic curiosity. Stocchi et. al. (2022) suggested that future research can explore a broader range of personality variables driving the intention to adopt the app and to continuously use the app. Consistent with Litman and Mussel (2013) research, in this research, we test the impacts of I-type epistemic curiosity and D-type epistemic curiosity on user intention separately. Introducing epistemic curiosity (contextual construct) can not only articulate why consumers continuously use the apps, but it can also help us to better understand users' reading habits. Epistemic curiosity is a subjective concept whose effect on consumer behavior is variable with both consuming products and consumer traits. When personal epistemic curiosity is augmented with their demography, we can predict more audiobook app users' reading behavior for selecting the books in the audiobook apps. Furthermore, relative to other individual traits, I-typed and D-typed epistemic curiosity can be good factors to predict users' reading propensity because these two types of epistemic curiosity are personality traits that are less influenced by temporary environmental change.

Human epistemic curiosity measures whether individuals have a high desire to learn new knowledge and deeply explore new information (Litman, 2008). In the context of audiobook apps, if the audiobook app publishers understand the epistemic curiosity traits of each audiobook app user and users' regulatory focus, and if they can provide customized book lists to users depending on different types of epistemic curiosity and regulatory focus, what will happen? Understanding users and developing clustering analysis tools to provide customized in-app products and services are essential for the promotion tools by audiobook app publishers.

## **Appendix 1: Manipulation Scenarios**

### **Regulatory Focus Manipulation Scenarios**

The manipulation scenarios are based on Mogilner, Aaker, and Pennington (2008). we manipulated participants' regulatory focus through a regulatory framing of the descriptions of the audiobook app, which described the function of the app as either avoiding the negative outcomes (prevention) or achieving the positive outcomes (promotion). To eliminate the confounding factors, participants' age, educational background, and gender will be the control variables

All the participants were asked to read and imagine a scenario in which “You are looking for a mobile app that offers a library of audiobooks and videos. You see an app named “Voice Book” with a description as follows”. Participants in the promotion focus condition read the following description of an app: “Use Voice Book to listen to the books, you can expand your knowledge!”, ‘ ‘Use Voice Book to listen to the books, you can get professional advice for how to improve your professional abilities!’’, and “Use Voice Book to listen to the books, you can enjoy many science fictions, which brings you the feeling of being there and finally improve your satisfaction and decrease your pressure!”.

In contrast, participants in the prevention focus condition read the description: “Use Voice Book to listen to the books, you can avoid boring!” “Use Voice Book to listen to the books, those books can teach you how to prevent failures in your daily life and in your job!” and “Using Voice Book to listen to the books has become a trend, if you use it, you won't become the ‘outdated and odd person’ in the eyes of others!”

### **Epistemic Curiosity Manipulation Scenarios**

#### **D-type EC vs. I-type EC.**

Consistent with Litman (2008) and Litman, Crowson, and Kolinski (2010), epistemic curiosity is a personality trait, which is less influenced by temporary environmental changes. For the manipulation process, we simply ask all respondents to finish the D-type and I-type epistemic curiosity questionnaires. Based on the results of the survey, we will divide the respondents into two groups: I-group and D-group.

### **Consumption Orientations Manipulation Scenarios**

The manipulation scenarios are based on Liu, Yuen, and Jiang (2019). Specifically, participants will read the following short vignette and then finish the questionnaires.

Please read the following scenarios and relate them to your previous experience:

#### **Hedonic-consumption orientation (AI-Voice vs. authentic voice):**

You are planning to use a popular audiobook app called "Voice Book" to listen to interesting science fiction to relax. You have already chosen the science fiction that you want to listen to on Voice Book mobile app. This fiction is very interesting and fascinating, improving your satisfaction and decreasing your pressure. You can only choose AI voice (authentic voice) to listen to this book. Now, you will listen to a part of the chapter of this scientific book. When you finish listening, please answer all the questions.

#### **Utilitarian-consumption orientation (AI-Voice vs. authentic voice):**

You have just received a notification from your company, asking you to learn how to improve your presentation skills. Your presentation skill is directly related to your future promotion. You are planning to use a popular audiobook app called “Voice Book” to listen to a book to learn. You have already chosen a book that you want to learn and listen to it on Voice Book mobile app. This book is very useful and can help you to improve your presentation skills. You can only choose AI voice (authentic voice) to listen to this book. Now, you will listen to a part of the chapter of this book. When you finish listening, please answer all the questions.

## **Appendix 2: Constructs' Instruments**

### **1. Regulatory Focus**

**Cited from Haws et al. (2010)**

For each of the following, please indicate the extent to which you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements, ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 6 – Strongly Agree).

#### **Promotion Focus**

1. When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don't perform as well as I would ideally like to do. (R)
2. I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.
3. When I see an opportunity for something I like, I get excited right away.
4. I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations.
5. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my "ideal self"—to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations.

#### **Prevention Focus**

1. I usually obeyed the rules and regulations that were established by my parents.
2. Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times. (R)
3. I worry about making mistakes.
4. I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life.
5. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I "ought" to be—fulfill my duties, responsibilities, and obligations.

### **2. Stickiness:**

Adapted from Hsu and Lin (2016)

(6-point Likert scale; 1: Strongly Disagree to 6: Strongly Agree)

We are investigating consumers' attitudes relative to **a mobile app that offers a library of audiobooks and videos.**

For each of the following, please indicate the extent to which you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements, ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 6 – Strongly Agree).

- (1). I would stay longer on this app than other apps.
- (2). I intend to spend more time on this app.
- (3). I use this app as often as I can.
- (4). I use this app every time I am online.

### **3. Epistemic Curiosity (Including I-type EC and D-type EC):**

Cited from Litman and Mussel (2013)

(6-point Likert scale; 1: Strongly Agree to 6: Strongly Agree)

For each of the following, please indicate the extent to which you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements, ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 6 – Strongly Agree).

**I-Type EC**

1. I enjoy exploring new ideas
2. I find it fascinating to learn new information
3. I enjoy learning about subjects that are unfamiliar to me
4. When I learn something new, I would like to find out more about it
5. I Enjoy discussing abstract concepts

**D-Type EC**

6. Difficult conceptual problems can keep me awake all night thinking about solutions
7. I can spend hours on a single problem because I just can't rest without knowing the answer.
8. I feel frustrated if I can't figure out the solution to a problem, so I work even harder to solve it.
9. I brood for a long time in an attempt to solve some fundamental problem
10. I work like a fiend at problems that I feel must be solved

### **4. Consumption Orientation**

Adapted from Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994).

(6-point Likert scale; 1: Strongly Agree to 6: Strongly Agree)

We are investigating consumers' attitudes relative to **a mobile app that offers a library of audiobooks and videos.**

For each of the following, please indicate the extent to which you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements, ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 6 – Strongly Agree).

*Hedonic-Consumption Orientation*

1. This mobile app was truly a joy
2. I continued to use this mobile app, not because I had to, but because I wanted to.
3. This mobile app truly felt like an escape
4. Compared to other things I could have done, the time spent on this mobile app was truly enjoyable.
5. I enjoyed being immersed in this mobile app
6. I enjoyed using this mobile app for its own sake, not just for following the popular trend
7. When I use this mobile app, I felt the excitement of listening to interesting books.
8. While using this mobile app, I was able to forget my problems.
9. While using this mobile app, I felt a sense of exploring interesting new knowledge.

*Utilitarian Orientation:*

1. I accomplished just what I wanted to on this mobile app
2. I couldn't learn what I really needed when I use this mobile app
3. While using this mobile app, I found just the books I was looking for
4. I was disappointed because I couldn't find the books that I needed on this mobile app.

**5. Customer Engagement (Multidimensional Construct)**

We are investigating consumers' attitudes relative to **a mobile app that offers a library of audiobooks and videos.**

For each of the following, please indicate the extent to which you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements, ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 6 – Strongly Agree).

***Conscious Attention***

- (1) I like to know more about this mobile app.
- (2) I like to learn more about this mobile app.
- (3) I pay a lot of attention to anything about this mobile app.
- (4) I keep up with things related to this mobile app.
- (5) Anything related to this mobile app grabs my attention.

***Enthusied Participation***

- (1) I spend a lot of my discretionary time on this mobile app.
- (2) I am heavily into this mobile app.
- (3) I am passionate about using this mobile app
- (4) My days would not be the same without this mobile app.
- (5) I enjoy spending time on this mobile app.

***Social Connection***

- (1) I love sharing this mobile app with my friends
- (2) I enjoy using this mobile app more when I am with others
- (3) Using this mobile app is more fun when other people around me use it too

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# Summary Brief

## Reseller Impact on Brand Community Member's Wellbeing

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*Online brand communities have been the hallmark of consumer-based social networking, where brand lovers can discuss and bond over their deep affection for a brand. However, given their open nature, other consumers who seek to take advantage of a community's passion via "shelf-clearing" and reselling also have open access to such spaces. The inability to collect desired goods at a fair price and participate within beloved communities may change the relationship between a brand lover and the brand. We posit this can impact a brand lover's self-esteem, anxiety levels, and brand jealousy. Ultimately, we seek to understand how reseller attitudes influence consumer collector community members' well-being.*

### Introduction

Online collector and brand communities are expanding within the digital landscape. While this growth connects consumers sharing a common interest, it also invites out-group members such as resellers, also known as speculators, into these spaces, who use the opportunity to capitalize on limited collector's items and resell them for a profit. Speculators are defined as people who want to make "quick money" by buying goods or services from primary market vendors and reselling them to other consumers at a markup (Chen et al., 2014). They can use real-time inventory checkers (e.g., Popfindr.com, Brickseek.com), utilize scarcity-based marketing techniques (Shi et al., 2020), and have access to complex social media networks within brand communities (Zaglia, 2013) in which other consumers share real-time information about collector product launches and locations to resell on secondary markets. In the current digital era, social networking websites have given brand community members a primary area to interact with companies in meaningful ways online (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). However, just as consumers participate in these online brand communities, so do speculators, which causes conflict among participants. Although previous research has shown that speculators are advantageous to businesses, particularly in terms of increasing revenues (e.g., Su, 2010), the psychological and behavioral impacts of speculators on consumers, particularly those within brand communities, have received little attention. While some speculators can help consumers complete their goals, often, they act as the gatekeepers who restrict both the ability to purchase from primary markets, as well as render them unable to afford products within the secondary market. At the intersection of social comparison theory and social exclusion theory, this research explores the impact of reseller attitudes on brand community members' well-being. This paper contributes to the literature by investigating beyond the financial influence of speculators and instead focusing on the psychological and behavioral impacts that speculators have on a community of passionate consumers.

### Background

Brand communities are socially based consumer groups whose members have a similar zeal for a certain brand (Muniz Jr & O'guinn, 2001). Brand communities are frequently associated with seminal examples, such as Jeep (McAlexander et al., 2002), however, the brand communities most pertinent to this research extend into hedonic merchandise, such as collectibles (e.g. Funko Pops and trading cards), toys (e.g. Squishmallows and Legos), and limited-edition goods (e.g. experiential exclusives). Online brand communities frequently have few qualifications for membership (Wirtz et al., 2013). Brand communities provide a platform for brand enthusiasts to share knowledge (Sharma et al., 2022), making them a significant resource for speculators. Speculators can base their resale strategy on the same information that the general public has access to. They may discover which product is most anticipated, when it will be available, and which retailers will carry it. They can then "shelf-clear" by buying the units that are still available from a retailer in order to enroll in their own online marketplaces. Therefore, unaffiliated speculators may act as a barrier to consumers' purchases of highly desired goods from a cherished brand.

The majority of prior studies on speculators have concentrated on their interactions with event organizers, such as with concert tickets on secondary markets (e.g., Kuksov & Liao, 2022). The findings show that speculators benefit

both customers and enterprises (e.g., Su, 2010). However, while they aid in the spread of commodities and services in secondary markets, speculators don't always play by the rules. Speculators frequently engage in deviant behavior by increasing prices considerably above the item's initial retail price (Drayer, 2011), which restricts who can buy from them. Further, they do not have money-back guarantees or protections like companies often do. Hedonic products like collector items, toys, video games, handbags, and other limited-edition items are popular targets for collectors and resale (Macák & Šašalová, 2022). A classic example of this is Beanie Babies in which the highest plush was sold for \$500,000 in 1997 and then sold for \$20,000 in 2022 (Beauloye & Beauloye, 2023).

### Key Findings

This research has the potential to add to both marketing theory and practice in a number of ways. First, we examine resellers and speculators outside of their economic influence which has traditionally been researched in the marketing literature. We concentrate on the psychological and behavioral imprints that speculators might make on a set of ardent consumers who engage in brand communities in this way, as well as examine their well-being. As such, we expand the marketing literature on speculators and examine their function beyond ticketing sales and platforms. Further, we develop an understanding of how speculators can impact brand lovers within the spaces that are important to them, which has the potential of impacting consumer well-being, an important construct to consumers and consequently, marketers (Callaghan et al., 2021). Ultimately, becoming aware of the impact speculators have on passionate consumers' well-being overall pushes marketing into a better world.

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## **Session 11.2: Marketing Futurology & Strategy**

**Chair:** Justin Boyd

# Summary Brief

## **Influencer Marketing Strategies for Small Businesses: Exploring Entrepreneurial Decision-Making and Performance Outcomes**

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*Influencer marketing presents an attractive alternative to address the resource limitations of small businesses over traditional advertising mediums. The conservation of resources theory is employed to reason how entrepreneurs' attitudes toward marketing and their marketing experience impact the choice of influencer marketing strategy and its subsequent effectiveness as a marketing tool. A two-staged mixed-method approach involving structured interviews and quantitative surveys with small business owners will be employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The research aims to extend current knowledge about how small business owners allocate resources and aid them by illuminating factors contributing to strategic marketing decisions.*

### **Introduction**

Small businesses face unique challenges over their larger counterparts due to limited resources. Owners of small businesses find themselves fulfilling a diverse set of roles, from strategic visionaries to financial analysts to plumbers. Additionally, founders of small businesses typically pursue the entrepreneurial venture due to a passion for the product or service provided rather than the ancillary business support tools. It is no wonder essential activities like marketing lack the time and effort required to be successful, especially for entrepreneurs who may have an insufficient background in marketing. Small businesses are increasingly turning to influencer marketing to fill this gap. Online influencers are personalities who have developed a virtual followership on social media and are respected as opinion leaders, often holding considerable influence over their followers (Leung et al., 2022). Depending on the influencer's base size and relevance, an influencer partnership can be a cost-effective alternative to traditional advertising methods (Geysler, 2022). Alternatively, entrepreneurs may forgo an influencer partnership and attempt to become an influencer themselves. This decision could be prompted by their attitudes toward marketing activities, personal skills, or previous marketing experiences.

### **Background**

This research will explore the factors leading to successful influencer marketing campaigns for small businesses. More specifically, how entrepreneurs' attitudes toward marketing activities and their marketing astuteness affect the choice of influencer marketing strategy will be examined. Further, the research will explore how strategic decision-making impacts the campaign's performance. The conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is used to develop propositions about the nature of these relationships. COR theory was formulated to explain how humans manage stress, postulating that "people strive to retain, protect, and build resources" (p. 517) when experiencing stress. Further, people are generally predisposed to minimize loss rather than prioritize gain. Within the current context, prior research has shown support for a positive relationship between self-employment and stress (Lee et al., 2023). The present research will examine how small business owners respond to this stress regarding their decision to partner with influencers.

Resources available to small business owners are naturally scarce. They often lack capital resources to invest in potential growth opportunities like marketing. Further, the need for more human resources at their disposal may cause entrepreneurs to forgo long-term strategic activity, such as marketing, in favor of the salient day-to-day needs of the firm. Owners will only allocate the necessary funds and time if they perceive marketing efforts as a worthwhile investment. Owners' previous experiences and attitudes toward marketing will shape these perceptions. If their attitudes and experience dictate a perception of marketing as a nonessential expense, COR theory would predict that they are more likely to minimize this expense and choose an influencer based on minimizing cost. Alternatively, they may even adopt a do-it-yourself approach to generate a following. Consequently, the reach and success of the campaign may be stifled. However, if the owners' attitudes and experience shape their perceptions of marketing as an investment into the firm's future growth, COR theory would predict they are more likely to risk capital resources and time into the influencer partnership.

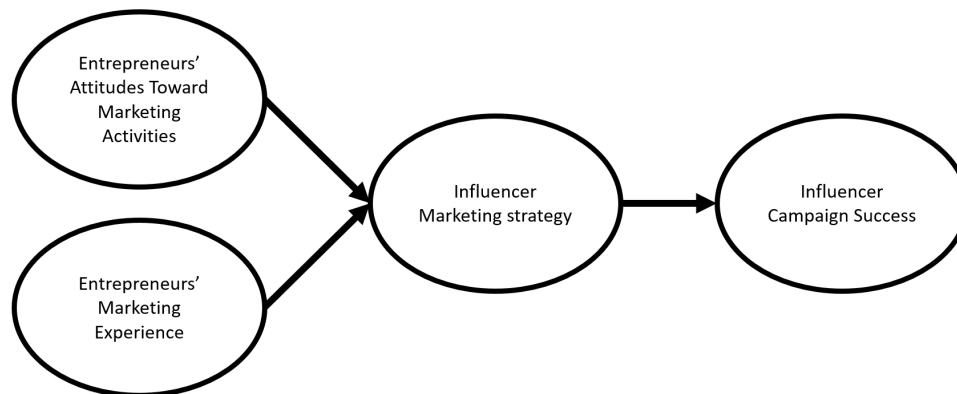
Capable influencers are credible and represent a good fit for the brand, leading to favorable consumer behaviors such as purchase intentions (Belanche et al., 2021; Breves et al., 2019). Additionally, the larger followership and reach associated with effective influencers will command a higher price but should increase the campaign's probability of success. The proposed relationships are depicted in Figure 1.

This research intends to further current knowledge about small business owners' resource allocation and strategic decision-making. Moreover, the application of COR theory is extended within the small business marketing domain. Finally, small business owners will benefit from an increased understanding of their marketing decision-making process and how it affects campaign performance.

### Proposed Method

The research will implement a two-staged mixed-method design to test the proposed relationships. First, structured interviews will be conducted with current small business owners to ascertain a general understanding of their attitudes toward marketing, marketing experiences, past and current influencer partnerships, and the level of success of these partnerships. The interview results will be analyzed and used to inform a quantitative survey in the second stage of the research.

Figure 1



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## Full Paper

# Forensic Marketing: A Primer of a Hot Niche

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*Despite being widely used in business practices, practical forensic marketing has received little attention in academic research. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of forensic marketing, which is associated with 1) gathering evidence that involves marketing non-litigation services and 2) litigation services that may be presented in a civil court of law as part of a marketing dispute. By discussing the skills that forensic marketers need in their roles as a consultant, fact witness, summary witness, or expert witness, this research provides best practices for marketers for preparing written reports, testifying at depositions, and testifying at civil trials.*

### Introduction

Although the importance of forensic analysis has been recognized in the business field, much attention has been paid to the areas of forensic accounting and forensic economics, and the understanding of forensic marketing remains limited in spite of its wide uses in business practices (e.g., counseling on the structural changes of businesses and legal expert testimony of false advertising or product claims) (Miles, 2020). There is confusion or dispute as to this new area of forensic marketing or forensic analytics for marketing. One group defines it as a process of marketing research, but UK's Marketing Society states that forensic marketing is a vital process that few are honest and brave enough to undertake. Another and certainly the most common definition of the term "forensic" is associated with gathering evidence that might be presented in a civil court of law as part of a marketing dispute. This article first covers the research or investigative side of forensic marketing involving investigative services. Next, it covers the most common aspects of forensic marketing involving gathering evidence for a possible courtroom dispute.

### Research or investigative process

#### *Forensic marketing as a research process*

Barrett (1995) suggests that forensic is a mnemonic to be applied to the decision-making processes of the marketing function, focusing on the communication strategy. His mnemonic is "designed to ensure that a sufficient rigor goes into the briefing" (Barrett, 1995, p.136). Brief refers to a document prepared by a professional supplier of marketing communication resources. His early book suggests a new discipline that looks at why a certain marketing method is chosen by looking back in more depth to previous efforts so better decisions can be made. Barrett covers these steps in his suggested decision-making process: focus on facts, observations, research, evaluation, negative indicators, strategy compliance, inertial barriers/factors, and check and recheck.

As far back as 2002, Joseph Yeager compared projective marketing research techniques with forensic interview techniques. He believes qualitative interviewing is better in marketing research by calling projective techniques voodoo. "Forensic is about capturing the bad guys and market research is about capturing customers (presumably the good guys)." Forensics focuses on gathering evidence, whereas projective techniques gathering ideas. Projective techniques are more suggestive and are only indirectly connected to any subsequent action taken.

Yeager believes that marketing researchers rely on antiquated tools such as projective techniques and multi-person focus groups. He believes that the one-on-one forensic interview or forensic profiling has evolved into an extraordinary reliable and valid motivational profiling tool. He gives the following purpose for forensic profiling (Yeager, 2003, 129):

The study of applied customer's psychology gets down to the key question: why do customers commit the choices they do, the way they do? The bottom-line question: what the causes are and what are the effects, and does the profile reveal these facts of the decision - making in an effective manner.

He (2002) predicted that sharp-eyed attorneys would start suing market research firms and their client executives for causing the failure of corporate marketing actions. As an example, James Industry Research Group won a fraudulent data lawsuit against a Las Vegas marketing research firm. The plaintiff claimed that all the research by

Ansel Research was discredited due to change responses, failure to even be surveyed, and falsifying data (Palmer, 2016).

Busier (2005) used the word forensic to add excitement to a classroom assignment to avoid using the term "history." The assignment forced students to research, analyze, and explain a historic marketing event. He suggested that the benefits of the historic method exceed the case method approach. Busser's (2004) rationale for using the term was that forensic medicine and forensic accounting have imperfect access to information. Similarly, marketing "research must be adapted as the teams progressed as a result of each piece of information" (p. 64).

Kotler et al (1977) added more structure to Busser's case study approach by adding the marketing audit as a tool for the marketer (like the accounting audit). The marketing audit should be a comprehensive, independent, systematic, and periodic approach to the information gathering needs of forensic marketing. They suggested the forensic marketing audit should be more vertical (specific marketing function focused), more external (outside marketing expert), more diagnostic (evidence based), and less periodic (as legally needed) than the typical marketing audit.

Anderson et al. (2008) tried to tie a case study method to the field of forensic marketing as a commonly accepted application of the scientific method in the social sciences. They suggest a forensic marketing case study approach. As a proposed structure for forensic investigations dealing with marketing issues, their proposal is to integrate the case study method and the information gathering tools of the marketing audit. This Forensic Marketing Case Study Method includes these six steps: problem definition, framing the issue, factual evidence collection, evaluation of factual evidence and credibility, evidence interpretation, and conclusion(s) and presentation. Their framework includes the first three steps of the traditional case study method and the last three steps of the historical case study method. On several occasions Anderson et al. (2008) state that forensic marketing deals with the application of laws. However, a marketing expert may not give opinions about law. Law is the providence of the judge and not the jury. An expert is a trier of the facts (not law). A marketing expert may find their report and testimony excluded from trial if they give opinions about law (except for foreign law).

In addition, a marketing audit may provide structure for forensic marketing fact gathering (Anderson et al., 2008). The purpose of a marketing audit is to provide a snapshot of a company's marketing function to give a generic overview of a business' current marketing situation. To a certain extent a marketing audit can be equated to one of the two major branches of forensic accounting: 1) investigative auditing, and 2) litigation support. These authors confuse the concept of a "public accounting audit" versus a forensic audit. They state that a "marketing audit has not reached a high degree of methodological sophistication or consistency" as a public accounting audit.

A forensic audit is most often different than a typical financial audit. A financial audit is generally a sampling activity that does not look at every transaction. Thus, the system can be exploited by someone, such as an executive, who knows how to "cook the books" by overriding the internal controls. Forensic accounting also requires a different mindset. Many accountants are trained that numbers do not lie. Auditing is about following the rules. Forensic accountants take the opposite tack because they cannot assume books and financial statements are correct. Books may be cooked; financial statements may be deceptively constructed; records may be false; and invoices may be fake. Forensic accountants look beyond the records and invoices.

SEO Forensic Marketing (Denver) seems to equate forensic marketing to harnessing big data analytics on their website. Kubi's (2014) uses the term "autopsy" in his Wav3 rating system which assigns metrics to the components of a failed marketing effort, comparing those metrics with experience, an understanding of the value, and impact of media-based on the targeted audience. His Wav3 reviews key elements such as content, context, and expectations along with supportive components such as media, deployment, timing, frequency, and goals and objectives of the marketing effort. Rather than using Return on Investment, he uses Resume on the Internet.

Jessica Campos (ND) asserts forensic marketing provides evidence that points precisely toward marketing strategies and tactics that are not functioning as they should. She believes the common denominator between forensic medicine, forensic accounting, and forensic marketing is they identify inconsistencies, disparities, and irregularities to expose potential areas of opportunity. She emphasizes obtaining sales leads from a company's websites, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media platforms (e.g., cultivating sales opportunities to convert to customers).



Having a thorough knowledge of the data links (e.g., metric aids) aids forensic marketers to focus on prime areas they can impact swiftly and in a quantitative manner. Regular monitoring with surveys strengthens the final hypothesis.

The Locale blog suggests that criminals have an MO, and so do consumers. Forensic accountants find the fraudsters by examining evidence, piecing together the story behind the fraud or crime, and creating a profile. Similarly, in automotive digital marketing, trends in consumer purchases, intent, and interest drives the market. By homing in on the profiles of potential customers gives a profile of what they want and where they are looking., like profiling serial killers or fraudsters. A profile allows a marketer to use the trends and not put money into a particular campaign type that is not going to impact an intended audience.

### ***Forensic marketing as an investigative process***

From the investigative perspective, forensics can be understood as the investigation of crimes (Lutui, 2016) that “serves the purpose of facilitation or furthering the reconstruction of events found to be criminal or helping to anticipate unauthorized actions shown to be disruptive to planned operation” (Reith et al., 2002, p. 2). In line with this perspective, Lieberman (2016) uses the Oxford definition of forensic meaning “relating to or denoting the application of scientific methods to the investigation of crime” to ask what crime has been committed about a business’ marketing activities? He suggests applying forensic marketing to uncover what happened, what is currently happening, and what needs to happen to change a marketing strategy from a current-impression-based approach to an inbound marketing approach that drives leads and revenue for a company. A forensic review of a company’s lead nurturing looks at open rates, click-through rates, pathing, workflows, and offer mapping to determine where your program may have broken down and how to improve it.

Bates (2013) provides a case study how he used data mining techniques built into Adobe Analytics Premium to discover why a Big Tech company lost 40 percent of sales in one of their Asian markets. Describing the consulting work as being a detective or a superhero, he used predictive modeling techniques to test an online theory. By changing the email blasts, the revenue of the company was increased to as much as \$500,000 in weekly incremental revenues.

Watkins (2021) defines forensic marketing as the practice of comprehensive review of a business’ marketing efforts, evaluating for efficiency, messaging, and measuring real ROI. A forensic marketing firm (Forensic Marketing, ND) in Toronto advertises that they will “discover new ways to increase sales and marketing.” They suggest that their “forensic marketing consulting techniques to increase sales has grown to become highly efficient and increased a multi-national Fortune 100 annual sales by \$40 million.”

Miles (2020) recent book builds an investigative forensic marketing model around these five categories: marketing position and competitors forensics, management and law forensics, marketing and financial pricing forensics, branding and brand offering forensics, and distribution channels and key partners forensics. Miles explains how to use market position analysis, competitive intelligence analysis, law and policy analysis, pricing analysis, branding audit, customer relationship auditing, and more to perform this investigation process.

### **Forensic marketing as gathering evidence**

The second broad area of forensic marketing is litigation services that has received little academic attention. An AMA conference (Loveland, 2007) provides a definition of this litigation service category of forensic marketing. The panel members define forensic marketing as "the application of theory and methods from marketing to uncover evidence and aid in the workings of the justice system." They suggest that forensic marketers may have an impact on anti-trust, consumer protection, intellectual property, contract, and tort issues. A more intense level of rigor is required when acting as an expert witness or consultant. Marketers may conduct market research on consumer perceptions of product similarity, intellectual property disputes, analyze scanner data to detect the influence of an advertising campaign, help define the market of a product for an anti-trust case, or determine how marketing can fix an earlier deception in consumer protection disputes.

The panel suggests that the other side will look for possible flaws in any research, so the research must be "done with an eye to possible omissions and careful documentations." They stress that everything one does is discoverable, and the marketer must be impartial and maintain objectivity.

Attorneys Fujimoto and Campbell (ND) state that data analysis has shaped outcomes in business, marketing, and baseball, and data analysis is important for clients. Clients are looking for ways to increase the value of legal services. “Using well-analyzed data to form strategy can yield higher savings in both cost and time by giving lawyers

better ability to predict outcomes in negotiations and trial.” For forensic marketers to become competitive, intuition must be replaced with statistical William E. Deming’s suggestion: In God we trust; all others must bring data.”

A review of the marketing experts on info@jurispro.com, include of these categories:

Advertising	Market research	Media relations
Branding	Market share	Product development
Competition	Market size	Packaging
Contests	Market defense	Promotion
Customer behavior	Market channels	Sweepstakes
Market analysis	Marketing effectiveness	Warranties
Market barriers	Marketing strategy	

For example, here are the top five largest marketing lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies (Drug Lawsuit Source, ND): GlaxoSmithKline, 2011, \$3 billion; Pfizer, 2009, 2009, \$2.3 billion; Abbott Laboratories, 2012, \$1.6 billion; Bristol-Meyers Squibb, 2007, \$515 million; and Johnson & Johnson, 2012, \$181 million. If marketers could get just one percent of these amount would be great.

Advertising is an area that could be open for marketing expert witnesses. The Lyon law firm provides these examples of deceptive marketing lawsuits (Lyon, 2021): supplement mislabeling, mislabeled cosmetics, deceptive food marketing, stem cell fraud, private placement fraud, dating site fraud, and mortgage fraud.

Zeiler (2009) indicates that disputes involving claims of false advertising brought under the Lanham Act are often lost or won based upon the quality of the market research. Some huge marketing-type lawsuit settlements include VW (\$31 billion), GlaxoSmithKline (\$3 billion), Abbott Laboratories (\$1.6 billion), Bristol- Meyers Squibb (\$515 million, Pharmaceutical Industries (\$420 million), and Apple (\$310 million). In 2022 alone, there were \$7.4 billion shareholder class action lawsuit settlements. Often the plaintiffs’ lawyers get a huge share of the settlement, such \$80 million of the \$31 million Apple settlement (26 percent). But within this amount is fees for marketing and other forensic experts.

### ***Expert witnessing and consulting***

Concisely defined, the second broad area of forensic marketing is the use of marketing data for legal and consulting purposes. In addition to marketing and investigative skills, a forensic marketer needs a working knowledge of the legal system and excellent qualitative analysis and communication skills to prepare an expert report and to give expert testimony in the courtroom and to aid in other litigation support engagements. A forensic marketer reduces marketing complexity by simplifying information and slicing away difficult concepts to help a judge or jury to see the essence of a marketing dispute. Forensic marketers need an understanding of marketing, investigative and interviewing techniques, law, and excellent data analytic skills. Forensic marketers having different specialties create different balances of the sets of knowledge. Superimposed upon these skills are excellent oral and written communication skills.

A marketer may be hired by an attorney to gather and interpret facts, prepare analyses, help the attorney interpret evidence, advise about issues and strategies involved in a legal matter, locate other marketers to be a consultants or expert witnesses, and help expert witnesses form their opinions. Marketers acting as consultants are not asked to testify in a judicial or regulatory proceeding, and their work usually is protected from disclosure by the attorney work product privilege.

A marketer may be retained by an attorney or court as an expert witness to testify in a judicial or administrative proceeding. Marketers retained as expert witnesses are expected to give their opinion in a judicial or administrative proceeding and can expect their work for a lawyer or court to be available to others involved in the litigation.

### ***Written Agreement to Perform Litigation Services and Communication with Attorneys***

Marketers asked to perform litigation services (as well as non-litigation services) should enter into a written agreement with the employing attorney. A four-page Model Consulting Agreement may be found in The Comprehensive Forensic Services Manual, Appendix V. (Babitsky et. al., 2000).

Confidential communication between a client and lawyer is considered a protective privilege. If a forensic marketer is hired to testify as an expert, he or she may not use the attorney-client privilege. However, a non-testifying expert may fall under an attorney work product privilege (*Hickman v. Taylor*, 1947). Thus, a forensic marketer hired as a consultant is immune from discovery under Rule 26(b)(4)(B). If the consultant's work product is shared with an expert, the material may become discoverable. A forensic marketer should be hired directly by the attorney, and any agreement should be between the expert and attorney.

### ***Expert witnesses distinguished from lay witnesses***

A marketer may testify as a lay (fact) witness or as an expert witness. A fact witness testifies as to facts. A marketing person may have to testify as to facts in a civil or criminal trial. An expert witness is an individual who, because of specialized training or experience, is allowed to testify in court to help the judge or jurors understand complicated and technical subjects (Black's Law Dictionary).

As a rule, an individual may not testify as a witness unless he or she has personal knowledge of the matter being litigated (FRE, 602). However, if specialized knowledge will help the jurors or judge understand the evidence or determine a fact in issue, a witness qualified as an expert may testify (FRE 702). Expert testimony is not needed "to explain an issue or fact that the average person can understand by the use of common knowledge or common sense" [Weinstein, 2nd]. Expert testimony about matters that are readily intelligible is unhelpful to a jury and is inadmissible (Montas, 1994).

Expert witnesses may rely on inadmissible facts or data if they are of a type reasonably relied upon by experts in the particular field (e.g., marketing) in forming opinions or inferences upon the subject (FRE 703). They may give an opinion on an ultimate issue to be decided by the trier of fact (FRE 704). Expert witnesses may be asked to answer hypothetical questions in a deposition and on the stand.

Nonexpert witnesses cannot give opinions unless the opinion amounts to "shorthand statements of fact" or are otherwise helpful for an understanding of the witness' testimony. A typical example would be testimony that a person "looked drunk." The lay opinion rule may be thought of as one of preference. If a witness can make a statement more specific, then the more specific language is preferable. But if a witness cannot do so or if requiring a more detailed description would unduly consume time without benefit to the fact finder, it may be better to hear it as it is. Courts often take the view that so long as a witness has a sufficient opportunity to observe, the details can be inquired into during cross-examination.

### ***A marketing dispute begins***

Grisham (1998) gives two major ways to sue in civil courts: (1) by ambush, or (2) serve and volley. With an ambush, the attorney prepares a skeletal framework of the allegations, runs to the courthouse, files the suit, leaks it to the press, and hopes he or she can prove what is alleged. A serve and volley approach begins with a letter to the defendants, making the same allegations, but rather than suing, the attorney invites a discussion. Letters, e-mails, and phone calls go back and forth trying to reach a compromise so litigation can be avoided.

The six major phases of litigation are: pleadings, discovery, pre-trial conferences, trial, outcome, and possible appeal. Much of the work for forensic marketers occurs in the discovery stage. The pleadings consist of: Complaint (plaintiff files); Service of process (served on defendant); Answer (defendant must admit or deny allegations); Demurrer (no cause of action exists); and possible cross-complaint (defendant files).

An attorney's job is to ultimately avoid trial and the resulting lost time and expenses. Thus, the goal of a forensic marketer is to help the attorney to avoid the cost and uncertainty of a trial. (Silverstone & Sheetz, 2004)

One has the right to a jury trial in district courts, but jurors can only determine the facts and not the law. There is an automatic right to appeal from trial courts to the first level of the appellate process. But higher courts (e.g., Supreme Court) must decide whether to hear a dispute. To get to federal courts, one must raise the question of a federal law or diversity of citizenship (e.g., different state). For the federal court, the controversy must exceed \$75,000. State courts have trial courts, appeal courts, and Supreme Court.

During the trial, both sides of attorneys each act in the role of opposing movie directors--calling witnesses and orchestrating carefully timed presentations. All the role playing is designed to sway the jury's disposition in favor of

their respective client's position. Civil cases are decided based only on which side has the greatest preponderance of evidence in its favor (e.g., greater than 50%). Evidence of guilt or innocence beyond a reasonable doubt is the criterion for deciding criminal cases only (e.g., greater than about 95%), and therefore do not apply to civil cases.

### **Qualifying as an expert witness**

How a person can qualify as an expert witness varies depending on whether the litigation is in federal or state courts. The federal courts and many states have adopted the *Daubert* standards to determine if an expert is admitted in a court dispute. Some states follow the older *Frye* standard, and other states have their own standard (e.g., North Carolina balances relevancy or materiality against prejudicial effect). The following internet sites keep track of the states: <http://faculty.ncwc.edu/toconnor/daubert.htm>, and <http://www.effingham.ne/tmichaelldbtp.html>.

### ***Frye standard***

Before *Daubert* was decided, the dominant standard for determining the admissibility of expert testimony was the *Frye* standard. Under the *Frye* standard, which no longer is used in federal courts but still is used by many state courts (at least 14), the test for admitting expert testimony is (1) whether the expert's testimony will assist the trier of fact in understanding the evidence or in determining a fact in issue, (2) whether the theories and/or techniques relied upon by the expert are generally accepted by the relevant professional community, and (3) whether the particular expert is qualified to present expert testimony on the subject at issue (*Frye v. U.S.*, 1923).

Judges applying the *Frye* standard review what an expert's peers have written and said about the expert's theories and/or techniques to determine whether those theories and/or techniques have gained general acceptance in the relevant professional community. Judges applying the *Frye* standard defer to an expert's peers to determine whether the expert's testimony is admitted into evidence. By contrast, under the *Daubert* standard, judges themselves are required to assess the reliability of an expert's theories and/or techniques.

### ***Daubert Standard***

The U.S. Supreme Court in *Daubert v. Merrill Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.* (1993) established the rule for federal courts that trial judges have a special duty to ensure that scientific testimony is not only relevant, but also reliable (e.g., a gatekeeper). In *Kumho Tire Company, Ltd. v. Carmichael* (1999), the Supreme Court decided that a judge's "gatekeeping" obligation applies not only to scientific testimony but to all expert testimony (e.g., marketing disputes). The *Daubert* decision and its progeny have had a substantive impact on investigative and courtroom methods and reasoning in general. These court decisions have resulted in heightened scrutiny in many instances of not only the methods used but the underlying factual support for the conclusions presented.

There may be simple *Daubert* challenges or complex *Daubert* challenges. A simple *Daubert* challenge involves a motion of limine and then a motion of summary judgment. A motion of limine is considered without the jury present to request certain evidence be excluded (e.g., the expert witness report and testimony). Once documents are filed, there is a hearing with the judge and lawyers. The motion for summary judgment may or may not be granted. A complex *Daubert* challenge may involve multiple- day hearings with experts testifying for and against the challenged expert witness.

Before permitting an individual to testify as an expert, a judge determines whether the expert's reasoning and methodology can appropriately be applied to the facts of the dispute (*Stag v. Delta Airline, Inc.*, 1997) Also, the judge takes into consideration an expert's background and practical experience when deciding whether the expert is qualified to render an expert opinion (*McCollock v. H. B. Fuller Company*, 1995) A judge may decide that an expert is insufficiently qualified because his or her expertise is too general or too deficient (*Trumps v. Toastmaster*, 1997). A judge also may decide that studies cited are too dissimilar to the facts involved in the litigation. [*General Electric Co. v. Toner*, 1997]

Numerous factors are considered by judges to determine whether an expert's testimony rests on a reliable foundation and can be applied properly to the facts in the dispute. In *Daubert* (1995) the U. S. Supreme Court suggested that judges should consider the following factors:

- Whether the theory or technique in question can be and has been tested
- Whether the theory or technique to question has been subjected to peer review and publication
- The theory's or technique's known or potential error rate.
- Whether the theory or technique has attracted widespread acceptance within the relevant community.

- The existence and maintenance of standards controlling its operations.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (1995) added another consideration: whether the theory or technique existed before litigation began.

*Daubert* decisions are made at the trial court level. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that the abuse-of-discretion standard ordinarily applied to review evidentiary rulings is the proper standard by which to review a trial court's decision to admit or exclude expert testimony (*General Electric Co. v. Joiner*, 1997)

Judges can harm an expert witness' reputation by making critical comments about the expert in an open courtroom or their written opinions. A judge in Florida's Fourth District Court of Appeal indicated the following about an expert: "Dr. \_ \_ is an insidious perjurer who wouldn't know the truth if it leapt up and bit him on the \*\*\*." The expert had been a doctor since 1963 and had testified for 25 years. On appeal the appellate court upheld the judge's ruling that the expert's claims lacked merit.

### ***Weight vs. admissibility***

There is a difference between using a *Daubert* challenge for admissibility versus weight. *Daubert* analysis should not replace trial on merits, but any defects in an expert's methods should be addressed, through cross-examination (*Mathis v. Exxon Corp.*, 2002). The duty of a district court is to ensure that the basis of an expert's opinion is not so fatally flawed as to render his or her opinion inadmissible as matter of law (*In re Visa Check*, 2001). For example, an appellate court said that the defendant did not argue that the expert fails to comport with *Daubert* factors, but rather argued that his calculations did not support his conclusion. This attack is not a true *Daubert* challenge, but rather goes to weight (*TFWS v. Shaefer*, 2003).

Creditors argued that a company's quarrels with the expert's approach went to weight, not admissibility, but in the trial court the judge identified no fewer than eighteen deficiencies, and testimony was riddled with implausible and unexplained assumptions. The Second Circuit said that there was no abuse of discretion (*Lippe v. Bairnco Corp.*, 2003). However, in another situation the Ninth Circuit said that a plaintiff's expert was qualified and used mathematical extrapolation, straight line linear progression, and averaging to arrive at his figures. Defendants attacked none of these methodologies, and their objections went to weight, not reliability (*CDM Mfg. v. Complete Sales*, 2002).

The First Circuit said that defendants did not object at the trial court level, so review is for plain error. Defendants said the expert is unqualified, but he had spent 33 years as an IRS agent, mostly investigating financial fraud. Defendants also fault the expert for basing analysis solely on bank records supplied by plaintiffs, rather than a broader array of transactions, but this objection went to weight, not admissibility (*Micro Financial v. Premier*, 2004).

### ***Testifying at a deposition***

Expert witnesses are expected to answer questions from opposing counsel at a deposition. At a deposition, which takes place outside a courtroom, witnesses are required to answer oral questions under oath. The rules for depositions vary from state to state, but the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP) cover disputes in the federal courts in all fifty states. If a report is required from an expert, a deposition may not be conducted until after the report is provided under FRCP 26(b)(4). An expert may receive a notice of deposition subpoena, because if a marketing expert does not receive a subpoena and fails to show up for the deposition, the attorney can be responsible for court costs under FRCP 30 (g)(2).

Depositions may be recorded by a written transcript or by a video. A marketer should always review and correct his or her written deposition transcript. A videotaped deposition may be used if an attorney plans to submit the video testimony in lieu of the party's live testimony. A videotaped deposition may be more economical because one does not have to pay for the expert to testify at trial. Videotaped depositions are used when the witness may not be available for trial due to illness, travel plans, or some other reason.

Expert witnesses can expect to be asked about almost anything, including the scope of their assignment, what opinions they have performed, and the bases of opinions (even embarrassing questions). Any written materials that they have relied on to form their marketing opinions usually must be furnished to opposing counsel at the deposition along with all written communications between an expert and counsel.

### ***Testifying at trial***

At a trial, expert witnesses (like other witnesses) usually undergo four phases of interrogation: direct examination, cross-examination, redirect examination, and recross-examination. During direct examination, an expert witness is questioned by the attorney for the party for whom the witness is testifying. Leading questions (i.e., questions that suggest a desired answer, usually a "yes" or a "no") may not be asked on direct examination unless directed to the opposing party or a hostile witness.

During cross-examination, an attorney for the opposing party questions the expert witness. The opposing counsel generally can question an expert witness only about the credibility of the witness and matters covered by the direct examination. However, under certain circumstances a court may permit questions regarding matters not covered during direct examination. While cross-examining a witness, an attorney may ask leading questions. During redirect examination, the hiring attorney gives the expert witness the opportunity to clear up any confusion that may have been caused by the cross-examination and complete any answers that the witness could not complete during cross-examination. Questions asked during redirect examination must be within the scope of the direct examination.

Unless there is an introduction of new matters on redirect examination, a recross-examination is not required. Unless there is something new, an attorney has the last word with his or her own witness. If new subjects were raised in redirect examination, courts allow new matters to be subject to recross-examination.

Courts have discretion whether to permit witnesses to hear each other's testimony. At the request of a party or on its own motion, a court can exclude witnesses from the courtroom except while testifying. Courts often permit experts to listen to each other's testimony so that they may comment in rebuttal. Courts usually instruct witnesses to refrain from discussing the case or their testimony with each other.

A judge can make negative comments about an expert in the courtroom, so a thick skin is important for expert witnesses dealing with the harshness of some judges. For example, in an antitrust dispute (*Menasha Corporation*, 2004), the Seventh Circuit said that the marketer offered a potpourri of survey research and armchair economics. At the lower court level (*Menasha Corporation*, 2003) the district judge found that James Tense's survey "used none of the devices essential to survey research and was rejected." He used a survey of friends and acquaintances and found that they preferred at-shelf coupons to other kinds. Once the Tense survey was rejected, Menasha's marketing expert James Lindenfeld emphasized consumer preference was economically irrelevant. The court used the phrase "garbage in, garbage out."

Attorneys may easily locate expert witnesses that have been rejected by a *Daubert* or *Frye* challenge in *The Daubert Tracker* ([www.daubetracker.com](http://www.daubetracker.com)) which is an online repository of *Daubert* documents including more than 238,093 court decisions and 173,703 expert reports since 1993. An attorney can check the gatekeeping history of any marketing expert before retention or disposition. This Tracker allows a lawyer to get case documents, and the service indicates the fifth top area of law cases is product liability, and ninth is patents and trademarks.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes the business practice of forensic marketing and offer best practices with respect to its applications in civil trial work. Forensic marketing can be understood as the intersection of investigation, marketing, law, and data analytics. As Herbert Rosenthal has said, "a lawsuit is like a parachute jump; you have to get it right the first time." Litigation breeds litigation, so an expert witness may be swimming with sharks when he or she testifies in a courtroom. Basic knowledge of courtroom procedures is essential to the success of a marketing litigation consultant. Bear in mind that there are biases toward experts: "The courts hold them in disdain; the parties are offended by their expenses; and the jurors are resentful because the experts arrogantly claim superior knowledge" (Malone & Zwier, 2000). Sarah E. Murray summarizes the expert's paradox as an advocate hired by one party in an adversarial dispute. However, a marketing expert "will only be persuasive if the jurors or judge believe that you are a neutral and objective expert (like a scientist), with an opinion that has not been influenced by the adversarial nature of the forum" (Murray, 2004).

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## **Session 11.3: A Western Marketing Medley**

**Chair:** Wei Wang

## Summary Brief

# The Dark Side of Product Reviews: Helpful Reviews are Anxious Reviews

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*Product reviews are an important source of information for consumers when making purchase decisions. Previous research has shown that negative reviews can be more helpful than positive reviews, particularly when they express emotions such as anxiety or anger. This study investigated the effects of anxiety and anger on the perceived helpfulness of product reviews. The results showed that anxious reviews were perceived as more helpful than angry reviews. Future research should investigate the possible role of a positivity bias in the evaluation of negative reviews when the emotional content displays a level of uncertainty.*

### Introduction and Literature Review

Emotional cues in a product review often lead to consumers viewing that review as more helpful (Yin, *et al.*, 2017). Two emotional dimensions that receive widespread support among researchers are valence and arousal (Russell, *et al.*, 1989). This paper investigates the effects of two similar emotions on consumers' perceptions of product review helpfulness. Previous research investigating helpfulness of online reviews show that reviews conveying negative emotions are well-received by consumers (Fan, *et al.*, 2022). Siering and Muntermann (2013) mapped nearly 5,000 words considered emotional in online reviews and determined that consumers found reviews with words negative emotions were perceived as more helpful than reviews with positive emotions. Consumers also perceive reviews with negative emotions as more useful than those conveying neutral or positive emotions, particularly expressions of anxiety and anger (Ren and Hong, 2019).

Similarly, prior work has demonstrated the efficacy of negative reviews on consumer's decision making (Yin, *et al.*, 2017). Findings show that negative reviews were found to hold greater utility for consumers (Kuan, *et al.*, 2015). Online reviews that express negative emotions can be more helpful to consumers than those that express positive emotions because negative reviews can help consumers to understand the potential losses associated with a product. Psychological research shows that people are more sensitive to losses than to gains, so negative reviews can be particularly impactful (Baek, *et al.*, 2012).

Emotions can be expressed across multiple dimensions, and people experience a combination of emotions at once (Mohammad & Turney, 2013). Felbermayr and Nanopoulos (2016) argue that because of the importance of emotions in online reviews that marketers should consider an emotional perspective when analyzing these reviews. According to emotional theorists, anger and anxiety are similar emotions in terms of valence and arousal yet differ on certainty, with anxiety being less certain than anger (Yin *et al.*, 2017). One of the reasons reviews are so popular is that they help reduce the uncertainty surrounding purchasing items online. While researchers have investigated the impact of negative reviews on usefulness, there are two key aspects that have not been adequately addressed. First, there is a lack of research on the impact of negative reviews on perceived helpfulness. Second, there is a need to explore the differences between anger and anxiety in terms of how consumers perceive helpfulness, as well as how these emotions affect helpfulness at different levels of certainty. Consequently, we proposed that:

H1: There will be a difference in the perceived helpfulness of a review based on its emotional content.

H2: There will be a relationship in the level of emotional arousal in a review and the perceived helpfulness of a review.

H3: The relationship between the level of emotional arousal in a review and the perceived helpfulness of a review will be moderated by the emotional content of the review.

### Data and Results

Respondents were 168 undergraduate students. Each respondent was randomly assigned to an emotional condition where they read a single product review. The emotional content of the review was implemented by appending

the emotional content to the beginning and ending of the review. Aside from the emotional cues, all reviews were identical. Hypothesis 1 tested for mean differences in the helpfulness of the review. This hypothesis was supported ( $F_{(1, 164)} = 16.40, p < 0.001$ ). Reviews displaying anxiety were seen as more helpful ( $\bar{x}_{\text{anxiety}} = 20.88$  vs  $\bar{x}_{\text{anger}} = 18.68$ ). Hypothesis 2 tested the relationship between arousal and helpfulness. This hypothesis was also supported ( $F_{(1, 164)} = 37.93, p < 0.001$ ). The more a respondent viewed the review as emotionally arousing, the more helpful the review was found to be. Finally, Hypothesis 3 argued for the interaction of emotional content and arousal. This hypothesis was also supported ( $F_{(1, 164)} = 5.66, p < 0.018$ ), indicating that the relationship between arousal and helpfulness is stronger for anxious reviews when compared to angry reviews ( $\beta_{\text{anxiety}} = 0.60$  vs  $\beta_{\text{anger}} = 0.26$ ).

## Discussion

As expected, emotional content was viewed as more helpful. However, anxious reviews were seen as more helpful than angry reviews. Despite being similar emotions in terms of valence and arousal, the more uncertain emotion, anxiety, was viewed as more helpful. This is surprising because communication ideally reduces uncertainty and individuals prefer more certain outcomes over uncertain ones (Racherla, *et al.*, 2012). A possible explanation for this finding is the tendency for individuals to possess a positivity bias, where they assume good things will happen. The anxiety review ended with the sentence, "I am very nervous that I will not get these problems worked out" which allows for the possibility that the review did have a satisfactory outcome with the product. Conversely, the angry review ended with the statement, "Let me tell you: I am very mad" which does not allow for an unstated positive outcome. Future research should investigate the possible role a positivity bias could play in evaluation the helpfulness of negative reviews when the emotional content displays a level of uncertainty.

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# Summary Brief

## The Role of Cryptocurrency Knowledge on Gen Z Cryptocurrency Consumption

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*In this research, we delve into the intersection of cryptocurrency consumption and knowledge levels within Generation Z, based on a qualitative survey executed in March 2023. The survey pool included undergraduate students from universities in the Midwest and West of the United States. Our findings revealed a considerable association between cryptocurrency engagement and knowledge depth. Participants with shallow understanding, primarily fueled by non-authoritative sources, displayed limited trust and engagement with cryptocurrencies. Contrastingly, those with comprehensive knowledge, derived from authoritative sources, were more inclined to partake in cryptocurrency purchases. The study provides a novel perspective on consumer behavior literature by applying information processing theory to the field of cryptocurrencies. It also generates significant insights for industry practitioners, underlining the demand for veracious educational resources, the importance of cultivating trust, and the strategic potential of social media as an educational tool in the cryptocurrency sector. Finally, we argue that recognizing and addressing the varied needs within the Generation Z demographic is pivotal for effective engagement and successful strategies in the cryptocurrency market.*

### Research Background

Cryptocurrencies have emerged as a disruptive force in the investment landscape, challenging traditional financial markets (Anaza et al., 2022). Bitcoin, the first cryptocurrency, has been in existence for over a decade (Frankenfield, Mansa, & Jackson, 2023), and despite initial skepticism, there is a growing interest in investing in this digital currency (Siripurapu & Berman, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of cryptocurrencies, with Bitcoin's price surge and increased attention on other cryptocurrencies (Axelrod, 2020).

Among the investing population, both millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z) have shown a keen interest in allocating a portion of their savings to cryptocurrencies (Juwita et al., 2022). A recent survey in the USA found that 56% of Gen Z's and 54% of millennials are including cryptocurrencies as part of their retirement strategy (Simon, 2022). This trend is facilitated by user-friendly mobile investment applications such as Robinhood, Coinbase, Binance, and Crypto.com, which offer convenience and ease of transactions (Christopher, 2021). These platforms have made investing in cryptocurrencies accessible even with small amounts of money (Farrington, 2023), enticing individuals to invest nominal amounts using their petty cash.

The availability of information on cryptocurrencies through social media platforms and video-sharing platforms like YouTube has played a significant role in driving Gen Z's interest and investment decisions. Social media channels serve as knowledge repositories, allowing users to access the latest news, trends, and discussions about cryptocurrencies. Stories of individuals earning substantial returns through meme coins or other cryptocurrencies have captured the curiosity of potential investors, including Gen Z. The accessibility and easy sharing of such information contribute to the growing interest and investment in cryptocurrencies.

To understand the factors influencing Gen Z's cryptocurrency investment decisions, this research aims to address several key questions. Firstly, it seeks to assess the level of knowledge among Gen Z regarding cryptocurrencies. Secondly, it investigates how Gen Z individuals acquire their knowledge about cryptocurrencies. Thirdly, it explores Gen Z's experiences with cryptocurrencies and how these experiences shape their investment decisions. Lastly, it examines the ways in which cryptocurrencies have influenced Gen Z's investment decisions.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative survey methodology was employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's perceptions and attitudes towards cryptocurrencies. This approach allowed for a deep exploration of their knowledge levels, experiences, and attitudes regarding cryptocurrencies, capturing nuanced insights and understanding the reasoning behind their investment decisions.

The findings of this research have implications for cryptocurrency platforms like Coinbase, Crypto.com, and Robinhood. Understanding Generation Z's perspectives on cryptocurrencies can assist these platforms in developing tailored strategies to attract and cater to the needs of this generation. Furthermore, this research contributes to a greater understanding of Generation Z's knowledge and perceptions surrounding cryptocurrencies, providing valuable insights for both researchers and cryptocurrency providers. By comprehending Gen Z's attitudes towards cryptocurrencies, we can gain insights into their role in shaping the future of the cryptocurrency landscape.

## Conclusion

Overall, the data supports the notion that cryptocurrency knowledge influences cryptocurrency purchase behavior. It was clear that those interested and investing in cryptocurrencies significantly differ in the amount of knowledge and sources of information. For those who felt their knowledge was *not well* or *well enough* but did not own cryptocurrency, their main source of information was online and through social media. However, those who felt their knowledge was *well enough* and did own cryptocurrency sought out a wider variety of sources of information focusing on expert knowledge. Our analysis shows that limited knowledge and focus only on online sources and social media can lead to misinformation about cryptocurrency and impact Generation Z's purchase behavior.

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## Summary Brief

# Little Things Matter! How Front Desk Courtesies Affect Guest Satisfaction and Loyalty – A Luxury Property-based Big Data Analysis

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### Introduction

Service quality and guest satisfaction have become the key instruments for establishing a competitive edge in the hospitality industry (Nunkoo et al., 2019). In general, 70% of purchase experiences are based on how the customer feels they are being treated (Alldredge et al., 2022), and 78% of consumers have bailed on a purchase or not made one because of a bad service experience (American Express, 2017). In the context of hotels, as many as 66% of guests who say they would go out of their way to stay at a desired hotel brand do so because of a positive guest experience, making it the top reason before price, location, and familiarity (PWC, 2018). Thus, guest service is an important differentiator in purchase decisions in the lodging industry.

The benefits of providing high-quality customer service are multifaceted. 42% of customers would pay more for a friendly, welcoming customer service experience (PWC, 2018). Moreover, acquiring a new customer is anywhere from 5 to 25 times more expensive than keeping a current one (Gallo, 2014). In addition to increasing positive guest feedback and customer satisfaction, quality customer service can enhance customer retention rates, average daily rate, occupancy, market share, employee morale, pride, satisfaction, and camaraderie among employees (Enz & Siguaw, 2000).

Even with such substantial benefits, providing top-quality customer service can be challenging in the increasingly competitive landscape of the broader lodging industry. In fact, 80% of companies say they provide superior customer service; however, only 8% of their customers think these same companies deliver such service (Allen et al., 2005). This highlights a gap in customer and host perceptions of what superior customer service is. Often, consumers seek increased levels of personalization to differentiate one brand from the others. 79% of consumers say personalized service from a hospitality brand is more important than personalized marketing (Gladly, 2020). This underscores the importance of personal attention in hotel guest services once the guest has arrived.

Experiencing hospitality is primarily a perception of personalized attention (PijlsHoekstra et al., 2015). One-to-one personal attention and relationship building are widely perceived as desirable to increase customer loyalty (Geddie et al., 2002). In the extant research, personalized attention has been repeatedly mentioned as a motivating factor in guests' decisions to stay in hotels and as a highlight and benefit of their stay (Mcintosh & Siggs, 2005). Although the related literature includes a plethora of academic research focusing on personalized attention, there is a clear lack of studies involving big data from hotels in this domain. Moreover, most of the studies employing big data (e.g., Zhang & Kim, 2021; Zhao et al., 2019; Baek et al., 2020) use publicly available data, e.g., online reviews, which can include paid and fabricated reviews facilitated by the owners/managers, incentivized reviews by customers, and biased reviews from competitors and other detractors (Gössling et al., 2018; Gössling et al., 2019).

Additionally, most studies have focused on efficiency and empathy (e.g., Umasuthan et al., 2017) and service recovery (e.g., Jin et al., 2019), giving little attention to the impact of softer interpersonal acts. Such acts include a warm welcome on arrival, the employees using the guest's surname wherever possible, the employee making eye contact with a warm smile and a fond farewell upon departure. These same actions are also crucial aspects of personalized service and quality customer service.

### Methods

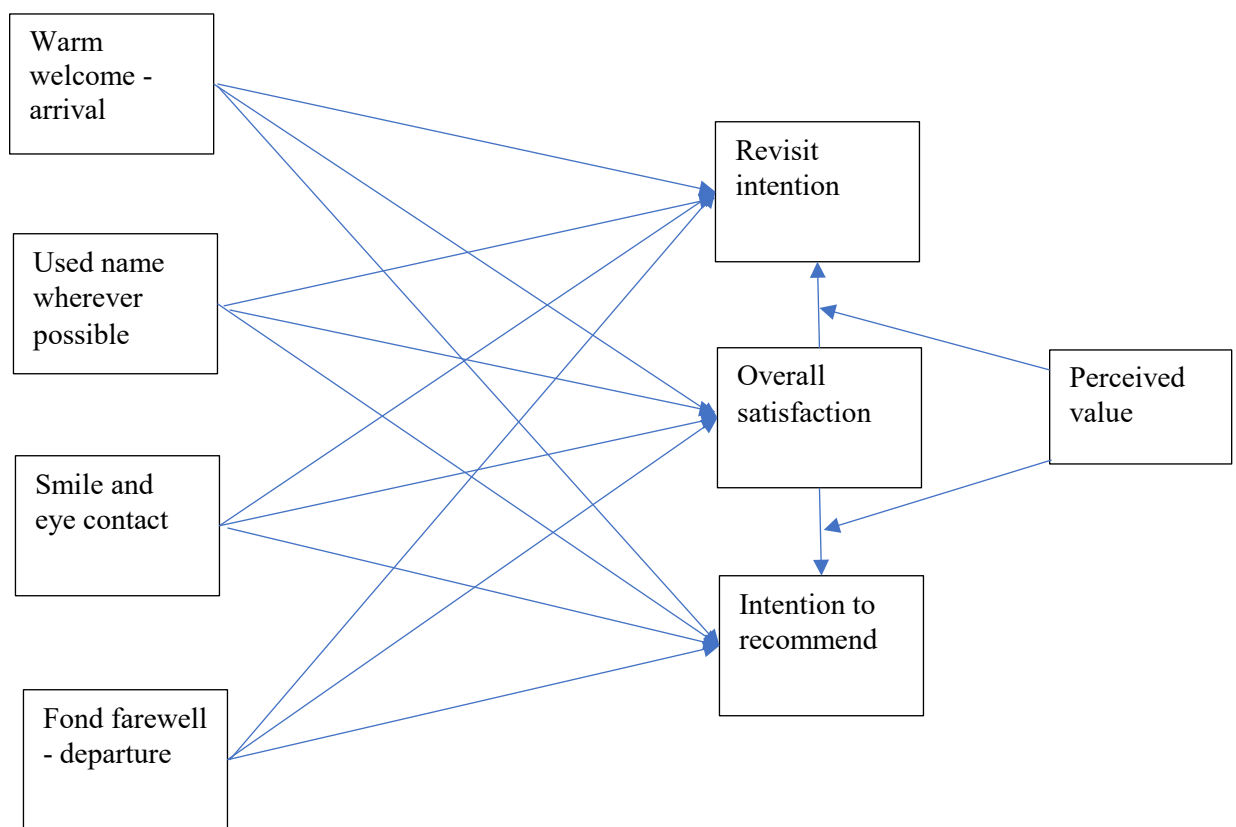
This study aims to understand how interpersonal interactions initiated by front desk personnel impact consumer satisfaction and loyalty. More specifically, this research focuses on understanding whether subtle common courtesies can significantly impact guest satisfaction and, correspondingly, the consumer's intention to return and the intention to recommend. The previous relationships will be developed based on the application of the Chaos theory in the context of the butterfly effect (Lorenz, 2000). Using big data from more than 10,000 hotel guests of a luxury full-service hotel located in the Southeastern USA, this study will examine the influence of a warm welcome on arrival, the employees using the guest's surname wherever possible, the employee making eye contact and including a warm smile, and a fond farewell upon departure, on guest satisfaction and loyalty. This data was gathered via guest surveys that

were emailed to the respondents after checking out from a single hotel. In addition, the moderating role of perceived value on the relationships between interpersonal interactions and satisfaction and loyalty will be examined. In the lodging industry, customer value is regarded as the next source of competitive advantage after service quality and is a strong influencer of guest satisfaction and loyalty (Woodruff, 1997). Therefore, the role of perceived value needs to be investigated further in the context of this research.

**Expected Findings**

It is expected that the findings of this study should establish the efficacy of nuanced courtesies used in service provider-guest interactions at the front desk based on data gathered directly from paying customers. Moreover, how perceived value plays a part in influencing the relations between courtesies and satisfaction and loyalty will also be revealed. As such, this study is anticipated to provide practitioners with the rationale to modify their customer service strategies accordingly.

Figure 1-Proposed Model



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## Summary Brief

# Analyzing Universities' Need to Engage in Promotional Activities: A Case of Greater Toronto Area

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*Universities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) are facing tough competition from universities within the region as well as nationwide. The purpose of this research is to analyze the need of universities to engage in the promotional activities in GTA. Data was collected from universities in the GTA, and analysis identified the reasons why universities engage in promotional activities. Later relevance of the results is discussed in the context of the published literature. Findings provide the information on factors that universities consider important to engage in promotional activities. Finally, a concluding thought, limitations and directions for future research are provided.*

### Introduction

Engagement in promotional activities is vital for present day profit and non-profit businesses alike. Organizations engage in promotional activities to communicate their message as well as to gain competitive advantage. Universities in present times need to promote themselves to establish a positive reputation as well as to attract more students to sustain themselves in a highly competitive market (Milian and Rizk, 2008). There has been contentious debate on the promotional activities of universities (Biggs, 2003; Chalcraft, Hilton, & Hughes, 2015; Maringe & Gibbs, 2009; Rutter et al., 2016). Some researchers believe that universities should not be engaged in promotional activities as the purpose of universities is to educate the community not generate a profit. While others believe that universities must opt for promotional activities to articulate their message and generate a profit to survive in a competitive environment. The purpose of this research is to study the need of universities in the GTA to engage in promotional activities. The GTA is the most renowned destination for new immigrants looking for economic opportunities. While there are a number of universities within the GTA competing with one another, universities within Ontario as well as from the rest of Canada also try to capture the GTA market (Jones, 1997, p. 1).

### Background

University promotional activities do not entail selling programs, rather they provide relevant information to prospective students and other stakeholders (Gyure & Arnold, 2003). The study discussed each of the elements of promotion in the context of the universities and provided relevant literature in support of universities indulging in promotional activities. To depict the relevance of the elements of promotion; advertising (including direct marketing for this research) is considered to be most effective in reaching the wider audience but is the most expensive of all elements and not considered cost effective for universities. University selling activities are more tied to personal selling efforts once a prospective student contacts the university, whereas universities do not indulge in sales promotion. Similarly, public relations activities are important in establishing a good reputation with the public. Lastly, the importance of digital marketing cannot be overstated during present times. It is mostly free of cost on a digital platform and has a global reach. Although opposing views are also provided, this research is articulated in support of universities engaging in promotional activities (Lauer, 2007; McCorkle & Alexander, 1991). The study is qualitative in nature because the purpose of the research is to understand the need of universities to engage in promotional activities not the projection. Those directly engaged in promotional activities were interviewed. Participants pseudo initials were used to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

### Key Findings

Data identify branding, increasing enrollment, generating more funds, attracting better faculty, and involving alumni to be the major reasons for engaging in promotional activities. Effective promotion tends to establish a university as a reputable brand, helping to define the positioning of the university, which further helps to attract better and more students, eventually increasing the university's revenue in the form of tuition fees. Promotion also helps to attract funding from governmental and private donors. Finally, promotion plays an important role in providing stakeholders information on the resources at their disposal, attracting better faculty and engaging alumni, who play an instrumental role in spreading the information on their university.

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## **Session 11.4: Marketing Education**

**Chair:** Caroline Munoz

# Summary Brief

## A Ten-Year Bibliographic Content Analysis of Teaching and Pedagogy Topics at SMA

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*This research uses a ten-year systematic bibliographic content analysis of all teaching and pedagogy topics that are part of the Society for Marketing Advances (SMA) Proceedings in order to better understand what marketing academics believe are the most relevant topics over the past decade. Using both a cluster analysis and a latent Dirichlet allocation methods of the abstracts and first paragraphs of each proceedings that related to marketing education topics, an eight-cluster solution was found. These eight clusters as well as the implications that these clusters have on the marketing education field is discussed.*

### Introduction

Marketing education has changed considerably over the past few decades. With new modalities to reach consumers as well as new marketing analytical tools, traditional marketing techniques have become less valuable to organizations. Because of this, marketing education has had to adapt in order to teach this new content to students so that students are ready to take on employment upon graduation.

One way to identify the changing trends in marketing education is to examine what is being presented at academic conferences. Since the journal publication process can take numerous years from the start of the research to actual journal publication, investigating preliminary work presented at academic conferences can allow researchers a better understanding of what types of research will be more prevalent in journals over the next few years. In addition, synthesizing this information can yield useful information that will allow for the development of practical advice for teaching these marketing topics. It is for these reasons why this study involves the completion of a ten-year systematic bibliographic content analysis of all teaching and pedagogy topics that are part of the SMA Proceedings.

### Method

Bibliographic analysis has been widely used by marketing researchers to generate and organize marketing literature reviews. Examples include bibliographic literature reviews for broad academic research areas, such as environmental marketing (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2011), mobile app technologies (Stocchi et al., 2021), and reviews analyzing individual journals or conferences (e.g., Donthu et al. 2022).

To create the initial bibliographic analysis, first all the programs and abstracts for the SMA conference were collated for the last 10 years (from 2013-2022) from their website. For each proceedings volume, a Word VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) Macro was written to code and extract the teaching sessions. Manual coding and checking were conducted in order to ensure all teaching proceedings were included in the final list. For each paper, the article title was taken along with the first two paragraphs of the published proceedings. The abstract text was analyzed with a semi-automated content analysis so that insights could be generated.

To perform the analysis, first the abstracts were pre-processed, by removing stop words (words with little useful analytical information, e.g., “a”, “the”), numbers, and punctuation symbols. Counts were taken of words and bi-gram combinations of two words. Bi-grams increase analytical complexity but allow for more context, and encapsulate multi-word concepts, such as “supply chain” or “services marketing (e.g., Tan et al., 2002).

After the abstracts were pre-processed, a cluster analysis and latent Dirichlet allocation method was employed. The final results were calculated using k-medians clustering on cosine distances between the abstracts since the k-medians technique is more robust to outliers (Jin & Han, 2017). In cluster analysis there are a plethora of methods for finding the optimal number of clusters (see Steinley, 2006). Using a 10-fold cross validation procedure (e.g., Arlot & Celisse, 2010), it was determined that the eight-cluster solution was recommended since this solution had i) mid-sized topics corresponding to commonly taught marketing courses and areas of marketing, ii) a good

value of the Rand index (0.85) and a local optima for the adjusted Rand index, and iii) topics that were homogeneous and had good face validity.

## Results

For each of the eight clusters, the cluster lift, which is the relative increase in the proportion of a word over the baseline rate was calculated for every word in the cluster. Word clouds along with more restricted lists of the “top 10” cluster words were used to name the clusters. For each cluster, the size (number of articles), name, and the ten words with highest lift are summarized in Table 1. The topic clusters give a good mix of clusters focused on specific class content (Sales and Products & Branding, and Social Media), teaching styles and ideas (Cases & Gamification and Experiential Learning), teaching modalities (In The Classroom and Online Courses), and general skills (Research Skills).

**Table 1: Overall Cluster Summary**

Cluster	Size	Name	Ten Words with Highest Lift
1	88	In the Classroom	students, marketing, project, class, assignment, create, plan, work, marketing project, teaching
2	59	Social Media	social, media, social media, brand, study, cultural, media marketing, engagement, trust, marketing
3	37	Cases & Gamification	game, case, teams, gamification, discussion, failure, method, concepts, questions, entrepreneurial
4	43	Sales	sales, role, selling, professional, competition, professional selling, play, student, opportunity, world
Cluster	Size	Name	Ten Words with Highest Lift
5	60	Research Skills	data, skills, business, research, consumer, critical, job, thinking, qualitative, problem
6	43	Online Courses	online, courses, online courses, digital, faculty, education, students, universities, covid, higher education
7	48	Experiential Learning	learning, experiential, experiential learning, education, knowledge, student, outcomes, study, based, projects
8	41	Products & Branding	product, students, group, groups, class, brand, examples, products, brands, exercise

## Discussion

This study examined the teaching topics published in the Society for Marketing Advances proceedings over a ten-year period via a systematic content analysis. Results show that the most published area, with 88 proceedings, can be described as “In the Classroom.” These proceedings focused on various projects, exercises, assignments, or activities that could be utilized in the classroom in order to help students stay engaged and have a better understanding of the marketing content being discussed. The second cluster focused on social media and digital marketing topics. As this is a newer focus area of marketing education, it is not surprising that there would be an extensive amount of proceedings discussing this topic area. The third cluster focused on “Cases & Gamification.” Although cases have been used in marketing education for decades, gamification is a newer focus which is likely why this area had the least number of proceedings associated with it. The fourth cluster, “Sales,” covered all concepts of teaching sales and sales related classes such as the usage of role plays and sales competitions. The fifth cluster had the second highest number of proceedings and can be classified as the “Research Skills” cluster. This cluster covered not only traditional marketing research topics but also marketing analytics, which is a newer focus

area for most marketing educators. The sixth cluster covered “Online Courses.” As mentioned, the number of publications discussing content related to this cluster expanded significantly due to the pandemic. These proceedings related to online course development as well as specific ways to teach marketing content in an online environment. The seventh cluster focused on “Experiential Learning.” Many schools have initiatives that look for applied, experiential learning since this can help make students better prepared to enter the workforce. AACSB 2020 standards now require colleges to document these experiential learning activities; therefore, it is expected that research on this topic area will continue to increase in the future. Finally, the eighth cluster covered topics related to “Products & Branding.” Overall, these eight clusters show the most relevant marketing education topics discussed by academicians and highlight the coursework and type of requirements (i.e., projects, experiential learning) considered important for successful marketing programs.

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# Summary Brief

## Department Advisory Boards: A Thematic Literature Review and Path Forward

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*The purpose of the study was to review relevant literature related to advisory boards or councils to both better inform the development and operationalization of marketing department and program-specific boards, as well as identify research gaps. Six marketing education and cross-disciplinary/subspecialty journals, along with a representative education journal from five other disciplines found in business colleges, were reviewed. In total, 17 articles were included in the analysis. A thematic review revealed five primary categories (i.e., organization, activity, advisory board, faculty, and student perceptions) and sixteen subcategories. Research gaps and opportunities are discussed.*

### Introduction

The rate of technological innovation, coupled with a marketplace clamoring for applied skills, mandates that marketing departments effectively utilize advisory boards. Some marketing departments, at present, are providing degree specializations (e.g., digital marketing, professional selling) that put increased pressure on being current with narrow industry knowledge. Yet, how are departments effectively integrating industry advisors into their curriculums and programs? The purpose of the study was to review relevant literature related to advisory boards or councils to both better inform the development and operationalization of marketing department and program-specific boards, as well as identify research gaps.

### Methodology

Six marketing-related education journals were initially selected for the literature review. These journals included the three dominant marketing education journals: *Journal of Marketing Education*, *Marketing Education Review*, and *Journal of Advancement of Marketing Education* (JAME). Three cross-disciplinary that publish educational research were also selected. Each journal was searched using the keywords, “Advisory” “Board” and “Council.” The keywords needed to be in the abstract and/or title and identified as a primary topic within the article. Given the limited amount of previous research conducted, it was decided to expand the literature review to include a representative education journal from other business disciplines. An additional five articles were identified. Thus, seventeen articles were reviewed and included in the final sample. Each article was reviewed and coded into primary and subcategories. Table 1 provides further clarification on the categories and subcategories.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Advisory Board Research

Category	Subcategory	Descriptions
Organization	Census	Descriptive national survey data was presented to understand the popularity and characteristics of boards.
	Creation	Processes involving or impacting the creation of an advisory board
	Management	Discussions related to meeting format, agendas, and communication.
	Functions	Provides an overview of the advisory board functions or responsibilities
Activity	Benefits	Benefits derived from having an advisory board
	Project Process	Describes the process of integrating the advisory board into a student-orientated activity
Board Perceptions	Desired Skills	Student skills that advisory board members preferred
	Curriculum	Data discussion related to curriculum decisions
	Technology	Highlights technology used to communicate with board members
	Motivations	Data exploring board members’ motivations to participate
	Expectations	Data focusing on advisory board members’ service expectations
	Trends	Board members identifying environmental trends
Faculty Perceptions	Involvement	Data addressing the extent faculty were active and aware of the board activities
	Effectiveness	Data addressing the value of boards’ contributions on key areas.
	Evaluation	Students evaluated the advisory board-related projects

Student Perceptions	Perceived Value	Students provided their input on their perceptions of the advisory board's contribution to their activity
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There is a dearth of research that has been conducted on business-related advisory boards. In particular, only three articles dealt with marketing-focused boards. The type of advisory board researched also varied. *Organization*. Nine articles highlighted the logistics of creating and having a board (Andrus & Martin, 2001; Avila et al., 2005; Dorazio, 1996; Koong, 2003; Kress & Wedell, 1993; Penrose, 2002; Query, 2018; Schwartz & Fogg, 1985; Xu et al., 2023). *Activity*. Four research articles emphasized one activity (i.e., writing portfolio contest, advising a product group, resume advice, and curriculum course development) that incorporated the involvement of advisory board members (Dillon, 1997; Gilbreath et al., 2001; Hunt et al., 2017; Rapert, 2017). *Advisory Board Perceptions*. Four articles surveyed or interviewed advisory board members on a host of topics (i.e., desired skills, curriculum, technology, motivations, service expectations, and trends) (Aiken & Martin, 1994; Hinton & Williams van Rooij, 2021; Ireland & Ramsower, 1994; Penrose, 2002). *Faculty Perceptions*. Five studies sought to explore empirically explore faculty perceptions of advisory board involvement and their effectiveness on key areas (Kilcrease, 2011; Kress & Wedell, 1993; Query, 2018; Schwartz & Fogg, 1985; Xu et al., 2023). *Student Perceptions*. Lastly, two studies sought to explore student perceptions of advisory boards and/or their related actions (Hunt et. al, 2017; Rapert, 2017). In conclusion, the marketing discipline needs to take a closer look at the role and implementation of advisory boards. Based on the literature review, the following areas of research are proposed: conduct a census of marketing department advisory boards, identify new ways of board management, clarification on the board member's roles, identify new board activities, and solicit additional advisory and student perceptions regarding advisory boards activities and their reputational value.

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# Summary Brief

## Antecedents to Online Student Engagement: Some Preliminary Evidence

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*Higher education has experienced a considerable increase in students enrolled in online courses due to pre- and post-COVID conditions. This growth has exacerbated many of the challenges of online education. One of the persistent issues is maximizing student engagement in an online learning environment. This preliminary investigation explores the impact of the antecedents of student self-regulation, student empowerment, and student perceptions of organizational support services on student engagement. Data gathered from 200 university students was analyzed using structural equations modeling. The results support that self-regulation is directly influenced by student empowerment and support services. In addition, self-regulation directly influences online student engagement.*

### Introduction

As online education options grow in terms of student enrollment, many challenges are increasing likewise. One of the foremost challenges is increasing student engagement as measured by increased student interaction and participation (Kebritchi et al., 2017). This study is a preliminary exploration of the factors influencing online student engagement.

### Conceptual Model

Self-regulation has been defined as a student's organization and management of learning through controlling their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions during learning (Chang et al., 2022). For students, especially those taking online courses, it is a self-directive process that facilitates the development of plans for students to attain their goals (Robinson, 2021). Additionally, Chang et al. (2022) suggest that self-regulation skills are more required in online learning than in traditional face-to-face environments. Empowerment can be defined as intrinsic task motivation that results from performing tasks that increase feelings of self-efficacy (Frymier et al., 1996). The facets of empowerment include the idea that individuals work independently or take autonomous charge or control of their lives (Alam et al., 2022). These facets are examples of a direct link from empowerment to self-regulated strategies and tactics. Overall, this discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: Students with a higher level of empowerment will exhibit more self-regulating behaviors.

Support service tools can offer feedback on their efforts to students, which is linked to those students practicing more self-regulation tactics (Ley & Young, 2001). Whipp and Chiarelli (2004) suggest that self-regulation learning tactics are directly shaped by student success in managing the technical environment of a class, which the utilization of support services can accomplish. Hence, the following hypothesis is presented:

H<sub>2</sub>: Students with a higher perception of the availability of adequate support services for online course management systems will exhibit more self-regulating behaviors.

Self-regulated learning can play an “irreplaceable role” in getting students to develop and use engagement skills (Wang et al., 2022). More engaged students appreciate the self-regulation aspects of their learning process and how it allows them to attain their goals. Based on the preceding discussion, the following is hypothesized:

H<sub>3</sub>: Students who exhibit more self-regulating behaviors will demonstrate a higher level of student engagement behaviors.

The difficulties of an online learning environment have associated costs and may dampen the desire to engage in learning activities. Support services can lower the cost of learning and using new technologies and the related

benefits like higher levels of engagement (Cole, 2009). Facilitating and mentoring are support services techniques that promote student engagement (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). Based on these ideas:

H4: Students with a higher perception of the availability of adequate support services for online course management systems will demonstrate a higher level of student engagement behaviors.

### Methodology

A self-administrated questionnaire to university students resulted in 200 useful responses. First, estimation and testing of the measurement model utilizing a confirmatory factor analysis. Next, estimation and testing of the conceptual relationships using structural equations modeling. The analysis confirmed a good fit with the resulting indices signifying a satisfactory measurement model. Finally, the path coefficients were analyzed to determine if the collected evidence supported the hypotheses.

### Discussion

This preliminary conceptual model aims to propose a more complete understanding of the dynamics of student engagement in an online learning environment. An online learning environment must be designed with forethought to facilitate student engagement (Asoodar et al., 2016). To facilitate more student engagement, other areas need to be addressed. Evidence exists that self-regulation is important in any learning environment, including online learning (e.g., Chang et al., 2022; Zimmerman, 2002). These self-regulating behaviors can be supported when students feel intrinsically motivated to learn and perform their best work; otherwise, empowerment. In addition, faculty members and technical support services can support self-regulation behaviors by providing them with assistance to manage their learning independently (Alam et al., 2022).

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# **Session 11.5: B2B Supply Chain Strategies**

**Chair:** Michelle Sullivan

## Summary Brief

# Impact of Linguistic Cues of Social Media Content on Engagement Rates in Supply Chain Context

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### Introduction

Social media marketing (SMM) has witnessed tremendous growth since the advent of social media platforms. The majority of social media marketing research has been conducted in business-to-consumer (B2C) environments. Substantially less work has been undertaken in business-to-business (B2B) environments related to social media marketing (SMM). However, evidence from B2B literature suggests a positive impact of social media on relationships and performance. This research extends SMM research in the B2B sector by studying the linguistic features of suppliers' social media posts on social media engagement rates, a measure of behavioral outcomes.

### Literature Review

Studies suggest that social media presence has a positive impact on B2B relationships, relationship value, and sales performance (Rodriguez, Robert M. Peterson and Vijaykumar Krishnan, 2012)

There is an increased volume of evidence related to the positive impact of social media presence in the B2B space (Huang, Potter, & Eyers, 2020). A social media presence has been found to: 1) aid in building better relationships; 2) improve information sharing; 3) increase demand for a firm's products 4) increase the value associated with those products; and 5) increase customer satisfaction. (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, & Krush, 2016, Cawsey, & Rowley, 2016, Rodriguez, Robert M. Peterson and Vijaykumar Krishnan, 2012). Many of these advantages are driven by the firms B2B posts. However, little is known about what linguistic cues increase the effectiveness of social media posts in a B2B environment.

With relatively easy access to big data from social media sites and scraping capabilities, suppliers can efficiently and effectively access information on what types of social media content and its linguistic features can help improve their presence in SMM. Using the above-mentioned tools this study seeks to explore the effective use of social media post captions and how this generates post engagement.

Thus, the purpose of this study twofold. First, to determine which linguistic cues used in captions of suppliers' social media posts on Instagram contribute to engagement. Secondly, how the linguistic cues may vary across suppliers by size. The findings carry both theoretical implications and managerial implications. Our findings further the understanding of linguistic cues on the persuasiveness of social media posts, specifically related to supplier posts using SMM as a tool to help them increase their visibility and sales potential.

Research on the specific linguistic content of social media posts and their effectiveness has not been previously explored in a B2B setting. It also offers implications for practice by providing a potential list of linguistic cues a supplier would consider using by either limiting or increasing for the purpose of increasing engagement.

The study of communication content is not new. However, it's been typically part of the qualitative research paradigm where researchers manually coded elements of textual or verbal communication. Communication could be anything: public speeches, advertisement content, or social media posts and comments. It could be done by manually coding and quantifying words and meanings or occurrences of expressions (such as in content analysis) or by engaging in a fully immersive experience to gain a deeper understanding of an online community (such as in netnography). The disadvantage of qualitative inquiry, is feasibility in an SMM environment. This is due to the length of time to complete the process. Oftentimes, practitioners may need to analyze large amounts of data in a

timely fashion to optimize their decision-making and adjust, if necessary, their social media presence. Researchers today have sophisticated software, that enables various data mining approaches. Such software can be utilized to analyze intelligence with social media sites. One of these approaches includes a Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), which is a "transparent text analysis program that counts words in psychologically meaningful categories" (Tausczik, & Pennebaker, 2010) LIWC allows for extraction of words and meanings which include global measures such as authentic dimension which includes perceived honesty and genuineness, clout which indicates leadership language, analytical variable which represents formal thinking and word complexity such as words per sentence, word count and big words which are words containing over 7 words (Boyd, Ashokkumar, Seraj, & Pennebaker, 2022). Linguistic dimension are also extract which can specify emotion, tone, and even moralization. Linguistic cues have been studied in the fields of psychology and communication. For example, the use of language may help indicate psychological differences between individuals, how individuals cope, or even predict deception (Sbarra, Smith, & Mehl, 2012, Van Der Zee, Poppe, Havrileck, & Baillon, 2022). However, marketing, too, has begun to explore the impact of linguistic cues on marketing metrics. For example, Syrdal at all (2023) analyzed the effects of linguistic cues in affiliate marketing on social media engagement. Little is yet known how linguistic features of supplier social media posts may affect the behavioral dimension of the buying firms. Additionally, because B2B social media use and B2C social media are distinctly different (Iankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau, 2019), more research on linguistic cues is needed in the B2B environment.

## **Methodology**

We extracted over 14000 (14,324) Instagram posts from 18 suppliers in the body care and candle industry. Based on respondent feedback, the suppliers were categorized into small to medium to large sized firms. They supplied raw materials for the production of body care products and candles as well as a limited number of finished products for repackaging and resale under the buying firm's brand name.

The extracted posts included a caption under the post, an indication of whether the post was an image or video, a raw number of views generated (for video only), as well as engagement metrics which included a raw number of post likes and comments. The posts' captions were then analyzed based on their linguistic features. This enabled the researchers to determine their unique contribution to engagement metrics. The engagement rate was calculated by summing standardized scores of likes and comments divided by the number of followers. Standardization and weighting by the supplier size allowed for engagement rate comparison across suppliers of different social media following. This technique reduced size bias. Supplier size was manually coded to indicate whether the supplier was small, medium, or large. Social media following was manually coded based on supplier follower count as displayed on their Instagram page.

## **Analysis and Results**

The captions were analyzed using LWIC 22. Once the linguistic features of social media post captions were quantified and categorized, a linear regression was used to determine the impact of linguistic features on social media engagement. Further, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine how the linguistic cues may vary across the suppliers by their size.

The regression analysis ( $R=.146$ , Adj.  $R\text{ square}=0.020$ ,  $F=25.682$ ,  $p<.001$ ) suggests that average words per sentence (WPS) and affect-linked linguistic cues which use words such as good, well, new, love had a negative impact on engagement, while Authentic which indicates perceived honesty, genuineness, Affect which Cognition, a psychological process which is linked to words such as is, was, but, are, Social process which includes words such as you, we, he, she and dimensions of conflict and , as well as Tone which is a degree of emotion, and the use of Emojis had a positive impact on engagement. However, Clout, BigWords, emotion dimension, and Analytic cues had no impact on the engagement rate.

Further analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggests that the large suppliers had the highest engagement rate, despite adjustment for the size of social media following, followed by medium and small-size suppliers. To determine differences in linguistic features between suppliers, a set of ANOVAs was also conducted.

All analyses were statistically significant with significant between-group differences based on Tamhane post hoc analysis ( $p < .001-.01$ ) The large suppliers s had the lowest rate of words per sentence but had the highest engagement rate. This is an important finding given the most substantial impact of words per sentence ( $\text{Beta}=-0.106$ ,  $p<.001$ ) on engagement rate, lower percentage or WPS are desirable and large suppliers use the lowest WPS as

compared to small and medium suppliers. Affect-linked linguistic cues were used at the highest rate by the large suppliers, followed by medium and small suppliers. An analyses of those variables that had a positive impact on the engagement rate showed that, small suppliers had the lowest authenticity and tone cues with large suppliers having the highest scores. Large suppliers also had higher cognition score and the use of emojis.

### Findings and implications

Findings indicate that different linguistic cues may positively or negatively affect engagement rates. More specifically, WPS and affect-linked linguistic cues negatively impact engagement rates, while Authentic, Cognition, Social linked linguistic cues, as well as Tone, and the use of Emojis positively impact engagement rates. Further, the findings suggest that large suppliers had the highest engagement rates even after adjusting for the supplier size, and they outperformed engagements rates those of small suppliers on the linguistic cues that had a positive impact on engagement rates. Based on these findings medium and smaller firms should 1) decrease their WPS 2) use linguistic cues that increase perceived honesty and genuineness, 3) and increase cognition-linked linguistic cues such as all or nothing speech with words such as all, no, never, always, or insight linked words such as know, how, think, feel. The findings can help smaller and medium suppliers to close the existing gap from their larger competitors, at least with respect to social media presence. However, given the impact of social media presence on B2B relationships and supplier performance, the use of effective linguistic cues may potentially help all suppliers but particularly the smaller ones, to increase their performance and narrow the gap to their larger competitors.

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## Summary Brief

# Does ‘Off-label’ Use of Prescription Medications Influence the Supply Chain Shortage?

Christine Summers, University of South Alabama, USA  
C. Michelle Sullivan, University of South Alabama, USA

*Near the end of 2022, and early in 2023, there was a major media buzz surrounding a new “miracle” weight loss injectable drug called Ozempic. Once the word got out, individuals could easily be exposed to multiple ads per day across various social and media platforms in the US. The issue with the marketing surrounding Ozempic is that it is only FDA approved for Type 2 diabetes management, not weight loss. Wanting to lose a few pounds, many individuals were able to access prescriptions to this medicine, thereby, leading to a major shortage of the medicine. This paper proposes to identify and predict the supply chain relationships involving consumer demand, off-label prescribing, and prescribing physicians’ CCI (Customer-Company Identification) effecting the result of medication shortages. CCI can be defined as the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104), the extent to which a substantial overlap exists between their internal personal perceptions and that of the company (Arikan & Güner, 2013). While much research is available on medication shortages, there is limited research surrounding how influencer marketing and CCI have contributed to the off-label use of prescription medications and the resulting supply chain shortages. This research contributes to the existing literature in both supply chain and marketing by investigating the new effects of influencer marketing on the supply chain as a whole.*

### Introduction

In the wake of COVID, CDC research shows adult obesity in the United States increased 35% from 2018 – 2021 (Overweight and Obesity, n.d.) Many Americans desiring to lose weight quickly, without yet unknown complications, are turning to injectable biologic medications produced by Novo Nordisk called Wegovy and Ozempic. These medications are being touted as the new weight loss super drug that has similar results to gastro-surgical techniques without the complications (Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons, 2022). Many patients with miraculous results are posting to social media and becoming instant influencers.

Social media influencers are defined as individuals who voice their opinions through digital platforms and have the power to control the decision-making power of the masses (Vrontis et al., 2020). These influencers are now acting as both consumer and promoter (Vrontis et al. 2020). This influencer effect appears to have significantly contributed to the increased demand for Wegovy and Ozempic injectable drugs for “off-label” weight loss. Off label prescribing is defined as prescribing the medication for a purpose other than which it was licensed (McIntyre et al., 2000). Tik Tok alone logged over 260 million TikTok views of influencers promoting demonstrative weight loss by opting for this injectable drug therapy (See Figure 1). This weight loss revolution has caused a large-scale uptick in general consumer usage resulting in a drug shortage that can be detrimental for patients diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.

### Background

There appear to be multiple definitions of the term “drug shortage”. The World Health Organization has identified 82 distinct definitions of “drug shortage” ways (Shukar et al., 2021). The American Society of Hospital Pharmacists (ASHOP) defines drug shortage as a “supply issue that affects how the pharmacy prepares or dispenses a drug product or influences patient care” (Shukar et al., 2021) The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) defines a supply chain drug shortage by two parameters within the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. One or all of the parameters can be present to classify the drug in a shortage category:

1. “A period of time when the demand or projected demand for the drug within the United States exceeds the supply of the drug.”
2. “Total supply of all versions of a commercially available product cannot meet the current demand, and a registered alternative manufacturer will not meet the current and/ or projected demands for

the potentially medically necessary use(s) at the patient level” (Frequently Asked Questions About Drug Shortages, 2023)

Our proposed model aims to investigate the relationships between the off-label marketing of injectable pharmaceuticals mainly, Wegovy and Ozempic, meant to reduce A1C in Type 2 diabetics, and the apparent impact in the supply chain system, leading to current drug shortage. The framework for our research is structured by Porter’s Competitive Advantage of Nations Diamond (Porter, 1990) along with Institutional Theory. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, it is common practice for pharmaceutical companies to pay physicians for the promotion of a drug to their patients (Physician Specialty Data Report, n.d.). This practice falls under Institutional Theory as an acceptable norm in the social culture of pharmaceutical sales. This solidifies this theory in our research framework.

- P<sub>1</sub>** *Off-label drug marketing increased consumer demand resulting in drug shortages.*
- P<sub>2</sub>** *CCI positively moderates the relationship between Novo Nordisk prescription increases and drug shortages, thereby increasing both stockholder revenue and adverse impacts.*
- P<sub>3</sub>** *Off-label marketing increases consumer demand to the extent that CCI positively moderates the relationship between Pharmaceutical Representatives and the number of Novo Nordisk prescriptions.*

## Methods

In addition to initial qualitative interviews with medical professionals, secondary data will be extracted from data sets available online. This data includes physicians’ payouts from pharmaceutical companies for prescribing certain medications, city and statewide data from Tennessee on number of prescriptions given during this time period, etc. Structural equation modeling will be applied to explore the relationships proposed in the theoretical framework.

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**Session 11.7: Panel Session: Teaching with AI: How do we  
create REAL marketing intelligence in an  
Artificial Intelligence world?**

**Chair:** Karen Hopkins

## Panel Session

# Teaching with AI: How do we create REAL marketing intelligence in an Artificial Intelligence world?

Haya Ajjan, Elon University, USA  
James Blair, Eastern Kentucky University, USA  
Prachi Gala, Kennesaw State University, USA  
Karen Hopkins, Auburn University, USA  
Charla Brown, Troy University, USA

*Navigating the classroom and maintaining rigor for marketing students in the age of AI has presented new challenges for instructors, students, administrators and potential employers. According to popular theory, those who will be successful in the future are those who discover the potential of AI and use it constructively in conjunction with their own critical thinking. This panel will discuss and explore this new landscape and offer paths to remain relevant*

### **Learn About AI**

Like any new tool, AI is something faculty must grasp, not just in the knowledge of one platform, but as part of an understanding of the mechanics of AI and how it is used across platforms. As faculty, we work together to identify the tools and processes to help us develop our own knowledge of AI and then identify resources to keep abreast of new developments as they arise.

### **Develop AI Policies for your Classroom and Program**

Institutions, programs and individual classes have had to pivot to create policies and clear boundaries acknowledging and then advising how AI is to be used (or not in the context of student work,

### **Integrate AI Into your Classroom**

There is a continuum surrounding AI among faculty ranging from fear to embracing. Utilizing AI tools in the classroom to improve student processes of utilizing the technology tends to reduce the fear and acknowledge the usefulness of the tools and technology behind them in a way that leads to learning.

### **Update Assignments and Assessments with AI in mind**

The use of AI, like calculators and the Internet before Chat GPT, makes it necessary to reinvent the assessment of student learning. This panel will discuss ways to measure student processes and progress instead of traditional deliverables that have measured student learning as a finished product only.

### **Help Students Understand what AI is (and isn't) and what it can (and can't) do**

Taking the knowledge about AI's abilities and limitations in its current form and translating it into classroom content for the purpose of developing a new literacy about AI among students, encouraging them to use it in productive ways.

### **Help students use AI in ways that promote learning, not dependency**

The open availability of the latest AI tools comes, unfortunately, on the heels of the global pandemic, a time of lowered expectations and reduced human engagement. This panel will discuss ways to utilize the current tools toward a path of learning processes, the "how to" of prompting, generating and critical thought to lead the students toward learning rather than leaning on the technology to complete their work.

## **Session 12.1: MER Special Issue Symposium**

**Chairs:** Ginger Killian & Jeff Tanner

## Summary Brief

# Social Impact Through Student Engagement: A Preliminary Analysis

Rebecca Reed, St. Mary's University, USA

Mathew Joseph, St. Mary's University, USA

*Universities have the potential to be drivers of social change. These institutions foster the growth and development of future leaders and active citizens. Part of the social impact of universities includes incorporating engaged students into university-community partnerships so that students can gain hands-on experience helping community organizations to innovatively solve social issues that are prominent in the community. Without student engagement, universities cannot engage in truly successful collaborations with community organizations and maximize their social impact. This research seeks to build on existing studies in this area to determine how universities can increase their social impact through the involvement of engaged students. Additionally, this research seeks to create a framework based on existing methods that can be tailored to individual universities to measure the characteristics of engaged students and determine the social impact of university-community partnerships. The data collected using this framework can then be applied by universities to make informed decisions regarding student and community engagement initiatives for the creation of greater social impact.*

### Introduction

Social impact involves any effort by individuals or organizations to solve complex problems that face society and create value for communities on a local, regional, or global scale. To garner lasting social impact, these efforts must create this value using methods that are based on innovation, sustainability, and scalability (Schwartz, 2017). The United Nations signed into agreement 17 goals for sustainable development (SDGs) in 2015. Members of the United Nations are seeking to achieve these goals by 2030 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023). Institutions who seek to have positive social impact can do so through the pursuit of any of the 17 SDGs (Mitchell, 2021). It is important for institutions to have social impact because positive changes in any one area of society can foster greater development in other areas (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023). The creation of social change is not a short-term solution to short-term problems, it requires innovative solutions to complex long-term issues that plague society. Institutional strategies for social impact should be designed with the intention of meeting documented needs with solutions that can be measured and sustained over long periods of time (Schwartz, 2017).

Universities are institutions that can be a driving force behind social change. University students are poised to become the next generation of community leaders. With this precious resource under their guidance, universities are continuously forced to prove to society that they are molding these future leaders in valuable ways. Social engagement of students through educational initiatives with the goal of social impact is a way for universities to provide value to society and prove that they are deserving of continued funding and enrollment (Gamoran, 2018). As a result of the high importance placed on universities having positive social impact, this is a field of ongoing study to determine how universities can maximize social impact. This includes the development of frameworks to measure the effectiveness of social impact initiatives pursued by universities, particularly those that are part of university-community collaborations (Plummer et al., 2022, p. 7-8). Student engagement is also vital in the success of university-community partnerships. One of the characteristics of engaged students is the development of a sense of belonging on campus and in the community (Gopalan, 2016). Engaged students are more likely to stay in school until graduation and participate in experiential learning opportunities, like those created by university-community partnerships, which provide them with the necessary skills to be impactful members of society (Abla et al., 2019; Stephens, 2021). It is with this focus that this research will seek to analyze how universities can maximize their social impact and the important role that engaged students play in achieving that goal, specifically through their involvement in university-community collaborations.

### Method

The data for this study will be collected through a survey. The survey will be designed for distribution to students at a private university in Texas. The survey will seek to measure the level of student engagement both on campus and in the local community. The survey will analyze the actual community engagement of students at the

university as well as the opportunities provided by the university to foster such engagement. The analysis of data from the survey will be used to develop a detailed consensus regarding the overall community engagement of the university. This data will then be used to evaluate the shortcomings or gaps in the initiatives of the university so that the institution can increase community engagement and create greater social impact. The survey will be distributed beginning on September 1, 2023, until November 1, 2023. For this initial study, only students from this university will be sampled. The study will be expanded over time to include a larger, more diverse sample from other universities.

## Conclusion

As the educators of future generations of leaders and active citizens, universities are under constant scrutiny to prove to stakeholders that they are worthy of public and private funding (Gamoran, 2018). One way that universities can provide evidence of their value to society is through positive social impact in their local communities. Thus, social impact should be one of the foundational purposes of universities and continuously measured to ensure that universities are meeting the standards that they have set for themselves in this area. Through university-community partnerships, universities can share their knowledge and resources with community organizations to develop innovative solutions to prolific social issues. By engaging students in these partnerships through volunteer opportunities and projects for university courses, students can contribute to meaningful social change in their community (Gamoran, 2018; Groulx et al., 2021; Holland, 2001, p.1; Mitchell, 2021; Plummer et al., 2022, p. 1-2). Such participation prepares students to be effective leaders and civically engaged once they graduate. Participation in these endeavors can also increase student engagement, which is key to increasing retention and graduation rates by fostering a sense of belonging for students on campus and in their communities (Abla et al., 2019; Gopalan, 2016; Stephens, 2021). However, it is not enough for universities to just engage in partnerships with community organizations and to involve students in the process. These ventures must be considered successful if positive social impact is to be created. To be successful, all parties must make progress towards achieving the goals established at the foundation of the partnership (Plummer et al., p. 7-8). Consequently, universities must continue to conduct research regarding student engagement in order to develop initiatives and strategies that will improve the student experience and lead to greater positive social impact. This proposed study will seek to build on existing research to develop such a framework and provide universities with the tools that they need to make information-based decisions about their next steps for increasing social impact and student engagement.

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# Summary Brief

## Voices Against Violence: Empowering Students to Address Domestic Terrorism through Digital Advocacy

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*This research examines the impact of an innovative social media project and its influence on students' digital advocacy and perspectives on related societal issues. The study explores the effects of active engagement in advocacy campaigns. Preliminary findings demonstrate a significant positive relationship between ethnocultural empathy and digital advocacy, indicating that a better understanding of cultural and ethnic experiences can enhance online advocacy. Additionally, this understanding is linked to an increased belief in individuals' ability to make a substantial difference in the world. Moreover, a repeated measures ANOVA analysis reveals an intriguing temporal pattern concerning these beliefs. Initially, there is a decline in these beliefs following the project's initiation; however, this decline is temporary. As the project progresses, the belief in making an impact recovers and surpasses the initial levels. This pattern suggests a positive correlation between the duration of involvement in the project and individuals' confidence in their ability to effect change, emphasizing the value of sustained involvement in advocacy efforts, as it strengthens individuals' confidence in their potential impact. Overall, this research contributes to the growing literature on digital advocacy and sheds light on the transformative potential of active engagement in advocacy campaigns as a pedagogical tool, particularly when supported by innovative social media platforms. The findings underscore the importance of cultivating ethnocultural empathy and sustaining involvement over time to maximize the effectiveness of digital advocacy initiatives. The study offers an engaging, practical curriculum by bridging marketing principles with societal dialogue. The evidence-based outcomes indicate a robust model that can be replicated and extended in business schools. Furthermore, this research is a resource for educators to link marketing concepts with societal impact effectively.*

### Introduction

Digital advocacy has become a potent catalyst for societal change in our increasingly interconnected world, especially among younger generations. These individuals routinely engage with diverse social issues on digital platforms, a component now integral to their daily lives. However, understanding how such engagement cultivates genuine belief in one's capacity for instigating meaningful change remains largely uncharted territory. Recent scholarly calls urge the marketing discipline to be more proactive in comprehending and curbing events prompted by radicalization (Radanielina & Grégoire, 2023).

This research project addresses this gap by investigating the impact of an innovative social media project on students' perspectives on advocacy aimed at countering targeted violence. Research indicates that connections to terrorists and instances of radicalization frequently transpire through the internet and social media platforms (Smith, 2018). We examine the temporal patterns in self-efficacy belief regarding instigating change. We further analyze the vital role of ethnocultural empathy in digital advocacy, delving into how a deeper understanding of diverse cultural and ethnic experiences can enhance the willingness to engage in online advocacy. Our research enriches the emerging field of digital advocacy by revealing the transformative potential of innovative social media platforms and sustained engagement in advocacy campaigns.

### Background

The innovative course project collaborated with the nonprofit Invent2Prevent and the Department of Homeland Security, which provided a grant for digital and social media campaigns to counter domestic terrorism. The project is aimed to counter misinformation, promote awareness, and mitigate the threat of violence associated with these issues. Thirty-nine students in a social media marketing course developed content for two chosen topics -

dismantling white supremacy and anti-abortion violence. We divided the class into two main groups, each focusing on one of the two selected topics. Their task involved crafting comprehensive social media campaigns. Each group was further subdivided into five specialized teams to ensure a diverse approach to the complex issues, with each team taking responsibility for different aspects of the campaign (Website, Tiktok, Instagram, Youtube, and Facebook). The ultimate aim of these campaigns was to channel users to the project's website, spurring them to support the cause. The encouraged actions ranged from signing a petition, donating to local community events, or gaining further insights into the issues.

In addition to accomplishing the project's objectives, this research sought to understand whether digital activism engagement could alter the student's perspective on these issues, their advocacy willingness, and their belief in their capacity to influence the world with marketing efforts. Ethnocultural empathy (Wang et al., 2003) was measured four times throughout the semester, providing insight into students' cross-cultural understanding and capacity to create inclusive social media campaigns. Extant literature suggests that ethnocultural empathy can influence students' propensity to advocate for others. For example, Fleming et al. (2015) found that a targeted intervention improved students' ethnocultural empathy, resulting in better communication. Kim and Tausen (2021) discovered a correlation between peer support and increased empathy among white students toward Asians and Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies suggest that fostering ethnocultural empathy may enhance students' advocacy inclination. We also measured students' willingness to engage in digital advocacy and their beliefs about contributing to the world, among other control variables.

### Key Findings

Preliminary results of the SmartPLS model suggest that ethnocultural empathy significantly impacts digital advocacy, with a path score of 0.707 ( $t=9.172$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Furthermore, digital advocacy strongly influences individuals' beliefs that they are making positive change and contributing to good in the world, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.729 ( $t=8.996$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and an R-squared value of 0.532. These findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of ethnocultural empathy are more likely to engage in digital advocacy, strengthening their beliefs in making a positive impact.

A repeated measures ANOVA revealed a fluctuating yet overall increasing trend in students' belief that their work had a positive social impact throughout the project, with mean scores progressing from 5.740 at time 1, then dipping to 5.302 and 5.466, and finally rising significantly to 6.519 at time 4 ( $p=0.058$ ). This increasing trend indicates that sustained participation in such projects can significantly bolster students' conviction to effect positive social change through their work.

This research contributes to understanding how digital advocacy campaigns can transform students' perceptions of societal issues and provides a practical, theoretical-based framework for marketing educators. This framework, rooted in innovative practice, can serve as a resource for educators to further connect marketing concepts with societal impact and social good.

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## Summary Brief

# A Post-COVID Gesture: A Student-Run Business Applying Public Relations in the Retailing Course

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### Abstract

This paper outlines the curriculum built upon a regular Retailing course with a student-run initiative within the College of Business, an AACSB accredited institution. The international accreditation standard for business schools has emphasized the experiential learning as well societal impacts in school of business standards (AACSB, 2020). The lack of operating an actual business leads students' course projects to merely analyze case studies or practice simulations that may not be utilized again after the course work. Externally, threats such as COVID force businesses to adapt to unprecedented environments that prevent businesses from running in-person services. Universities face similar challenges. Although several universities have launched their own university-themed products to portray their school spirit, most of the universities do not tie their products with school of business but through third-party vendors. This paper provides a solution for meeting the AACSB standards to maintain the experiential learning virtually in a real-world business.

The student-run initiative designs their own products and sells them on an ecommerce site. All profits go to student organizations. Students taking the Retailing class are tasked with the operational elements that need solutions. Different groups of students complete assignments needed to grow the business. Those assignments include developing new products, creating Meta ads, identifying target market and segmentation, and working with vendors for logistic operations.

During COVID, the student-run business sold fan masks online. As of today, there were substantial numbers of masks left. To reduce the inventory and benefit the community's well-being, students contacted organizations that will utilize fan masks by their clients, or employees. The student-run business received internal funding allowing them to donate fan masks and utilize Retail Communication Mix to understand the importance of public relations, connecting with the community, and more importantly giving back to those in need beyond the scope of their course work.



# Summary Brief

## Artificial Intelligence in Project-based, Community Engaged Learning

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*This paper explores the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education, highlighting its transformative impact on teaching and learning practices. AI offers significant benefits for both instructors and students, including personalized assignments, improved teaching practices, and enhanced problem-solving skills. The specific use of AI in community-engaged and project-based learning courses enables immersive experiences and relevant projects that address community needs. However, the paper emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations in AI implementation, as potential risks such as biases and privacy invasion must be carefully managed. By striking a balance between AI's benefits and ethical guidelines, higher education can harness AI's potential to enrich learning experiences and benefit society.*

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education has significantly transformed teaching and learning practices, offering vast potential to enhance learning experiences, streamline administrative tasks, and enable personalized education. There are tremendous benefits of AI from both instructor and student perspectives. AI allows instructors to personalize assignments, assess student performance, improve teaching practices, and streamline administrative tasks. For students, AI supports personalized learning, increases material accessibility, aids in research, enhances problem-solving skills, and offers virtual assistance.

The integration of AI in courses that are already utilizing community-engaged learning and project-based learning opens up new possibilities for transformative learning experiences. By leveraging AI-powered data analytics and mapping tools, educators can create immersive experiences that connect students with community needs, fostering relevant and impactful projects. AI also facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration, elevates critical thinking and research skills, and contributes to responsible citizenship by encouraging ethical considerations.

However, as AI use expands among students and instructors, it is essential to weigh its benefits against potential risks and establish ethical guidelines for its use. While AI can improve efficiency across various industries, it also presents risks, including biases, privacy invasion, job displacement, and potential misuse. Thus, ethical considerations are central to AI implementation. Guidelines for usage in higher education are particularly necessary to ensure transparent, fair, and accountable AI development and usage.

This study analyzes existing literature and case studies to explore how AI can enhance student learning outcomes in project-based, community-engaged learning courses, while also benefiting the broader community. It emphasizes the importance of ethical AI use and presents innovative practices to drive positive results for students, faculty, and community partners.

Ultimately, the paper emphasizes the need to strike a balance between utilizing AI's potential benefits while being mindful of ethical implications, ensuring AI's responsible integration to enrich learning experiences and benefit society as a whole.

## Summary Brief

# Sustainable Global Partnerships: Empowering Female Entrepreneurs while Creating Strategic Social Impact

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As noted by Grier (2020), “institutions of higher education are under pressure to equip students to competently engage in multicultural contexts” (p. 59). At the same time, marketing educators and administrators are struggling to train themselves and prepare students for a new global business paradigm. This emerging schema, in contrast to the neoliberal viewpoint of stockholder value maximization that remains prevalent in most business schools (e.g., Friedman, 1970, 2009), considers flourishing, sustainable organizations and economic ecosystems that embrace humanistic approaches to balancing resources with growth (Ehrenfeld & Hoffman, 2013; Jackson, 2011; Laszlo, Brown, et. al., 2014). Simultaneous to this paradigm shift, business schools and marketing educators face several pressure points from students and relevant agencies calling for curricular and co-curricular activities that address societal issues. These external forces include accrediting bodies (e.g., AACSB), marketing societies (e.g., Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and the American Marketing Association (AMA). AACSB's updated accreditation requirements include a call for engaged learning and mission-centric innovations in business education (e.g., standard 9). CIM similarly notes the desire to “inspire public confidence and safeguard the wider society” through improved marketing practices (“About CIM,” 2018). Finally, AMA suggests that marketers need to “not only serve [their] organizations, but also act as stewards of society,” (“About AMA,” 2017).

To tackle these challenges, our research discusses two critical components needed to advance this new approach and embrace the power of a paradigm shift, namely, (1) global partnerships and (2) community-based (Cadwallader, Atwong, and Lebard, 2013) experiential (Askim-Lovseth & O’Keefe, 2012) learning. Through the discussion of a specific global partnership, the authors present both curricular and co-curricular strategies that create social impact while empowering female entrepreneurs in emerging markets through education and entrepreneurship. The discussion connects ecosystem development to the advancement of specific UN SDG goals.

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# Summary Brief

## Business School Marketing Activities for Social Impact in Local Communities

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*Business schools endeavor to demonstrate social impact of their work, especially in their local communities. One popular way to incorporate communities into the output of a business school is to create project-based learning opportunities with local businesses. These opportunities may be incorporated into upper-level and graduate business classes, where students apply course learning objectives to local businesses in the form of individual or group semester-long projects or with applied assignments. The present paper presents a list of ten key social impact activities, with examples and specific suggestions for how to integrate these into marketing courses. The goal is to increase the societal impact of university teaching.*

### Introduction & Background

In 2020, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) adopted new standards by which member schools must assess their contributions to society, beyond the population of students and other academics. The AACSB define societal impact as encompassing “activities undertaken by business schools that over time lead to meaningful, discernable change for the betterment of people, economies, and the environment” (AACSB, 2023, pg. 2). The purpose of this presentation is to identify ten activities that can be incorporated into a variety of marketing courses to increase social impact.

### Key Activities & Actionable Examples

These key activities can be incorporated into existing in-person or online marketing courses with little effort, through guest speakers, in-class activities, weekly assignments, or semester-long course projects. I have incorporated such assignments into the following marketing courses: principles of marketing (shortened marketing plans, target market research), social media marketing (social media audits, content creation, content calendars, social media analytics, full social media marketing plans), marketing research (customer surveys, employee surveys, product/service development surveys), consumer behavior (buyer persona research, customer journey), and services marketing (service audits, service plans).

1. **Inclusive Marketing Strategies**: Teach your students the importance of inclusive marketing strategies. Emphasize the significance of culturally sensitive marketing content that resonates with the local community. Students should consider diverse representation and incorporate cultural elements relevant to the businesses' target audiences.
2. **Understanding Local Business Needs**: Start by gaining a comprehensive understanding of the needs, challenges, and aspirations of the local businesses. Faculty can engage in dialogue with business owners, conduct surveys, and hold focus group discussions with businesses. These activities can be facilitated with the small business development center, entrepreneurship hubs, or chambers of commerce connected to the university community, who can sponsor community breakfasts or meet-and-greets between business owners and business faculty. Business owners can also be invited to speak in class, either in person or virtually, especially in the first part of the course. Faculty can then use these local examples throughout the remainder of the course. Owners can also be invited to speak based on individual class assignments, which can be tailored to address specific issues faced by these businesses.
3. **Research Local Market Trends**: Encourage your marketing classes to conduct research on local market trends and consumer behaviors. Understanding the unique preferences and needs of the local community can help businesses tailor their marketing strategies effectively. This activity can be done in a number of ways. I use an assignment utilizing Census.gov and Claritas PRIZM (<https://claritas360.claritas.com/mybestsegments/#zipLookup>). Students explore the zip code of chosen businesses and identify what types of products and services would suit the demographic, psychographics, and behavioral criteria of the local population.

4. **Collaborative Marketing Projects:** Assign students to work on marketing projects with a local business. These projects could involve creating marketing plans, conducting market research, or developing social media strategies. The projects should aim to align course objectives with the business goals and contribute to their growth and visibility. Students should not use national businesses or franchises; rather, they choose a local business or a small business with which the student has a connection (e.g., family-owned business, business the student has worked for, or a business which the student patronizes as a customer). All businesses must be approved by faculty prior to the student receiving the go-ahead for the project to ensure the business is compatible with the project goals. This is usually accomplished in a discussion board or short assignment where the student identifies the company or companies being considered by name and website or social media URLs and clarifies why the business fits our project goals. It is important to note that the small businesses in such projects do not necessarily need to be aware of or involved with the project in any way. I simply make sure that the business has a web or social media presence so I can assess the value of the student project.
5. **Community-Oriented Campaigns:** Encourage your marketing classes to create campaigns that engage and uplift the local community. Businesses that demonstrate a commitment to community welfare often have a more significant societal impact. Students can design marketing initiatives that support local events, charities, or initiatives, showcasing the businesses' community involvement. I have integrated into my courses a community initiative to create more local walking and biking trails, a housing project for autistic and neurodiverse adults, a school-based health project to gamify healthy behaviors in pre-teens, to name a few. These community-building campaigns are often the most personally fulfilling to students.
6. **Sustainable Marketing Practices:** Promote sustainable marketing practices to your students. Encourage them to develop marketing strategies that are environmentally friendly and socially responsible. Businesses that prioritize sustainability and ethical practices can positively impact the community and environment. This area is an opportunity to “flip the classroom” and ask students to find three ways that a local business can be more environmentally friendly or socially responsible, identify any cost(s) associated with these activities, and suggest ways that the business can promote these practices to their customers.
7. **Measuring Societal Impact:** Teach your students how to measure the societal impact of their marketing efforts. Introduce them to AI tools for sentiment analysis and social listening. By analyzing data on public perception and sentiment, they can assess the impact of their campaigns on the local community. Admittedly, measuring social impact is likely the hardest activity of all. One tactic I have used is a pre-test, post-test with the business owners at the beginning and end of the semester project or workshop, where I measure knowledge, perceptions, and expectations of the business owners before and after the activity.
8. **Long-term Partnerships:** Encourage your marketing department to build long-term partnerships with local businesses. Rather than one-off projects in single courses or placing all the social impact effort on the shoulders of one(few) faculty member(s), fostering ongoing relationships with the business school as a whole can lead to more sustainable and meaningful societal impact. Business owners may benefit from continued support and expertise over multiple courses and/or in a capstone business course.
9. **Workshops and Training:** Organize workshops and training sessions for local businesses on the latest marketing trends and tools is an effective way to share faculty expertise with the business owners. This works best when the faculty member collaborates with small business development centers or entrepreneurship hubs. I have done workshops with local business owners on digital marketing, website SEO, and social media marketing. They are marketed by the centers to local businesses, owners are encouraged to bring their computers, and the workshops are very focused so everyone has a feeling of accomplishment at the end of the workshop.
10. **Showcasing Success Stories:** The business school should highlight successful collaborations and campaigns that have had a positive societal impact. These success stories can be shared within the university via the university and marketing communications office and with the local community via newspapers, newsletters, and local social media to inspire others and demonstrate the significance of such initiatives.

## **Conclusions**

By integrating these societal impact activities into specific marketing classes with project-based learning objectives and applied assignments, business school can make a tangible and positive effect on the local community. Students will not only gain valuable skills but also develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy, making

them well-rounded marketing professionals. Moreover, local businesses will get creative, research-based, actionable projects at low or no cost and feel more connected to the university, its professors, and its students.

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# Summary Brief

## Educating for Marketing and Sustainable Consumption: Empowering a Greener Future

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*Marketing education is an essential topic for both scholars and professionals since the results of its evolution have a direct effect on everyday practices. However, the challenges presented for the 21st century, such as climate change, scarcity of natural resources, multiple stakeholders involved in decision-making processes, and incorporating sustainability as a practice rather than a discourse, require marketing education programs to rethink their contents and forms. They are teaching Marketing to a world different from those still in textbooks. To identify the perceptions and practices of marketing educators worldwide, the proposal is to conduct a survey based on eleven trends and prepare a report to share best practices. As a result, it is expected to contribute to understanding this phenomenon and propose alternatives to empower a Greener Future by Educating for Marketing and Sustainable Consumption.*

### Introduction

Through its consumption-oriented actions, even unintentionally, marketing may have promoted unsustainable production and consumption practices. However, currently, society has pressured organizations to adapt to sustainable consumption. In this sense, marketers need to be aware of adopting a more responsible posture that leads to more sustainable product and service offerings (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2021). However, a sustainable economy is one of the challenges for marketing (Hunt, 2011).

Sheth and Parvatiyar (2021) point out that sustainable marketing is being routed to center stage, potentially becoming one of the most critical areas of study in the marketing discipline. To achieve this evolution in the performance of professionals in the area more effectively, marketing educators are essential for raising awareness about sustainable consumption.

However, studies indicate that even when considering the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in different areas of education exclusively, there are few courses and disciplines that address the SDGs, even though they are so widespread (Aleixo et al., 2020), indicating a disconnection between formal education and the topic of sustainability.

Specifically, regarding marketing, a tense relationship with sustainability is observed in academia. Kemper, Hall, and Ballantine (2019) explain that marketing is considered to encourage excessive consumption, although it is observed that it is seeking to adopt sustainable consumption better. The authors indicate the existence of institutional barriers that need to be removed in universities, business schools, and marketing disciplines so that sustainable consumption is worked more assertively in the training of future marketing professionals.

Agu, Etuk, and Madichie (2022) observed that sustainability is little explored in marketing education. Thus, they developed an empirical study that identified in the group of students that took part in the study that sustainability-oriented marketing education influences the attitude and awareness of future professionals toward sustainable consumption. Thus, they pointed to the relevance of the debate on sustainable consumption in marketing disciplines.

Marketing Education and Education for Marketing and Sustainable Consumption are two interrelated facets of the same coin. In most undergraduate programs, students typically take one or two marketing courses before specializing in their chosen track.

Education for Marketing and Sustainable Consumption encompasses a broader scope, including sustainable consumption and addressing times of scarcity. Regrettably, most traditional consumption practices prevalent over the past few decades are no longer feasible for a significant portion of the global population. For instance, it took considerable time for Consumer Behavior textbooks to incorporate topics such as recycling or sustainable methods for disposing of used goods. This begs the question: **are marketing educators actively discussing these critical issues in the classroom?**

By examining the synergies between marketing education and education for marketing and sustainable consumption, marketing educators can drive positive change (Rohm et al., 2021), foster responsible consumption practices (Jasrotia et al., 2023), and achieve global sustainability goals (LeClair, 2018), as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Voola et al., 2022).

Moreover, educators and students will delve into integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives from publicly traded companies, the importance of stakeholders (Hunt et al., 2022), and their multiple interrelated connections.

## Background

We intend to survey marketing educators around the globe about their perceptions and practices of the topics presented in Figure 1 to produce an initial diagnostic of how we prepare the current generation of students to face and address the challenges ahead in sustainability. In addition, we intend to share best practices, allowing for a cross-pollination of ideas and experiences, as noted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by pioneering scholars in marketing (Brown, 1948; Luck, 1949; Lazer, 1966).

Topic	Main aspects	SDG
Environmental Crisis	The escalating global environmental crisis, including climate change, resource depletion, and pollution, necessitates urgent action to mitigate their impact.	8, 9, 12, and 13
Role of Marketing	Marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer behavior and influencing purchasing decisions, making it a required field to address for promoting sustainable consumption.	12
Knowledge and Awareness	Education empowers individuals with knowledge about the environmental consequences of consumption patterns, fostering awareness and understanding of sustainable alternatives.	4, 12 and 13
Skill Development	Education equips marketers with skills to design and promote sustainable products, adopt green marketing strategies, and engage in ethical business practices.	4, and 12
Ethical Perspectives	Education fosters the development of ethical perspectives, encouraging marketers to prioritize the well-being of the planet and future generations over short-term profits.	3, 8, and 12
Shifting Consumer Behavior	Education enables marketers to influence consumer behavior by creating demand for sustainable products, promoting conscious consumption, and fostering a culture of responsibility.	12
Industry Transformation	Education drives innovation and encourages businesses to adopt sustainable practices, leading to a greener and more socially responsible industry.	12, and 13
Long-Term Sustainability	We create a legacy of environmentally conscious professionals who can drive lasting change in various sectors by embedding sustainability in marketing education.	3, 12, and 13
Academia-Industry Collaboration	Collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners is vital to develop relevant curricula, incorporating practical experiences, and bridging the gap between theory and practice.	4, 9, and 12
Policy Support	Governments and policymakers should provide support, incentives, and regulations to integrate sustainability into marketing education and encourage sustainable business practices.	13, and 16

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement	Engaging various stakeholders, including NGOs, civil society, and consumers, fosters a holistic approach to education for marketing and sustainable consumption, leveraging diverse perspectives for effective change.	9, 12, 13, and 17
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**Figure 1.** Topics to be addressed with the prospective survey considering (SDGs).

These topics were defined by the authors of this work considering the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 by The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To carry out the research, these eleven topics will be presented to educators, and first, they will be asked which of them are covered in their marketing disciplines. Later, they will be asked why these subjects are treated. Finally, participants will be invited to present how these topics are addressed, seeking to identify the practices adopted by educators.

The survey will be online, and all marketing professors from the top 200 universities ranked in the 2023 QS World University Rankings in Business & Management Studies will be invited to participate.

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## Summary Brief

# Emphasizing the Service in Service-Learning: Adding Additional Volunteerism Opportunities in Student-Run Business Service-Learning Experiences

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*This paper investigates the integration of service learning in business education, focusing on the added value of a community service component in a student-run business program where profits are donated. The research argues that inclusion of an additional service component not only enables students to apply theoretical knowledge practically, but also enhances their sense of social responsibility, ethical awareness, and professional network. Using a student-run business, where profits are donated to a charity, as a case study, this study examines how student self selection, the type of service and the length of service in a community service engagement influences students' learning experience, performance in common school of business desired outcomes, and connection with the organization and community. Despite concerns over potential detachment from the served causes, responses from students suggest that allowing choice in the nature and extent of service hours fosters deeper personal engagement and impact realization. The findings advocate for a more flexible and meaningful integration of service learning in student-run business programs for a holistic educational experience.*

### Introduction

Colleges and universities play a critical role in preparing students for their future careers by equipping them with relevant knowledge and skills. In addition to academic coursework, incorporating experiential learning opportunities into college programs can enhance students' learning experiences and better prepare them for the workforce. A movement to install these opportunities in business curriculum has been a focus (Godfrey, Illes, Berry 2005). Service-learning takes many forms and is offered in many different courses across a wide range of business subjects (Andrews 2007). One such experiential learning approach that is increasingly being adopted involves students creating and running a business (Robinson, Sherwood and DePaolo 2010; Ligouri and Tonelli 2021). And while successful entrepreneurial classroom endeavors have been shared in the marketing education literature for a while (Peterson and Albertson 2006; Wierman, Aronhime, Camerer and Gibbs 2007), a service-learning element, where business profits are used charitably, is a newer development. However, donating proceeds may not adequately provide opportunity for students to experience the psychological engagement, social responsibility, or community belongingness in physically taking part in a service activity (McGuire and Gamble 2006). This paper aims to explore the benefits of adding a student community service component to a college program focused on a business creation and development for philanthropic purposes.

### Background

Service learning has been defined as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to prompt student learning and development” (Jacoby and Associates 1996, pg. 5). A primary goal of service learning within the classroom is to educate students using means that go beyond basic faculty lectures. The literature on marketing and entrepreneurship emphasizes the importance of experiential learning in preparing students for the challenges of the business world. Scholars have argued that combining classroom learning with real-world, hands-on experiences can significantly enhance students' learning outcomes (Kenworthy-U'Ren 2008). Walker et al. (2009) summarized findings from their students this way, “marketing educators...need to both *teach* theory and provide

opportunities for students to *apply* theory in situations that mirror those in work” (pg. 261). One approach that has gained increasing attention in recent years is incorporating a student community or charity benefit component into entrepreneurship programs in colleges and universities.

Research has shown that engaging in community service as part of a student-run business program can bring numerous benefits. First, community service can provide students with opportunities to apply their business knowledge and skills in real-world settings. Second, engaging in community service can foster students' social responsibility and ethical awareness. Third, community service can enhance students' professional networks and connections. Furthermore, engaging in community service can also enhance the reputation of the college or university. While service learning projects offer valuable opportunities for students to apply their business knowledge and skills, there is a growing concern that these projects may not always connect students closely enough to the cause they are serving (Butin 2006; Sabbaghi, Cavanagh, and Hipskind 2019). As a result, students may feel detached from the cause they are serving and perceive the service as an obligatory task rather than a meaningful experience. This lack of personal investment can diminish students' motivation and hinder their ability to connect deeply with the community. This paper examines service learning projects in business curriculums and explores focusing on better connections between students and the causes they serve, specifically through a student-run business that adds an additional service component.

This research involves a mid-sized midwestern university course grouping that provides a unique and immersive program designed to prepare undergraduate students with a comprehensive understanding of various business disciplines and experiences. The primary goal of this educational experience is to simulate a real-world business environment, where students gain hands-on experience by working in cross-functional teams. These teams are tasked with developing a comprehensive business plan for a new product or service, from concept to execution. The program requires that students make a lasting impact on a non-profit organization that the students choose together. Thus far, the students have committed a total of 28,824 service hours to various charities, in addition to donating profits from the business to these causes. These service hours represent a substantial in-kind contribution to the community, providing valuable support to charitable organizations and those they serve. The results of this initiative suggest that service-learning, especially focused on service, can be an effective pedagogical approach in business education, with benefits that extend beyond the classroom and into the community.

### **Key Findings**

While some have advocated for removing the volunteer requirement and the service-learning reflection (Cadwallader, Atwong, and Lebard 2013), allowing students to select the amount, type and opportunity of the service hours may enhance the experience and learning in areas of knowledge, communication, group work, decision making and ethics. A brief end of service-learning program questionnaire prompted the decision to look closely at the additional value of a service component. The responses reveal that students see value in the collaborative aspects of the program with a designated cause. Other students responded “The service element opened up an area of myself that I didn’t know was there” and “the care for others, and realizing I could have an impact,” highlighting a deeper connection to the cause or organization they were working to benefit. The integration of service hours into a student-run business course can offer manifold benefits, contributing to the holistic development of students and better preparing them for their future careers.

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# Full Paper

## Incorporating a Societal Impact Component in Distance Education Classes: A Case Study

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*This paper discusses the societal impact component of the AACSB 2020 Guiding Principles and Standards for Business Accreditation. Business schools are now required to demonstrate how their programs are contributing to society and having a meaningful impact. This is in addition to the primary goal of providing high quality education to students and preparing them for positions in government, nonprofit organizations, and industry. After discussing the concept of societal impact and how it is evaluated for AACSB accreditation, a case study is provided for how a department of business at a university in a small town has managed to make a meaningful contribution to the local community. The paper also discusses the importance of being able to address societal impact in distance education classes that are delivered online. Finally, some recommendations are given for how the societal impact component can be engrained in the university's business program.*

### Introduction

Service-learning projects are meant to develop students' critical thinking skills, practice teamwork, understand their community better, and engage deeper with the material they are learning (Popovich and Brooks-Hurst, 2019). In recent papers, some authors have expanded traditional service-learning projects to include online or distance students (Marcus, et al., 2020). Most studies have found that while there may be more apprehensiveness on the part of the instructors, online service learning is just as effective as traditional service learning and, in one study, course evaluations demonstrated that the online students were more grateful for the experience because it allowed them to relate what they were doing to the real world and they felt more connected to the class through the project (Marcus, et al., 2020; Figuccio, 2020).

According to the AACSB's 2020 Guiding Principles and Standards for Business Accreditation and Interpretive Guidance, "The defining feature of quality business schools is that they are making a significant difference through educational activities, thought leadership, and engagement with external stakeholders. Quality schools create and disseminate intellectual contributions that have an impact on the theory, practice, and/or teaching of business, and have a positive impact on society." (<https://www.aacsb.edu/educators/accreditation/business-accreditation/aacsb-business-accreditation-standards>). Initially, when the AACSB 2020 Standards were introduced, most business schools focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a guide for societal impact (<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>). This consisted of 17 goals identified from 17 diverse areas. In reality, it can be difficult for business school faculty to address all of these issues through their intellectual contributions and scholarly activities. The 17 SDGs can be grouped into four larger categories: Economy, Environment, Equality, and Health & Well Being. Table 1 contains the four categories and their respective SDGs.

**Table 1. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

Economy: - Decent work and economic growth - Industry, innovation, and infrastructure - Responsible consumption and production - Partnerships for the goals	Environment: - Clean water and sanitation - Affordable and clean energy - Climate action - Life below water - Life on land
Equality: - Quality education - Gender equality - Reduced inequalities - Peace and justice; strong institutions	Health & Well Being - No poverty - Zero hunger - Good health and well-being - Sustainable cities and communities

Not surprisingly, faculty in business schools are focusing primarily on the ‘Economy’ category. However, it is possible to engage in activities and conduct research that addresses the other categories based on collaborations with certain types of organizations and faculty from other disciplines. It is also important to note that recent guidance from the AACSB has been for business schools to identify one or two areas to focus on (and excel at), rather than try to cover all 17 SDGs. Regardless of the focus, business schools must determine how they are going to incorporate societal impact into their academic operations from both the teaching and scholarly activities perspectives.

### **Project Background**

Motivated, in part, by the new AACSB 2020 standards, the Business and Information Technology (BIT) Department at the Missouri University of Science and Technology set out to utilize its strengths in technology, experience in distance education, and desire to engage with the local community to do a service-learning project that impacted the entire county. The AACSB 2020 Standards require business schools to engage in research and scholarly activities that transform business education for positive societal impact. As businesses transition from a shareholder approach to a stakeholder approach, societal impact has become an important component of business school curriculum. According to the AACSB *“societal impact encompasses activities undertaken by business schools that over time lead to meaningful, discernable change for the betterment of people, economies, and the environment.”* (<https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/briefings/aacsb-and-societal-impact>). This can be accomplished in a number of ways including such things as integrating societal concepts in class lectures and materials, having guest speakers in classes, providing opportunities for students to volunteer with community organizations (both for profit and nonprofit), and conducting class projects that focus on societal impact. This can be accomplished whether the school is located in an urban or a rural area.

The BIT Department used classes that contained both seated and distance students, with more than three-fourths of the students being asynchronous distance students. The university is located in a small, rural town with a population of less than 20,000 people, but the same type of project can be undertaken at universities in any size city. In fact, the smaller the community, the more potential impact, given the lack of resources and the size of the municipal government. Larger government entities have more employees dedicated to various services and activities that affect economic development and the quality of life in the community. In addition, the larger cities have money in their budgets to hire consultants who can aid them in areas where they lack the necessary expertise. It is a major asset to smaller communities to have access to faculty, staff, and students at colleges and universities; often, universities have funds to finance projects, or faculty can do them at a fraction of the cost of a consulting firm. In that way, the collaboration between local organizations and academic institutions can result in communities having research and strategic planning that rivals their larger counterparts.

This project started when a member of the department’s Corporate Advisory Board approached the chair of the department to inquire about the possibility of having the department replicate a strategic plan that was performed in a nearby city/county (Springfield/Greene County, MO). A member of a local nonprofit organization came across the study in a meeting they attended and thought it would be beneficial if a similar study was done for Phelps County (which includes Rolla and the university). The chair chose two faculty members that they thought would have the expertise to conduct such a study and met with them to determine the feasibility of the project, consider the impact to the academic integrity of the courses being taught, as well as the learning opportunity for the students in those faculty members’ courses. A couple of options were considered when deciding on the most impactful approach: a graduate student participating through an internship or independent study, or to have faculty include the project as part of a graded course assignment (which would offer an opportunity to a greater number of students). It was decided that the Strategic Management course would be responsible for the regional plan (or strategic plan). In addition, the marketing faculty member suggested that a Quality of Life (QoL) study also be conducted by surveying the residents of Phelps County to obtain their perceptions of the county’s services (both nonprofit and government) as well as their level of satisfaction. This survey project was assigned to a group of graduate students in a course entitled “Customer Focus and Satisfaction.” In this sense, the university, college, and department were engaging with the community through the two faculty members and their students. It was a win-win situation because the community was getting two valuable research projects for a very minimal donation to the department, and faculty and students were able to participate in a real-world project and learn that member of the business community have a responsibility to the region in which they reside. In fact, the project also resulted in the creation of a new nonprofit organization (Phelps County Community Foundation) to mobilize the community and encourage input and collaboration for various sectors of the economy.

### **Project 1 – Strategic Plan**

The strategic planning study was modeled after a report that was created by a nearby county. The goal was to generate a report consisting entirely of secondary data that was grouped into six ‘buckets’, representing different dimensions of our community (Phelps County). The six ‘buckets’ were decided upon by the community leaders of our county and each bucket had a community champion to assist the faculty member in answering student questions and ensuring they were thinking about each ‘bucket’ in its entirety. The six ‘buckets’ of secondary data were Business & Economic Development, Community Health, Early Childhood, Housing, Public Safety, and Transportation. For example, data on public safety included statistics on the number of violent and nonviolent crimes, the clearance rate of crimes in our county, fire preparedness, medical emergency calls, sex offender registry information, wildfire data, vehicle crash reports, and more.

Before beginning the project, the faculty member surveyed all students (using Qualtrics) on their skills and interests, including which of these ‘buckets’ of information most interested them, whether they had experience in cold-calling, data collection, data analysis, InDesign, Power BI, Tableau, or any other software that may be useful. Using this information, the faculty member created balanced groups and made sure that they knew the community leader associated with their assigned topic. The faculty member also created a Google folder with six spreadsheets (one for each bucket) so that they could track the data collection in real time, ensure proper citation and point out any deficits in the data quickly. Students collected data from a variety of websites, but also made calls to local schools, firehouses, realtors, etc., to get data that wasn’t readily available online. Where Phelps County was significantly different than the state or US averages, in terms of data, students were asked to make note of it. At the conclusion of the data collection, students completed write-ups which were then edited and inputted into an InDesign report template for consumption by the community. After the report was created it was vetted by the faculty member, an external editor, as well as each of the community leaders involved in the project to ensure it was ready to be made available to the public. Additionally, the community leaders were given access to the data in the Google Sheets so that they could verify the data and add to it in the future.

### **Project 2 - Quality of Life Survey**

The Consumer Focus and Satisfaction class incorporated a service-learning component by conducting a survey of community residents that would address the perceptions and level of satisfaction related to the quality of life in Phelps County, the services offered, and economic development. An online survey was designed by the faculty member with input from the graduate students in the class, and then tested on some of the members of the foundation to ensure the validity of the content (i.e., the necessary topics were being addressed and the questions and statements had face validity). A list of emails was obtained from the county that consisted of residents who conducted business with the county (e.g., paid personal property and real estate taxes). The list contained 7,642 emails that were used to distribute the survey through Qualtrics, the online survey platform. The first section of the survey focused on the respondents’ reasons for living in Phelps County, how long they lived in the county, whether they work and live in the county, and where they live. The next section determined the respondents’ level of satisfaction with the quality of life in the community, followed by sections on public services, government, and nonprofit assistance services. Then, respondents were asked for their opinions on economic development and living in Phelps County. Finally, the respondents were asked to provide demographic information. After collecting the data, the faculty member distributed the annotated questionnaire and some additional crosstabulations and mean comparisons to the five graduate students who, in turn, analyzed the data and wrote reports.

The local community received some good information that can serve as a benchmark for future studies. In addition, the results provided empirical evidence to support many of the beliefs of the community activists and can now be used to lobby the county administrators to enact necessary changes. The following is a summary of the basic analysis presented in the annotated questionnaire.

- Lowest rated *Quality of Life*: public transportation, childcare, affordable/available housing (overall was 3.63 out of 5.0).
- Lowest rated *Public Services*: level of property crimes and motor vehicle registration (overall 3.59 out of 5.0).

- *Other Government and Nonprofit Services*: mostly around 3.0 (overall 3.08) - more likely an awareness issue or use issue (most were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).
- *Economic Development*: mostly 2.0 out of 4.0 (Fair) - creating jobs, supporting small business, communicating with residents, and putting them first (15% getting better, 52% same, 33% worse).
- *Phelps County as a Place to Live*:
  - Place to Live in next 5 years: 27% getting better, 45% same, 28% worse.
  - Place to Live, Raise Family, Retire - Fair to Good (little lower for retire).
  - Place to Live: okay for families and seniors, but not as good for minorities, immigrants, LBTGQ+, and especially college graduates.
  - Choice where to Live: 46% stay, 54% move (36% to another city or state).

In addition, the crosstabulations and mean comparisons are useful in determining whether the perceptions are similar across all residents or if there are important differences to consider. The following is a summary of the crosstabulations and mean comparisons.

- Overall ratings were highest for: men, married people, people without children, households with less people, older people, and people with higher household incomes.
- Overall ratings were mixed for: why they came to Phelps, where they live in Phelps, how long residents have been in Phelps.
- Economic conditions: middle aged think it's getting worse, younger residents and females more likely to leave; people born here think it is getting worse but more likely to stay, people in Rolla more likely to move.

The study also allowed residents to participate in county government and give their opinions and perceptions regarding the various services offered by government and nonprofit organizations. They feel that their input is valued, and the community can determine how to improve the quality of life and economic development in the area.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

While Butin (2006) suggested that it was hard to quantify learning in any type of service-learning project, it seems to hold a wide variety of benefits for all stakeholders including students, faculty, and community partners (Salam et al., 2019). We found this to be true as students seemed genuinely excited to work with these community leaders. In this case, these leaders were representatives from a variety of different industries and many actively recruit on campus, making them business leaders that the students hoped to impress. Even though conducting service-learning projects with students in an asynchronous class is challenging, it is clearly feasible and impactful. The projects used in this case work well in online courses because students can gather information and analyze data on their own time, and they have latitude regarding the content of the report (i.e., there is no one right answer). Also, depending on the size of the class and the weight of the assignment, they could do it in groups or individually. For instance, the strategic plan project was done in groups and the community needs survey project was individual. For group projects, here are tools in learning management systems (LMS) like Canvas and Blackboard that allow students to collaborate on projects, as well as sharing software like Google Docs.

Both faculty members discussed this prior to, and following, the projects and had a few important takeaways. First, it is imperative that the faculty member set strict deadlines for milestone deliverables, require frequent check-ins by all students, and ensure that there is sufficient motivation to keep up with the milestones in the project (in terms

of points). That said it is also important to clarify the exact deliverables with any organizations you may be working with. In this case, since there were so many community leaders involved there were a few instances of changing expectations and scope which necessitates a strong understanding up front regarding the deliverables. Second, it is recommended that faculty provide a template or example of the report students will be required to submit. This is particularly important for an (asynchronous) online class because there is less interaction with students. If possible, a special virtual meeting/session can be arranged at an opportune time for the majority of students. However, the session might have to be voluntary, and it should be stated that “students are strongly encouraged to attend.” This session could be recorded, or students could be provided with a pre-recorded video discussing the project and common pitfalls.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the fact that the AACSB wants to see societal impact become part of the business school’s overall mission and be included in the strategic plan. In addition, it will become part of the other standards such as intellectual contributions and assessments of learning. It is not enough for various faculty members to incorporate it in a random class or do a one-off study that happens to have implications for society. Instead, there needs to be a concerted effort to include the societal component throughout the school’s program and activities. The following is a list of suggestions for how societal impact can be introduced in business schools through curriculum and intellectual contributions:

#### Societal Impact in the Curriculum

- Make an inventory of courses that have a societal impact component (e.g., Marketing for Nonprofits),
- Add societal components to existing courses (e.g., discussions, guest speakers, exercises, case studies, and course projects),
- Create new courses to reflect changing trends, and
- Develop multidisciplinary degrees and programs.

#### Societal Impact in Publications and Intellectual Contributions

- Identify a list of journals that focus on the United Nations SDGs and provide a monetary incentive to publish in those journals,
- Encourage faculty to work across disciplines with faculty in other departments, especially those that have more relevance to societal impact (identify faculty in other departments that focus on areas with societal impact and foster some type of interaction such as research seminars or meet-and-greets), and
- Provide internal grants for research that focuses on societal impact.

Unfortunately, it isn’t enough to just pay lip service to the importance of societal impact without having incentives to motivate and encourage faculty. For example, a business school could implement a policy that faculty get extra credit for intellectual contributions that have a societal impact. Publications in journals could be advanced one category in the rankings if the paper has a true societal impact (e.g., C to B in the ABDC ranking system or Level 2 to Level 3 in the ABS Academic Journal Guide). In addition, the monetary reward system could be adjusted to place more emphasis on intellectual contributions that have a societal impact. The school could use a compensatory model that allows faculty who are heavily engaged in the community to offset deficiencies in the quantity or quality of their publications. Faculty could also be awarded release time to develop courses, or a significant course component, that includes societal impact.

Finally, it should be noted that societal impact is related to Thought Leadership and Community Engagement in the AACSB’s 2020 Guiding Principles and Standards for Business Accreditation. The faculty members, in this case, exhibited thought leadership by providing their expertise in conducting these projects for the community. In addition, the project was a good example of how business schools can engage with the community for the betterment of society. Many business schools already have Economic Development institutes or Small Business Development centers that provide a service for small and disadvantage businesses and organizations in their communities. Now, it is just a matter of establishing a formal relationship between these types of operations and the business school’s faculty and curriculum. Also, as in this case, business school advisory boards provide another conduit for projects and collaborations between the university and the local community. They should be utilized to the best advantage of the business school. And, as business schools continue to pivot toward distance education, it is imperative that programs are created and adapted to accommodate this delivery method as well.



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## **Session 12.2: JMTP Special Issue Symposium**

**Chair:** Bryan Hochstein

# Summary Brief

## The Use of Big Data and the Marketing of Familial DNA Test Kits: From a Promise to Find Lost Ancestral Ties to Uncertainty, Ambiguity, and Distrust.

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*When looking at who uses these services, we find that things which should be driving people away from using them have no effect. The working explanation of this puzzling non-finding is that DNA companies rely on their ignorance of their users to drive sales, and as such they structure their marketing campaigns to ensure factors that would drive down usage fail to become salient. However, when faced with the potential that their data could be used for purposes other than intended, the consumers felt far more uneasy about the databases. This is ethically problematic in that DNA is perhaps the most personal data that exists and the potential privacy violating uses of it are being systematically obscured from the customers who provide said DNA samples.*

### Introduction

DNA databases exemplify the concept of “Big Data” as they can be described in terms of variety, velocity, volume, veracity, and value given that they involve the sequencing of 13 quadrillion DNA bases which can be analyzed and utilized in innumerable ways (Tripathi, Sharma, Chakraborty, & Varadwaj, 2016). Big data in general also represents themes which include (a) information even when unstructured and expansive, (b) technology, which allow for its storage and processing, (c) methods with its visualization capabilities and machine learning and, finally, (d) impact on society, organizations and value creation (De Mauro, Greco, & Grimaldi, 2016).

### Background

DNA databases are associated with an industry poised for explosive growth and societal impact. The genetic testing market generated \$8 billion USD in 2021 and is expected to nearly double by 2030 given to the fact that the direct to consumer (DTC) genetic testing kit’s compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is expected to reach 15.7% over the 2022-2027 period. What’s more, a 2018 study estimated that 60% of Americans of European decent could already be identified through familial DNA regardless of whether they took the test themselves or not (Erlich, Shor, Pe’er, & Carmi, 2018). A practical effect of these tests then is that they call into question the potential for true anonymity of any individual in society. While the DTC genetic testing kits represent only a small subset of all DNA databases, the top two providers, Ancestry.com and 23andme.com, have databases with approximately 32 million users (Larkin, 2021). Given the size and growth rates of commercial DNA databases, their overall lack of anonymity, and the potentially limited consumer knowledge of how this data could be used, the implications of privacy violations and unethical use of this data are exceptionally far reaching.

At the same time, the marketing of DNA test kits often centers on unlocking the mysteries of one’s ancestry. However, the data generated from these tests is substantially more powerful in scope than that, so much so that it ensures these companies operate in an environment that is beset by many serious ethical dilemmas. To what extent do these companies purposefully sidestep or downplay the acknowledgement of these issues to drive sales?

### Key Findings

In a three-study mixed method research design, we first conducted a quantitative analysis of a large dataset in which we focused on issues such as privacy, trust and uncertainty of use and benefit of big data, information, and DNA testing. Our research reveals that consumers have a high degree of uncertainty about how companies and the government would use consumer data. Almost 70% of respondents felt that their information is less secure than it was in the past while over 70% of participants felt that they benefit none to almost none from the information companies

collect about them. Finally, only about 50% of participants were comfortable with their DNA profile to be used in a criminal investigation.

Additionally, using content analysis and netnography, we analyzed the marketing content of the companies and the comments associated with their social media marketing. It was revealed therein that consumer sentiment varies greatly based on whether they are exposed to the potential of their DNA being used for purposes other than what they intended. Qualitative data triangulated the findings from quantitative data with themes that indicated lack of trust, ambiguity of use, fear of potential implications as well as the lack of willingness to uncover familial “deep dark” secrets. Additionally, the ambiguity of how the DNA databased might be used increased distrust both toward commercial companies as well as the government.

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# Summary Brief

## A Netnography of Human Trafficking on TikTok

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*Consumers are generating content related to human trafficking on social media sites, which can misinform consumers, hurt brands, and create unnecessary fear in society. This study uses netnography to explore how human trafficking is being discussed on social media. Qualitative analysis of video content on TikTok yields three major themes embedded in the data: Human Trafficking Education, Real Human Trafficking Stories, and Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios. Substantive, theoretical, and managerial implications are discussed.*

### 1. Introduction

Human trafficking, also known as modern slavery, is a pervasive global issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are millions of human trafficking victims worldwide (Pennington et al., 2009) who vary by age, gender, social background, and nationality (U.S. Department of State, 2023). Human trafficking robs these individuals of their dignity and autonomy and reduces them to commodities that can be purchased and consumed.

Human trafficking not only impacts victims, but it can also impact firms. On the one hand, businesses believe that actively addressing human trafficking constitutes a meaningful reputational incentive that can be used as a competitive advantage (Wray-Bliss & Michelson, 2021). On the other hand, (mis)information about a firm's involvement with human trafficking can hurt firms. For example, in July 2020 Q-Anon conspiracy theorists took to social media to accuse the online retailer Wayfair of selling children via expensive furniture listings, which hurt the brand's reputation and consequently lowered its stock price (Duggan, 2020).

As noted in the Wayfair example, social media plays an important role in the dissemination of human trafficking information. Social media, a hallmark of the big data era, refers to a group of Internet-based applications that allow consumers worldwide to create and exchange content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Although consumers report low levels of trust for the social media industry itself (Swani et al., 2021), they believe that social media serves as a powerful medium for raising awareness of political and social issues (Auxier & McClain, 2020). Importantly, social media facilitates interactive communications between and among firms and consumers (Grewal et al., 2022) and thus can be used by firms to communicate their commitment to human rights or by consumers to condemn unethical business practices. It is therefore important for the social media industry, who has the power to regulate the dissemination of human trafficking content, as well as other firms, who may become targets of human trafficking misinformation, to understand how modern slavery is discussed online.

Academic research on human trafficking within the marketing discipline is limited. Pennington et al.'s (2009) seminal work presents human trafficking as a harmful micromarketing phenomenon that is often underestimated. Murray et al. (2015) build on this work by using a marketing channels perspective to redefine human trafficking and create a typology of victims. More recent marketing research has investigated specific aspects of human trafficking, including prostitution (Mitra et al., 2022), its use in supply chains (Wray-Bliss & Michelson, 2021), and anti-trafficking campaigns (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018). However, marketing research to date has ignored the intersection between human trafficking and digital communications.

The current study uses netnography (Kozinets, 2002) to explore human trafficking content on social media. We qualitatively analyze human trafficking TikToks ( $n = 80$ ) and identify three major categories of human trafficking as well as subcategories. This research contributes to the human trafficking and social media literature by (1) relating user-generated content to different types of knowledge (Brucks, 1985; Tajdini 2021), (2) uncovering how brands are being discussed in relation to human trafficking, and (3) documenting the narrow scope of human trafficking TikToks in terms of types of trafficking, victim segments, and content creators.

## 2. Methodology

In this research, we conduct a netnography (Kozinets, 2002) to explore how human trafficking is being discussed on social media. Netnography is a non-obtrusive observational research technique that extends the concepts and method of ethnography to the Internet and is increasingly used to examine social media conversations (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018). This qualitative research method allows concepts to emerge from the data itself through an iterative process of data collection and analysis (Belk et al., 1988; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Netnography is appropriate for this exploratory study of human trafficking discussions on social media because it (1) is discovery-oriented, (2) facilitates the interpretation of multi-modal data, which is common on social media (Grewal et al., 2022), and (3) is appropriate for investigations of sensitive topics (Hill, 1995).

## 3. Data and Analysis

Prior to data collection, we conducted a pre-test by searching Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok for video content with #humantrafficking. We focused on video content specifically because this type of multimodal data offers high media richness compared to other types of data (Grewal et al., 2022). While all three platforms are used by millions of people around the world, we observed that a relatively small amount of human trafficking videos are shared on Facebook and Instagram, most of which are duplicates of what already is on TikTok. Thus, we decided to collect data from TikTok, which has millions of interactions on videos with relevant human trafficking hashtags.

To establish a depository of TikTok videos (“TikToks”) related to human trafficking, we first identified common hashtags that co-occurred with #humantrafficking. We then searched TikTok using the following hashtags and collected the top (non-duplicated) search results: #humantrafficking, #humantraffickingawareness, #humantraffickingstory, and #traffickingawareness. To analyze the data, we engaged in a collaborative and iterative process to differentiate emerging concepts from TikToks (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Spiggle 1994). We began by separately viewing a small set of videos and writing down our initial thoughts regarding their substantive and emotional contents. We then met to categorize, abstract, and compare emerging concepts. We continued this process until we reached theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Overall, we collected and analyzed 80 TikToks uploaded to the platform between November 2020 and June 2023. These videos generated a high level of engagement and collectively received over 24 million hearts and over 200,000 comments.

## 4. Results

Our analysis identified three major categories of human trafficking videos on TikTok: (1) Human Trafficking Education, (2) Real Human Trafficking Stories, and (3) Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios.

### 4.1. Human Trafficking Education

This category of TikTok content disseminates numbers, definitions, and other factual information about human trafficking. Often, the content creators are nonprofit organizations, experts, and others who provide a relatively objective, third-party perspective on the matter. Human Trafficking Education TikToks are rare; only 9 TikToks in our dataset were coded as such. This theme is comprised of three subcategories: *descriptive content*, *suggestions for prevention*, and *debunking misinformation*.

*Descriptive content* refers to videos that share objective information about the human trafficking market overall. The information conveyed in these videos varies in terms of specificity, with some videos discussing it more broadly (e.g., men, women, children, and trans individuals can all be trafficked) while others discuss it within specific contexts (e.g., 20,000 women and girls are trafficked across the India-Nepal border every year). The second subcategory, *suggestions for prevention*, includes videos that alert viewers to tactics that traffickers use to abduct people and provide recommendations on what to do if they come across these. Much of this content is centered around getting into vehicles safely, including one’s own vehicle as well as rideshares (e.g., Uber). Lastly, *debunking misinformation* TikToks usually start by showing another piece of digital content related to human trafficking and then talking about why it is incorrect. Interestingly, these videos sometimes dispute *suggestions for prevention*; for instance, two such videos note that “you are probably not going to get trafficked in the Target parking lot” and that such scenarios only represent 1-3% of all trafficking cases.

### 4.2. Real Human Trafficking Stories

Real Human Trafficking Stories are comprised of TikToks that share actual human trafficking experiences. This theme is more common than Human Trafficking Education ( $n = 28$ ). There are five subcategories related to this theme which correspond with the storyteller: *victims*, *law enforcement*, *traffickers*, *media*, and *others*.

*Victims* use TikTok to tell their personal stories, answer commonly asked questions, and help others understand what it is like being trafficked. These are often very graphic and sometimes display a “sensitive content” warning from TikTok before playing the video. Some of these videos also discuss victims’ recovery and their lives after they escape from their traffickers. *Law enforcement* TikToks describe real situations that governmental and private agents have encountered as they have worked to free human trafficking victims. Like *victims’* stories, *law enforcement* stories are often vivid and detailed; one operative from O.U.R. Rescue notes, “...this is raw and horrifying but you need to know. This is the world of human trafficking and child sex slavery.” Many *law enforcement* stories describe the locations where human exchanges are made, which include innocuous businesses such as spas that serve as fronts for brothels. *Traffickers* also tell their stories on TikTok. While rare, these videos give a glimpse into the lives of people who are buying and selling others. For example, indicted human trafficker Tristan Tate discusses how this label is negatively impacting his daughter and mother. In another video, a former trafficker talks about going to human auctions; the text superimposed on the video claims that “it’s just like the movie Taken.” Real Human Trafficking Stories are also told by the *media*. Such videos are usually clips of documentaries that shed light on the lived experiences of victims and those close to them. For example, one of these videos shows a clip from a BBC documentary where an escaped victim describes human auctions and says, “[the trafficker] has to come to pick you, like the way you go to the market and pick potatoes.” There are miscellaneous *others* who also share Real Human Trafficking Stories, including family members and medical professionals. While these videos communicate actual human trafficking stories, they do so from an outsider’s perspective and highlight the indirect impact that trafficking can have on other members of society.

#### **4.3. Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios**

Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios refer to videos containing perceived or fully fabricated instances of human trafficking. TikToks of this type were the most common in our dataset ( $n = 43$ ). There are three subcategories within this theme: *personal*, *bystander*, and *cinematic*.

The *personal* subcategory refers to TikToks in which the creators themselves felt in danger of being trafficked. Many of these videos show or talk about strangers approaching and following the creators, often at well-known businesses such as Walmart. While the circumstances of these *personal* scenarios are generally suspicious, there is no evidence that these were instances of actual human trafficking. The *bystander* subcategory refers to TikToks in which the creators believed that they witnessed someone else being trafficked. As with the *personal* subcategory, it is not clear if the *bystander* scenarios are describing actual instances of human trafficking. For example, in one video which shows an unmarked white van with tarped windows, the creator apologizes to the driver if he did nothing wrong but says that the van looks “sus and kidnapper-ish.” In another example, the creator sees a young girl being held and put into a car, asks the girl if everything is all right, and takes note of the license plate; however, the creator ultimately acknowledges that the man who put the girl into the car was her father. Similar to the *personal* subcategory, *bystander* videos often depict potential trafficking incidents within and around retail stores. The last subcategory of Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios is *cinematic*, which refers to scenes from movies (e.g., “Stolen from the Suburbs”). TikToks of this type depict fabricated human trafficking scenarios with actors playing the roles of victims, traffickers, and law enforcement.

### **5. Discussion**

This analysis of human trafficking TikToks identified three major themes: Human Trafficking Education, Real Human Trafficking Stories, and Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios. Theoretically, the three themes uncovered in this study can be abstracted to objective, experiential, and subjective knowledge, respectively (Brucks, 1985; Tajdini 2021). Generally, TikToks conveying objective and experiential knowledge provide more accurate information about the realities of human trafficking whereas those conveying subjective knowledge tend to reinforce stereotypes, spread misinformation, and fearmonger; this is particularly problematic given that subjective Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios account for over half of the most popular TikToks on the subject. Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios can negatively impact consumer wellness (Mertz et al., in press) by creating anxiety over everyday situations that very rarely result in actual trafficking.

Furthermore, these TikToks can also hurt brands, such as Walmart, Target, and Hobby Lobby, by telling viewers that traffickers are lurking in and around retail stores. Given the prevalence and speculative nature of Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios, consumers may overestimate the frequency of those entering human trafficking involuntarily. Conversely, Human Trafficking Education and Real Human Trafficking Stories more often

discuss the role that Google plays in misrepresenting the human trafficking market. For example, in one real *victim* story, a woman voluntarily became entered human trafficking after seeing positive reviews for an escort company on Google. As such, content on TikTok gravely misrepresents the realities of human trafficking, which may result in consumer backlash against the wrong companies. Moreover, it may distort consumers' perceptions of human trafficking, since only 6% of victims involuntarily enter into trafficking whereas 84% do so voluntarily (Murray et al., 2015). It should also be mentioned that rideshare companies (e.g., Uber, Lyft) were discussed in both objective Human Trafficking Education and subjective Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios TikToks; as such, the relationship between these companies and the human trafficking market is not immediately clear.

While these results speak to the nature of human trafficking TikToks, it should be noted that these videos predominantly focus on sexual exploitation, with very few TikToks mentioning other types of human trafficking (e.g., forced labor, organ removal; Pennington et al., 2009; Murray et al., 2015). Additionally, very few of the TikToks in our sample mentioned the trafficking of men, transgendered individuals, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations. This substantive finding indicates that human trafficking is being misrepresented on TikTok, despite the existence of *debunking misinformation* videos. Furthermore, all of the sampled TikToks were posted by consumers and NGOs; as such, it appears that brands have not yet used this social media platform to communicate their commitment to this human rights issue, despite the potential for reputation enhancement.

### 5.1. Managerial Implications

Social media companies can use these findings to adjust their algorithms and display warnings to reduce human trafficking misinformation on their platforms. For instance, social media can use text and video mining (Grewal et al., 2022) to identify the characteristics of Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios and subsequently demote them in users' feeds or label them as potential misinformation. Such actions can be part of a larger industry-wide strategy to combat misinformation and increase consumers' low level of trust in the industry (Swani et al., 2021). These findings also suggest that there is a strategic opportunity for brands to generate anti-human trafficking content. Potential Human Trafficking Scenarios TikToks imply that involuntary entry into human trafficking often occurs at large retail locations, yet these incidences are rare (Murray et al., 2015); this rampant misrepresentation of the realities of human trafficking can lead to unfounded conspiracies that hurt brands (Duggan, 2020). Affected companies can create and disseminate their own objective human trafficking that raises awareness of this important social issue and communicates the actions they are taking to combat it. Executing this social media strategy would allow firms to combat misinformation online, counteract claims that trafficking occurs at their stores, and enhance their reputation (Wray-Bliss & Michelson, 2021).

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## Summary Brief

# Factors Affecting Organisational Intent to Adopt Big Data Analytics in Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

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### Abstract

In today's business environments, information and knowledge are critical factors in attaining strategic advantage and retaining market leadership. The effective collection and utilization of marketing knowledge, customer trends, behavioral psychology, and specialized task-accomplishment methods play a pivotal role in any organization's success. Information technology-based systems significantly influence decision-making processes related to market orientation, strategic advantage, and competitiveness.

A considerable literature supports the positive impact of IT systems and data analytics on the success of products and services, as well as revenue generation for companies. Aligning corporate IT systems with marketing functions is vital, as it facilitates the sharing of lateral and composite information, enables real-time decision-making, and optimizes articulation of corporate interests. This paper aims to explore the factors that affect the adoption of data analytics and its implications for organizational success specifically in the case of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

There are studies that have emphasized the critical role of integration in overcoming organizational failures, preventing loss of competitiveness, and gaining an advantage in the marketplace. The association between IT and strategic operations promotes actions that align with market requirements and allow organizational agents to access essential information for effective decision-making.

Alignment between IT and strategic operations facilitates long-term prospects, authority allocation, and multi-tasking among managerial roles. This alignment fosters better communication, incentive allocation, and overcoming resistance to change, thereby improving organizational efficiency and decision-making. Access to vital marketing information empowers real-time decision-making, enabling companies to outperform competitors and dominate the market.

This research proposes the following objectives:

- Identify the factors influencing an organization's decision to adopt big data analytics in decision-making.
- Identify key enablers and success factors of big data implementation from a marketing perspective.
- Study the role of big data implementation in driving strategic organizational change.

By addressing these objectives, this study will shed light on the significance of big data analytics for organizational adaptation to market realities, allowing businesses to align their marketing strategies effectively and maintain a competitive edge.

### Introduction

Information and knowledge play a crucial role in attainment of strategic advantage and a company's ability to retain market leadership across turbulent business environments. The "strategic advantage" from organizational collection of marketing knowledge, customer trends, behavioral psychology and insights as well as peculiar or specialized ways and means of accomplishing a task; play an important role in for any organization. Information technology-based systems influence the availability, the manner of response and pattern of decision making with regard to attainment and retention of market orientation, sustenance of strategic advantage as well as competitiveness.

There is a lot of literature available that links the usage of IT systems and data analytics with constructive and positive consequences for the success of product and services offered by the company and the ability to generate a regular revenue. A host of academic studies seem to underline the crucial role of alignment across corporate information technology systems and respective marketing functions. The management of two has been observed to lead towards creation of better prospects for the sharing of lateral and composite information across decision making

domains, seem to facilitate real time decision making and has been observed to lead to more optimum articulation of corporate interests.

### **Need for adoption of data analytics**

A recent study (Azouri & Harb, 2022) underlined the critical role of integration in overcoming the organizational failure, prevention of loss of competitiveness as well as advantage in the market places. The association between IT and strategic operations has been observed to promote action in a manner that promotes organizational interests and well as enable the organizational agents to access the essential information for effective and appropriate decision making in line with market requirements.

IT and strategic operations alignments (Maric & Ivanovic, 2021) seem to facilitate building of exchanges, long term prospects as well as sequential allocation of authority along with prospects for multi-tasking amongst the managerial class. The IT and strategic operations alignments have been observed to foster exchange of communications leading to better allocation of incentives, overcoming resistance to change as well as overcoming organizational inertia and rigidity to change. The association has been observed to lead to better utilization of human potential and talent and enable the employees to overcome shortcomings Vis-a- Vis decision making. The information seems to play a crucial role in organizational functioning. A host of academic studies vindicate the role of information and managerial access to requisite marketing information as possessing vital consequences for the organizational functioning, organizational outlook as well as organizational efficiency to act Vis a Vis competitors. The managerial access to vital information has essentially been observed to lead to a situation of real time decision making with emphasis on containing the competitors and leading the market places. The use of technology of big data has been observed as promoting the requisite organizational change, and overcoming inertia to adapt to market realities. The relationship across information systems and strategic decision making is very necessary, in order to facilitate organizational adaptation to market realities as well as ground situation in market places and adapt the marketing strategies accordingly.

### **Proposed Research Objectives**

1. To identify factors influencing organization's decision to adopt the big data analytics in decision making.
2. To identify key enablers and success factors of big data implementation on decision making from a marketing perspective.
3. To study the role of big data implementation in bringing about strategic organizational change.

### **Literature**

The phenomenon of theorizing the implementation of big data in firms would borrow from the structuration model of technology (Staeher & Shanks, 2002), from the organizational behavior research and organizational studies involving role of information technologies in influencing and shaping the organizational performance, strategy building and leverage in strategy execution. Organizational research involving role of IT impetus in shaping organizational working, as an independent area of research has had a lot of research interest. Organizational behavioral research as an aspect of social science involves research focus on groups of people or employees working together across diverse departments and creating the organizational ecosystem. The multidimensional character of impact of IT and big data as shaping the organizational working reflects well across literature on subject matter. The studies (Ahmi & Saidin, 2022) have sequentially investigated a lot of individual, contextual, organizational and environmental factors as shaping the relationships. The IT especially the big data, data modeling, Internet of things derived applications seem to play a critical role in the organizational working. IT and big data applications have been observed to foster the design and re-design of existing work flows across organizational departments and facilitates effective restructuring of organizational tasks and activities. The rapid advances in big data and evolution from stand-alone software interfaces to contemporary cloud based interfaces (Caserio & Trucco, 2018), foresee prospects for organizational management and control of organizational resources. Big Data essentially involves the thrust on integrated business management software that facilitates the firm to collect, to disseminate and interpret the vital information about the core business processes (Ahmi & Saidin, 2022).

### **Proposed factors and methodology**

The top management support and organizational inclination for technology adoption of marketing-based decision making could be considered. The influence of the business environment that the organization is working in and other macro-economic aspects can be made part of study.

The above factors are sought to be validated on Likert scales and further reliability study will be undertaken.

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# Summary Brief

## Technology and Adult Learners: a TAM Perspective

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*We live and thrive in an age, where everything is influenced if not controlled by AI. Banks, hospitals, restaurants, gas stations and retailers leverage the tremendous power of AI and use it mainly for profit purposes. Adults and senior citizens, however, are either unfamiliar with or cannot keep pace with such ultra-modern and dynamic technology. Furthermore, the authors use the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) as a backdrop to argue that our adult learners find it challenging to use such AI-based technology to accomplish even basic tasks and perceive little marginal benefit of learning to use such technology. Consequently, it is unethical to expect our adult learners to be productive members of our society, which has been seldom studied in extant literature.*

### Introduction

Today, every device and tool, big or small, whether at home or in the store, is online and is interconnected, and our interaction with such gadgets is influenced heavily by Artificial Intelligence (AI). The massive amounts of data being generated every moment is being harvested through data warehouses all over the globe, and analyzed for profit-making purposes, intelligence gathering, shopping trends, weather patterns, potential terrorist threats and so on. Despite AI's considerable benefits in diverse fields (Floridi et al., 2022), multiple concerns exist as well. AI models reflect the biases, values, and preferences of those who fund and design the model—a fact that our adult learners may not be aware of. It is also taken for granted that everyone is conversant with such technology to accomplish even basic tasks such as filling up your gas tank, ordering food, opening a bank account, or buying a plane ticket.

### Background

Should we expect the same level of familiarity with technology from everyone irrespective of age or education level? Do we allow separate lines at the hospital for self-check-in and manual check-in patients? Why do grocery stores have more than self-checkout than manual checkout aisles? In our haste to infuse AI into every function that previously used to be handled by a human being, we tend to forget about those whose technology skills may not be at par. Specifically for adult learners, ubiquitous application of AI has added multiple layers of complexity to this already-glaring problem (McQuivey et al., 2020). For example, miscreants use AI to impersonate authoritative figures and steal your identification information. Consequently, susceptible adults and senior citizens fall prey to hackers and scamsters every year, losing millions of dollars, as is reflected in a recent report: “The FBI estimates that senior citizens lose more than three billion dollars each year to financial scams. From the 2022 report, Louisiana had over 700 residents over the age of 60 become a victim to a fraud scam.” (Courville, 2023). Moreover, AI constantly evolves by learning from users' past and present behavior. In the process, it actually changes the learners' behavior without the learner's knowledge (Poquet et al., 2021). Moreover, AI models are biased by the developers' input and assumptions (Schwartz et al., 2022), making an already-challenging situation even worse for our adult learners. While AI, data analytics, and robots can support independent living for adult learners, not everybody has the ability to adopt such skills. Specifically, given that older adults prefer to age in place (Wang et al., 2019), their only option to gain the required technical skills is through remote learning, which requires technical knowledge as well.

### Key Findings

As per the latest available data on adult school enrollment, there were about 7.5 million adult learners (considered as those 25 years or above), out of almost 20 million students (roughly 25%) enrolled in US colleges and universities in 2020 (bold.org). By 2020, 65% of all jobs would require post-secondary education and beyond (Georgetown Center for Education and Workforce, 2023). More than 50% of such jobs required moderate to high level of computer literacy (Recovery, 2020, p.9). However, there appears to be a significant gap between job requirement and adult education levels attained. For example, as of 2018, less than 50% of the US adult population had the minimum required technical skills to succeed in school. The authors' research also reveals that an adult who is not as technology-literate as its younger counterpart, suffers mental and functional roadblocks; consequently, a sizeable chunk of our adult population fails to productively contribute to the economy. AI models seldom reflect the needs and diversity of our adult learner population (Chu et al., 2022). Instead, AI-based models reflect the designer's

implicit biases and assumptions, which further exacerbates the situation. Furthermore, taking a cue from the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), the authors posit that for adult learners, not only does technology become more difficult to use, but also the perceived usefulness of learning (to use) technology is diminished. Given the inadequacy of research on the challenges that adult learners face due to technology, the authors contribute to this field by posing the following stance: investing more and more on AI and automation of our infrastructure without concomitantly creating opportunities for adult learners to learn such skills, defeats the very goal of technology-acceptance, both from socio-economic as well as ethical standpoints.

The authors believe that the current research strongly resonates with the theme of the conference and fills a major gap in extant literature. While existing research focuses on different aspects of adult learning (importance of acquiring digital literacy by adult learners, (Rosen, 2020) and adult learner challenges despite government and private support (Abbott et al., 2020)), there does not exist significant research on the interaction between AI and its consequence on adult learning from an ethical perspective. In addition, the current topic is pregnant with far-reaching social and managerial consequences. If adult learners can use the 'right' technology at the 'right' place, they can significantly improve their confidence, thereby creating proper match between use of technology and the adult learning environment. Consequently, the society can absorb more adult learners into the productive workforce, who depend less on government dole and typically spend less on healthcare, thereby reducing the burden on the public exchequer.

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# Summary Brief

## A Literature Review of Big Data Analytics Research in Marketing

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### 1. Introduction

Advances in digital technologies coupled with the explosion of data is transforming the way businesses operate at a rapid pace. In the era of digital disruption, big data are increasingly considered as a means of reaping market opportunities (Hofacker et al., 2016). Because these datasets are becoming large, unstructured, and complex, commonly defined as 3Vs (i.e., high *volume*, *variety*, and *velocity*), today's analytics necessitates non-traditional forms of information processing and robust analytical techniques to extract meaningful insights (Wedel & Kannan, 2016). As such, many scholars have identified big data analytics as a distinctive resource of a firm and main source of its sustainable competitive advantage (Erevelles et al., 2016). Despite the burgeoning academic interest, however, there is little understanding of how the extant research has progressed and contributes collectively to the understanding of big data research in marketing. As we proceed in the fast-evolving future disrupted by the big data revolution, this would be an opportune time to review what has been studied in this field to generate insights and provide directions for future research. Against this backdrop, the objective of this paper is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of big data analytics research in marketing.

### 2. Thematic analyses

A bibliographic coupling analysis was conducted using VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2009). Four distinct themes were produced based on 63 articles reviewed. Cluster 1 focuses on examining online consumer reviews in hospitality industries posted on various review platforms. Cluster 2 focuses on exploring consumer engagement in the age of big data. Earlier research in this topic revolved around providing perspectives and research agenda for future research. Cluster 3 focuses on examining the transformative impact that big data have on the value creation process through improved decision-making. Cluster 4 focuses on exploring how big data serve as the new frontier of innovation and competition.

### 3. The TCCM Framework

**3.1. Theories:** Of the 63 articles, a total of 37 studies were based on at least one theory. The most frequently used theories among them were *Resource-based view*, followed by *Value co-creation/Service-dominant logic*, *Dynamic capabilities*, *Knowledge-based view*, and *Hofstede's theory of cultural dimension*.

**3.2. Context:** Findings revealed that big data research was predominantly conducted in the hospitality (21%) and retail (15%) sectors, and this is largely because they rely heavily on consumer reviews and consumer big data in these sectors are easier to access. Other industries that appeared in the reviewed articles include high-tech (11%), B2B (4%), sports (2%), consumer goods (2%), luxury (2%), and higher education (4%). Of the 46 empirical studies, 15 studies (32%) were conducted in multiple industries.

Findings suggested that the U.S. is the biggest contributor to this research (15%), followed by China (13%) and U.K. (11%). Studies were conducted in a range of countries including Canada, Finland, Ireland, India, Israel, Italy, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, and UAE. It is worth noting that many studies (30%) were conducted in multiple-country contexts.

**3.3. Characteristics:** For independent and dependent variables, a general divide in findings was observed between studies that used different research methodologies. Only a fraction of the empirical studies explored the moderating/mediating effects.

#### 3.4. Method

Of the 63 papers, 46 papers were empirical (19 studies used a big data method and 27 studies used a traditional research method). Of the 27 studies, 52% were quantitative (e.g., survey), 41% were qualitative (e.g., interview, focus group), and the remaining 7% were mixed. Studies that used surveys analyzed the data mostly by conducting structural equation modeling, while studies that used a big data approach analyzed their data mainly by conducting regressions and text mining including sentiment analysis.

### 4. Implications and Future Research Directions

First, research on online consumer reviews is emerging recently (i.e., Cluster 1). This stream of research has gained popularity in hospitality industries, particularly in hotels, given consumers' increasing reliance on such platforms and researchers' easier access to such data. More research that explores online consumer reviews in other service-oriented industries such as retail, healthcare, airline, and banking that heavily rely on big data will be warranted.

Second, findings note a deficiency in theories utilized. This can be attributed to the fact that big data rely on inductive reasoning which is against the traditional method of using a priori theory followed by empirical studies (Hofacker et al., 2016).

Third, findings from the investigation of the key variables reveal that there was a big divide in focus between studies that used big data and studies that used surveys as a research methodology. This warrants the need for more empirical research that seeks to integrate big data sources with data from more traditional research methods.

Lastly, although many studies were conducted in multi-country contexts, a majority of them were from the United States. Given that big data is not bounded geographically, more focus on the cross-country subtleties that highlight the nuances of cultural differences would be useful, especially as we proceed in this borderless digital world.

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# Summary Brief

## The Analytics of ESG Reporting

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*This study aims to evaluate ESG analytics and reporting metrics and advance the literature toward formulating a standardized communication and reporting framework. The study's objectives are twofold, focusing on (1) analyzing the key themes present in corporate ESG communication and (2) identifying the main components of ESG analytics. We use a theoretical framework incorporating signal and legitimacy theory elements in a multi-level, multi-method analysis of organizational and country data.*

### Introduction

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) topics and standards have gradually taken over discussions on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability, yet the current reporting and metrics on their performance are aimed at stakeholders and do not always reflect their organizational and market impact and effectiveness (Aksoy et al. 2022; Fernandez-Feijoo et al. 2014; Vitell 2015). Research found that business organizations encounter problems in communicating on ESG-related topics, considering the need to recognize the most important sustainability issues and formulate solutions, formulate goals and related metrics, and communicate actions and outcomes to relevant stakeholders (Aksoy et al. 2022; Burker 2022).

ESG reporting practices vary considerably from company to company, both in quantity and quality. Conca et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between profitability and disclosure practices of strictly environmental and social information and a negative effect between company market value and disclosure practices relating to governance. ESG reporting is important for stakeholders and customers, investors, governments, and regulators (Pham et al., 2022). Stakeholders have shown increased interest in ESG issues, and ESG practices have become an inevitable part of businesses' sustainable growth plans. ESG reporting serves as a way for companies to build trust with society and investors by demonstrating their commitment to sustainability (Pham et al., 2022).

In this context, the purpose of this study is to evaluate ESG analytics and reporting metrics and advance the literature toward formulating a standardized communication and reporting framework. The objectives of the study are twofold, focusing on (1) analyzing the key themes present in corporate ESG communication and (2) identifying the main components of ESG analytics. For this analysis, we use a theoretical framework incorporating elements from signal theory (Dhaliwal et al., 2011; Ioannou & Serafeim, 2015; Spence, 1973) and legitimacy theory (Cruz & Matos, 2023; Hahn & Kühnen, 2013). Using a multi-method approach, we analyze corporate communications for companies from the Corporate Knights list of the Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the world for year 2022 (Elijido-Ten and Clarkson 2019; Pal and Jenkins 2014) and evaluate the macro-level analytics of ESG reporting based on World Bank country data.

### Literature Review

Since the acronym ESG was formulated in 2005, the concept and the interest in it have evolved, exhibiting a fivefold growth in internet searches for ESG since 2019, while searches for corporate social responsibility (CSR), a precursory concept, have declined (Perez et al. 2022). Organizations are placing more resources in their ESG strategies, while more than 90% of S&P 500 companies now publish ESG reports (Perez et al. 2022). Investors on the institutional and individual market and other stakeholders consider ESG matters essential for evaluating a company's risk profile and readiness for the future (Burker 2022). Studying ESG is even more important considering findings showing that ethical investing and strong financial performance, both from the activist's and the targeted firm's perspective are complementary (Barko, Cremers, and Renneboog 2022; Perez et al. 2022). ESG metrics are used to measure and evaluate a company's performance in these dimensions. These metrics can be quantitative or qualitative and are often standardized to allow for comparisons across companies and industries. Common ESG metrics include carbon emissions intensity, employee turnover rate, board diversity, and CEO-to-worker pay ratio.

Investors and stakeholders have recognized the importance of ESG, as it provides valuable information about a company's long-term sustainability and ethical practices. Research has shown that good ESG performance can improve a company's financial performance and profitability. ESG metrics also help socially responsible investors integrate their ethical beliefs into investment analysis (Widyawati, 2019). To assess ESG performance, various databases and frameworks are available. However, there are challenges in ESG reporting and measurement. Existing frameworks often lack transparency, reliability, consistency, and materiality, and may not adequately address the social dimension of ESG (Cruz & Matos, 2023). There is also a need for more metrics, particularly in the social dimension, to effectively report and validate the S dimension of ESG (Newell, 2023).

### ***Signal theory***

Signal theory, within the context of corporate disclosure, revolves around companies utilizing voluntary disclosures, such as ESG reports, as signals to external stakeholders regarding internal attributes that may not be readily observable. The underlying premise is that high-quality companies have incentives to distinguish themselves from lower-quality companies, and they achieve this by sending costly and difficult signals for lower-quality companies to imitate. The idea of signaling originates from the problem of information asymmetry, where one party possesses more or superior information compared to the other. Spence's (1973) job-market signaling model, which uses education to signal worker productivity, is a classic example. Similarly, companies may employ ESG reporting to signal their quality, resilience, and forward-looking orientation.

ESG reports, particularly those verified by third parties, can be costly both in terms of monetary investment and commitment required. Therefore, when a company invests in high-quality ESG reporting, it sends a credible signal to the market regarding its quality. Lower-quality firms may find it costly or detrimental to mimic such signals (Dhaliwal et al., 2011; Ioannou & Serafeim, 2015). Conscious investors interpret these signals to make informed decisions. They recognize that companies focused on ESG performance are likely better equipped to handle future risks, whether environmental, regulatory, or social (Eccles et al., 2014). Consequently, a company's ESG initiatives can be seen as reflective of its management quality and strategic foresight.

ESG reports can also serve as a tool for competitive differentiation. In saturated markets where products are increasingly similar, firms seek alternative ways to distinguish themselves. Demonstrating a commitment to ESG values can be a differentiator, particularly in industries where consumers and investors are highly conscious of ESG issues. Signal theory can provide a framework for understanding why firms may voluntarily disclose information such as ESG metrics. These disclosures act as signals to the market, assisting investors and other stakeholders in differentiating between firms based on non-financial attributes that indicate a company's long-term health and management quality.

**P1:** Organizations with higher social integration use it as a signaling tool to convey their capability and commitment to ESG initiatives to stakeholders.

**P2:** Companies use tone in their communications as a mechanism to send positive/negative signals about ESG practices to the market.

### ***Legitimacy theory***

There has been a growing emphasis on sustainability and corporate social responsibility in recent years, leading companies worldwide to report their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices to stakeholders. Legitimacy theory has been instrumental in understanding why organizations voluntarily disclose such information. This theory suggests that entities strive to align their activities with societal values and norms to avoid delegitimization. Traditionally, companies primarily reported financial information. However, as societal awareness of environmental and social issues increased, companies also faced pressure to disclose non-financial data. ESG reporting emerged as a means for companies to communicate their commitment to sustainability and social responsibility (Hahn & Kühnen, 2013).

Legitimacy theory proposes that companies engage in ESG reporting to legitimize their actions, particularly when there is a perceived gap between societal expectations and the firm's activities (Deegan, 2002). By disclosing their ESG practices, companies aim to reduce public scrutiny and ensure continued support from stakeholders. Nevertheless, a significant challenge in ESG reporting is the lack of standardization. Different firms use various metrics, making it difficult for stakeholders to compare and contrast (Cruz & Matos, 2023; Hahn & Kühnen, 2013). As ESG reporting continues to evolve, its ties with legitimacy theory and its implications for the business world will

also evolve, and reality reflects a need for more structured insights regarding the analytics of ESG reporting (Newell, 2023).

**P3:** Companies that emphasize authenticity in their communications aim to align their operations with societal norms and values to gain legitimacy within their operational context.

**P4:** Organizations use affiliation in their communications to appear legitimate by aligning with society's values and affiliations.

**P5:** Countries that highlight political and social integration in their narratives and policies aim to show alignment with global sustainability norms and practices, which in turn might result in reduced national CO2 emissions.

## Methodology

To evaluate our two research objectives, we used a multi-method, multi-level qualitative and quantitative approach. We first analyzed corporate communications for companies from the Corporate Knights list of the Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the world for year 2022 (Elijido-Ten and Clarkson 2019; Pal and Jenkins 2014). We downloaded the ESG or sustainability reports for the 100 corporations for this study, based on the most recent year available (2019-2022). Top names such as Adidas, Apple, and Samsung are among the studied corporations. The database provided by Corporate Knights also includes information regarding their global rank and environment-related indices, such as carbon-productivity.

The first step was to extract the key ESG information from the annual reports, in the form of corporate narratives – executive summary and statements, as well as statements regarding each of the ESG components. We then used the linguistic analysis software LIWC 2015 to identify the linguistic characteristics of the text of each corporation in terms of psychological, interpersonal and socio-cultural factors and further test the effects of TDR elements on corporate carbon-productivity in a regression analysis reflected in Table 1. We selected the carbon productivity score as a reflection of each element of the ESG framework, including environment, social, and governance/management aspects. We included the clout and affiliation index to reflect socio-cultural aspects, the tone and authenticity index to reflect interpersonal aspects, while the focus on the future, need for achievement, and risk reflect strategic aspects of the corporation (Pennebaker et al., 2014).

The second study reflected in Table 2 represents a continuation at the country level of the first analysis. For this we used country-level data on ESG provided by the World Bank (2023). The analysis focused on the determinants of CO2 emissions (kt) (World Bank, 2023), including elements related to how consumers interpret business signals and their legitimacy expectations, based on cultural values, including the autonomy index, post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1971), the political and social integration score (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018), and income equality levels. The total sample included 64 countries for which this information was available.

## Results and Discussion

Nevertheless, considering the views of TRD and how sustainable behavior can affect future behavior, along with other psychological, interpersonal, and socio-cultural factors present in the ecosystem (Joshi, Yadav, and Shankar 2021), the next results reflect the impact of these factors on the company's carbon productivity - success in creating revenue with less carbon emissions (revenue/carbon emissions). This reflects the ability of the businesses analyzed to incorporate essential information in narratives and to relate impactful variables to their ESG outcomes.

**Table 1: Corporate Communications Regression Analysis Results**

Model	Unstand. Coef.		Stand. Coef.	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	60.429	19.782		3.055	0.003
Authentic	0.218	0.318	0.072	0.686	0.494
<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>-3.608</b>	<b>1.767</b>	<b>-0.382</b>	<b>-2.042</b>	<b>0.044</b>
<b>Focus Future</b>	<b>-12.624</b>	<b>4.402</b>	<b>-0.285</b>	<b>-2.868</b>	<b>0.005</b>
Clout	0.668	0.354	0.375	1.889	0.062
<b>Tone</b>	<b>-0.588</b>	<b>0.182</b>	<b>-0.423</b>	<b>-3.237</b>	<b>0.002</b>
<b>Achieve</b>	<b>4.718</b>	<b>2.217</b>	<b>0.278</b>	<b>2.128</b>	<b>0.036</b>
Risk	-8.992	4.985	-0.192	-1.804	0.075

a. Dependent Variable: Carbon Productivity Score; Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.124, F=2.968; Sig. 0.008

Overall, the regression analysis results for the carbon productivity score reflect the impact of a combination of communication variables used for market signaling, including psychological, interpersonal, and socio-cultural factors present in narratives (Joshi, Yadav and Shankar 2021). From an orientation towards the future to a greater focus on achievement and social affiliation, as well as a positive tone, all these elements are closely related to the ESG success of the organization. They reflect the signaling and legitimizing characteristics of ESG strategies and the ecosystem aspect underlining the need to incorporate all essential actors in this framework.

**Table 2: Corporate Communications Regression Analysis Results**

Model	Unstand. Coef.		Stand. Coef.	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	5.297	1.323		4.002	0.001
<b>Autonomy</b>	1.082	0.267	0.512	4.056	0.001
<b>Post-Materialism</b>	-1.182	0.449	-0.359	-2.631	0.012
<b>Pol &amp; soc integration</b>	-0.163	0.080	-0.282	-2.031	0.049
<b>Income equality</b>	-0.322	0.125	-0.325	-2.575	0.014

a. Dependent Variable: CO2 emissions (kt), Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.342, F=6.967; Sig. 0.001

The relationship between autonomy and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is highly significant, with greater autonomy being associated with higher emissions. On the other hand, post-materialism has a significant negative relationship with emissions, indicating that a greater emphasis on post-materialistic values leads to reduced emissions. Similarly, political and social integration significantly negatively impacts emissions, suggesting that greater integration in these areas reduces emissions. Additionally, income equality is significantly negatively related to emissions, indicating that greater income equality is associated with reduced emissions.

Both models provide valuable insights into the factors influencing Carbon Productivity Score and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. From a legitimacy theory perspective, companies may prioritize certain aspects, such as affiliation, focus on the future, and tone, to appear legitimate to stakeholders, even if these aspects have a negative impact on the Carbon Productivity Score. From a signal theory standpoint, certain variables, such as clout and achievement, may act as credible signals to the market, positively impacting the Carbon Productivity Score. These findings highlight the importance of considering both the content and intention behind ESG reporting. While companies may communicate certain themes to align with stakeholder expectations, their environmental performance, as measured by the Carbon Productivity Score and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, may differ based on their tangible actions.

### Conclusions and Implications

The narrative-based analysis identified elements from the signal theory (Dhaliwal et al., 2011; Ioannou & Serafeim, 2015; Spence, 1973) and legitimacy theory (Cruz & Matos, 2023; Hahn & Kühnen, 2013) as essential for the formulation of an effective ESG strategy and its communication. While the environmental part of the framework is well reflected in communication, the social and governance part especially emphasizes a need for an ecosystem-view of ESG and a better structure that reflects the micro, meso, and macro level actors. Moreover, the findings show the applicability of signaling and legitimizing analytics in formulating, implementing, and effectively communicating ESG strategies in a global business ecosystem.

A nuanced understanding of legitimacy theory is revealed through the findings of this study. It is suggested that simply seeking legitimacy through authentic communication does not always result in positive environmental, social, and governance (ESG) outcomes, such as improved carbon productivity. This challenges the assumption that portraying authenticity always leads to tangible positive actions in the environmental domain. The interplay between signaling and performance is complex, as indicated by the mixed results of this study. The negative association between positive tone and carbon productivity and the marginal association of clout suggests that signals may sometimes be misaligned with actual performance. This enriches signal theory by highlighting the need for stakeholders to adopt a more discerning approach to interpreting signals, understanding that not all positive signals equate to positive outcomes.

The implications of ESG reporting extend beyond the organizational level to the country level. The variation in results across different organizational and country levels highlights the layered complexity of ESG reporting and its outcomes. While individual companies may signal positive attributes, the aggregate data at the country level may

present a different picture. This suggests that macro-level factors, such as national policies, culture, or economic contexts, significantly shape ESG outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to develop multi-level theoretical models to study ESG reporting comprehensively. The negative association between affiliation emphasis and carbon productivity at the organizational level challenges the assumption that seeking societal approval always leads to better sustainable practices. This reframes the concept of affiliation within legitimacy theory, indicating that seeking approval may sometimes come at the cost of tangible ESG performance.

The findings at the country level have broader implications for national sustainability policies. The negative association between political and social integration and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions suggests that countries emphasizing social cohesiveness and integration may be more successful in driving sustainable policies. This enriches our understanding of how societal structures can influence sustainability outcomes and emphasizes the importance of socio-political cohesion in promoting sustainable practices at the macro level. The positive association between autonomy and reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at the country level suggests that countries that allow more decentralized decision-making or foster local/regional initiatives may achieve better environmental results. This introduces a new dimension to the discussion of sustainability, highlighting the role of decentralized structures and autonomy in driving positive environmental outcomes. In conclusion, these theoretical implications emphasize the need for a more discerning and multi-layered approach to understanding ESG reporting and outcomes. Integrating insights from both legitimacy theory and signal theory can provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved. These findings also pave the way for future research to delve deeper into the intricacies of these theoretical implications.

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## **Session 12.3: Accommodations to Schedule Request**

**Chair:** Somjit Barat

## Summary Brief

# A Global Cultural Phenomenon ‘Hallyu’ among Gen Zers: The Effect of Foreign Pop Culture Content on Attitudinal States and Behavioral Intentions

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*This study aims to examine how Hallyu content derived from different entertainment genres (K-drama, K-movie, K-pop, K-variety-show) affect Korean cultural image and culture-related behavioral intentions (culture learning, language learning, revisit intention) among Gen Zers who visit South Korea at the first time. To explain this relationship, an integrated theoretical framework between attribution theory and self-perception theory was applied. The overall results revealed that Hallyu content is critical in building Korean cultural images and stimulating subsequent behavioral intentions. However, the findings also showed that Hallyu content in different entertainment genres had affected the subsequent Korean cultural images and behavioral intentions differently. The implications and limitations were discussed.*

### Introduction

While experiencing the COVID pandemic, restricted mobility (i.e., social lockdown) has accelerated online dependency, changing consumers' leisure activities and consumption patterns (Sheth, 2020). One of the prevalent changes in consumer behavior is pop culture content consumption as primary leisure activity entailing experiential consumption (e.g., digital content consumption via various streaming services: Sheth, 2021). This adventurous behavioral tendency in experiential consumption leads Gen Zers (born between 1997-2012) to unravel sound curiosities toward foreign cultures (Green, 2020), such as Hallyu (a.k.a., Korean wave), which motivate them to explore more about foreign pop cultures (e.g., the interest country's cultural image, language learning intention, and visit intention).

Hallyu is a cultural trend and a social phenomenon encompassing various content categories, and it is predominantly driven by Gen Zers worldwide. Despite its exponential growth, the study on this topic is in the infant stage and relatively underexplored academic realms. The focus of this study is to examine how Hallyu content derived from different entertainment genres affects Korean cultural image and culture-related behavioral intentions among Gen Zers who visit in South Korea first time as international students in the exchange program. This study applied an integrated theoretical framework between attribution theory and self-perception theory, as well as adopted a conceptual framework of media richness theory to investigate the effect of entertainment genres (i.e., music, TV drama, movie, and TV variety show).

### Methods

This study conducted an onsite self-administered survey among international students who first visited South Korea to attend the exchange student program jointly provided by Korean universities in 2023. To test an integrated hypothetical model, this study ran structural equation modeling (SEM) by controlling age, gender, and nationality.

### Key Findings

A proposed hypothetical model is a robust model to explain Gen Zers' foreign cultural content (Hallyu in this study) and a theoretical integration of attribution theory and self-perception theory enhances the efficacy of the proposed model. This study highlights the significant influence of Hallyu content consumption through different entertainment genres (music, TV drama, movie, and TV variety show) on Gen Zers' subsequent attitudinal states and behavioral intentions. The overall result reveals that different entertainment genres have different roles in affecting subsequent behavioral intentions, such as country image, language learning, and revisit intention. The findings suggest the importance of considering various media platforms and understanding their specific characteristics when designing strategies to promote affirmative cultural images. Moreover, the intention to learn culture positively influences Gen



Zers' attitude formation toward the country's image, language learning intention, and revisit intentions. The formed country image does not directly affect language learning intention, but it does directly encourage their visit intention to the country to learn about cultures.

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## Full Paper

# Applying Victim Intervention Marketing Analytics in the Hospitality Industry

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*We created victim intervention marketing metrics to succinctly describe societal human trafficking situations, and to prescribe theory-based interventions. Results for the global hospitality industry indicate that “enslavement rates,” “misery scores” “relative prevalence” and “misery indexes” may vary by country. In hospitality, the most egregious trafficker “means of control” (e.g., “psychological abuse”) are used against foreign victims trafficked into the US. Interventions should include basic necessities (e.g., food).*

### Introduction

Typical discussions about marketing and analytics in the hospitality industry involve concepts such as number of customers, bookings, revenue, etc. (e.g., Yallop and Seraphin, 2020). Such metrics facilitate decision making regarding variables that can affect a hospitality firm’s profitability. In contrast, this discussion offers metrics to help human trafficking interventionists service victims in the hospitality industry. We apply “Victim Intervention Marketing” (Murray, Dingman, Porter, and Otte, 2015) metrics to help minimize human trafficking victim involvement and suffering in the hospitality industry. Victim Intervention Marketing is “...that branch of social activist marketing that uses traditional and nontraditional marketing techniques to prevent or end a vulnerable population’s introduction into, or continuance in, a human trafficking distribution channel. Thus, it entails efforts to assist both current and potential trafficking channel participants, where the latter is at substantial risk of abuse by a trafficker.” It includes a set of nine intervention related metrics. They will be discussed later on and will form the basis for an expanded set of metrics. Social activist marketing (Murray, 1997) is a branch of social marketing that “...involves: (1) more important and socially divisive issues, (2) conflict between the social marketer and the target, and (3) greater reliance upon coercive influence strategies such as boycotts, buycotts, protests, strikes etc.” Thus, the endemic conflict in Victim Intervention Marketing is between the interventionist and the human trafficker. It may also occur between the interventionist and the trafficker’s customers who participate in victim exploitation. Human trafficking victims must make potentially life altering decisions about accepting jobs (from traffickers), fleeing from traffickers, exchanging information with, and receiving aid (e.g., food, shelter, rehabilitative care) from interventionists, and more. The victim has a set of situation related cognitions, affect, and behavior, which form the basis for the intervention marketing strategy. For instance, some “victims” do not perceive themselves as such (e.g., Foluke, Rundle-Thiele, and Kubacki (2019). Rather, they focus on their sense of agency which they have employed to change their economic status, etc. The intervention message strategy will probably be different for a self-perceived victim versus an agent.

Human trafficking remains a societal problem (CFA, 2023). It is illegal, often violent, and can leave physical and psychological wounds (e.g., Stöckl, Fabbri, Cook, Galez-Davis, Grant, Lo, Kiss, and Zimmerman, Chon, 2021). Globally, forty-nine million victims (ILO, 2023) are currently being exploited for sex, labor, and organs. The hospitality industry (e.g., hotels, bars, restaurants) is often involved as a venue for labor and sex (e.g., Kragt, 2020, DHS, 2023) trafficking. Accordingly, the purpose of this discussion is to offer an expanded set of Victim Intervention Marketing metrics, and to apply them to the hospitality industry. This will entail identifying the Murray et. al (2015) victim categories within the global hospitality industry, prescribe theory-based interventions for each category, and computing victim situation metrics from secondary UN data. Moreover, we will employ the metrics to better understand the problem, and thereby suggest metric-based “3P’s” (“prosecution,” “protection,” and “prevention”) allocations for the hospitality industry.

### Literature Review: Human Trafficking in Marketing

In marketing, Pennington, Ball, Hampton and Soulakova (2009) addressed human trafficking from a “cross border” perspective. They defined it as “...the movement of people across international borders for the purpose of involuntary servitude [enslavement].” Subsequently, Murray et. al (2015) defined human trafficking as “...the activities of an egregious, interorganizational, opportunistic, marketing distribution system wherein people (or their

organs) are treated as products or property. All other things equal, egregiousness (severity of abuse) ranges from relatively low under voluntary participation, where fraud is often employed, to relatively high, where traffickers use force and coercion to elicit involuntary participation (slavery).” They operationalized low to high trafficker egregiousness as three modes by which victims participate (i.e., enter and continue in) in a human trafficking situation. They will be discussed in detail later on. However, for now, they are “Voluntary,” (lowest victim misery) “Semivoluntary,” and “Involuntary” (highest misery). Voluntary participation means there is no interpersonal coercion (i.e., no abduction or threats). It encompasses the United Nations’ definition of “consent,” and is usually caused by economic desperation. Semivoluntary participation happens when there is strong social pressure from a loved one to accept an exploitive job from a human trafficker. For instance, an impoverished mother in a country with few opportunities may encourage her daughter to work for a trafficker to prevent her grandparents from starving. Finally, involuntary participation refers to abduction, forced marriage, forced military service (beyond what is normal) or minor status (under age 18). When these three *entry* and *continuance* modes of victim participation are combined, the result is a three-by-three matrix of nine victim situation types. The framework is found in Table 1, and the victim descriptions are in Table 2. For instance, “Willing Assimilators” *enter* and *continue* working in the trafficking situation voluntarily (i.e., in the absence of interpersonal coercion). In contrast, many voluntary entrants are less fortunate. For instance, “Tricked and Trapped” victims enter voluntarily, but they are subsequently forced to continue working without pay. They are “slaves,” and are subject to physical abuse, restricted movement, etc.

The “Victim Intervention Marketing” framework is comprised of the nine types. It applies Frazier and Sheth’s (1985) “attitude-behavior consistency” framework, as well as their prescribed “Influence Strategies” for each cell within their framework (See Table 3). Thus, the framework assumes victim beliefs about their situations (e.g., consensual vs abduction) affect their attitudes and behavioral intentions. For instance, an impoverished victim who consents to work for a trafficker in order to feed her children is not likely to follow the advice of an anti-trafficking message that tells her to quit her job. In both the Frazier and Sheth (1985) and Murray et. al (2015) frameworks, then, victims within a given cell have the same attitude-belief-behavior mixes. In turn, those mixes determine the best influence strategies to use in each cell. This framework was applied in Murray, Solin, and Shea (2021), wherein sex and labor trafficking victim intervention marketing metrics (e.g., percentage of Willing Assimilators) were compared. Similarly, this present discussion’s specific mix of hospitality victims will prescribe specific influence strategies, 3P’s combinations, and related metrics.

**Table 1: Victim Intervention Marketing Framework**

		Victim Continuance		
		Voluntary	Semivoluntary	Involuntary
Victim Entry	Voluntary	Willing Assimilators	Disillusioned Contrastors	Tricked and Trapped
	Semivoluntary	Peaceful Displacers	Responsible Martyrs	Enlightened Apostates
	Involuntary	Stockholmers	Karmic Acceptors	Trapped and Robbed

\*Adapted from Murray et. al (2015)

**Table 2: Intervention Marketing Typology**

Victim Group	*Description
Willing Assimilators	This group joins the trafficking situation voluntarily; meaning there is no interpersonal coercion. They enter according to the UN's definition of human trafficking victim "consent." This group leaves the trafficking situation at will.
Disillusioned Contrastors	This group entered the trafficking situation voluntarily. However, subsequently, the trafficker placed exit barriers before them. These include fake romantic relationships, seizing the victim's passport, giving them drugs, etc. These victims are discouraged from leaving, rather than prevented from leaving.
Tricked and Trapped	This group enters voluntarily, but is subsequently forced, coerced, etc. into continuing to work. They are discouraged and prevented from leaving.
Peaceful Displacers	This group joined the trafficking situation under social pressure from a loved one (i.e., semivoluntary entrance). Subsequently, they continued to work voluntarily without social pressure. This can occur when the working conditions and terms are not as poor as initially anticipated.
Responsible Martyrs	: They enter because of social pressure from a loved one, and remain working because of continued social pressure, and/or because they were discouraged (not prevented) from leaving. Reasons for continuing to work include the trafficker seizing their passport, drug use, false romance, etc.
Enlightened Apostates	They enter because of social pressure from a loved one. However, with or without the loved one's knowledge or approval, they are subsequently enslaved.
Stockholmers	These adults are abducted or otherwise coerced into the trafficking situation. Subsequently, presumably due to "Stockholm Syndrome" (or "Trauma Bonding"), they bond with the trafficking situation and continue to work voluntarily.
Karmic Acceptors	These victims are coerced into the trafficking situation. However, they subsequently perceive their situation in a larger religious and/or philosophical context (e.g., fate, karma, destiny). As a result, they remain in the situation because they believe they are "supposed to" in some sense.
Trapped and Robbed	These adults are coerced into the trafficking situation and remain because of ongoing coercion. They are discouraged and prevented from leaving the trafficking situation.

\*Adapted from Murray et. al (2015)

**Table 3: Prescribed Victim Intervention Marketing Influence Strategies by Type**

Victim Group	*Intervention Influence Strategy
Willing Assimilators	Radical Confrontation; Change Beliefs & Attitude; Add Attributes to Consider
Disillusioned Contrastors	Inducement; Negative Normative. Against Trafficker; Economic & Noneconomic. Rewards; Request, Counter Info.; Exchange Support Contrasts, Free-Market Solutions
Tricked and Trapped	Inducement; Negative Normative Against Trafficker Economic & Noneconomic. Rewards; Requests
Peaceful Displacers	Radical Confrontation; Counter Argue Pos. & Neg. Beliefs, Rational Appeal; Change Attitude to Negative
Responsible Martyrs	Inducement; Negative Normative Against Trafficker; Economic & Noneconomic. Rewards; Requests, Counter Info.; Exchange Free-Market Solutions, Cultural Pluralism Change Beliefs to Negative
Enlightened Apostates	Inducement; Negative Normative Against Trafficker; Economic & Noneconomic. Rewards; Requests, Counter Info. Exchange; Encourage & Facilitate Flight
Stockholmers	Moderate Confrontation; Modeling, Recommendation, Warning, Pos. & Neg.; Normative Noneconomic. Reward; Request, Plea, Promise
Karmic Acceptors	Inducement; Negative Normative Against Trafficker Econ. & Noneconomic. Rewards; Requests, Counter Info. Exchange; Liberation Theology; Heretical Imperative
Trapped and Robbed	Inducement; Negative Normative Against Trafficker Economic & Noneconomic. Rewards Requests, Counter Info. Exchange; Encourage & Facilitate Flight

\*Adapted from Murray et. al (2015) and based on Frazier and Sheth (1985).

### Human Trafficking in the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry covers a broad range of establishments, including hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, etc. Human trafficking in hospitality has been discussed for a few decades. Rao (1999) discussed sex tourism in South Asia. Her article predates the UN’s Palermo Protocols of 2000, which set global standards against human trafficking. She asked, “...*why sex tourism is being condoned*” and “...*why more voices are not raised in protest against its continuance.*” Since then, there have been many articles written on the subject of human trafficking in the hospitality industry. For instance, Gasienaca, Arendt, Olson and Schrier (2022) measured lodging employees’ attitudes and knowledge about human trafficking. Ying, Wen, Goh and Yang (2022) discussed the dearth of research on the relationship between sex and tourism. Shedd (2019) discussed ways to use technology to reduce human trafficking operating out of hotels. They argued that hotels partly benefit from reduced exposure to lawsuits from victims. Paraskevas and Brookes (2018) discussed measuring hotels’ vulnerability to being used by human traffickers.

In our discussion, the hospitality industry is defined according to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Section 1, Divisions 55 and 56, we employ their definition as well. The definition is as follows: “*This class includes the provision of food services to customers, whether they are served while seated or serve themselves from a display of items, whether they eat the prepared meals on the premises, take them out or have them delivered. This includes the preparation and serving of meals for immediate consumption from motorized vehicles or non-motorized carts. This class includes activities of: - restaurants - cafeterias - fast-food restaurants - pizza delivery*”

- take-out eating places - ice cream truck vendors - mobile food carts - food preparation in market stalls. This class also includes: - restaurant and bar activities connected to transportation, when carried out by separate units. This division includes the provision of short-stay accommodation for visitors and other travelers. Also included is the provision of longer-term accommodation for students, workers and similar individuals. Some units may provide only accommodation while others provide a combination of accommodation, meals and/or recreational facilities.” (ISIC). We employ this definition to be consistent with the source of our data, the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC), a UN affiliate.

### 3P’s Paradigm of Human Trafficking

The 3P’s paradigm of human trafficking has been endorsed by UN’s Palermo Protocols in opposition to human trafficking. The “P’s” are described in Table 4. To effectively oppose human trafficking, victim intervention marketing must incorporate the 3P’s. For instance, prosecution is not a facet of intervention marketing. However, International Justice Missions (IJM, 2020) uses social marketing tools to persuade governments to enforce their anti-trafficking laws.

**Table 4: 3P’s of Human Trafficking Intervention Defined (Excerpts)**

<p><b>Prosecution:</b> Under the frameworks set forth in both the Palermo Protocol and the TVPA, effective law enforcement action is an indispensable element of government efforts to fight human trafficking. ... Governments should hold criminally accountable all perpetrators of human trafficking, including intermediaries aware of the intended exploitation, and should not impose suspended sentences, fines, or administrative penalties in place of prison sentences.</p>
<p><b>Protection:</b> Protection is key to the victim-centered approach that the international community takes in its efforts to combat modern slavery. Effective victim protection entails identifying victims, providing referrals for a comprehensive array of services, directly providing or funding NGOs to provide those services, and supporting these individuals as they rebuild their lives. Comprehensive victim services include emergency and long-term services; intensive case management, housing, food, medical and dental care, and legal assistance; and access to educational, vocational, and economic opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Prevention:</b> Prevention efforts are an equally important component of the global movement to combat human trafficking. Effective prevention efforts address the tactics of human traffickers head on. With the dissemination of accurate and targeted information, communities will be better prepared to respond to the threat of human trafficking. Strategic intervention programs can reach at-risk populations before they are faced with the deceitful recruitment practices of those bent on exploiting them for labor or commercial sex.</p>

\*\* Source: The 2022 U.S. State Dept. Trafficking in Persons Report

## Victim Intervention Marketing Analytics Defined

The field of marketing analytics has a variety of definitions. For instance, Germann, Lilien and Rangaswamy (2013) defined it as a “...*technology-enabled and model-supported approach to harness customer and market data to enhance marketing decision making.*” Wedel and Kannan (2016) defined marketing analytics as involving “...*the collection, management, and analysis—descriptive, diagnostic, predictive, and prescriptive—of data to obtain insights into marketing performance, maximize the effectiveness of instruments of marketing control, and optimize firms’ return on investment (ROI).*” Iacobucci, Petrescu, Krishen, and Bendixen (2019) defined marketing analytics as, “...*the study of data and modeling tools used to address marketing resource and customer related business decisions.*” Consistent with the above definitions, we define Victim Intervention Marketing Analytics as “...*the study of data and modeling tools to segment human trafficking victims, minimize severity and prevalence, and optimize 3p’s resources to disrupt human trafficking distribution channels.*” Accordingly, this definition includes some of the metric concepts (e.g., “severity” and “prevalence”). Finally, when the “3p’s” are allocated efficiently, more victims can be served.

## Expanding Victim Intervention Marketing Metrics

There are several types of metrics involved in victim intervention marketing analytics. The first type is comprised of the percentages of each of the nine victim types discussed previously. We refer to that as the “Victim Participation Structure.” In this discussion, parts of the nine types are combined to create “Summary Metrics.” Moreover, those metrics can be combined with other metrics (e.g., prevalence) by country. Accurate prevalence data for human trafficking is difficult to acquire, however, because human traffickers do not file reports about their illegal activities. Finally, the above metrics may be computed by age and gender for more granular analyses.

## Summary Metrics

The “*Trafficking Misery Score*” (Murray, Dingman and Porter, 2016) was developed as a concise way to summarize the nine cells in a Victim Participation Structure. (See Table 6). The misery score is based on the idea of avoiding the problem of “Exploitation Creep” (Chuang, 2009) in human trafficking analysis. Exploitation Creep is the idea that all human trafficking is “slavery.” Chuang (2009), Weitzer (2014), Murray et. al (2015) and other human trafficking scholars place human trafficking situations on a continuum of egregiousness. For instance, all other things equal, a paid worker (i.e., Willing Assimilator) probably feels better off than his unpaid, forced counterpart. Thus, while all slavery is human trafficking, not all human trafficking is “slavery.” Misery score is computed by weighting the nine cells for “Relative Egregiousness/Misery” from 1 to 5 diagonally (from Willing Assimilators =1, to Trapped and Robbed = 5).

To demonstrate the above computation, we offer the global adult victim participation structure from our CTDC sample. See Table 5. Later, we will compute the hospitality metrics. As Table 5 shows, when cells weights are applied, multiplied by cell percentages, and summed,  $TMS = 1.46$ . As the range is 1 to 5, where 5 is high egregiousness, a score of 1.46 means relatively low egregiousness. This does not mean there is no problem. Rather, it suggests a great deal of poverty, globally. The logic is that a TMS score near “1” means most of the victims are Willing Assimilators. Rational adults do not accept such exploitive work when they have better options. Thus, they are mainly exploited by traffickers because of poverty. The *Weighted Trafficking Misery Score* ( $TMS_w$ ) combines “Relative Prevalence” with misery/egregiousness. See Table 6. Relative Prevalence refers to a nation’s prevalence relative to global prevalence. It is offered here as a solution to the problem of validity when attempting to measure actual prevalence. Since human trafficking is illegal, traffickers are presumed to conceal actual victim counts. NGO’s such as “Walk Free” compute prevalence estimates, but it is difficult to estimate accuracy. However, if we assume that biases and errors in data collection are consistent across nations, then relative prevalence appears to be a less risky approach. Relative Prevalence extends incorporates the concept of prevalence into a nation’s human trafficking misery score. Society faces a tradeoff between its number of victims (prevalence), and their average degree of suffering (i.e., along an isoquant curve). The *Trafficking Misery Index (Weighted)* ( $TMI_w$ ) is based on the idea that victim misery is a function of *severity, prevalence, and intervention*. Thus, the worst countries would have many slaves, who on average are suffering greatly, and where no governmental help is forthcoming.  $TMI_w$  is the most important metric for comparisons because it is comprised of the greatest number of component parts.

*Enslavement Rate* (ER) is the percentage of victims who have been involuntary participants at some point. It is the sum of five group percentages per Table 6. ER is important because it offsets the interpretive problem that ensues

when a trafficking misery score is near “3.” A score of “3” could mean most scores (e.g., for each nation) were midrange, split roughly evenly between “1’s” and “5’s.” However, if a nation’s misery score is near “3,” and its enslavement rate is moderate to high, then its victims are mostly enslaved. Finally, deception is endemic to human trafficking. A victim may agree to the terms of a given job, only to be forced to keep that job without pay. Or he may be forced to continue in some other job without pay. A nation can monitor its “*Deception Rate*” and adjust its intervention strategy to prevent future deceptions into slavery (i.e., involuntary continuance). For instance, the global (i.e., where n = 85,000) rate of deception into slavery rate is 17%. As that number is fairly low, it means most (83%) victims are not tricked into slavery. Thus, all other things equal, the social marketing implication is that deception-based social marketing messages are not likely to have a strong impact.

*The 3P’s (prosecution, protection and prevention)* of intervention are inputs applied to alleviate the problem of human trafficking. Hence, they are analogous to the means of production for a for-profit venture. Accordingly, human trafficking interventionists should seek the optimal percentages of each “P” for its total intervention budget. Based on Murray et. al (2021), percentage of resource allocations for each “P” should be made strategically. The idea is that each victim participation mode (e.g., voluntary) has a dominant (most appropriate) corresponding “P.” For instance, the best “P” to use for voluntary victims is “Protection.” The rationale is that volunteers are typically destitute and have no economic reserves. If they are *prevented* from working, they will suffer greatly (e.g., starvation) in the short run. If their traffickers (“employers”) are *prosecuted*, then, in the short run, the same outcome will ensue. Therefore, *protection* is best for volunteers, as it includes meeting their basic needs (e.g., food). The rationales for the other two “P’s” employ similar logic. The dominant “P” for *prevention* is for semivoluntary victims, and for involuntary victims the dominant “P” is *prosecution*. This means each cell in the intervention marketing framework is ideal for a specific mix of up to two “P’s.” For instance, protection and prevention should be used for Disillusioned Contrastors. Thus, if that cell holds 50% of a nation’s victims, then for that cell, 25% of resources should be allocated for each of those two “P’s.” For example, all other things equal, we found that for US victims (n = 30,000) across industries, prosecution should be 60%, protection should be 30%, and prevention should be 10% of the nation’s intervention budget.

**Table 5: Trafficking Misery Score Computation Example: Global Aggregate**

Victim Type	Frequency	Percent	Misery Wt.	Misery Scores
Willing Assimilator	64623	0.763	1	0.763
Disillusioned Contrastor	1231	0.015	2	0.03
Peaceful Displacer	3723	0.044	2	0.088
Tricked and Trapped	10194	0.12	3	0.36
Stockholmer	215	0.003	3	0.009
Responsible Martyr	1168	0.014	3	0.042
Enlightened Apostate	3302	0.039	4	0.156
Karmic Acceptor	26	0	4	0
Trapped and Robbed	179	0.002	5	0.01
Total	84661	1		0
<b>Global Trafficking Misery Score</b>				<b>1.458</b>



**Table 6: Victim Intervention Marketing Summary Metrics Defined**

Metric Name	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Trafficking Misery Score (1-5 high)	Summarizes the relative extent of the average victim's suffering, in a specified group, all other things equal; five is the least favorable.	$TMS = \sum_{C1-9}(CW_{1-5i})(CP_i)$ ; where $CW_{1-5i}$ = the misery weight (1-5) for each VIM cell; $CP_i$ = the percent of cases in Cell i.
Relative Prevalence per Country (GSI)	Human Trafficking Victim Relative Prevalence is the proportion of a population who have been trafficked in a given time period, relative to the global prevalence estimate. We use the Global Slavery Index, here.	Relative Prevalence = (# of human trafficking victims in a sample / Total # of people in that sample) x (Group Prevalence/Global Prevalence). GSI Prevalence = No. HT Victims per 1,000 people
Relative Prevalence per Country	This is the percentage of human trafficking victims in a country relative to the percent of human trafficking victims globally.	$RP_{Ci} = P_{Ci}/P_G$ ; where $RP_{Ci}$ = Relative Prevalence for Country i, $P_{Ci}$ = Victim Prevalence in Country I; and $P_G$ = Global Prevalence.
Trafficking Misery Score (Weighted)	The Weighted Trafficking Misery Score includes relative prevalence ( $RP_{Ci}$ ). The greater the prevalence, the higher the misery score.	$TMSw = \sum_{C1-9}[(CW_{1-5i})(CP_i)(RP_{Ci})]$ ; where $CW_{1-5i}$ = the misery weight (1-5) for each VIM cell; $CP_i$ = the percent of cases in Cell i.
Trafficking Intervention Score (1-5 high)	This summarizes how much effort (e.g., resources) a given country has allocated toward opposing human trafficking within a given time period (e.g., one year). We use the Cho et. al (2015) "3P's Scores" for TIS.	$TISc = \text{Total 3P score}/3 = \text{average 3P score.}$

**Table 6 (Continued): Victim Intervention Marketing Summary Metrics Defined**

Metric Name	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Trafficking Misery Index (-4 - +4 high)	The average victim misery counterbalanced by the country's efforts to oppose human trafficking. The estimated quantified level of victim well-being.	$TMI = TMS - TIS$
Trafficking Misery Index (Weighted)	The average victim misery weighted for relative prevalence of human trafficking victims in a given country. This number is then reduced by the country's level of intervention (TIS)	$TMI_w = TMS_w - TIS$
Enslavement Rate (%)	The percentage of human trafficking victims who were enslaved at some point.	$ER = \sum [TT\% + EA\% + TR\% + KA\% + S\%]$ Where TT = Tricked and Trapped, EA = Enlightened Apostates, TR = Trapped and Robbed, KA = Karmic Acceptors, and S = Stockholmers
Deception Rate (%)	Percentage of human trafficking victims who were not coerced into it, but who were subsequently coerced to remain it.	$DR = TT\% + EA\% / WA\% + DC\% + TT\% + PD\% + RM\% + EA\%$
Victim Recruitment Structure	Indicates whether a person who initially enticed or obtained the individual into the situation of exploitation was a person with whom the individual had any other notable relationship (i.e., other than "friend," "intimate partner," or "family.")	$VRS = f(\text{Unknown}\%, \text{Other}\%, \text{Friend}\%, \text{Intimate Partner}\% \text{ and } \text{Family}\%)$
Trafficker Control Structure	Victims' accounts of the methods their traffickers used to gain their compliance	$TCS = f(\text{Psychological Abuse}\%, \text{Threats}\%, \text{Threats of Law Enforcement}\%, \text{Debt Bondage}\%, \text{Takes Earnings}\%, \text{Makes False Promises}\%, \text{Excessive Work Hours}\%, \text{Physical Abuse}\%)$

**Intervention Metrics Applied to Hospitality**

The goal of this exploratory study was to apply the previous set of metrics to the hospitality industry. The main idea is to determine the extent to which global human trafficking victims in the hospitality industry are suffering. At the more micro level, we examine the ways by which hospitality workers are "controlled" (i.e., abused), and how segmentation by country may offer benefits. To answer these questions, we identified a convenience sample publicly available from the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative, a United Nation's affiliate (CTDC, 2023). The overall dataset consists of roughly 84,000 adult human trafficking victims across roughly fifty countries. From this overall sample of adults (age 18+), we isolated those who responded "Yes" to the question, "Were you exploited in the hospitality industry?" This resulted in a sample of one hundred and eighty-four (n = 184) adult victims. We then ran

a series of frequency distributions for the relevant variables. In a few instances we ran crosstabs with Chi Square tests involving gender effects. It should be noted that the CTDC dataset is not the result of random sampling. Rather, it oversamples victims in select regions and countries where there are typically a large number of migrations.

## Results

### *Sample Size by Year*

Roughly one-third of the 184 hospitality victims in the analyzed dataset had registered with a CTDC related human trafficking office in 2005, and roughly two-thirds registered between 2016 and 2017.

### *Exploitive Country Counts*

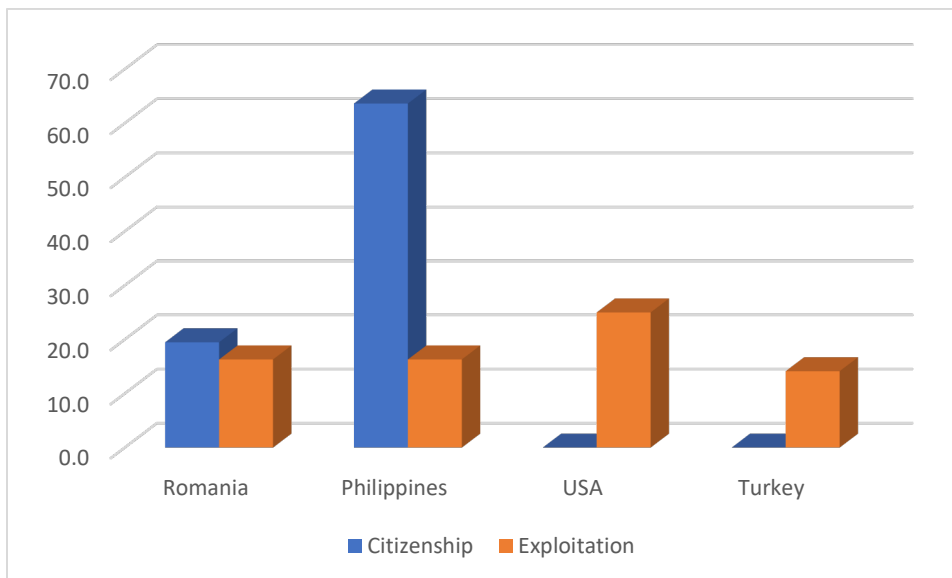
Only a few countries were mentioned by name as places of exploitation in the hospitality industry. These include Romania and the Philippines (n = 30 each), 46 in the US, and 26 in Turkey. There were fifty-two victims from unnamed countries of exploitation, resulting in a global sample size of 184 adult hospitality victims.

### *Countries of Citizenship and Exploitation*

As Figure 1 shows, some countries (e.g., Romania and the Philippines) are net exporters of human trafficking hospitality labor. The number of its citizens who are trafficked in the hospitality industry exceeds the number of hospitality victims who are being exploited in those particular countries. Other countries (e.g., the US and Turkey) are net importers. Thus, in this sample, all of the trafficked hospitality workers in the US and Turkey have crossed at least one border (i.e., Pennington et. al (2009)). The largest difference between citizenship and exploitation counts is in the Philippines. Its hospitality victim *citizen* counts greatly exceed its number of hospitality victims *exploited*.

*Social Marketing Implication:* One social marketing implication of citizenship and exploitation countries is that messages and alerts for hospitality victims in the US and Turkey would probably need to target citizens of other countries. Whereas, for Romania, targeting only Romanians would be likely to reach the large majority of their hospitality trafficking victims. Relatively few are trafficked to other countries, evidenced by roughly equivalent percentages for citizenship and exploitation.

**Figure 1: Countries of Victim Citizenship and Exploitation Hospitality**



### *Gender Differences*

Eighty percent (80%) of the women in the hospitality sample said they were trafficked for labor in the hospitality industry. However, 41% of the women said they were exploited for sex in the hospitality industry. In contrast, none of the male victims in hospitality reported having been trafficked for sex.

*Social Marketing Implication:* For the female targets, the intervention messages, etc. must address sex trafficking where appropriate. For the males, the main intervention message can be about labor trafficking.

### ***Victim Participation Structure***

Per the earlier metric presentation, here, we present the more important metrics (See Table 7). Accordingly, in most of the countries, the largest victim segment was Willing Assimilators. The exception was the US, where Tricked and Trapped (44%) was its largest group. Globally, Willing Assimilators are the largest group. Prescribed interventions (per Table 3) are typically economic support, consisting of such essentials as food, clothing, and shelter. The two countries with the lowest risk of enslavement in this sample are Romania and Turkey. However, additional metrics are needed to offer a more complete picture.

*Social Marketing Implication:* For Victim Participation Structure, all other things equal, interventionists should focus most on *protections* such as food, clothing, and shelter for those who are destitute enough to consider consenting to be trafficked in the hospitality industry.

### ***Victim Recruitment Structure***

Most victims in hospitality did not indicate how they were recruited. However, there is some indication that family members play a more prominent recruitment role in the Philippines.

*Social Marketing Implication:* Nations should conduct research to determine how victims are being recruited in the hospitality industry in their particular countries.

### ***Trafficker Control Structure***

Among the four nations in the sample, hospitality victims in the US were subject to the most abuse, where the most common type of abuse was “psychological.” Globally, among the control types listed, this was also the main type of abuse, with 10% of victims responding “Yes” to the questions involving how their particular traffickers controlled them.

*Social Marketing Implication:* To alleviate problems stemming from trafficker control, nations should consider offering free training in methods of dealing with psychological abuse. This training should target segments of the population who are likely to accept exploitive jobs in the hospitality industry. This would especially apply for those who are seeking exploitive jobs in the US.

### ***Summary Metrics***

The global *Trafficking Misery Score* for adults in the hospitality industry was 1.4 on a scale of 1 to 5 (unfavorable). Note, this is the same score as for the aggregate global sample of  $n = 84,000$  in Table 10. In the hospitality setting, the USA had the least favorable TMS (USA = 2.1) among the four nations. However, when relative prevalence is considered (i.e., *Weighted Trafficking Misery Score*), Turkey has earned the least favorable score (TMSw = 2.17) compared with the four nations and the global aggregate. The global *Weighted Trafficking Misery Index* (TMIw) is the most descriptive, as it incorporates the greatest number of variables (eleven). The result is that the US has the most favorable score (USA = -3.34), as a negative number indicates low misery. The US metric is also more favorable than the global score. Turkey has the least favorable score (-.83) as it is the closest to the positive numbers (indicating high misery). Technically, there is no upper limit, because there is no limit to a nation’s relative prevalence relative to the global mean. The *Enslavement Rate* for this sample is highest for the US (ER = 44%). This percentage is far less favorable than the global mean of 11%.

*Social Marketing Implications:* Countries vary in their summary scores. Thus, a country segmentation approach should be considered. Those with relatively high prevalence scores should consider increasing awareness of the human trafficking in hospitality. Those with high *severity* problems should search for creative ways to inform and warn potential victims.

### ***3P’s Allocation***

We used the Murray, Shea, and Solin (2021) approach to recommend resource allocation among each of the 3Ps. We found that roughly 86% of global resources targeting hospitality victims should be allocated to *protection*, with roughly equal percentages allocated for *prosecution* and *prevention*. See Table 11.

*Social Marketing Influence Strategies:* Since the majority of global hospitality victims are Willing Assimilators, the main influence strategy, consistent with Frazier and Sheth (1985) and Murray et. al (2015) should be to “*radically confront*” those who are planning to work in hospitality in high-risk places such as US. The idea would be to offer them basic necessities and try to persuade them to accept them. Only “*moderate confrontation*” should target victims in countries where there is a low risk of enslavement (e.g., Romania, Philippines, and Turkey). Essentially, the idea is to offer potential victims physical aid, and inform them of the risks. Globally, appropriate interventions from Table 3 should be incorporated for Disillusioned Contrastors (e.g., “counter information”), Tricked and Trapped (e.g., make “Requests”) and Peaceful Displacers (e.g., offer a “Rational Appeal”). The Philippines should offer interventions for Peaceful Displacers as well.

**Summary**

We used the Murray et. al (2015) the nine Victim Intervention Marketing metrics as a basis to construct additional metrics. The most encompassing one was the Weighted Trafficking Misery Index, as it includes Relative Prevalence. We applied the metrics to the 185 adults who were trafficked in the hospitality industry. Overall, we found that adult human trafficking victims in the hospitality industry are suffering moderately. They suffer most severely when they are trafficked in the US. Presumably, they may suffer greatly, too, in countries beyond those in this study. The victim experience, and, therefore, social marketing interventions, should vary by country. Much emphasis should be placed on providing victims with food, clothing and shelter, and other necessities. Exploitation in the hospitality industry has the tone of labor trafficking. However, it should be noted that nearly half of the women victimized in hospitality are being trafficked for sex rather than for traditional labor. Therefore, interventions should specifically target female sex trafficking victims as a large segment.

**Table 7: Victim Participation Structure Metrics for the Hospitality Industry**

Victim Type	Romania	Philippines	USA	Turkey	Global
Willing Assimilators %	100	67	33	100	71
Disillusioned Contrastors %	--	--	24	--	6
Tricked and Trapped %	--	--	44	--	11
Peaceful Displacers %	--	33	--	--	12
Responsible Martyrs %	--	--	--	--	--
Enlightened Apostates %	--	--	--	--	--
Stockholmers %	--	--	--	--	--
Karmic Acceptors %	--	--	--	--	--

Trapped and Robbed %	--	--	--	--	--

**Table 8: Victim Recruitment Structure Metrics for the Hospitality Industry**

Recruiter	Romania	Philippines	USA	Turkey	Global
Unanswered %	100	67	41	100	72
Other %	--	35	35	--	10
Family %	--	20	--	--	4
Friend %	--	--	--	--	8
Intimate Partner %	--	--	--	--	0

**Table 9: Trafficker Control Structure Metrics for the Hospitality Industry**

Type of Control	Romania	Philippines	USA	Turkey	Global
Not Specified %	100	--	13	100	34
None %	--	100	--	--	--
Psychological Abuse %	--	--	41	--	10
Threats %	--	--	35	--	9
Threats of Law Enforcement %	--	--	33	--	8
Debt Bondage %	--	--	30	--	8
Takes Earnings %	--	--	26	--	7
False Promises %	--	--	20	--	5
Excessive Work Hours %	--	--	11	--	3
Physical Abuse %	--	--	8	--	8
Withholds Documents %	--	--	7	--	2
Restricts Movement %	--	--	2	--	1
Restricts Medical Care %	--	--	2	--	1
Other %	--	--	2	--	1

**Table 10: Summary Metrics for Victim Intervention Marketing in the Hospitality Industry**

Metric	Romania	Philippines	USA	Turkey	Global
Trafficking Misery Score (1-5 high)	1	1.33	<u>2.1</u>	1	1.4
Prevalence (GSI)	7.5	7.8	3.3	<u>15.6</u>	7.2
Prevalence Wt.	1.04	1.08	.46	<u>2.17</u>	1
Trafficking Misery Score (Wtd.)	1.04	1.43	.96	<u>2.17</u>	1.4
Trafficking Intervention Score (1-5 high)	4	4.67	4.3	<u>3</u>	3
Trafficking Misery Index (-4 - +4 high)	-3	-3.34	-2.2	<u>-2</u>	-1.6
Trafficking Misery Index (Weighted)	-2.96	-3.24	-3.34	<u>-.83</u>	-1.6
Enslavement Rate (%)	0	0	<u>44</u>	0	11
Deception Rate (%)	0	0	<u>44</u>	0	

\*\*The least favorable cases in each row are underlined.

**Table 11: 3P's Intervention Resource Allocation Structure for the Hospitality Industry**

3P's Category	Romania	Philippines	USA	Turkey	Global
Prosecution %	5	8	22	5	5
Protection %	90	84	67	90	86
Prevention %	5	8	12	5	9



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# Summary Brief

## Cricket: A Marketing and Ethics Conundrum

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*The game of cricket boasts of the second-largest viewership amongst all sports and yet, fewer than 10 countries play it at the highest level. It is also worth mentioning that cricket is virtually unheard of in many regions of the world. The authors investigate this enigma using game data from the public domain and argue that big data and profligate infusion of technology and cash by the powerful nations leave their (financially and technically) weaker counterparts to bite the dust and consequently, fall behind in cricket rankings. The authors hold the International Cricket Council (ICC) ethically responsible for such dichotomy in terms of team rankings and submit that such negligence towards the weaker playing nations does not bode well for the future of the game. Finally, constructive suggestions to improve the current situation are offered, which can lay the foundation for the future of the game.*

### Introduction

While unbeknownst to many of our readers, the game of cricket, nonetheless, is followed and watched by more than 2.5 billion fans around the world. Thus, cricket's popularity is only second to the other most popular sport—soccer (with a fan following of more than 3.5 billion according to worldatlas.com, 2023). It is perhaps the only sport of its kind to feature as many as three different formats, each with its unique uniform, duration of play, skill-set, equipment, rules, entertainment quotient etc. Obviously, it begs the question as to why a game that is followed by roughly a quarter of the world population is almost unheard of in certain pockets of the world, including the US. The authors conduct trenchant analysis of the game, using data on viewership, infusion of technology and role of data analytics in the modernization of the game and explore how the ICC neglected to bolster the weaker cricket-playing nations. In the process, the ICC created a bicameral ranking structure, where only a handful of the highest-ranked teams have continued to flourish in strength and popularity at the cost of their weaker counterparts, whose rankings have gotten from bad to worse. The authors' research reveals that a multitude of factors—big data, administrative structure and ethical underpinnings to name a few - contribute to the current state of the game, and caution that such state of affairs does not bode well for the future of the 'gentleman's game', with a colonial history and steeped in tradition (Cashman, 2020). Despite the severity of this problem, these issues have barely been addressed through academic research, which provides strong motivation for the current work.

### Background

Since cricket was firmly established in London in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the game has undergone immense changes in terms of format, rules, competitiveness, participation, viewership, and most importantly, the revenue it generates. Despite the game being introduced to North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is virtually unheard of in the US even today, where its fanbase and popularity are nowhere close to baseball, football, basketball, or soccer.

Cricket has undergone major transformation and is unique in the sense that it is currently played in as many as three different formats: a 'Test' format; a 20-over (aka 'Twenty20') version and a 50-over (aka 'One Day') version. Secondly, the major cricket-playing nations created league-style matches (similar to those of the FIFA, NBA, MLB) such as the Indian Premier League and the Big Bash in Australia. The third and perhaps the biggest transformation in the game has been the infusion of technology in every aspect of the game, including in umpiring decisions (Awan et al., 2021; Kapadia et al., 2020). Thus, there has been a proliferation in the use of big data and AI in analyzing the players' strengths and weaknesses, resulting in major changes in the way that players, administrators and spectators view and learn from the game itself. At the same time, however, many of the cricket playing nations who lack technical expertise and financial resources, have fallen way behind—so much so that the next edition of the Men's 'One Day International' World Cup will feature only 10 teams whereas the next ICC Men's T20 World Cup will feature only 20 countries, from among the ICC's 12 Full members and 94 Associate members (ICC website, 2023). In contrast, the next soccer World Cup will host 48 countries from among 211 affiliated associations, (FIFA website, 2023).

### Key Findings

Only Australia, England and India (all Full ICC members) garner the limelight, with Bangladesh, New Zealand, Pakistan, West Indies and Sri Lanka playing second fiddle. The other 94 Associate members – ironically, have been reduced to a footnote in the game, as is evident by the miniscule number of teams who have qualified to play in the next editions of the World Cups. Analyzing the trove of match statistics available on the ICC’s and other country-wise cricket-governing bodies’ websites, as well as authentic sports journal sources, the authors unearth several reasons for the current state of the game.

With the infusion of copious amount of technology and big-data, cricket too has become more competitive, hi tech and interactive (Padli et al., 2023). However, several countries, whose players and coaches struggle to adapt to the rigors of new technology, find this challenging (Weldon et al., 2021). The Associate nations are automatically at a disadvantage compared to their Full members, when it comes to participating in bilateral matches, ability to host international tournaments, and having access to skilled coaches. Ironically, many of these maladies are the results of archaic ranking policies and rules (ICC website), as well as averseness of the top nations to aid their weaker counterparts (Mondal et al., 2021). Further, the gross maldistribution of ICC’s revenue is an unethical bias that further jeopardizes the survival of the weaker cricket-playing nations, whereby 88% of the revenue benefits the Full Members and the remainder goes to the Associates (Chakraborty, 2023). As such, the authors posit that it is unethical to expect the weaker teams to compete with the top teams at the international level.

In conclusion, the implications and ramifications on the game of cricket go much deeper than what meets the ordinary eye. Specifically, the authors argue that its fanbase notwithstanding, the lack of universal acceptance of cricket is the result of several factors, which can be categorized as big-data, administrative, managerial, and ethical-based, to name a few. Even though the 2024 T20 World Cup will be held in North America, cricket is still a pariah in terms of universal recognition. The authors believe that this topic is highly relevant to the conference from the big data analytics and ethics perspectives, hoping that it will generate considerable interest among its participants.

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# Summary Brief

## SmartPLS Application: Formulating Effective Policy Guidelines Against Luxury Brand Counterfeiting

Md Shahidul Islam, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay  
Muhammad M. Mollah, California State University, Los Angeles

This research aims to investigate to explore how enforcement activism influences the deterrence of counterfeit activities, fosters moral awareness regarding illegal counterfeit consumption, and alters consumers' perspectives on counterfeiting to mitigate its prevalence. The study draws upon the *Theory of Moral Reasoning* (Kohlberg, 1976) and *Deterrence Theory* (Peace et al., 2003). Employing a *partial least squares structural equation modeling* (PLS-SEM) approach, the authors assessed the relationships within the proposed conceptual model. Additionally, *Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CCA)* was utilized to evaluate both the measurement and structural models. The findings from both methodologies indicate that enforcement activism plays a crucial role in indirectly shaping consumers' intentions to purchase counterfeit goods, with mediation through deterrence actions against counterfeiters and consumers' attitudes toward counterfeiting. Managerial and theoretical implications are also discussed.

**Keywords:** counterfeiting, deterrence, enforcement, intellectual property, brand passion.

## **Session 12.4: Saturday School**

**Chair:** Terry Motley

## Summary Brief

# Post-Pandemic Failure Rates: Observations and Longitudinal Data

Timothy H. Reisenwitz, Valdosta State University, USA

*This study reports issues related to the increase in student failure rates due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. Observations are drawn from the recent literature, personal communications, and longitudinal data on failure rates from an Introduction to Marketing course that was taught by the same instructor over a nearly 20-year period. Course materials were updated over time, however, the basic pedagogy remained the same. The longitudinal data shows that failure rates were at a 12.5% average from Spring 2003 until the Pandemic, when averages spiked to 37%, 54%, 47.5%, and 51% for Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring, 2022, respectively. Possible options for both faculty and administrators are suggested.*

### The Coronavirus Pandemic and Failure Rates in Education

The interruption of the educational process due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic has resulted in negative consequences. Numerous studies have supported the decline in student performance as a result of the Pandemic (e.g., Bird, Castleman, & Lohner, working paper; Garcia & Weiss, 2020; Hammerstein, Konig, Dreisorner, & Frey; Kim, Lee, Line, & Kang, 2021; Kuhfeld, Soland, Lewis, & Morton, 2022). There has been a widespread increase of failure rates at colleges and universities, which has been well-documented in academic journals and elsewhere (personal communication, The Center for eLearning, May 6, 2022). A Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at a medium-sized southeastern university, stated that a dramatic increase in class failure rates is a problem that transcends disciplines, is a problem that is due to many reasons, all of which are related to the Pandemic, and is a problem that will probably continue for some time (personal communication, Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, May 6, 2022). Furthermore, Dr. Brightman, founder and moderator of The Harvey J. Brightman Master Teacher Program, discussed the high failure rates for 2021. He stated that high failure rates exist in K-12 as well as colleges and universities due to a number of factors related to the Pandemic. However, Dr. Brightman could offer no specific suggestions to address high failure rates as a result of the Pandemic (personal communication, Dr. H. Brightman, May 12, 2022).

Additionally, there is a substantial amount of longitudinal data regarding an Introduction to Marketing course and its past failure rates. The data in Table 1 begin in 2003. The course was taught by the same instructor, who used the same pedagogy throughout the nearly 20-year period: four exams and a final with the lecture delivery method. As a result of the Pandemic, exam administration was moved online. Classes were held via Zoom during the Pandemic. The following table summarizes the failure rates for the Introduction to Marketing course.

**Table 1: An Introduction to Marketing Course with Respective Failure Rates (%)**

Spring 2003	12	Fall 2009	10	Spring 2020*	10
	12	Fall 2010	6		5
Summer 2003	17	Spring 2011	15	Summer 2020	10
	15		8	Fall 2020**	34
Fall 2003	17.5	Fall 2011	12		40
Spring 2004	12	Spring 2013	5	Spring 2021***	60
	14		24		48
Summer 2004	5	Spring 2016	23	Fall 2021***	60
	3.1	Summer 2016	8		35
Summer 2005	20.5	Fall 2016	24	Spring 2022***	53
					49

\*Exams online after Exam 2, no proctoring

\*\*Exams later in the semester were administered online with proctoring software

\*\*\*All exams administered online with proctoring software

Prior to Fall 2020, failure rates range from 3.1% to 24% with a mean or average failure rate of 12.5%. The dramatic increase in failure rates begins in the Fall 2020 semester and continues into the 2021 semester. Averages spiked to 37%, 54%, 47.5%, and 51% for Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022, respectively. It was at this time that Hyflex was required as a delivery method due to the Pandemic (Fall 2020 and Spring 2021). Online administration of exams (versus hard copy) via proctoring software, Respondus Lockdown Browser, was required with Hyflex. Online exam administration has continued. Aside from updating the materials, the basic pedagogy for this class has not changed.

### **Changes in Admissions Standards as a Result of the Pandemic**

The reduction in admissions requirements by many colleges and universities may be another contributing factor to recent poor student performance, which increased during the Pandemic. Moody (2021) noted that accessing ACT and SAT scores were difficult in the early months of the Pandemic and many testing sessions were canceled due to safety concerns. This limited access led schools to suspend and reevaluate testing requirements. Some institutions have minimized the importance of standardized tests and are labeled, “test-optional” colleges. This relaxation of admission standards exacerbated poor student performance and higher failure rates.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

High failure rates are not healthy for the long-term success of a college or university due to accompanying increases in attrition as students are expelled due to poor academic performance or they simply give up and leave. There are possible options for faculty and administrators to address the recent high failure rates. First, no action could be taken with the anticipation that failure rates will soon return to their lower pre-Pandemic levels. Second, faculty could engage in “creative ways” to adjust final grades (grade inflation) before they issue final grades. Third, faculty and/or administrators could engage in offering voluntary or mandatory remedial courses, workshops, and/or seminars for students in order to motivate them to apply themselves in a more productive way academically.

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# Summary Brief

## “A Place for My Stuff:” Course Augmentation in Compressed Schedules

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*Instructors have long sought ways to enhance courses with relevant examples, exercises, and immersive experiences for their students. Over the years, a particular teacher will have accumulated numerous options to include in assigned courses. Students generally like to have textbook or lecture information and examples brought to life by these types of course augmentations. However, given the reduction in course schedule length in the recent education environment, a commensurate reduction of the number of augmentation options is often necessary to enable coverage of the required knowledge and skills for a particular course. This study seeks to describe various approaches marketing scholars are implementing, such as streamlining current exercises, changing the type of exercises assigned, and/or reducing the number of assignments. The full study will include information from multiple scholars; examples are provided from the author's experience for several types of compressed schedules. Findings from the study will benefit marketing professors experiencing their first compressed schedules by providing examples of success.*

### Course Augmentation

Instructors want their students to learn the concepts, theories, techniques, and practices associated with each particular course they teach. Knowledge acquisition, and the ability to apply that knowledge in meaningful ways is especially important for business students, as they are often expected to “hit the ground running” by applying work-relevant skills early in their employment. Thus, many instructors have spent significant time seeking ways to increase those valuable outcomes (Goi, 2019; Cadotte, 2016; Arora and Arora, 2015; Maher and Hughner, 2005). From learning new techniques for teaching, reviewing and adopting supplemental course material, to designing courses so that students have ample opportunities to apply what they're learning throughout the duration of a particular course.

### Time Compression

A new wrinkle has been increasingly present in the past decade that makes the environment for instructors augmenting a course more challenging. Time compression, sometimes referred to as schedule compression, refers to shrinking the academic term to ever shorter lengths of time (Giambatista and Hoover, 2019; St. Peter and Butler, 2011; Ewer, 2002; ). Many instructors have taught for years in sessions that are traditionally short—summer, winter, and intersession (usually two weeks just after a spring term) are the most common. Thus, they have faced decisions on what material and/or application exercises to remove or reduce to fit the amount of time students will have available. However, more institutions are implementing shorter term formats within traditionally full semesters. Here again, many instructors have likely taught courses in half-semester terms and have thus made decisions regarding how much and what they might remove to fit the time environment.

Although the days of full semesters, with time available for traditional techniques such as lecture, discussion, and entire class sessions held in the field or in a lab, are becoming less common, they are not over. Some schools have made their online offerings available in shorter formats while keeping the full semester in place. The following sections offer an overview of the types of course augmentation that the author has used in a strategic marketing course in several different session lengths.

### Course Augmentation in Traditional Settings

“Actually, this is just a place for my stuff, ya know? That's all; a little place for my stuff. That's all I want, that's all you need in life, is a little place for your stuff, ya know? I can see it on your table, everybody's got a little place for their stuff. This is my stuff, that's your stuff, that'll be his stuff over there.” - George Carlin

For many years full terms consisted of 15-week semesters and full semester courses were the mainstay. Some colleges and universities (e.g., University of Cincinnati and Stanford) utilized the quarter system of about ten weeks. Instructors in these settings will have already practiced some of the adjustments discussed for. The length of semesters

made it practical for many types of instruction and augmentations. We next describe the augmentations for a graduate strategic marketing course and an undergraduate consumer behavior course.

For strategic marketing, a 17-chapter textbook was utilized. Teams were formed based on student undergraduate major and work experience to arrive at teams with a diversity of thought and approaches. The course consisted of lecture, discussion, exercises, exams, and an eight-quarter strategic marketing simulation. Two exercises were planned for the first four weeks to allow a review of team cohesiveness and performance. If necessary, changes to the team composition were made based on this review. Three exercises were used during the simulation to allow students to practice using models that could be applied by teams during simulation decision making. Teams prepared a simulation report on completion of the competition and individual students prepared a short report on their experience during the simulation.

### **Course Augmentation in Half-Semester Settings**

“Sometimes you leave your house to go on vacation. And you gotta take some of your stuff with you. . . . about two big suitcases full of stuff. You gotta take a smaller version of your house. You get down to the hotel in Honolulu and you put away your stuff. . . . even though you're far away from home, you start to feel okay, because after all, you do have some of your stuff with you.” - George Carlin

For strategic marketing, a twelve-chapter textbook was utilized to enable coverage of most course material prior to starting the simulation. As before, teams were formed based on student undergraduate major and work experience to arrive at teams with a diversity of thought and approaches. The course consisted of lecture, discussion, exercises, chapter quizzes, and the same marketing simulation used in the full semester. One exercise was used in the first week and team cohesiveness and performance was noted. If necessary, changes to the team composition were made based on this review. Three exercises were used during the simulation to allow students to practice using models that could be applied by teams during simulation decision making. Instead of one week per quarter in the simulation for quarters 1-5 and about three days for quarters 6-8, the shorter term necessitated allowing five days each for the first four quarters, three days for Q5, and two days each for the final three quarters. Teams prepared a simulation report on completion of the competition and individual students prepared a reflection on their experience during the simulation, instead of a formal report.

### **Course Augmentation in Shorter Term Settings**

#### **Shorter Term Settings, from 2 to 4 weeks, including hybrid (online, classroom, video)**

For shorter terms, it is often necessary to omit some assignments, use shorter format simulations (e.g., 3-6 quarters instead of 8), and assign work preceding and even after session meetings have concluded. When teaching the strategic marketing course in conjunction with a partner in Europe, students completed some elements before the instructor's ten-day in-person class meetings and then finished the final three quarters of the simulation and accompanying reports once the instructor had returned to the U.S. Thus, models of many types might be tested in such short-term hybrid settings. If such work were not possible for this particular course, a simulation would not be used to apply learned theories and concepts.

### **Course Augmentation in . . .**

“That's when your friend says, ‘Aaaaay, I think tonight we'll go over the other side of the island, visit a pal of mine and maybe stay over.’ ‘Aww, no. NOW what do you pack? Right- you gotta pack an even SMALLER version of your stuff. The fourth version of your house. Only the stuff you know you're gonna need. Money, keys, comb, wallet . . . ‘ - George Carlin

For instructors new to compressed schedules, seeking information from colleagues in their department, college, and university can help them understand what has been done and how well it worked. Beyond their institutional setting, research on new ways to augment courses can help identify and disseminate best practices. It is difficult to imagine teaching a course in a higher education setting in less than two weeks. However, a professor in the first author's doctoral program once joked that he had asked permission to teach an entire retail management course over a single weekend. At least we *hope* he was joking.

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