Experiential Marketing in an Age of Hyper-Connectivity

Navigating the Customer Experience Journey

Edited by

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PREFACE

Introduced by Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Schmidt (1999) a few decades ago, the concept of experiential marketing has emerged as a response to the shift towards the experience economy and the progression of value towards experiences. However, over the last twenty years, the consumption landscape has changed drastically. The omnipresence of the internet, social media, online communities, and, more recently, virtual and augmented reality, robotics, digital sensory worlds, and immersive digital spaces have brought about potentially lasting changes in the everyday consumption space. Consumers and brands have found that traditional marketing, with focus on functional features and benefits, emphasizing rationality of consumer decision making, and narrowly defining product categories and competition require adaptation to the new realities. Enter experiential marketing, the alternative to traditional marketing in the context of a changing landscape, the hyperconnected world, which eventually turned to be a nurturing environment for experiential marketing, and therefore to scholars and practitioners of the discipline. Gradually, academic and practitioner interest has proliferated towards understanding, and explaining the consequences of, activities and strategies that have at their core, the experience of, and from, product and service offerings.

Embracing the experience focus by companies and consumers alike, resulted in a large lexicon of a plethora of terms related to experiential marketing, such as experience marketing, customer experience marketing, user experience, experiential consumption, experiential purchase, experience design, experiential value, among many others. Thus, there is a lot of value, for companies and for their customers, to focus on each of these areas. For the scholars of experience, however, there is an impetus to obtain better distinction and a clearer delineation between all these terms, concepts, and strategies, that have at their core the essence of experience.

We note that the term “experience” is rich in its nature, focus and dynamics. Experience can describe both an action and a state. Within the context of experiential marketing, an experience can be used to describe not only the process through which a brand becomes known to a customer, but also the act of interaction and participation at each brand touch point, the resulting affective state, and even the final outcome as acquired by skill or learning.

Further, experiences themselves range in intensity from mundane to extraordinary and memorable, and summarize the consolidated and integrated information received through all our senses. Thus, a better understanding of experiential marketing, as a strategic focus of a company, must start with a clear definition of the experience employed. A larger implication of this observation is that the field will be able to move forward by developing better and more innovative measures of the experience.

Although extant literature has conceptualized and defined customer experience in various ways (e.g., Verhoef et al. 2009; Lemke et al. 2010), based on Klaus and Maklan 2013; p. 228), we define customer experience as 'the customer's cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with the firm, relating to their purchasing behavior'. As such, customer experience holds the cumulative assessment arising from a longer process of brand–customer interaction across multiple channels, elicited through functional, sensorial, and emotional clues. Thus, we must go beyond traditional marketing to meet consumers' interest driven by the rich environment in which consumption occurs. Indeed, research shows that, over time, consumers' preferences shift toward more experiential purchases, that is, purchases with an experience component, such as travel or concerts, because in many instances, these purchases can provide greater satisfaction, and happiness (Gilovich, Kumar and Jampol 2015). For consumers, experiential purchases tend to evoke fewer negative feelings, and fewer social comparisons than material purchases. In fact, they can even be a bigger part of our identity than material purchases.

For business, experiential marketing can be the differentiating force in a commoditized marketplace cluttered with very similar core offerings. A well-planned and designed experience, through which consumers interact with the brand at the many touchpoints during the customer experience journey, can be the ultimate success factor and help establish a lasting association between the consumers and the brand. This concept has already become, or on its way to becoming a promising marketing strategy. As firms are not insulated from the hyperconnected physical and digital world in which they operate, adapting to and embracing experiential marketing is how organizations that successfully manage the online shopping experience and bridge the offline and online realms achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Firms should consciously create, measure and improve customer experience touch points at each stage of the customer experience journey, as part of delivering their customer value proposition. Creating a unique marketing experience by engaging consumers on multiple personal levels will have a strong impact on consumers' behavior, which can affect their

purchase and repurchase intentions, loyalty, and ultimately the financial performance of the firm.

To further showcase the importance of experiential marketing in a hyperconnected world, we have edited a collection of readings that introduce the reader to some of the critical concepts within the field of experiential marketing, covering a broad range of contexts. Such a broad focus enables us to address some of the themes critical to experiential marketing, as included in the sections below.

Section 1: The state of experience and experiential marketing

The objective of this section is to introduce critical research questions that prevail in the academic world and offer scholars of experiential marketing a few starting points for future research. One of the most difficult aspects of embracing experiential marketing is the unclear distinction and delineation among the offerings, which can include tangible offerings from clothing to experiences and personal transformations, and the strategies and tactics associated with the implementation of an experiential marketing strategy. To this end, in the introductory chapter, titled "Customer Experience and Experiential Marketing: a Research Framework", Dr. Batat provides a clear description of the concept of customer experience, including the importance of the multitude of touch points between a customer and the brand, and emerging strategies designed around integrating experiences in the overall experiential marketing strategy. This chapter also sheds light onto valuable research methods and focuses on qualitative research and its potential to gain deeper insights into the experiential marketing.

In the second chapter, "Awe Experience and Consumer Behavior", Dr. Park and Dr. Howlett expand on one of the core elements of the experience economy, introducing the experience of awe, its nature, and psychological consequences. In understanding the future of experiential marketing and the marketing potential of experiential transformations, the researchers draw attention towards a less researched type of experience, which, in the context of the Covid 19 era, has the potential to become a central issue. Among elements central to awe are feelings of connectedness others, and the collective aspect of experience. Given the fact that Covid 19 has completely transformed how we all connect, communicate with each other, including our collective perception of the future, we believe that awe experiences hold a great future potential for research.

Section 2: the experiential consumption environment

The second section brings together a focused approach regarding the role that physical, digital, and sensorial stimuli play in experiential marketing. In the first chapter of this section, titled "Experiential Conspicuous Consumption on Social Media", Dr. Anlamlier highlights the role of social media, as an omnipresent environment, within which, the consumption of material products can shift owners' perceptions from material to experiential at the post-purchase phase. The author describes how the experiential framework of Sense, Feel, Think, Act and Relate connects with social media and explain the essential features of social media that require alignment with experiential product characteristics. In the second chapter of this section, titled "Lifestyle Fashion Retailing in China: Redesigning the Consumer Journey", Ms. Yini Chen and Dr. Ting Chi focus on the design of shopping experiences in physical stores. The authors pay attention to environmental stimuli and employ a qualitative study to reveal how lifestyle fashion stores could induce positive internal states and favorable hedonic and utilitarian evaluations for their customers. In the third chapter in this section, titled "Capitalizing on the crossmodal correspondences between audition and olfaction in the design of multisensory experiences", Dr. Carlos Velasco and Dr. Charles Spence provide an experimental view on how soundscape and olfactory stimuli influence consumers evaluations in the context of a hedonic product. As researchers and practitioners are increasingly looking to incorporate audio-olfactory associations in the design of multisensory experiences, the authors present interesting future opportunities that can systematically influence human experience.

Section 3: a practical perspective on experiential marketing

The final section brings to the reader more practical and innovative approaches regarding customer experiences and experiential marketing. In the first chapter of the section, titled "Experiential Marketing: A supporting Role for Promotional Products", Dr. Jaime Noriega takes a practitioners' approach and makes the case for using promotional products as a vehicle for implementing an experiential marketing focus, where functional and/or aesthetically attractive and interesting promotional products can influence a consumer to experience extemporaneous thoughts not just about the brand, but also about the attributes for which the brand is known. In the concluding chapter titled "Understanding customer experience: asymmetry effects of touchpoints on hotel booking decision", Dr. Kim highlights the hyperconnected

world of today's consumption environment defining a customer's journey. Dr. Kim's experimental findings highlight the distinctive influences of customer experience collected from different touchpoints on customer decisions.

In conclusion, firms and brands have started to consciously move away from considering experiential marketing simply as a tactic within the existing marketing campaigns. Experiential marketing has come of age to become a significant part of the customer value delivery strategy and is occupying a more central role in brands' overall marketing strategy. Thoughtful use of technology to augment experiences, the consideration the customer experience throughout their entire consumption journey, and a focus on creating immersive experiences by using all emerging senses will prove beneficial to firms implementing a customer experience strategy. To that end, we are excited to present thoughtfully selected articles that can provide researchers, doctoral students, and practitioners with a primer on experiential marketing and also a roadmap for future research in this fast-growing field.

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

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SECTION 1:

THE STATE OF EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

Chapter 1

Customer Experience and Experiential Marketing: A Research Framework

Wided Batat

The Founder of the Experiential Marketing Mix (7Es), Entrepreneur, Researcher, and Professor

Abstract

At the heart of the new paradigm of experiential marketing, the customer experience is a holistic and multidimensional concept. It refers to the set of emotions and feelings felt by a customer before, during, and after purchasing a product or service. It is the result of all the interactions a customer can have with the brand or the company. Therefore, the customer experience is the complex result of heterogeneous elements and factors involved in the customer journey. Besides, the nature and components of the customer experience can vary greatly depending on the field of activity, perspective, and framework. In some domains, the customer experience will be essentially felt at the point of sale/service, while in others, it may be much more fragmented across different touchpoints. It is also centered on the experience of using the product. Thus, the implementation of successful experiential marketing strategies requires a good understanding of what customer experience is and what its components are to adapt marketing tools to the profile and characteristics of the new consumer's behaviors both online and offline. In this chapter, I shed light on the shift in paradigm from traditional marketing to experiential marketing. Then, I explain the principles of the experiential approach to understand how the experience concept has been transferred to the marketing field. Finally, the foundations for new experiential marketing will be developed in line with the evolution of consumer behaviors and the emergence of new consumption trends to offer businesses and scholars comprehensive insights in terms of experiential strategies.

"Experience is a concept that is unavoidable in contemporary marketing strategies to the point that almost all products and services are now sold as – experience."
(Wided Batat, Experiential Marketing, Routledge, 2019)

In the current context characterized by the evolution and diversification of the offerings, the dominance of communication technologies, and the rise of new consumer trends, companies should question their marketing model as well as the methodological tools to analyze the marketplace and emerging behaviors alongside physical and symbolic needs of consumers. On the one hand, the advent of new hedonic consumers, better-informed, and seeking pleasant and memorable experiences (Batat, 2019) highlights the importance for marketers to go beyond a purely utilitarian consumption logic, which is limited to the usage value and the functional benefits that the consumer can derive from the consumption and purchase processes. On the other hand, the recent COVID-19 global pandemic crisis that occurred in late 2019 has emphasized the importance for firms to focus more on consumers' emotions and offer experiences where consumers can feel enchanted, as stated by Batat (2020): "*In the 'new normal,' companies should implement a more bottom-up marketing strategy. Thinking needs to shift from a product-centric to a more customer-centric logic as well as from traditional marketing—based on the 4Ps or 7Ps of Kotler—to the new experiential marketing and its 7Es.*"

Therefore, integrating consumers' perceptions and their experiential, symbolic, hedonic, ideological, subjective, and emotional needs into the offer is vital to create a competitive advantage by enhancing consumer enchantment (e.g., Batat, 2019; Schmitt, 1999; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Following an experiential perspective, the act of consumption is no longer seen in terms of destruction but rather as an activity where the consumer can create meanings and new usages within a predefined sociocultural context. Consequently, companies should focus on consumers' functional needs and provide the consumer with consumption and purchase experiences full of emotions and pleasure that generate memorable sensations.

Prior marketing studies (e.g., Schmitt, 2010; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) have emphasized the importance of adapting marketing tools to better understand the consumer experience and its dimensions in all business sectors, ranging from tourism and culture to ordinary consumer activities. Therefore, the application of experiential marketing is essential to design innovative and emotional consumer experiences that are both satisfying and profitable. Companies need to change their way of thinking and doing by integrating at the center of their

strategies and business models the consumer through promoting strategic thinking by adopting a consumer-centric approach. This approach requires adapting marketing tools to better understand and analyze the components of the experience, the profile and characteristics of the new consumer, and off and online consumption practices (Schmitt, 1999). This chapter will first explain the shift in paradigm from traditional marketing to experiential marketing. We then outline the principles of the experiential approach by explaining the genesis of the experiential theory to understand how the experience concept has been transferred to the marketing field. The thoughts that structure experiential marketing will be developed in line with the evolution of consumer behaviors and the emergence of new consumption trends to provide companies and marketing scholars with rich insights through exploratory research approaches, which both practitioners and researchers in marketing could consider.

From Traditional to Experiential Marketing: The Paradigm Shift

Consumption has transformed, since the 1970s, into an activity where the consumers have become emotional and social actors (e.g., Ingwer, 2012; Arnould and Price, 1993), seeking unique and pleasurable experiences while satisfying their functional needs (Alderson, 1957). Following this logic, Batat (2019) has recently emphasized the limits of the traditional marketing approach based on using the marketing mix of 4Ps or 7Ps (Kotler, 1986), a dominant tool that is still used nowadays by marketing professionals as well as in academia.

According to Batat, the transition from a cognitive process based on a utilitarian logic that has long prevailed in the marketing field to an experiential approach can be reflected in a change in the paradigm linked to the questioning of established behaviorist models (e.g., Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch, 2004) that highlight the process of information processing by the consumer. Therefore, the limitation related to traditional marketing that follows a cognitive logic is mainly associated with the definition of the consumer as a rational economic actor and decision-maker, which is considered as a narrow vision that does not help companies and scholars capture the paradoxes and the irrational behaviors of consumers (e.g., Batat and Frochot, 2013; Batat and Wohlfeil, 2009; Bandura, 1977). Thus, adopting an experiential approach allows companies to deepen their understanding of consumers' behaviors and the meanings they assign to their consumption

experiences embedded within a specific sociocultural setting (Batat, 2015) and are shaped by many macro forces (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

The experiential approach has been recognized in the area of consumer behavior since the late 1950s by questioning two basics of the consumer behavior model: product evaluation and consumer rationality (Batat and Frochot, 2013; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Regarding product evaluation, the idea behind this questing is related to the statement that products cannot be limited to their tangible attributes because they do carry meanings and other symbolic aspects that consumers may value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon, 2002; Holbrook, 1999; 1994). As a foundation in behaviorist models, consumer rationality does not integrate emotions as an essential component in decision-making. For instance, compulsive behavior and buying fashion and luxury products are among the purchase experiences that lead us to question consumer rationality and product limits, which only consider physical features (Pullman and Gross, 2004). That is why to understand better the complexity of consumer behavior and the decision-making process, marketing researchers and professionals should integrate other elements such as consumers' meanings, situational factors, previous experiences, and the emotions generated, which can positively or negatively affect both the purchase and the consumption experiences.

Prior research that examined the characteristics leading to the differentiation between the traditional and the experiential approach in marketing (e.g., Batat, 2019; Schmitt, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1999,1998; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) identified three main factors to explain the shift in the paradigm: the type of the product, the characteristics of the consumer behavior purchase process, and the competition on the marketplace. Thus, while traditional marketing does not integrate the emotional dimension and consumer's subjectivity, experiential marketing allows companies to go beyond the pure satisfaction of the needs expressed by consumers who would be more interested in living experiences full of emotions, pleasure, hedonism, socialization, sharing value, and recognition (e.g., Firat, Sherry, and Venkatesh, 1994; Ward, 1974). Therefore, the rise of the experiential approach in marketing has created a new experience economy (Gilmore and Pine, 2002), which have two key fundamentals: designing an experiential package in which the experience constitutes a new offering and considering the experiential value that comes from the interaction of the individual with the product/service as the outcome of the experience. Table 1 summarizes the main differences between traditional marketing and experiential marketing.

Table 1: Traditional Marketing vs. Experiential Marketing

	TRADITIONAL MARKETING	EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING
FOCUS	Functional and benefits of products	The meanings of consumer experiences
PRODUCT	The product and the competitors are closely defined	Consumption is a holistic experience
CONSUMER	The consumer is a rational decision-maker	The consumer is irrational and emotional
METHOD	Quantitative (questionnaires)	Immersive, ethnography, subjective introspection

The experiential approach applied in the marketing field was born with the works of the researchers Holbrook and Hirschman, who published two founding articles on the topic. The first one on the hedonic consumer behavior (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), and the second article, lays the foundations of the experiential theory in consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Having identified the limits of traditional marketing theories mentioned earlier in this chapter, these scholars proposed a theoretical framework, which can overlap with the conventional approaches in different consumption settings. Nevertheless, Holbrook and Hirschman did not reject traditional marketing (e.g., Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2010; Kotler and Keller, 2006) and its behaviorist consumption theories (Kotler, 1986), but recommended developing a new analytical framework for certain types of consumption domains such as leisure, art, culture, and entertainment. Their model aimed to respond to the behaviors that were differentiated by consumers' emotional response, sensorial aspects, and attraction to playfulness.

Therefore, the experiential approach invites marketing professionals and scholars to rethink marketing research and strategies (Kozinets, 2002; Zaltman, 1997) and the tools in the light of the new experiential context studied. Thus, the interest is related to sensory and non-verbal stimuli, thanks to tangible and verbal ones (Agar, 2011). The main difference between experiential marketing and traditional marketing is the purpose of the consumption, which no longer focuses on maximizing the usefulness of a good, but more on maximizing lived experience, which is evaluated on symbolic and aesthetic criteria (Batat, 2019). As a result, consumers will seek to maximize their emotional benefits and evaluate the experience based

on the pleasure they derive from it. In this perspective, we no longer measure the experience in the light of customer satisfaction but more about the intensity of the memory and the pleasure that constitute an integral part of consumer enchantment. For example, Lush, a chain of stores, develops cosmetics based on essential oils produced from organic plant materials (fruits and vegetables) offers real customer experiences in the cosmetics market by focusing on the consumer's senses to transform their purchase experience. Lush, therefore, stimulates several senses such as smell and taste that are enhanced through products that release scents that spread to the streets. The products are also associated with food flavors (e.g., chocolate, sugar, honey, coconut). In this case, offering and designing sensorial experiences instead of products is an essential competitive advantage. As Pine and Gilmore (1990) stated, the services provide the stage, and the goods are the accessories that allow the creation of a memorable consumer experience. Therefore, the memorability of the experience is a crucial element of success as it enhances consumer loyalty and contributes to creating positive word-of-mouth.

For marketers, the experiential perspective has the merit of enriching the understanding of specific consumption and purchasing behaviors, especially in the area of cultural consumer products and leisure activities in general. It also highlights the vital role of emotions in the evaluation and the enhancement during the consumption experience (Cuff et al., 2016; Dewar et al., 2009). Therefore, in following an experiential logic, the company will acknowledge the idea that the aim of the purchase process is not only about consuming a product but about living experiences and interacting with the product (Carù and Cova, 2004) in a particular sociocultural context to immerse the consumer by integrating individual's senses. In experiential marketing, the consumer expresses a growing quest for immersion through varied experiences to explore a multiplicity of new meanings to give to one's life. Thus, for companies, experience constitutes a fourth category of offer alongside commodities, products, and services (Carù and Cova, 2003).

Experience to Keep up With the Emerging Consumer Trends

Today, companies are witnessing new emerging consumption trends that lead them to consider innovative ways of communicating with new consumers who are becoming more emotional, digital, and paradoxical in their behaviors. Offering experiences instead of products is then a proper way to keep up with the emerging consumer trends and thus create and share

value with their clients (Carù and Cova, 2006). To connect with their customers, companies should rethink their relationship with their customers by emphasizing the symbolic aspects of the meanings these consumers assign to their consumption experiences and the emotions that emerge within their experiences in connection with the company (McCracken, 1986). Therefore, adapting to the advent of these new consumers by changing their marketing paradigm to shift towards a more experiential approach seems necessary for companies to develop a sustainable competitive advantage. To do so, companies have to learn more about the profile and characteristics of the new consumer and which experiences they should offer to fit with the tangible (e.g., quality, functional) and intangible (e.g., social, emotional) needs of the new consumer (McGrath, Sherry, and Levy, 1993). The transition from a logic centered on the product and its tangible attributes to a philosophy focused on the consumption experience of the new consumer can thus be achieved by incorporating three key aspects that characterize the new consumer behavior: engagement, postmodernism, and "phygitized" consumption practices (Batat, 2019). These three aspects are developed in the section below.

Responsible Experiences to Satisfy Engaged Consumers

The new consumers see themselves as responsible market actors who should be engaged in the environment as they are aware of their consumption activities' social, ecological, and economic impacts (e.g., Batat, 2019). The new consumer is more eager to criticize companies and reject brands and products that do not integrate a responsible dimension in their offerings. Consumer responsibility and ethical behaviors have been the subject of extensive works in marketing and consumer behavior literature (e.g., Frochot and Batat, 2013). This responsible consumption, which gives an ethical meaning and a social utility in the act of purchase, leads consumers to develop a thoughtful approach to their consumption activities. Thus, to avoid rejection and connect strongly with this new consumer through the values expressed, companies should integrate into their experiential strategies the fact that today's consumers can no longer be considered as passive market actors and they can express their engagement through their consumption practices (e.g., Heinonen et al., 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The fundamental ideology is to consume what is essential. To behave responsibly, these new consumers assess products when making decisions according to the product's potential to do good or bad at social, economic, and environmental levels. Companies should then adapt to this trend and incorporate socially responsible business practices at all stages from

production to consumption to fit with the needs of these consumers. For example, H&M is now offering a new service that allows consumers to give back their worn clothes that the company will purchase for less than 10 USD. The clothes are classified into four categories: resalable (sold as secondhand items at very affordable prices), reusable (as material to make everyday textiles), recyclable (e.g., to produce energy).

Experiences Adapted to Postmodern Consumers

To understand the foundations, origins, and implications of postmodernism in the field of experiential marketing and consumption, we should first locate the rise of postmodernism in choosing modernity as a starting point in Western societies. Modernity can be grasped according to two dimensions: the economy through industrialization and culture by referring to creativity and transgression (Brown, 1998; Firat, Nikhilesh, and Venkatesh, 1995). In marketing, several scholars have brought various criticisms to the foundations of modernism in the consumption field (Thomas, 1997; Batat, 2019). These critics integrate the idea that consumption and production are not just economic acts but also cultural and experiential processes (Venkatesh, 1992). As a result, the disapproval of modern consumer society has given rise to new forms of consumption, allowing the shift from the "modern" to the "postmodern" era.

Postmodernity, therefore, refers to a structural change in the individual and society linked to the end of a modern period, which had created modernity, and the advent of the digital and experiential age as we know it today (Batat, 2019). Postmodernity offers a rich analytical framework that is adapted to the new experiential era in the post-industrial society, which now expresses intangible, including symbolism and emotions. Following the postmodern logic, new consumer values have emerged, such as ecology, independence, feminism, responsibility, fragmentation, and tolerance. Altogether, these new values generate consumer paradoxes that the company should integrate when designing experiences by broadening the traditional marketing perspective based on an interpretation primarily cognitive of the consumer buying process (Batat, 2019).

Phygital Experiences for Digitized Consumers

Today, new mixed consumption experiences are booming thanks to the ubiquity of digital technologies in our daily lives. According to Castelli (2016), the characteristics of these consumption experiences are not

exclusively physical nor entirely digital. However, they merge the features of the two worlds: digital and physical, which give rise to a third context of consumption in a logic of bringing together the digital and physical context: phygital (Batat, 2019). The phygital environment is a context of consumption integrating gateways set up by companies between the different physical (offline) and digital (online) channels so that customers can switch from one to the other without too much difficulty by guaranteeing them consistency in the experiential journey from the physical context to the digital and vice versa.

The customer experience in the phygital setting represents a significant challenge for companies in the years to come. For companies, it is essential to create effective and efficient digital customer experiences that are embedded in daily habits by using technologies and digital devices (e.g., Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010). For example, the use of beacon technology (a small box with Bluetooth technology that enables the company to exchange with its customers in the store via their smartphones) is an excellent example of the importance of combining physical and digital worlds. These technologies allow companies to digitize the physical customer experience at the point of sale. Quantified-self experience is another example of the phygital customer experience that highlights self-quantified experiences. Consumers appreciate self-quantified experiences when they use apps and connected objects to monitor, control, optimize, and improve their behavior themselves (Kedzior, 2015). Augmented reality, digital concierge services, and experiences derived from 3D printing are examples of phygital experiences.

However, companies today have limited knowledge of what makes these phygital experiences useful to consumers because integrated technologies are new (Batat, 2019). To incorporate new technologies and provide functionally and emotionally satisfying phygital experiences for their customers, companies should then focus on identifying the elements of the phygital customer experience that can create value for them. To meet their customers' needs, companies, therefore, should ensure consistency between the digital customer experience (DCX) and the user experience (UX), since customers do not dissociate the two elements and tend to interpret all events as a unique global experience with the company without distinction (Batat, 2018). For example, a customer can find a pleasant and easy-to-use application (positive UX) and their experience through discussions with the staff of the company that designed the app, after-sales service, assistance, or hotline difficult and unpleasant, which leads to a negative overall digital customer experience (DCX). The opposite is also possible.

To sum up, we can state that by integrating new consumer trends, the company could design coherent, satisfying, and profitable customer experiences throughout different stages that incorporate various components of the overall experiential framework.

The Customer Experience Framework

Customer experience is not a new concept, but its introduction to marketing is recent. Its use in marketing should then be examined through a chronological and multidisciplinary approach to understand its importance in the consumer behavior field (De Keyser et al., 2015). Far from being specific to marketing, the concept of experience was first introduced by philosophers, then in sociology before becoming associated with the consumption and marketing fields. The concept of experience encompasses multiple meanings and includes various stages. There are manifold facets of the experience concept. Following a multidisciplinary review of the literature (e.g., Dewey, 2005; Bourdieu, 1979), we can state that the concept of experience encompasses diverse aspects depending on the perspective and the discipline that studied it. In philosophy, the experience is seen as an ambivalent ideological notion. It signifies the link between individuals with material reality and the formation of knowledge and skills. Yet, at the same time, it is irrational, random, emotional, intangible, and unrelated to the material world. From a philosophical point of view, the experience can be both a starting point and an end. Either it has something to teach us or confirms our knowledge in a confrontation with reality (Batat, 2019).

From a sociocultural perspective, the experience is analyzed according to three primary levels: macro, meso, and micro. In anthropology, John Dewey (1964) defined experience by assigning its individual, symbolic, and cultural dimensions. Experience is, therefore, seen as a source of individualization, which transforms individuals by making them unique and different because they have had experiences that participate in their individualization process. Finally, in marketing and consumer behavior, the customer experience was to replace Customer Relationship Management (CRM), ubiquitous in the 1990s (Payne and Frow, 2004). The interest of researchers and marketers for the new concept of "customer/consumer experience" can be explained by the limits of the CRM that does not incorporate a customer-centric approach and is limited to strategies centered on the product and its physical characteristics, quality improvement, sales through promotional strategies and rewarding customer loyalty.

The different definitions of experience we can find in the marketing literature emphasize the importance of subjectivity and intangible and symbolic dimensions in the purchasing process (e.g., Boddy, 2005; Rambo-Ronai, 1992). The company should then place the consumer at the center of its strategy to reduce the discrepancies between different experiences (e.g., experience expected by the consumer should not be different from the experience wanted by the company). The company can also intervene on the elements that constitute the consumption experience to adjust the offer to the symbolic and emotional needs expressed by consumers. For Pine and Gilmore (1999), the experience should be guided by five key elements: theming, leaving a positive unified impression, eliminating the negative, producing memories that consumers take with them, and engaging the five senses. O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998) identified five dimensions: consumer involvement in the experience, co-production of the consumer in the experience, the relevance of the aspects symbolic of the service, the multifunctionality of the service, and the centrality of experience in the consumer universe of the individual. Many authors have also produced critical elements of the experience that we cannot all list here. Other authors have looked at the conditions that allow the emergence of successful experience; design, sensory marketing, experiencescape, and immersion are critical.

Regarding customer experience stages, marketing scholars (Batat, 2019; Arnould and Price, 1993) state that the consumer experience is part of a longitudinal approach where the time dimension can be divided into four main stages: (1) the anticipation phase of the experience, which brings together activities, information research, budget optimization, planning and expectations in terms of future experiences; (2) the purchasing experience that represents the selection and choice of product and interaction with elements of the point of sale; (3) the experience of consumers who will express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction; and (4) the experience of remembering to relive the previous experience through photographic elements, stories, and discourses classified by the consumer according to significant events. These stages can be analyzed and examined by scholars and companies through using exploratory research methodologies such as ethnography (Arnould, 1998) or subjective introspection (Batat, 2015), which are appropriate methods to capture the "hidden obvious" and tacit meanings of the lived experiences.

Exploratory Research and Customer Experience

In exploratory research, the relevance of insights is increased by the open and not "selective" approach of the researcher who collects everything he/she can see and listen to with as much precision as possible but without prior selection (e.g., Chitakunye, 2012; Ereaut, Imms, and Cullingham, 2002). Exploratory research allows marketing scholars to understand better the market and consumer experiences from a "bottom-up" perspective, whose starting point is the consumer and his/her subjectivity. This approach, therefore, overcomes the limits of quantitative techniques by offering an in-depth and exhaustive analysis of the customer experience through immersion and interaction with consumers using different tools such as ethnography (e.g., Arnould, 1998) or subjective introspection (e.g., Batat, 2015; Gould, 2012; Wohlfeil and Whelan, 2012).

Ethnography is one of the qualitative methodologies that has an exploratory nature and allows marketers and researchers to understand the social interactions between the different market players and capture the symbolic and emotional dimensions that emerge within the experiences of individuals and consumer groups. This immersive method is focused on the individuals and their experiences in a specific sociocultural setting. The main objective is to go beyond the cognitive and rational vision of consumer behavior by incorporating a sociocultural viewpoint. In experiential marketing, ethnography aims to study how experiences and practices are built in a consumer culture and how this culture participates in forming individuals' experiences. Thus, the ethnography uses visual and verbal data through recording behaviors in consumption situations in which the researcher immerses him/herself in the context of consumption studied by socializing with the individuals. The data collection process in a natural setting by the ethnographer, who is seen as a partner, allows him/her to observe the behaviors in real-time instead of reacting to actors on their previous experiences. There are two types of ethnography in marketing: marketing ethnography and market ethnography (Batat, 2019). The first is related to the study of organizations and their marketing actions. The second focuses on studying social actors who constitute the marketplace and the sociocultural context to understand the emerging experiences and behaviors.

For companies, the contribution of market-oriented ethnography to consumer experience understanding is fundamental. Ethnography allows the identification, categorization, and analysis of microcultures and consumer subcultures in which the experiences emerge and are shaped according to

defined codes and standards by community members. While interviews tend to have an individualistic dimension, ethnography looks at consumer groups and communities from a social and collective angle, considering the context where the experience of consumption occurs. Ethnography will then help the researcher capture the emergence of the meaning consumers assign to consumption objects within their experiences.

Regarding personal subjective introspection (SPI), also called auto-ethnography, is a qualitative methodology centered on the individual as an observer of his/her consumption practices and his/her consumer life. This self-centered subjective observation aims to write an introspective narrative dealing with a consumption phenomenon over a period given fueled by personal reflections. To study consumption experiences and functional and symbolic dimensions defined by individuals in their sociocultural context, personal subjective introspection, stemming from experiences of the observer researcher who is also the individual whose behavior is to study, gives access to analyses of the researcher's own experiences (Gould, 2012).

These analyses allow understanding the meanings that the researcher/consumer attributes to his/her consumption experiences. Auto-ethnography gives access to the field 24 hours a day in real daily situations described in a dairy. In the implementation process of the methodological scheme using the SPI, the researcher is an integral part of the study and the group of consumers affected by the phenomenon studied. The researcher can cross his/her reflection on his/her behaviors with other social actors who demonstrate similar practices. Given biases such as subjectivity and lack of perspective, combining SPI with different techniques is recommended to consolidate the results (Batat, 2015). Nevertheless, according to researchers, SPI remains a complete method to understand the experience and its tacit and explicit dimensions. Besides, self-ethnography contributes to a better understanding of consumer experiences and perceptions of consumers where conventional qualitative approaches manifest their limits.

Conclusion

This chapter aims to better understand the experiential approach to marketing scholars and professionals. As shown in the above sections, experience is a vibrant and complex concept, which can be approached through different perspectives, disciplines, and strategies. The primary aim of this chapter was to recall the principles, models, and concepts that structure the experiential approach. Thus, understanding the experience should be reintegrated and analyzed within the broader framework of

consumer cultures, extending the marketing horizon to integrate the sociocultural setting in which the products and services are consumed. In the evolution of marketing, the experiential approach has been particularly relevant because it helped provide marketers and researchers with a coherent and structured approach to examine the concept of experience, which, at first glance, may seem like a vague and abstract concept to seize. At its origins, the experiential approach made it possible to bring an analytical framework particularly relevant for some consumption domains. Over the years, altogether, consumption sectors took hold of the concept of experience, and it has become essential in the provision of services and as a support for the marketing of products.

The experiential approach had the merit of highlighting previously studied concepts but whose recognition was not yet widespread in the business field. Thus, the experiential works were interested in the importance of emotions in consumption processes. We also analyzed in this chapter how the experience breaks down into different stages along the consumption process, and, for each of them, experiential strategies can be developed. The role of consumers in the experiment was also studied, with the notions of co-construction and co-production, which have become essential in customer experience management, and real consumer expectations. We have addressed different elements that allow marketers to manage the experience, whether it is linked to the physical and sensory environment or the digital sphere. The experiential theory is a field of expertise that is constantly evolving, numerous books and research continue to be produced on the subject, and the years to come will undoubtedly witness an advance in increasingly precise and strategic knowledge on this subject. The new technologies will also play a vital role in this evolution, shaping the experience and the methods to study customer experience that will be developed.

Therefore, future research can deepen our understanding of the holistic aspect of experiential marketing by examining customer experience from various angles and perspectives and in different fields. For instance, understanding the luxury consumption experience is critical because of its highly experiential and emotional dimensions. Besides, future studies can focus on the components we identified in this chapter to provide scholars and practitioners with a better understanding of the complexity of the experiential way of thinking, which can help to create experiences tailored to the tangible and intangible needs of customers in a new phygital, defined as "*the third realm of customer experience consisting of integrated consumption gateways. These gateways allow consumers to seamlessly pass*

between different physical (offline) and digital (online) channels with ease and guarantee consistency in the experiential journey from physical to digital and vice versa. When using this definition of phygital, it becomes obvious that taking advantage of the phygital world requires digital transformations to follow a consumer-centric logic" (Batat, 2021). As stated by Batat, the phygital real create a novel opportunity to design unique customer experiences that are both efficient and emotionally charged. Thus, by presenting new perspectives on the experiential approach, we hope to pave the way for further theoretical and empirical research on this topic.

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CHAPTER 2

AWE EXPERIENCE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Consumers at the moment experience tremendous social changes that strike the whole world. When confronted with irresistible and novel events that shake ones' normative boundaries, consumers go through certain psychological processes; they are forced to seek novel patterns and adjust mental schema. Consequently, they tend to experience awe. This chapter introduces an intense and transformative emotional experience, awe, and its effect on significant and timely marketing phenomena and consumer behavior. Starting with the nature and psychology of experiencing awe, the current chapter underscores the influence of awe experience on both marketplace and academia. Specifically, the chapter delineates (1) how feelings of awe are defined, (2) affective, psychophysiological, and cognitive consequences of experiencing awe, (3) attempts to evoke awe experiences by practitioners, and (4) up-to-date academic investigations of awe experiences in consumer behavior.

Nature of awe experience

There exist potential risks for marketers to introduce unfamiliar experiences to consumers since people oftentimes hesitate to break their consumption practices (Wood and Neal, 2009). Fortunately, however, awe has a potential to alleviate such risks since the emotion finds novel patterns and adjusts existing mental system (Chirico et al., 2016; Keltner and Hadit, 2003;

Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman, 2007). Furthermore, marketing research has been barely conducted to explore a particular intense emotion, i.e., awe, even though influence of emotion is prevalent throughout marketing (Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer, 1999) and intense emotions, specifically, are greatly related to experiential purchases (Chan and Mogilner, 2017). Hence, we find the significance of exploring the influence of awe on marketing and consumer behavior.

Early research on awe was fairly limited; it did not explicitly identify awe but instead focused on the experience of wonder, which is defined as a passive state of surprise or amazement after experiencing something unexpected (Frijda 1986). Prior emotion-focused research has focused largely on the examination of negative emotions. Ekman (1992) was one of the first researchers to identify awe as a distinct emotion, while other scholars have subsequently worked to establish the distinctions between positive emotions. Consequently, researchers have demonstrated that awe is an independent emotional state, positively valenced, associated with amazement, and dissimilar to enthusiasm or amusement (Keltner and Haidt 1999; Griskevicius, Shiota, and Neufeld 2010). In addition, others have demonstrated that awe is associated with wonder, astonishment, joy, reverence, and fear; that is, fear can be both a pleasant and unpleasant experience (Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. 2017; Keltner and Hadit 2003; Krause and Hayward 2015; Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato et al. 2015; Yaden, Iwry, Slack, Eichstaedt et al. 2016).

Keltner and Haidt (2003) defined awe as a metamorphic experience that is at the heart of many collective processes. These researchers proposed that two experiences are essential and present in all incidences of awe: sensed vastness and a desire for accommodation. Perceived vastness has been defined as "anything that is experienced as being much larger than the self, or the self's ordinary level of experience or frame of reference" (Keltner and Haidt 2003, 303). A need for accommodation is an inability to integrate an experience into current mental structures (see also Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007). People feel a sense of awe when they experience a variety of things such as nature, art, and music. Religion has also been identified as being significantly associated with awe (James 1985; Keltner and Haidt 2003). More specifically, religious sites such as temples and cathedrals elicit awe (Francis, Williams, Annis, and Robbins 2008). Stimuli such as natural wonders, panoramic views, beautiful art, and music also contribute to the experience of awe (Keltner and Haidt 2003; Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato et al. 2015; Pilgrim, Norris, and Hackathorn 2017). Admiration and wonder, tinged with sexual desire, such as an experience meeting "celebrities who

are exceptionally attractive" (Keltner and Haidt 2003, 309), also have the potential to create awe.

Research has recently demonstrated that virtual reality (VR) is a cutting-edge technology that induces experiences of awe (Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. 2017; Chirico, Yaden, Riva, and Gaggioli 2016). Scholars suggest that visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactive stimulations derived from VR create strong emotional responses (Baños, Botella, Alcañiz, Liaño et al. 2004; Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. 2017; Diemer, Alpers, Peperkorn, Shiban et al. 2015; Parsons 2015) and feelings of presence within an environment (Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. 2017; Riva and Waterworth 2003; Riva, Waterworth, and Waterworth 2004).

Several cognitive processes are affected by awe (Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. 2017); awe expands attention (Sung and Yih 2015), increases awareness of others (Prade and Saroglou 2016), changes time perception (Rudd, Vohs, and Aaker 2012), heightens feelings of uncertainty (Valdesolo and Graham 2014), and diminishes the estimation of one's body size (van Elk, Karinen, Specker, Stamkou et al. 2016). Moreover, exposure to awe increases feelings of connectedness to others and leads to greater life satisfaction (Krause and Hayward 2015), which in turn helps to reduce the likelihood of developing health problems such as depression and stress-related disorders (Stellar, John-Henderson, Anderson, Gordon et al. 2015).

There are also significant physiological experiences related to experiences of awe that represent bodily reactions of the breathtaking emotion; the metaphoric expression of a "jaw-dropping" moment genuinely occurs after experiencing awe. For example, awe is often associated with raised inner eyebrows, widened eyes, an open, slightly drop-jawed mouth, a slight forward jutting of the head and/or torso, and visible inhalation (Shiota, Campos, and Keltner 2003, 297; Shiota, Thrash, Danvers, and Dombrowski 2017). Note that the expression of a smile is not associated with awe (Shiota, Thrash, Danvers, and Dombrowski 2017) although there are known autonomic responses.

Along with the "jaw-dropping" responses, people also physically exhibit the metaphor of a "breathtaking" and "chilling" moment when feeling awe; awe influences cardiac and skin reactions. Researchers have found that awe is associated with a prolonged deceleration of heart rate (Bradley 2009; Graham 1979; Lacey and Lacey 1970) that is caused by heightened parasympathetic activation and/or sympathetic withdrawal (Shiota, Neufeld, Yeung, Moser et al. 2011); when in a moment of "breathtaking" awe, people

take fewer breaths per minute. Intense cognitive efforts, such as a response needed to accommodate novel information that is associated with the experience of awe, also trigger sympathetic withdrawal (Demaree, Robinson, Everhart, and Schmeichel 2004) and fewer breaths per minute. Awe alleviates the sympathetic nervous system's impact on the heart, a response that is likely to encourage the intake of information from the environment (Shiota, Neufeld, Danvers, Osborne et al. 2014). It has also been shown that awe results in more elaborative cognitive processing (Griskevicius, Shiota, and Neufeld 2010). Scholars have also found that awe may involve piloerection or, in other words, give people "chills" (Maruskin, Thrash, and Elliot 2012).

Some studies have utilized physiological measures to examine the bodily metaphors of awe. Researchers (Oveis, Cohen, Gruber, Shiota et al. 2009; Shiota, Neufeld, Yeung, Moser et al. 2011) have shown the effectiveness of the valence-arousal model of emotions (Lang 1995; Russell and Barrett 1999), a model that separates affective states based on two dimensions of physiological arousal and hedonic valence, and found evidence for sympathetic withdrawal of awe. Shiota, Neufeld, Yeung, Moser et al. (2011) assessed six psychophysiological measures that relate to sympathetic withdrawal such as Cardiac Pre-Ejection Period (PEP) and Skin Conductance Responses (SCRs). Their results showed that awe, compared to other positive emotions, affected the lengthening of PEP and diminished SCRs. They also argued that patterns of PEP from awe were consistent with sympathetic withdrawal. Among the six measures, cardiac signs and SCRs appeared to be the two most relevant psychophysiological components that can distinguish awe from other emotions (Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. 2017; Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007). Although researchers (Oveis, Cohen, Gruber, Shiota et al. 2009; Shiota, Neufeld, Yeung, Moser et al. 2011) have primarily focused on the relationship between awe and the sympathetic system, the involvement of the parasympathetic system in response to the experience of awe has also been considered. Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. (2017) examined both sympathetic and parasympathetic activation during awe exposure through VR stimuli. During the VR exposure, participants showed sympathetic (i.e., very low frequency measures and skin conductance responses) and parasympathetic (i.e., high frequency measure) activation; very low frequency measures and skin conductance responses were higher in the awe and neutral VR condition compared to the awe and neutral 2D condition. That is, immersive VR was more effective in increasing sympathetic activation than a 2D stimulus. The results of Chirico, Cipresso, Yaden, Biassoni et al. (2017) are consistent with prior research findings (Schuemie,

Van Der Straaten, Krijn, and Van Der Mast 2001; Wiederhold, Davis, and Wiederhold 1998).

Feelings of awe also affect one's perception of self. Awe takes attention away from one's self and directs it toward the environment and stimuli that need to be understood and appreciated (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007). Feelings of awe evoke a sense of "feeling small relative to environment'' and challenge one's existing worldview (Campos, Shiota, Keltner, Gonzaga et al. 2013). When faced with something greater than the self, as a consequence, transcendence or diminishment of one's self occurs (Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato et al. 2015). Along with a sense of self-diminishment, awe entails simultaneous feelings of connectedness with others and with the world (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007). Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman (2007) also demonstrated that those experiencing awe have a higher tendency to consider themselves as part of a bigger group. Hence, people who experience awe are attracted to prosocial consumption.

Van Cappellen and Saroglou (2012) also found that awe experienced in association with nature elicited feelings of being part of something bigger than one's self. Given the associations between awe, perceptions of vastness, diminished sense of self, and greater interpersonal connections, Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato et al. (2015) not surprisingly found that awe has a strong positive impact on prosocial behavior. Specifically, their findings showed awe's positive effects on consumers' heightened ethical decision-making, generosity, prosocial values, prosocial helping behaviors, and decreased feelings of entitlement. The scholars also examined the impact of awe on a metaphorical sense of "smallness of one's self." It is noteworthy that the heightened prosocial tendency elicited by the experience of awe was mediated by a "smaller sense of self" (Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato et al. 2015), a specific awe-related feeling. In sum, the experience of awe a) leads to feelings of self-diminishment, b) increases the importance of others, c) reduces the significance of personal concerns and goals, and d) fosters social connections, collaboration, and prosocial behaviors (Keltner, Kogan, Piff, and Saturn 2014; Nowak 2006; Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato et al. 2015; Sober and Wilson 1998).

The effect of awe does not solely rely on influencing one's sense of self. Apart from the influence on one's sense of self, feelings of awe result in extended patience and time perception, a heightened preference for experiences over material products, greater life satisfaction (Rudd, Vohs, and Aaker 2012), an increased ability to analyze persuasive messages (Griskevicius, Shiota, and Neufeld 2010), and a heightened sense of

spirituality (Saroglou, Buxant, and Tilquin 2008). Individuals are more likely to adjust their perceptions of time when embedded in the present moment and this, as a result, increases life satisfaction (Rudd, Vohs, and Aaker 2012). Griskevicius, Shiota, and Neufeld (2010) suggested that awe results in a scrutiny of persuasive messages because it increases systematic, accommodative processing of novel and unusual information (Keltner and Haidt 1999; Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007). Feelings of spirituality share many characteristics with feelings of awe: a transcendent reality, feelings of oneness, changes in the perception of time, and a diminished distinction between self and others (Hood and Chen 2013).

Attempts to evoke awe experience by practitioners

Awe is a frequent feature of companies' consumer-focused endeavors, and the most common attempts to induce awe can be found in advertising, e.g., Samsung's "Dedicated to Wonder," Palace Resorts' "Live in Awe," Apple's "Your Verse," Canon's "Inspired," Under Armour's "Copeland," and Google's "Year in Review" (Nikolinakou and King 2018; Rudd, Hildebrand, and Vohs 2018). Such advertising appeals trigger "larger than life" experiences (Keltner and Haidt 2003) and hence move and inspire consumers (Nikolinakou and King 2018).

Marketers also induce awe through products. When Tesla was first introduced, consumers experienced feelings of awe and had to update their mental schemas (Guo, Jiang, Huang, Ye et al. 2018; Shiota, Keltner and Mossman 2007). Apple also put great effort into eliciting awe among consumers through the launching of its products (Mickey 2013) and in-store settings (Kozinets, Sherry Storm, Duhachek et al. 2004), and hence, consumers often consider many Apple products "awe-inspiring" (Guo, Jiang, Huang, Ye et al. 2018; Heller 2011). Such frequent endeavors to elicit awe were considered as the instinctive understanding of the significance of awe by many practitioners (Guo, Jiang, Huang, Ye et al. 2018), but academic scrutiny of awe in the field of consumer behavior remains scarce.

Effect of awe experience on consumer behavior

There has been a recent surge of research focusing on experiences of awe within the field of marketing. The experience of awe has been shown to influence a variety of consumer behaviors. Pilgrim, Norris, and Hackathorn (2017) investigated the relationships between numerous types of awe-inducing music and related individual differences. Findings from this

research suggest that awe may be an effective segmentation variable. Studies by Cesareo and his colleagues (2017) also examined the relationship between beautiful products and awe. The results of this stream of research show that consumers can perceive products as beautiful. This, in turn, has the potential to evoke feelings of awe, which can transform mundane products into sacred objects when those are considered aesthetically pleasing. As a result of this transformational experience, consumers become more forgiving of product flaws.

It has been shown that spirituality diminishes the effect of awe on materialistic consumption (Hu, Yang, Jing, and Nguyen 2018; Tian and Lu 2015). Likewise, Hu, Yang, Jing, and Nguyen (2018) showed that awe impedes conspicuous consumption through the enhancement of self-transcendent values. Accordingly, awe-prone individuals favor experiential over material products (Rudd, Vohs, and Aaker 2012) and are more likely to select experience, which involves creating products, over ready-made products (Rudd, Hildebrand, and Vohs 2018).

People experiencing awe are more inclined to behave environmentally. Studies of Yang and scholars (2018) examined the effect of awe on connectedness to nature and environmental behavior. Feelings of awe led to greater ecological behaviors and increased feelings of connection to nature. Likewise, Zhao and his colleagues (2018) explored awe's influence on environmentalism. Their results suggest that awe diminished social dominance orientation, which increased individuals' willingness to sacrifice themselves for the environment and their intentions to engage in environmentally friendly behavior. The research corroborates the vital role of awe in promoting environmentalism and the significance of social dominance orientation in explaining the positive effect of awe on pro-environmental behavior.

Research in marketing has also examined the impact of awe on consumers' social media use (Nikolinakou 2015) and the spread of positive word-of-mouth (Guo, Jiang, Huang, Ye et al. 2018). Nikolinakou (2015) examined the influence of two positive emotions, awe and affection, on viral sharing; both awe and affection trigger actions related to connectedness, and both emotions increased the sharing in social media that is derived from emotional altruism and not from status or functional purposes. Similarly, Guo, Jiang, Huang, and Ye (2018) reported that products can provoke awe and, in turn, increase word-of-mouth. Findings from their work suggest that awesome products typically have the following characteristics: timelessness, accommodation, beauty, and vastness. The scholars also found that awe

makes products more unforgettable and even enhances positive word-of-mouth (Guo, Jiang, Huang, Ye et al. 2018).

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SECTION 2:

THE EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION ENVIRONMENT

Chapter 3

Experiential Conspicuous Consumption on Social Media

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Abstract

Material products that consumers acquire with the intention of keeping them in their possession bring less happiness and satisfaction to consumers than the experiential products that consumers obtain with the intention of gaining life experiences. This is because experiential products prompt more identity-representation, socialization, and narration than the material ones. However, the boundary between material and experiential products is changeable. Recent research demonstrates that the same product can be perceived as material or experiential via manipulating consumption intentions. In this chapter, I argue that conspicuous consumption of material products on social media can shift owners' perceptions from material to experiential due to the customizable, public, and interactive nature of social media. Furthermore, the transformation of owners' product perceptions from material to experiential has the potential to slow down the hedonic adaptation to possessions boosting the product's perceived status. The transient product conceptualization has also managerial implications such that brands can encourage consumers' social media usage with products after the purchase, which can lead to higher brand loyalty.

The Overview

Conspicuous consumption refers to the public display of high-status signals to elevate one's social status or sustain it in the eyes of others (Dubois and Ordabayeva 2015; Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky 2012; Veblen 1889/1994). People can heighten their status through acquiring cultural capital (e.g., taste; Bourdieu 1984), social capital (e.g., social networks), educational and

professional ranks (e.g., degrees, titles; Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn, 1981; Lin, 1999), or through showcasing costly signals (Zahavi 1975). Compared to other status acquisition alternatives, showcases of costly signals are more convenient and less time-consuming. Previous research usually studied displays of new and luxurious material products to examine status-seeking motivations and behaviors (Berry 1994; Han, Nunes, and Drèze 2010; Rucker and Galinski 2009). Recently, status signals are evolving to be more experiential and social (Currid-Halkett 2017). Moreover, the new criteria to judge status signals are flexibility, authenticity, and more importantly the level and nature of others' attention (Eckhardt and Bardhi 2019; Marwick 2015). The valuation of products' experiential and social aspects can motivate consumers to utilize new platforms for staging their possessions in unique ways and socialize with them, which could shift their product perceptions after the purchase and usage.

In this chapter, I argue that product demonstrations on social media can alter owners' product conceptualization from material to experiential at the post-purchase phase. Consumers usually acquire material products intending to keep them in their possession (e.g., car, furniture, TV); whereas they purchase experiential products (e.g., concert tickets and vacations) intending to gain unique life experiences (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Extant research demonstrates that experiential products trigger more socialization, conversations and represent consumer identities better than material products do (Bastos and Brucks 2017; Carter and Gilovich 2012; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Thus, experiential products produce higher and longer-standing satisfaction and happiness and are associated with less post-purchase regret when compared to material products (Carter and Gilovich 2010; Carter and Gilovich 2012; Kumar and Gilovich 2015; Gilovich, Kumar, and Jampol 2015; Howell and Hill 2009; Van Boven, Campbell, and Gilovich 2010; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Interestingly, the material and experiential product perceptions are not mutually exclusive and can be transient. Previous research has shown that consumer perceptions can be altered from material to experiential via manipulating consumption intentions (Mann and Gilovich 2016; Rosenzweig and Gilovich 2012). Consumers with particular drives might benefit from such a shift more than others.

Status-seeking consumers are motivated to ensure that they get recognition for owning status-signalling products (Mason 1981; Rucker and Galinski 2009) and the status of products are reflected to their identity (Braun and Wicklund 1989; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Therefore, transforming material product perceptions to experiential ones would be desirable for

these consumers. Social media can provide the necessary tools to claim social status through sending costly signals and negotiate the level of this status with others without time and space restrictions (Belk 2013; Goffman, 1967; Marwick 2015; Zahavi 1975). When consumers post information about possessions on social media, products become a part of their identity along with other identity-relevant information on their profile. Moreover, displaying possessions on social media might encourage concrete social recognition and interactions (e.g., comments and likes) because more observers can view the product on social media than offline product displays that are confined by consumption time and place. Lastly, it is more acceptable and thus gratifying to talk about possessions on social media compared to the offline settings where product displays are stigmatized (Belk 2013; Van Boven, Campbell, and Gilovich 2010). In sum, via triggering the socialization, narration with, and identity-representation of material products, social media displays have the potential to transform material product perceptions to experiential ones at the post-purchase phase. Such a transformation could prevent consumers from getting used to products quickly (Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman 2009; Van Boven 2005) and elevate perceived status and value of possessions. Brands can utilize consumers' social media displays to improve the satisfaction and status of their offerings.

The rest of the chapter is organized to review the recent literature on conspicuous consumption, material and experiential product perceptions, and product displays on social media and discuss how they blend together to enhance the status perception of material product owners. It also discusses how product displays on social media can benefit brands. Lastly, it will provide what kind of future research can be conducted to better understand the impact of conspicuous consumption on social media as well as the limitations of the suggested model.

Conspicuous Consumption

People engage in conspicuous consumption, which is the public showcase of high-status signals (e.g., possessions, titles, experiences), to heighten their social status or preserve their already high-status (Dubois and Ordabayeva 2015; Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky 2012; Veblen 1889/1994). Having a high-status is desirable, as it means a powerful stance compared to others in a group and usually comes with others' respect and envy (Eastman, Goldsmith, and Flynn 1999). A high social status can endow individuals with high self-esteem (Berger et al. 1972) and perceived power

(Rucker and Galinski 2008). It can also protect people from present and future self-threats via self-affirmation and psychological buffers (Sivanathan and Pettit 2010). Furthermore, having a high-status can bestow distinctiveness, competitiveness, and belonging to others (Berger and Heath 2007; Deshpandé and Stayman 1994; Gentina 2014; Han, Nunes and Dreze 2010; Wang and Griskevicius 2014). Therefore, when individuals believe they lack a desirable characteristic, such as power or belongingness or wish to prevent a future identity threat, they attempt to regain social status via obtaining and publicly consuming high-status symbols (Mandel at al. 2017). In other words, conspicuous consumption is a common pursuit to persuade others about one's high-status and benefit from various social privileges that accompany that status.

Traditionally, conspicuous consumption is a relatively easy way to gain a high-status, as it does not require people to devote substantial time and effort compared to more fundamental means of high-status acquisition. For example, attainment of cultural capital (i.e., acquiring tastes of one's social origin; Bourdieu 1984), social capital (e.g., relations with family and others who might provide access to resources), or academic/professional accomplishments (e.g., completing advanced degrees or being promoted to high positions in organizations; Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn 1981; Lin 1999) are more authentic pathways to gain a high-status but warrant being born in a certain family or years of investment. In contrast, conspicuous consumption only requires communication of wealth acquisition (Corneo and Jeanne 1997; Futagami and Shibata 1998) through the display of costly signals (Costly Signaling Theory; Zahavi 1975). Furthermore, the costly signals could even be showcased utilizing bogus signals despite lacking wealth and alter owners' and observers' status perceptions. However, previous research provides little insight on how product displays satisfy consumers' desire for status at the post-purchase phase.

Extant literature mostly illuminates the pre-purchase phase of conspicuous consumption uncovering the motivations for engaging in conspicuous consumption and differentiating the desirable product types for this behavior (Braun and Wicklund 1989; Griskevicius et al. 2007; Han, Nunes and Dreze 2010; Sivanathan and Pettit 2010). For example, before the consumption, consumers weight the product choices of favorable and unfavorable social groups to decide which product to consume (Berger and Heath 2008; Berger and Rand 2008). Product characteristics, such as brand visibility, logo size, and prominence are also influential on conspicuous consumption decisions (Rucker and Galinski 2009). Status-seeking consumers prefer the bigger and more noticeable brands and logos. Consumers can also

attempt to communicate a high status through consuming counterfeit products or products with subtle status signals (Han, Nunes and Dreze 2010). A focus on the pre-consumption dynamics portrays conspicuous consumption as a consequence of a high-status pursuit and assumes that a high-status is granted to everyone who engages in conspicuous consumption. However, from a broader perspective, social negotiations during and after the purchase are also capable of determining consumers' product status perceptions and whether the product status is transfused to their identity or not.

Status-seeking consumers' main motivation is not to enjoy products' material benefits (e.g., functionality), but to garner social acknowledgment for the high-status signals they exhibit (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Mason 1981; Rucker and Galinski 2009). In other words, the social experiences with high-status signalling products could be more crucial in status attribution than utilizing premium product features and high quality (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Han, Nunes and Dreze 2010). This notion is supported by Goffman's (1967) argument that status is not a given attribution but changes based on individuals' status claims and social negotiations. Therefore, after consumers acquire products, they crave for various types of evidence that shows other people have recognized products' high-status signals (Braun and Wicklund 1989; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Concrete indicators of social recognition can actualize products' expected status enabling consumers to attribute a high-status to their possessions and to themselves.

Brand communications that consumers are exposed at the pre-purchase phase, other consumers' status attributions, and possible social reactions can set a certain level of product status expectation for owners. However, they do not guarantee that the actualized status level owners attribute to possessions after consumption will be as high as expected. Researchers are recently uncovering the dynamics during and after the consumption that could alter products' status perception for both owners and observers. During the consumption, the ways retailers socialize with customers, regardless of the product type or brand, can shape consumers' status perceptions (Dion and Borraz 2017). After the consumption, other people make individual and interpersonal judgments about consumers depending on their observed possessions (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982). Users of high-status products experience various social and financial benefits because others believe they have high status (Lee, Ko, and Megehee 2015; Nelissen and Meijers 2011). These consumers also attribute superiority and high status to themselves (Wang, John, and Griskevicius 2020). Of importance,

both online and offline product displays motivate observers to judge product owners and their chosen brands (Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly 2013; Sekhon et al. 2018). Thus, these findings suggest conspicuous consumption does not automatically provide a high social status to every consumer who showcases status signals, but social interactions about possessions are indeed the determining factor.

Status-seeking consumers need to have social experiences with their possessions to be aware of the observers' reactions. Then, they can construct their own status attributions (Wang, John, and Griskevicius 2020). I posit that it is more plausible to view conspicuous consumption as a longer process encapsulating the social negotiations during and after the consumption. Given that consumers can change their product perceptions depending on how they utilize their possessions (Diehl, Zauberman, and Barasch 2016), it is not realistic to expect that consumers will always sustain their expected product status level after they socialize with possessions. Therefore, despite the general perspective that conspicuous consumption is the consequence of status pursuits, it can be viewed as an antecedent of status assignment. More research is warranted to examine whether and how consumers' own status attributions shift at the post-purchase phase based on socialization practices and social acknowledgment.

Recently, the ways, through which people have access to products and garner attention for them, determine product' status level for both consumers and observers. Previous research usually studied showcases of new and luxurious material products to examine status-seeking motivations and behaviors (Appadurai, 1986; Berry,1994; Han, Nunes, and Drèze 2010; Rucker and Galinski, 2009). However, status signals are becoming more experiential and social. For example, attending to certain activities (e.g., yoga classes) and being a member of a certain group (e.g., New Yorker readers) started to denote a high status (Currid-Halkett 2017). Furthermore, the flexibility and authenticity of one's resources (e.g., access-based consumption and craftmanship), and the quantity and quality of others' public attention (e.g., receiving likes, comments, or mentions) are the new determinants of high-status (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2019; Marwick 2015). The emphasis on experiential and social aspects of products can thus shift status-seeking consumers' product utilization goals.

Material and Experiential Product Perceptions

One way of product categorization is to determine whether a product is material or experiential. Initially, one might think that the tangible products,

such as vehicles and technological devices, should be categorized as material and the intangible ones, such as painting classes or vacations, should be categorized as experiential. However, individuals' consumption intentions are indeed the determining factor, especially for the tangible products. If a person acquires a product to possess it for a while, it is a material product; whereas, if a person acquires a product to have life experiences with it, it is an experiential product (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Therefore, a tangible product can be perceived as material or experiential based on one's intention denoting a blurry distinction between material and experiential products (Gilovich, Kumar, and Jampol 2015). Of importance, one's consumption intention can shift from material to experiential via experimental manipulations (Mann and Gilovich 2016; Rosenzweig and Gilovich 2012). These findings suggest it is also possible for consumers to alter their product consumption intentions both consciously and unconsciously.

To develop or distinguish products' experiential characteristics, marketers create (1) sensory experiences via focusing on visual, taste, sound, haptic, and olfactory senses; (2) affective experiences via focusing on feelings and emotions; (3) intellectual and creative experiences via focusing on convergent and divergent cognitions; (4) physical experiences via focusing on various ways of doing, living, and interacting; (5) relational experiences via focusing on one's connections with other individuals or broader social systems (Schmitt 1999). Consumers can also shift their own product perceptions from material to experiential via attending to and communicating products' sensory, affective, intellectual/creative, physical, and relational aspects. These aspects might make products as parts of pleasurable life experiences thus shift product owners' product type perceptions.

In particular, I propose that the goal of acquiring a high social status can impact individuals' consumption intentions (e.g., keeping status-signalling products in possession at home vs. acquiring life experiences with these products in an explicit way), which then might change products' conceptualization for them. When the major differences between material and experiential products are investigated, the characteristics of experiential products appear to be more desirable for status-seeking consumers. First of all, people tend to socialize with experimental products, talk about them, and associate them with their identity more often than material products (Carter and Gilovich 2012; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Furthermore, it is more difficult and less painful to compare experiential products to other experiential products because unique life experiences consumers gain through these products are hard to replicate (Carter and Gilovich 2010). As a result, experiential products yield higher-level and longer-lasting

satisfaction and happiness when compared to material products (Carter and Gilovich, 2010; Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003). These features have the potential to motivate status-seeking consumers to perceive their tangible possessions as experiential so they can explicitly consume and talk about them enjoying their facilitation of unique life experiences and attracting others' attention for a longer time.

The mere intention to keep a high-status product in possession would not be desirable for status-seeking consumers, as they need social recognition for their products (Mason 1981; Rucker and Galinski 2009). Moreover, gratification from a high-status material product is likely to be short-lived (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003) although they are durable with high quality and superior features (Rucker and Galinski 2009). The Hedonic Adaptation Theory (Frederick and Loewenstein 1999) also posits that consumers adapt to favorable products gradually which can also diminish their high-status perception for the owners. On the other hand, if product perceptions transition from material to experiential, consumers' adaptation to these products can be slower due to experiential products' intangible, active, and unpredictable characteristics (Alba and Williams 2013; Bar-Anan, Wilson, and Gilbert 2009; Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman 2009; Wilson, Centerbar, Kermer, and Gilbert 2005). Conceptualizing material products in experiential terms might entitle status-seeking individuals to have more social and authentic consumption episodes with them for an extended period. Recently, there are platforms that provide opportunities to create such consumption episodes, as they boost products' personalization as well as authentic and social aspects.

Consumption on Social Media

I posit that social media communications offer various capabilities to consumers in turning their material products to experiential ones. Through social media, consumers can construct and publicize different types of status symbols for a longer time and to a broader audience than face-to-face interactions (Anlamlier 2018; Belk 2013; Marwick 2015; Van Dijck 2013). Consumers have already been utilizing social media to share information about their new purchases (Duan 2016) and communicate various identities via brand demonstrations (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2015), and judge others based on their online consumption behaviors (Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly 2013). Therefore, the specific tools social media offers might propel status-seeking consumers to actualize and preserve their products'

high-status through (1) enlarged recognition, (2) concrete acknowledgment, and (3) a strong association between product status and owners' identity.

First, status-seeking consumers can curate their social media communications in a way to highlight high-status signals and garner concrete social feedback. Consumers are able to invite attention to certain parts or aspects of products via sharing focused photographs (Diehl, Zauberman, and Barasch 2016) or adding specific brand information to a post (Nam, Joshi, and Kannan 2017). Status-symbol displays can trigger immediate and also delayed reactions (e.g., thoughts and emotions) from followers in like, comment, or emoticon formats. Furthermore, some platforms (e.g., Instagram and Facebook) and posting formats (e.g., sharing stories that are available for a day) provide a list of the people who viewed a post although these people have not reacted to the post. This feature still informs the user about the recognition of the showcased status signal although it might not guarantee positive acknowledgment. Thus, social media extends various abilities for users to magnify high-status signals while minimizing or hiding low-status signals, which would be hard to achieve in offline settings. Moreover, users can gather concrete feedback and hence assurance from a broader audience through both direct and indirect means.

Second, material product exhibits on social media can lead to pleasurable social interactions for product owners when they portray these products as part of authentic life experiences. For material products, social media showcases are more normalized on social media than the offline contexts, where talking about material possessions is stigmatized (Belk 2013; Van Boven, Campbell, and Gilovich 2010). Hence, people share posts about experiential products more often than the posts about material products (Duan 2016). Furthermore, posting pictures of experiential products that are consumed with others augments consumers' enjoyment when the experience has not been perceived as engaging (Diehl, Zauberman, and Barasch 2016). Based on these findings, I argue that sharing product information in the forms of pictures or videos might turn material product perceptions to experiential ones for owners and observers encouraging them to engage in pleasant conversations revolving around the displayed products.

Including products in social media can elevate their valuation, which can help in actualizing and preserving product status in the eyes of owners. When people integrate material products into social media communications, these products become a part of social experiences (e.g., conversations). People share stimuli with others expecting to reach interpersonal agreement

and elevate their belongingness to these people (Raghunathan and Corfman 2006; Ramanathan and McGill 2007). That is why they cherish and value their consumption experiences more when they garner positive reactions from others about these experiences (Lambert et al. 2013; Reis et al. 2010). Overall, it is plausible that status-seeking consumers benefit from taking advantage of social media's power to supplement offline contexts' shortcomings through boosted socialization and to amplify positive social recognition toward products (Yuksel, Milne, and Miller 2016).

Displaying material products on social media does not only turn them into experiential ones but also allows the owners to consume them with others. Socialization aspect is crucial, since experiential products that are not social are associated with lower levels of consumption-related happiness similar to material products (Caprariello and Reis 2013). However, it is also possible that taking product pictures with the goal of disseminating them to others decreases consumers' product enjoyment because of self-presentational worries and reduced engagement (Barasch, Zauberman, and Diehl 2018). Overall, conspicuous consumption on social media can attract and enlarge others' gaze on status-signalling products but how and with which motivation owners create the product content also matter in the effectiveness of this behavior.

Third, social media is a convenient medium to attach the characteristics of the displayed products to consumers' identity. In the case of conspicuous consumption, once the status signal is realized and acknowledged by others, consumers' desire to be identified with the displayed product' high-status is indeed the main goal of product showcases (Braun and Wicklund 1989; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Given that one's identity is constructed not only through one-way information transfer but also others' reactions to such information (Cristofides, Muise, and Desmarais 2009; Van Dijck 2013), status-seeking consumers crave for social feedback to advance their identities with high-status perceptions. Thus, consumers place product-related content on their personal page to blend it with other identity-relevant information already existing on it. This placement then results in status negotiations between product owners and observers through public and private interactions (Duan, 2016; Marwick 2013), presumably strengthening the link between the products' status and owners' identity. To put it differently, similar to marketers (Dion and Borraz 2017), owners also create social experiences concentrated on their status-signalling products and these experiences can determine how much status is enacted from these products. In sum, the interactions happening on the owner's personal social media account have the potential to encourage the account owner and observers to

collectively view the product status as a part of owner's identity and elevate the owner's status along with products' status.

Additionally, the ability to socialize with products on online domains have also enlarged the scope of products and status signals consumers can integrate to their identities. This means consumers can portray products and related experiences that are not traditionally associated with a high-status and add high-status aspects to them. For example, they can share ownership information about products that are private (e.g., self-care products) or can only be visible to few people in face-to-face offline contexts (e.g., kitchen appliances). Moreover, consumers can display material products signifying desirable identities, such as smart consumption practices (e.g., renting a designer gown instead of paying the full price), professional success (e.g., awards), human capital (e.g., gifts from family members or friends), cultural capital (e.g., books, art pieces), or being fit (e.g., work-out equipment or apparel) (Anlamlier et al. 2015; Anlamlier, Torres, and Gal 2016). The wide collection of social media-friendly status signals shows that consumers can add high-status-signalling and experiential aspects to products that are usually associated with low-status (e.g., renting). Next, consumers are not only bounded by wealth-signalling product displays on social media; they can also exploit other high-status conferring domains, such as professional success, cultural and human capital. These opportunities, in fact, suggest that social media democratizes the status negotiations.

Overall, social media appears to be a proper context to study various dynamics of status acquisition through conspicuous consumption. It enriches the post-purchase phase of conspicuous consumption via more focused status communication, better socialization and identity integration, encouraging consumers to view their possessions in more experiential terms and with heightened status. These capabilities enlarge the definition of status signals and high-status products providing consumers more opportunities to turn their material possessions to experiential ones.

Managerial Implications

The potential of social media utilization to increase material products' experiential characteristics and hence augment these products' status perceptions for owners presents various managerial implications. First, it adds a new dimension to after-sale customer management. Brands can inspire customers to view their possessions as experiential via encouraging them to share their purchases on social media to boost social recognition and interactions around products. Furthermore, to encourage higher status

attribution to possessions, brands can suggest consumers to communicate sensory, affective, creative, physical, and relational product aspects, which represent main dimensions of experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999). Table 1 explains various experiential marketing applications social media users can utilize. These strategies might increase customers' product satisfaction and status perception at the post-purchase phase contrasting the general expectation that hedonic pleasure decreases in time (Frederick and Loewenstein1999).

Table 1. Experiential marketing application suggestions for social media

Schmitt's (1999) Strategic Experiential Modules	Schmitt's (1999) definitions	Possible social media applications
Sense	Creating sensory experiences via focusing on visual, taste, sound, haptic, and olfactory senses	Including products' picture and sound in posts and explain (in text) or talk about (in video) products' taste, haptic, and olfactory features
Feel	Creating affective experiences via focusing on feelings and emotions	Talking about or typing the feelings and emotions products trigger in the main text, captions, or as hashtags
Think	Creating intellectual and creative experiences via focusing on convergent and divergent cognitions	Mentioning and/or demonstrating pros and cons of products; comparing products to each other
Act	Creating physical experiences via focusing on various ways of doing, living, and interacting	Showing alternative ways of acting, experiencing, and socializing that are enabled by a certain product

Relate	Creating relational experiences via focusing on one's connections with other individuals or broader social systems	Exhibiting how products enable and enrich positive relationships with significant or professional others as well as important social groups

Brands can also urge customers to rethink the meaning of generally-accepted status expectations. For example, the Rent the Runway (RTR) company that rents designer apparel to women advocates being proud of renting via encouraging customers to use "thanksitsrtr" hashtag whenever they share a post with their rentals (www.instagram.com/renttherunway) although renting has historically been seen as a sign of low affordability and low status. This hashtag assumes that RTR rentals will be recognized and complimented on social media, triggering RTR products' experiential aspects. Thus, brands can elevate their brand value via their consumers' social media communications.

Sharing product information on social media can be seen as a form of online word-of-mouth (Anlamlier et al. 2015; Duan 2016). Moreover, customers' product placements on social media can result in more authentic word-of-mouth to spread the brand and product awareness on behalf of the company. Rather than expecting to engage in random socialization with status-signalling products in offline contexts, customers can actively create online socialization episodes around their possessions and with a special focus on status signals, which might pave the way to have unique life experiences with them. Instead of expecting others to grant high status to possessions, customers can initiate and manage status negotiations with others. These actions can be seen as the continuation of the status-enacting interactions brands start at the retail stores (Dion and Borraz 2017) and elevate brand loyalty.

Lastly, social media communications can benefit brands through putting privately-consumed products (e.g., sleep wear or self-care products) and products that signify other status-enhancing aspects (e.g., cultural and human capital) into the public sphere. In other words, customers help companies in manipulating product perceptions not just for themselves but also for others. Brand managers, who aim to shift product perceptions, can create campaigns that would require customers to share product information in more experiential ways.

Conclusions

This chapter discusses three features social media communications might enrich displayed products and how these features might transform owners' product perceptions from material to experiential, potentially raising their product satisfaction and valuation. In particular, I argue that engaging in conspicuous consumption on social media provide unique opportunities to product owners, which could transform their own product status perceptions. First, social media endows individuals with the right tools to strategically focus on status signals (e.g., high-status brands) and exhibit them to more people in a longer time period compared to the offline contexts. In this way, product owners can involve others in their consumption experiences and easily direct their attention to possessions' status-signalling characteristics. Second, consumers can track the degree and nature of social recognition (e.g., the number of people who notice and react to one's ownership, the valence of comments). Receiving concrete feedback from others might assure consumers about the products' social acknowledgement. Third, product-related engagements on personal social media accounts help users and observers to process this information along with other identity-relevant information on these accounts and accept the product status as part of owners' identity. These capabilities have the potential to enrich conspicuous consumption episodes by providing a controllable context to actualize the expected high-status of products.

The proposed model in this chapter that aligns experiential product characteristics with the social media features might contribute to the conspicuous consumption and status literature in several ways. Initially, it illuminates the post-purchase phase of conspicuous consumption, which is previously overlooked. This phase is essential, as it manifests the level and nature of the realized social recognition, as a separate dynamic from the expected or implied social recognition. Thus, this model views conspicuous consumption as an enabler of status negotiation and acquisition, not the consequence of status seeking. Next, this model distinguishes the unique characteristics of conspicuous consumption on social media. Social media platforms equip consumers with abilities to control what status signals to communicate and how to communicate them when exhibiting digitized versions of material products. Users can also manage public social reactions by sharing their content to some people and deleting unwanted reactions.

Although consumers might not intentionally attempt to alter their product perceptions when they share them on social media, this chapter shows how social media is a convenient medium for researchers to study the transient

nature of product perceptions and status for the owners. The previous literature mostly investigated others' perceptions of conspicuous consumption; alternatively, this chapter illuminates the perceptions of the product owners. Therefore, owners' social media exhibits appear to be more aligned with the recent status understanding, which is based on experience, authenticity, and attention (Currid-Halkett 2017; Eckhardt and Bardhi 2019; Marwick 2015). All these recent status connotations can be observed on social media. Furthermore, social media enlarges status-seeking consumers' audience and types of status signals they can showcase, contrary to the limited, conventional status signals only pointing out to affluence, such as owning expensive goods and services of luxury brands (Page 1992; Veblen 1889/1994). This expansion might impact consumers' loyalty to traditional luxury brands while supporting authentic but less-established brands. Therefore, brands should take into consideration of these consumer abilities to preserve or strengthen customers' brand loyalty.

Limitations and Future Directions

In this chapter, I aim to explain the shift in owners' material product perceptions toward experiential ones on social media and the following increase in their own status attributions. The main theoretical argument I suggest is the slowed-down hedonic adaptation to material possessions parallel to Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman's (2009) suggestions. However, these researchers caution that this effect can only occur when the consumption experience is positive. Future research can examine what kind of positive social media communications (e.g., compliments to the product vs. to the owner's taste, personality) can best lead to high status attributions for the displayed product. It would also be beneficial to determine the optimum level of positive reaction for various kinds of material products or display formats. Lastly, although negative social media reactions are rare when users' identities are not anonymous, consumers might still receive negative, confusing, or passive-aggressive reactions from their followers. Such reactions might hinder the motivation to attach experiential characteristics to material products and thus attain high-status to them after social media displays. Future research can also investigate the impact of not-so-positive social reactions.

Following influencers on social media might also impact consumers' own product perception. Influencers' product usage might alter consumers' product communication and product type perception. Both macro and micro influencers usually display products as part of positive experiences.

Following both type of influencers can inspire consumers to portray their products as experiential. Furthermore, researchers can investigate whether consumers identify with macro and micro influencers differently and how the degree of identification can alter consumers' own product perception on social media.

Researchers might also consider the differing impact of various social media platforms and types of social recognition and acknowledgement. Suggested effects in this chapter might not apply to all social media outlets, as they have distinct foci and features (Van Dijck 2013). For example, Facebook and Instagram are mainly based on visual and textual communication; whereas, Twitter is mostly textual. Pinterest is usually utilized to enjoy one's hobbies, but LinkedIn is for professional networking. Furthermore, the impact of picture and video sharing could diverge due to their engagement and display durations. All these media and display formats should be taken into consideration while analyzing their effects on product perceptions and status attributions.

Finally, social media communications might also make alternative ways of product acquisitions more possible because product displays on social media does not require product ownership and even usage. Thus, users might utilize products that are owned by someone else, counterfeit, or rented when they engage in conspicuous consumption on social media (Anlamlier, Torres, and Gal 2016). The increased popularity of sharing and access-based economy (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Belk 2014) also assists consumers in creating status negotiations without significant financial investment on status-signalling products. These avenues offer fruitful research endeavors in the future.

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CHAPTER 4

LIFESTYLE FASHION RETAILING IN CHINA: REDESIGNING THE CONSUMER JOURNEY

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Abstract

With the rapid development of China's economy, Chinese consumers' purchasing power and life quality have been improving quickly. The utilitarian values are no longer the only focus while shopping for many consumers. The consumers' need for hedonic values is emerging, particularly in the metropolitan areas. With this prominent lifestyle shift, the lifestyle retailers that cater to this need by offering experiential shopping experience in their physical stores are gaining popularity in China. This study aimed to gain a better understanding of the effects of environmental stimuli of lifestyle fashion stores on consumers' internal states and patronage shopping behaviors. An enhanced S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response) model was proposed and utilized to guide the study and analyze the results. As an exploratory study, the qualitative method was applied. 15 Chinese millennial female consumers living in the first-tier cities were interviewed for the primary data. The findings reveal that Chinese millennial consumers tend to shop at lifestyle fashion stores because unique products and shopping environment could induce positive internal states and favorable hedonic and utilitarian evaluations, which lead to patronage behaviors such as longer time spent in stores and greater purchase intention.

1. Introduction

After 40-year rapid economic development since its open-door policy started in 1979, China has transformed from an investment, manufacturing

and export-oriented economy to an innovation, consumption and service driven economy (Pi, Hamlin, and Han 2017). Chinese consumers' purchasing power and life quality have substantially improved. Compared to the consumers in the Western countries, Chinese consumers used to be considered less impulsive but more practical in terms of shopping (Chi 2018, 274). Nowadays, an increasing number of Chinese urban consumers are shopping products for hedonic reasons such as self-fulfillment, recreation etc. (Xu, Chi, and Su 2018, 49-52; Chi and Chen 2019, 56-58). These hedonic activities start to account for a bigger portion of Chinese consumers' expenditures. Experience-oriented retailers like Ikea, Apple and Muji have been opening stores in many metropolitan areas in China to fulfill consumers' growing needs of experiential shopping. These retailers are called lifestyle retailers, which target a particular market segment based on the lifestyle of a specific group of consumers (Grzeskowiak, Sirgy, Foscht, and Swoboda 2016, 124-125).

Although prior studies have explored the drivers and trends of the growth of lifestyle retail brands in the Western countries and its importance for current and future fashion industry (Damminga, Wu, and Johnson 2012; Hyllegard, Ogle, Yan, and Kissell 2016), very few researchers have studied the emerging phenomenon of lifestyle fashion retailing in China where is becoming the largest apparel consumer market in the world. To fill the gap in the extant literature, this study aimed to examine female metropolitan consumers' knowledge, attitudes and willingness to shop lifestyle fashion stores in China. To fulfil that goal, the researchers conducted a qualitative study by using primary data collected from semi-structured interviews. 15 female consumers living in the first-tier cities in China (i.e., Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou) were reached out and interviewed through snowball sampling.

To help this study's participants recall their previous shopping experiences in foreign lifestyle fashion stores, in this study, the authors showed the participants a video of a representative lifestyle fashion retailer, namely Anthropologie. Anthropologie is an U.S. apparel retailer, a subsidiary brand of Urban Outfitters, which conveys its values mainly through building attractive physical store environment and unique products to create memorable shopping experience for its customers. The reason for choosing this retail brand is that as a successful prototype of lifestyle fashion retailer, Anthropologie, represents a large amount of foreign lifestyle fashion retailers that are offering female Chinese consumers' new ways of shopping. Thus, this study explored the female Chinese consumers' knowledge and attitude toward such lifestyle fashion stores.

Anthropologie target at female consumers within the age range of late 20s and early 40s, who are economically satisfied and eager to reflect their unique styles through their apparel, home décor, and other lifestyle products (D'Urso 2021, 2). Although Anthropologie offers both online and offline sites, most of their customers still prefer to shop in their physical locations because of the pleasant and appealing shopping environment and atmosphere established in those stores. Moreover, Anthropologie has buying teams who travel around the world (e.g., Europe, U.K. and India) and visit various antique stores and flea markets to search one-of-a-kind products and designs for inspirations (D'Urso 2021, 2-3). Compared to traditional retailers, Anthropologie is special to many of their customers because the unique products and the well-arranged shopping environment make them enjoy browsing and shopping in the physical shops. When many retail companies are closing their brick-and-mortar shops and transforming into electronic commerce, Anthropologie chooses to stay with physical store retailing and focus on in-store visual merchandising and shopping experience to attract and retain customers (Lieber 2014).

2. Literature Review

In this section, we reviewed the literature on lifestyle retailing and the current popular types of lifestyle retailing with a focus on store environment and experiential shopping experience. The review of literature was divided into three parts: 1). shift of Chinese consumers' lifestyle and culture; 2). lifestyle retailing and experiential retailing; and 3). theoretical framework. Then, three propositions were developed based on the literature review. These propositions were used to guide development of the interview questions, proposal of our conceptual model, and focus of the study.

2.1 Shift of Chinese consumers' lifestyle and culture

Lifestyle is a person's way of living including his or her views about the world, which depends on the person's background, family, education, and job nature (Pandey 2012, 175). In marketing and consumer behavior studies, many researchers have further defined lifestyle to reflect subject matters (Chi and Kilduff 2011, 422; Levy and Rook 1999). Previous researchers assert that lifestyle can be defined as the symbolic products and services that consumers purchase (Levy and Rook 1999). Therefore, there is a tight connection between a consumer segment and a unique product or a brand's values and characteristics. Fashion retailers that sell expensive products and convey high-class lifestyles usually customize their products and services

for the consumer segment who affirms the values with them, such as scarcity or popularity (Kastanakis and Balabanis 2014, 2148). Although China still has a large rural population who are primarily utilitarian oriented and cannot afford Western lifestyles and services, China's young consumers and affluent consumers, who live in the metropolitan areas have already started picking up Western lifestyles and culture through shopping European and American brands (Morck and Yeung 2016).

Since Chinese consumers have very diverse demographic backgrounds and lifestyles, localization is needed for advertising and marketing (Hiebert, Rath, and Vertovec 2015, 16-18). Currently, Chinese urban households consume more than twice nondurable goods compared to rural households (Nie and Palmer 2016, 30). Businesses often use China's city-tier classification to locate their target market and design market entry strategies (Wong 2019). The tier systems categorize Chinese cities into four tiers based on three main factors: GDP, politics, and population (South China Morning Post 2016). For example, Tier 1 cities' GDP is over USD 300 billion, tier 2's GDP is between USD 68 billion and USD 299 billion, Tier 3's GDP is between USD 18 billion and USD 67 billion, and Tier 4's GDP is below USD 17 billion. Each city is evaluated and defined by comparing its score to the average score of each tier. Tier 1 cities have the greatest and wealthiest population in China (Wong 2019). Middle-class residents in the four first-tier cities (i.e., Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen) show similar lifestyles and consumption customs (Zhan and He 2012, 1455). With the growth of China's economy and Chinese consumers' consumption capacity, people's lifestyle and culture are going through a modernized and westernized transformation (Xiao and Kim 2009, 610-611; Wang 2016).

In addition to consumers' lifestyle and culture, consumers' gender also plays an important role in terms of their shopping habits and preferences. According to previous research, female consumers show higher interest to and shop more frequently for luxury products (Doss and Robinson 2013; Taube and Warnaby 2017). For example, previous scholar discovered that young female consumers in Taiwan enjoyed purchasing luxury fashion brands regardless of their financial situation because they liked to discuss those brands with their friends, and the brands displayed their social status (Wu, Sharon, Chaney, Chen, Nguyen, and Melewar 2015, 298-303). Female consumers have long been considered as the sizeable market for luxury fashion brands (Hung 2006; Okonkwo 2016; Silverstein, Fiske, and Butman 2008; Wu et al. 2015, 303-305)

Younger consumers pay more attention to their individual independence, freedom and distinctiveness, which has been reported as one of the most prominent lifestyle changes in China (Jing and Ruiming 2013). Nowadays, Chinese consumers seek unique and personalized products (Zhan and He 2012). Moreover, a huge number of overseas returnees (i.e., "Haigui"), who have lived and studied/worked in Western countries such as the U.S., are returning back to China to purse their careers (Lockin China 2017). According to the Lockin China's 2017 Overseas Talent Employment Analysis Report, the number of returnees is expected to exceed 600,000 in 2017, which is more than the number of students going to study abroad in the meantime. Most of them choose to live and work in first-tier cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou because of the globalized working environment and high-paid job positions. Some overseas returnees even expressed reverse culture shock when they came back to China because they had already adopted Western lifestyle (Tharenou and Seet 2014, 69). Thus, we proposed the research proposition (RP) as follows:

> **RP1:** *Young and affluent female consumers, who live in the metropolitan areas of China, are more suitable for Anthropologie to target due to their stronger consumption power and the more Westernized lifestyles they possess.*

2.2 Lifestyle retailing and experiential retailing

Early scholars described lifestyle retailer as a tailored store creating unique strategy and operations based on target consumers' lifestyles instead of demographics or promotions, which are different from traditional supplier-style retailers who focus on homogenous operations strategies (Blackwell and Talarzyk 2002). Another definition of lifestyle retailing concentrated on store environment, where compelling ambience is developed to stimulate customers to spend and interact in store (Pegler 1996). More recently, researchers found that lifestyle apparel stores differentiate themselves from each other and increase their sales through strategic visual merchandising (Mehta and Chugan 2014). When the products they sell to the customers were almost identical, they had to build unique store images and convey exclusive values to their customers through attractive window display, more organized product display, and comfortable atmospheres (Mehta and Chugan 2014). Moreover, fashion lifestyle brands sell more than just clothes. Most of the current successful brands in the fashion industry utilize the concept of lifestyle retailing by embracing multiple product categories besides apparel, such as perfumes, cosmetics, or home goods (Keiser, Garner, and Vandermar 2017). Previous researchers have long recognized

that consumers have experiential needs (e.g. sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation), so certain brands are created to meet these symbolic (inwardly engendered) needs (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986, 136). Therefore, lifestyle retailers often apply the techniques of experiential marketing to provide consumers memorable and sentiment shopping experiences.

As the Internet continues to become the center of people's lives, traditional brick-and-mortar retailers (e.g., Macy's, JCPenney in US, and RT-Mart, Sogo in China) are facing unprecedented challenges from online retailers such as Amazon in the U.S. and Taobao and JD in China. Recent studies suggest that to grow or even just survive, brick-and-mortar retailers should focus on their advantage, which is real-time shopping environment and offer consumers unique and memorable in-store shopping experiences (Chi and Chen 2019, 57).

According to previous scholars, "the term 'Experiential Retailing' is simply the retail version of the concept 'Experiential Marketing' that deals with connecting customers with a brand through one or more meaningful and relevant experiences while appealing to both rational and emotional behavior" (Senthil, Chandrasekar, and Selvabaskar 2012, 68). In addition to buying for utilitarian reasons such as price and quality, consumers also shop for hedonic values, and the two facets together affect consumers' shopping experiences (Ainsworth and Foster 2017). Consumers expect retailers to provide not only a good product at low price but also an emotional experience as purchasing no longer means just buying goods but becomes a leisure-time activity (Senthil, Chandrasekar, and Selvabaskar 2012, 92-93). Nowadays, retailers need to help mission-driven shoppers slow down their pace and breathe through having them more emotionally engaged in shopping (Reda 2016).

To offer memorable experience, marketers may create symbolic themes or stories regularly for customers to participate, so their need for social interaction and wish to experiment with new products can be fulfilled. For example, the lifestyle fashion retailers in China blend cafés into shops, and even host interesting activities, such as in-store pop-ups and afternoon tea, to attract experience-seeking Chinese consumers and improve sales (Chi and Chen 2019, 57-58). Thus, lifestyle retailing could be understood as a specific type of experiential retailing strategy that provides experiential shopping experiences to certain targeted consumer groups segmented by consumers' psychographic information (i.e., lifestyles). These targeted consumers enjoy the same type of lifestyles, so their hobbies, daily activities,

and preferred styles of products share some common features (Levy, Weitz, and Grewal 2019). Lifestyle retailers use experiential retailing as a tool to strengthen and widen the memorable shopping experiences their target consumers could receive. For instance, Lululemon, an athletic apparel brand, provides free yoga classes in their stores every week. Customers who show interest in sports and yoga can not only get sports attire and accessories from the store, but also engage in the sports activities that are a part of their routine life. Thus, we proposed that RP2 below.

> **RP2**: *Chinese female consumers who share the same values and lifestyle with Anthropologie would be willing to shop in the store ambiance because they not only want the quality and price that Anthropologie offers but also seek for the memorable and emotional shopping experience.*

2.3 Theoretical framework

Prior researchers proposed the Stimulus-Organism-Response(S-O-R) model to demonstrate that the physical and social catalysts in the environment can directly influence a person's emotional state, which in turn affects that person's approach-avoidance behavior (see Figure 1) (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). The three emotional dimensions: pleasure, arousal, and dominance, work as the mediators in between the environment's stimulus and human behaviors. The environmental stimuli include those sense modalities such as color, temperature, and odor. Lately, various marketing researchers applied the S-O-R model to demonstrate that the store environment (S) influences consumers' internal evaluations (O), which in turn generate behavioral responses (R) (Chang, Eckman, and Yan 2011; Chi 2013; Vieira 2013; Baker, Levy, and Grewal 1992; Hyllegard, Ogle, Yan, and Kissell 2016). For example, researchers examined this model under retail setting and discovered that customers' arousal and pleasure could mediate the stimuli of shop environment on their willingness to buy (Baker, Levy, and Grewal 1992). The S-O-R model provides an integrative framework for modeling consumer behavior, which effectively meets the criteria of parsimony, comprehensiveness, coherence, and flexibility (Jacoby 2002). To fully understand the S-O-R model under the retail store circumstance, three aspects of the model (physical store environment, emotional states, and approach-avoidance behavior) are further discussed below.

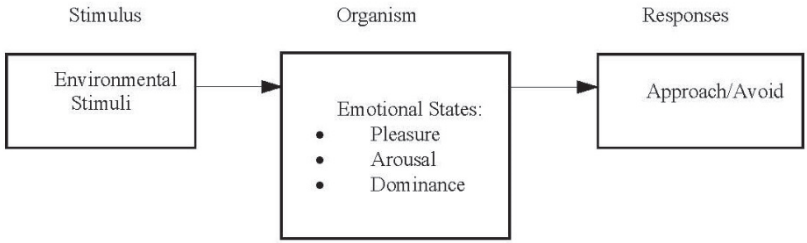

Figure 1. The Mehrabaian-Russell S-O-R Model

2.4 Environmental stimuli

According to previous researchers, "atmosphere refers to aesthetics and ambiance of the store" in the retail environment (Olahut, El-Murad, and Plaias 2012, 1). Store atmosphere such as shop layout, shop cleanliness, well-spaced product displays, and enticing decoration is an important retailing strategy because it affects consumers' behaviors positively and leads to satisfactory shopping experience.

Although Mehrabiana and Russel empirically proved that individual's behavior is affected by external environment, they did not classify environmental traits (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). Another scholar established a framework of three environmental variables: ambient, social, and design, remedied that deficiency (Baker 1986). Ambient factors involve background circumstances that affect people's sub-consciousness, such as lighting, temperature, scent, cleanliness. Design factors include functional dimension (e.g. layout, comfort), and aesthetic dimension (e.g. architecture, color). Social factors are the human aspect of the environment, which are divided into audience and service personnel. Consumers' perception of the store's service is strongly impacted by other customers' and employees' appearance, behaviors, quantity, and communication. This three-variable classification was added into the original S-O-R model to better examine Anthropologie's environmental cues and its impact on customer's emotions.

2.5 Emotional states and internal evaluation

Later, some researchers compared Mehrabiana and Russel's three internal statements with the popular ABC model, and discovered that pleasure, arousal, and dominance can be respectively linked to affect, cognition, and behavior in ABC model (Bakker, Van Der Voordt, Vink, and De Boon 2014, 415-417). Mehrabiana and Russel (1974) believe that pleasure-

displeasure is a state of feeling that is either positive or negative, arousal is "a feeling state varying along a single dimension ranging from sleep to frantic excitement", and dominance is when people feel free to act. Affect and cognition are the two internal statements found to be related to environmental stimuli (Russell 2003). Prior authors argued that cognition is related to consumer perception, which is a process of transforming stimuli into meaningful information (Chi and Chen 2019, 47-48). The behavior in ABC model is a conative dimension (Arriaga and Agnew 2001). Bakker et al. claimed that dominance should be conative as well since dominance is connected to free and unlimited actions (Bakker, Van Der Voordt, Vink, and De Boon 2014). Thus, we consider pleasure as affect, arousal as cognition, and dominance as conation, which were included in the enhanced S-O-R model (see Figure 2).

Some researchers found that cognitive and affective internal evaluations stimulated by store environment influenced consumers' approach behaviors toward single-brand apparel shops, so retailers' store-as-a-brand strategy was proved to be applicable (Kumar and Kim 2014). Moreover, positive internal evaluations, such as emotional satisfaction, influence consumers' product perception and approach intentions in utilitarian service settings as well (Ladhari, Souiden, and Dufour 2017). In addition to affective states, environmental cues can also affect consumers' cognitive states such as attention, information search, and evaluations because consumers use the environmental cues to assess the quality of the shop and its merchandise (Doucé and Janssens 2013).

Perceived value is a consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on his/her perceptions of what is received and what is given (Zeithaml 1988, 14). Consumer perceived value mainly includes two types: utilitarian value and hedonic value (Chi and Kilduff 2011). Cognitive value is the utilitarian aspect that consumers perceive when shopping, while affective value is the hedonic aspect (Yao, Zhou, and Meng 2007). Consumer's perceived utilitarian values mainly contain quality of products and service, price, and convenience. Consumer's perceived hedonic value is intangible and self-oriented, which is mainly associated with emotionality and satisfaction (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Chi 2013).

2.6 Approach behaviors

Approach-avoidance behaviors include physical approach, exploration, affiliation, performance, or other verbal and non-verbal communications of preference (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). The behavioral responses of the

S-O-R model can be either positive or negative. When the responses are positive, consumers tend to spend more time in the store enjoying shopping. Otherwise, consumers choose to leave the store and stop exploring the products in the store. Therefore, consumers' in-store emotional states can cause real shopping behaviors rather than just attitudes or intentions. In-store music and aroma can induce the arousal, thereby make consumers more pleasant, which directly affect their shopping behaviors: time and money spent, approach behavior, and satisfaction with the shopping experience (Morrison, Gan, Dubelaar, and Oppewal 2011).

Anthropologie is a good example as a lifestyle retailer successfully implementing the theory. Anthropologie's customers stay in its stores for an hour and fifteen minutes in average, which is longer than most other retailers; and spend approximately $80 per visit, which is higher than most other fashion retailers (Staker 2015). Time spent in store and purchase intention are the two types of consumer responses being reported by researchers and marketers, so we built them into the enhanced model (see Figure 2). Thus, the third RP and the enhanced S-O-R model are proposed below.

RP3: *Store environments like Anthropologie can affect Chinese female consumers' internal evaluations and consequently their responses reflected as the average time and money spent in the stores.*

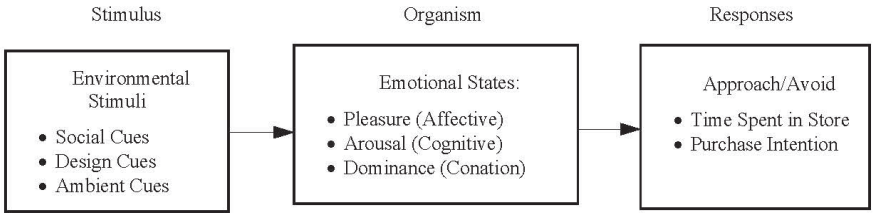

Figure 2. The Enhanced S-O-R Model

3. Methodology

This study applied a qualitative research method by using semi-structured interview and snowball sampling approach because this interpretive research method allows participants to freely describe their deep understanding of a phenomenon (Van Manen 1990). Fifteen participants living in first-tier cities in China (i.e., Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou) were interviewed during Spring 2017. Each interview lasted for approximately

one hour. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the responses were analyzed independently by two researchers. A consent letter with the interview questions were sent to the participants for preview before each interview. The interview questions were translated into Chinese by a bilingual researcher. The Chinese version was back-translated into English by another bilingual researcher to ensure translation equivalence.

The interview consists of three parts. The first part included a few general questions about the participants' shopping behaviors, lifestyles, favorite brands, and knowledge about Anthropologie and lifestyle fashion stores in general. In the beginning of the second part, the participants were asked to watch a short Anthropologie store video that aimed to help the participants recall their shopping experience in Anthropologie and to generate visual and sensory stimuli (Spencer 2010). Followed by the video, the interviewees answered some open-ended questions about their perceptions and thoughts about the Anthropologie store. In the last section of the interview, the participants were shown the photos of three different lifestyle-oriented products (i.e., a blouse, a pair of earrings, and a jar of candle) that were sold by Anthropologie and were asked to discuss their intentions to purchase as well as the prices they would be willing to pay for those products.

Based on the enhanced S-O-R model proposed, two coders analyzed the participants' responses thematically through an interpretation process from the finest to general. This process was repeated for a few times until the significant themes were filtrated from the data. At the end, the researchers ascertained that all the themes were correctly understood and disclosed the relationships among the themes and their roles in the model.

The participants' demographic information and their consumption behaviors were summarized in Table 1. These 15 participants were female white collars, possessing managerial jobs. Their ages ranged from 26 to 35 years old. Half of them were married. Their individual annual incomes ranged from $12,000 to $59,000, falling into the middle or middle-high income consumer groups in China (Goldman Sachs 2017). These consumers are considered to be the next fast-growing consumption power. Moreover, they all received college or higher degrees, and interestingly, six of them got their degrees from western colleges or graduate schools (i.e. U.S., U.K., Germany, or Australia). This reflects that the population of overseas returnees living in first-tier cities is becoming larger. The three participants who got their degrees from the U.S. recognized Anthropologie while watching the video because they had been to the store before when they were in the U.S. During the interview, they all expressed their favor toward

this retail brand, and one of the interviewees even stated that she wished that Anthropologie could open shops in China.

Although some of the participants claimed that they preferred either online or offline, most of them actually purchased fashion products from both channels. The main reasons of shopping online were convenience and low price. Taobao.com and its affiliate Tmall.com were popular among the participants. Furthermore, three new shopping methods were repeatedly mentioned: Daigou (asking people to purchase things from abroad), Haitao (using overseas shopping websites), and the most recent way, shopping when traveling to other countries. Low price and need for uniqueness or exclusivity were found to be the main reasons for choosing these three ways to shop. Most of the participants spent over $440 quarterly on apparel. We did not find a direct connection between the personal annual income and the expenditure on apparel. This is probably because most Chinese couples spend their incomes together and many parents continue to support their children financially even when they have become adults.

Table 1. Profile of the participants

Participant	Age	Marital Status	Annual Income	Education Level	Occupation	Basic shopping habits (frequency; online/offline; quarterly expense)
AZ	26	Single	$15,000	Bachelor from China	Waste water management compliance	Once a month/ season; both online and offline; $440-880 (other seasons), $2,200 (winter).
BX	27	Single	$15,000	Bachelor from the U.S.	Project manager for private equity firm	Once a month/season; prefer offline; $310 (shoes), $3000 (clothes).
CC	27	Married	$15,000	Bachelor from China	Film producer	Once a week; prefer online; $440.
DC	28	Single	$15,000	Master from the U.S.	Cultural event coordinator	Once every two months; both online and offline; $310-350.
EL	30	Married	$18,000 - $27,000	Master from China	Multi-media Journalist	Once every month/ two months; both online and offline; $440-740.
FC	27	Single	$30,000 - $37,000	Bachelor from China	AML Compliance officer	Once a week; both online and offline; $440.

GZ	28	Married	$15,000	Master from the U.S.	Bank risk management	Once every half month to a month; both online and offline; $440-740.
HL	28	Married	$15,000	Bachelor from China	Commodity's trading	Once every week; both online and offline; $147-590.
IF	33	Married	$12,000	Bachelor from China	Police records	Once every month/ two months/ season; both online and offline; $147-300.
JC	28	Married	$18,000	Master from Germany	Purchaser	Once every quarter; both online and offline; $440-590.
KY	28	Single	$30,000	Master from Britain	Commercial real estate analyst	Once every half month; both online and offline; $1,325.
LZ	30	Single	$59,000	Master from China	Stock exchange	Once a week; both online and offline; $350.
ML	35	Married	$44,000	Associate from China	International trade and commerce	Once every season; prefer offline; $440-880.
NY	28	Married	$12,000	Bachelor from China	HR	Once every few days; prefer online; $4,000-5,880.
OY	28	Single	$18,000	Master from Australia	Marketing executive	Once a month; both online and offline; $1,470 (winter), $660 (other seasons).

Note: reference to each participant is indicated by their initials.

4. Results and Analysis

The results demonstrate that Anthropologie's store environment induced the participants to have positive affect, aroused various positive perceptions and a conation to explore the store. Some of the participants articulated their strong purchase intentions and willingness to spend long time exploring and shopping in the store. Through the coding process, six themes under organism's three categories were identified: 1. emotion/feeling, 2. perceived convenience, 3. perceived hedonism, 4. perceived aesthetics, 5. perceived scarcity and 6. desire to explore and purchase.

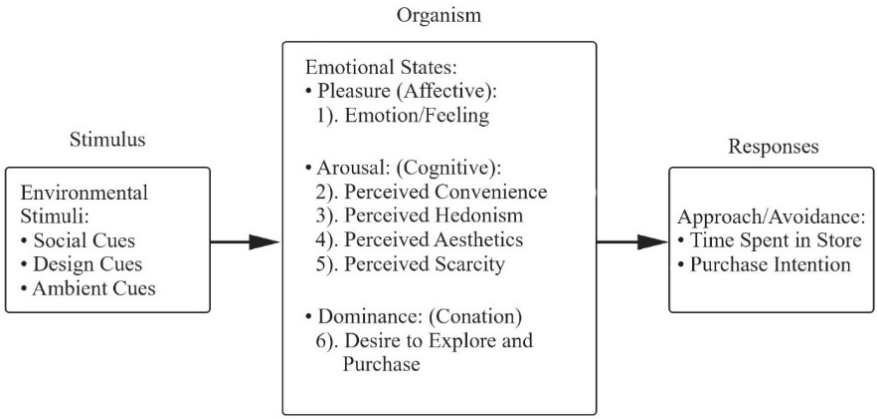

Figure 3. The Enhanced S-O-R model with identified themes and outcomes

4.1 Pleasure (Affective) with the environmental stimuli

Theme 1: Emotion/Feeling

Two major affections, namely happiness and easiness, were induced by the Anthropologie's homelike store environment. Words such as happy, joyful, pleasant, comfortable, free, relaxed and casual were used by the participants when describing how they felt after watching the Anthropologie video. All three environmental factors (social, design and ambient) exerted their influence on people's emotional states. One of the dimensions of the social factor, service personnel, was discovered to be impacting consumers' affect. Many participants articulated that they like the self-serving environment that Anthropologie provided because it would make them feel free and relaxed. Some of them indicated that a shop that doesn't have many sales

associates who are following customers around to offer services, makes them feel more comfortable and relaxed.

> BX: *"I saw those girls they were very free, moving around in the store and also videotaping, and nobody came out to stop them, so I think it provides a very relaxing environment".*

> EL: *"I think the biggest advantage of this type of stores is freedom. Sales associates wouldn't watch you and follow you around. Some consumers are shy. If they are watched by salespeople, they will not want to buy, but in this store, they would be very relaxed*".

In addition to social factors, design and ambient factors also affect the participants' internal emotions. Both functional and aesthetic facets of design factors were acknowledged by the participants. For the functional aspect, the store's layout and comfort were mostly mentioned; and for the aesthetic aspect, the participants praised its color and decoration. Furthermore, the participants also like how big the shop and its fitting rooms are, which lead to an easy mood.

> GZ: *"I think this store's layout is pretty good. It's interspersed and integrated, and things are not divided apart. There is a resting area. The color and decoration make people feel comfortable, so I think it's a nice shop".*

> BX: *"I really feel like it's a very joyful shopping environment by looking at the colors and stuff they sell".*

> AZ: *"The fitting rooms are pretty roomy, so it's comfortable and cozy".*

The participants also indicated their feelings toward ambient factors such as lighting. Although they could not sense the temperature and scent, or hear the music by watching the video, based on their knowledge some of the participants speculated that the Anthropologie store should have music or scent. For instance, HL said, "*this shop must have music or something else, which would make people feel comfortable and free*." Besides that, lighting is the ambient element that the participants paid most attention to and related their positive emotions to because they could see it in the video. They described the lighting by using words such as *warm and bright*. By stimulating the consumers through the three environmental dimensions, Anthropologie created a warm and homelike environment.

4.2 Arousal (Cognitive)

The participants not only had affective connections with Anthropologie's store environment, but they also perceived and processed information in their brain, and formed opinions and thoughts toward the store. Both utilitarian and hedonic perceptions were found to generate patronage behaviors, such as time spent in store, in-store browsing, and impulsive buying.

Even though price and quality are the two main utilitarian perceptions that consumers generate and use to decide if they should purchase (Rintamäki, Kanto, Kuusela, and Spence 2006). the participants we interviewed did not indicate much about these two dimensions. Instead, they perceived more hedonic and symbolic values that they could obtain when shopping at Anthropologie. Convenience was the only utilitarian value heavily mentioned by the participants.

Through video, the participants were unable to touch merchandise and feel its quality, which is usually associated with perceived price. The participants did not generate a clear perception of price for Anthropologie by observing the delightful store environment. The participants estimated the prices of Anthropologie's products based on their past experiences. The prices that they guessed were quite different between each other. That is because their past purchasing experience and knowledge toward certain brand are different, which means the reference price they evaluate in their mind when seeing the product is different (Kwak, Puzakova, and Rocereto 2015). The participants considered about country of origin, brand, and material, when guessing the price of the top. Some of them said that as it's not a designer name brand they would not pay too much for it. Although we did not discover the relationship between store environment stimuli and consumers' perception on merchandise price, a need of touching and feeling the products in order to know the merchandise quality was requested. However, the participants who know Anthropologie and have shopped there previously gave positive comments on their quality, and described it as a medium and high grade brand.

Each customer's perception of service quality is subjective and based on his or her personal experience with the service they receive (Nadiri and Gunay 2013). Most of the participants complimented about the self-service they observed from the video. They claimed that they did not want employees to follow them and promote products to them when they explore in the store, so they liked how Anthropologie allowed their customers to look around by

themselves. However, some participants claimed that they dislike self-service because it is difficult for them to find certain products that they need without any store employees' help. Moreover, some participants claimed that they liked self-service, but they still want employees to quickly approach them when they have questions or need help.

Theme 2: Perceived convenience

Unlike price and service that the participants generated different opinions about, convenience was agreed by the participants as one of the utilitarian benefits that they could receive when shopping at Anthropologie. Convenience is an output by input ratio, in which time and effort are outputs, and product and service that consumers purposefully want to gain are inputs (Holbrook 1996). According to previous researchers, there are four types of convenience in retail setting: access convenience, search convenience, possession convenience, and transaction convenience (Seiders, Berry, and Gresham 2000). The integrity and variety of the products that Anthropologie provides led the participants to perceive the value of convenience because they can do one-stop shopping instead of spending more time and energy to shop in multiple retail stores. Therefore, for the convenience and efficiency, consumers' patronage intention would increase.

> LZ: *"In this store, I should be able to get everything I need because it includes a lot of stuff like clothes, home decorations, jewelries and cosmetics. I probably don't need to go to other stores in the mall after I visit Anthropologie"*.

> BX: *"Anthropologie sells a variety of stuff. The girls shopping in the video apparently are having a good time. I think it's a very convenient one-stop shopping place. Basically, you can get everything there"*.

Theme 3: Perceived hedonism

As more and more researchers indicated, shopping is no longer only about fulfilling

utilitarian needs (Ainsworth and Foster 2017). Instead, consumers constantly seek for hedonism and entertainment in retail environment, so they can receive emotional value such as enjoyment and pleasure (Chi and Chen 2019; Rintamäki, Kanto, Kuusela, and Spence 2006). The participants showed huge interest in the hedonic store environment that they perceived. The participants used words like interesting, happy, and fun to describe the shopping experience they would receive if they were the shoppers. They also believed that Anthropologie would be a place where they could spend

fun time with their friends and family to explore together. Perceived hedonism leads to behaviors, such as taking time to browse around, touching and trying on products.

> KY: *"It would be a very happy shopping experience. I would choose to go with my friends, and we browse things together and have some discussions. The store is pretty big so I will stay at least half an hour in there, trying some clothes on and putting some shoes on"*.

> FC: *"When I am free, I would schedule a time to go with my friends. We would be talking and laughing, browsing and looking for stuff around, purchasing something and trying on clothes together. I wouldn't go there for a specific item that I need"*.

Theme 4: Perceived aesthetics

Moreover, the participants were attracted by the beauty of the products and the store

environment, which is mostly attributed to the splendid design. In a retail setting, perceived aesthetics refers to consumers' spontaneous appreciation to objects they see in a consumption environment where they gain visual appeal and entertainment (Holbrook 1996). Beauty is the center of PA attached to fashion and product design, and it awards people pleasure (Chi and Chen 2019). The participants complimented about the beauty of the decoration and design of the store environment and the products. Purchase intention was declared by the participants due to the aesthetics they perceived.

> IF: *"The way they display their products is beautiful. The store has a lot of decorations"*.

> GZ: *"I think people who pursue a delicate and high-quality life would like Anthropologie because they have fragrances, candles, mugs, dishes, which all look so pretty"*.

> CC: *"It's so beautiful. I think people who pursue high-quality lives would like this store"*.

Theme 5: Perceived scarcity

According to many researchers, scarcity is one of the valuable marketing strategies that merchandisers use to attract consumers and motivate them to shop, such as limited-edition wines, cars, and purses (Wu, Lu, Wu, and Fu 2012; Zhan and He 2012). Perceived scarcity significantly impacts consumers'

perceived value (i.e., perceived quality, perceived sacrifice, perceived uniqueness) in turn to influence consumers' purchase intension (Wu, Lu, Wu, and Fu 2012). Perceived scarcity can be defined as limited supply, which is related to quantity limit (Lynn 1991). Consumers recognize products' uniqueness when the products are distinctive from other products (Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001). If the products are more difficult for consumers to acquire than regular products, the value of these products will be perceived higher than those regular products due to the scarcity effects (Chi and Kilduff 2011).

Because Anthropologie has not opened any stores in China, and there are no similar ones that can be found in China, many participants perceived the scarcity of Anthropologie, and showed interest and patronage intention. The participants' knowledge about lifestyle stores are mostly from the popular Japanese retailer in China called Muji. Compared to Muji, reputed to its minimalism style of products and in-store decorations, Anthropologie has a more complex and luxurious design of products and store. The participants noticed that uniqueness and expressed curiosity. Other than that, they acknowledged the variety of products in the store, and claimed that as another uniqueness about Anthropologie.

> IF: *"We don't have this type of style in China. I think the store has a western style because their decorations are very bright and shiny. The style they have is different from the styles we usually see here. The style we have here are usually those Japanese styles like Muji, but they are not as comprehensive as this store. I think Chinese consumers would accept this style and even really like it".*
>
> JC: *"I think the store would be very attractive if it's opened in Shanghai because there are very few of this type of stores. Maybe there are some, but they are not as big as this one, and their products are not as many and various".*

4.3 Dominance (Conation)

Theme 6: Desire to explore and purchase

"Conation is not goal-setting motivation or achievement, but the way in which a person with any degree of motivation or goal orientation goes about acting on that motivation and achieving those goals" (Gerdes and Stromwall 2008, 236). Thus, compared to affect and cognition, conation is the closest one to behaviors and responses because people already generated the desire

and impulsion to do something. Due to the environmental stimuli, the participants formed the desire to explore and impulsively shop in the store.

> NY: *"I would have an impulsive feeling to browse and go shopping in there to see what I want to buy because I feel like it has many stuff, many varieties. The environment is also very cozy and fun"*.

> JC: *"Anthropologie is the type of store where I can browse around. When I see an item I like, I might want to try it on or bring it back home. This store can stimulate your shopping desire"*.

4.4 Responses

Two types of responses were articulated by the participants: spending long time in the store and purchase intention, which belong to the approach response. The store environment and well-designed merchandises make the participants want to spend time browsing and looking for things that they might like. Some of them declared that they would make purchases in the store.

> NY: *"I would stay in there for a very long time, look at everything, and in the end I would find what I want. I would also take a look at those home decorations. I wouldn't leave without buying anything"*.

> GZ: *"I would spend a long time in there because there are a lot to explore. I will definitely browse each section and try everything. I think I would buy a lot of stuff. Psychologically, I feel like I really want to buy"*.

5. Conclusions and Implications

By using the proposed enhanced S-O-R model, this study demonstrated the influence of lifestyle fashion store's environmental stimuli on the patronage willingness of Chinese female millennial consumers living in the first-tier cities. We discovered that a well-designed retail environment can greatly affect Chinese female consumers' affection, cognition and conation, which thereby result in longer time spent in store and greater purchase intention. Under cognition, both hedonic and utilitarian values influenced Chinese female consumers' purchase intention towards lifestyle fashion stores like Anthropologie, and hedonic values were more influential in this study compared to utilitarian values. It is revealed that as Chinese female consumers are becoming more hedonic-values driven, lifestyle fashion stores in China can focus on providing more hedonic shopping experience

to their customers by appealing store environment to compete with online retailers.

Moreover, Chinese female millennial consumers living in metropolitan areas showed strong interest and willingness to shop at lifestyle fashion stores such as Anthropologie. They were adapted to the westernized and modernized lifestyle that Anthropologie delivers, and desired for the memorable and emotional shopping experience. Some of the participants claimed that they wanted the exactly same service, product, price, and shopping environment in China as Anthropologie provides in the U.S. They are concerned that western lifestyle fashion stores opened in China can not measure up the quality of products and services offered in the U.S. and Western Europe. The common issues include the shopping environment are chaotic and crowded given the population in China, the prices of same products sold in China are regularly two or three times higher than those sold in the U.S. and Western Europe, and the post-sales customer services in China are not comparable to the counterparts in the U.S. and Western Europe. These are also the reasons for the Chinese female consumers to use overseas online shopping websites to purchase foreign brands, ask friends or agents to buy products for them, or buy a great number of products when traveling overseas. Therefore, the foreign lifestyle fashion retailers need to understand the significance of physical store environment and provide desired service and shopping atmosphere in the stores in China.

This research is significant for both academics and marketers who want to explore more about environmental stimuli of lifestyle fashion stores on consumers' internal states and patronage behaviors. For those brands or companies who are interested in the Chinese market, this research provided an in-depth exploration of current Chinese consumers' lifestyles and culture, and their perceptions about the emerging lifestyle fashion stores. Western lifestyle fashion retailers such as Anthropologie also can benefit from this research by understanding the perceptions that Chinese female consumers generate toward them, and provide the shopping environment and experience desired by target Chinese female consumers.

6. Limitations and Future Studies

Although this study has provided a better understanding on the influence of lifestyle fashion store's environmental stimuli on the patronage willingness of Chinese female millennial consumers, there are some limitations that should be mentioned and could be addressed in the future studies. First, this is a qualitative study that is exploratory in nature. In the future, quantitative

data could be collected through survey to test the possible statistical relationships in the model. Second, the effect of visual stimulus is probably not as strong as consumers' real shopping experience in the store although the video did help the participants recall their shopping experience and provide more relevant answers to the questions. In the future, conducting interviews with in-store shoppers might generate additional insights on Chinese consumers' shopping behaviors toward lifestyle fashion stores. Finally, with the rapid economic development in China, many western fashion brands have realized the great business potential in tier 2 and tier 3 cities (e.g., Chengdu, Wuhan, Hangzhou, and Suzhou) and are entering these emerging consumer markets where are less competitive and show a growing demand on lifestyle fashion brands. Thus, future researchers could expand the current study to a broader range of consumers in China.

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CHAPTER 5

CAPITALIZING ON THE CROSSMODAL CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN AUDITION AND OLFACTION IN THE DESIGN OF MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

In the latter half of the 19th Century, the chemist and perfumer Septimus Piesse drew attention to the close association (or similarity) that he felt existed between fragrance and music/sound. But what, one might be tempted to ask, is the value of knowing about such audio-olfactory associations (or crossmodal correspondences)? Here, we highlight a number of the ways in which such crossmodal correspondences have been incorporated in the context of multisensory experience design, in both the commercial and artistic spheres. We discuss how both academic researchers and practitioners are now increasingly starting to incorporate such audio-olfactory associations into the design of multisensory experiences and highlight some of the exciting opportunities that lie ahead. It is important to stress how the correspondences, unlike the synaesthetic relations with which they have long been confused, are consensually shared across populations, thus meaning that they provide a more robust basis for multisensory experience design. While Piesse may well have been the first to highlight the existence of these correspondences, only now are we coming to realize how they can be used to systematically influence human experience. As an illustration of the latter, we describe a small study demonstrating how the sounds that people hear influence their ratings of a qualities of fragrances,

thus hinting at their value for those wanting to modulate consumer/audience experience.

> *Scents, like sounds, appear to influence the olfactory nerve in certain definite degrees. There is, as it were, an octave of odours like an octave in music; certain odours coincide, like the keys of an instrument."* (Piesse, 1857, p. 38).

Introduction

In the context of multisensory marketing, researchers and practitioners have tended to focus on studying, and capitalizing on, the interactions that exist between the different senses, as well as the principles that guide them, for experience design (e.g., Velasco & Obrist, 2020; Velasco & Spence, 2019). Indeed, in recent years, there has been something of an explosion of research on the sometimes-surprising connections that exist between the senses at the same time as a growing realization of their potential relevance to the design of more engaging multisensory experiences (e.g., Krishna, 2012; Petit, Velasco, & Spence, 2019; Spence & Youssef, 2019). However, when it comes to the interactions between hearing (or audition) and smell (or olfaction) in the context of multisensory experience design, there has been surprisingly little research (see Spence, 2021a, for a review of the limited examples).

It has long been recognized that there may be a number of crossmodal associations, or correspondences, between smells (olfactory stimuli) and musical sounds. Consider here only how perfumers often describe fragrances and scents in terms of music and musical parameters (see Piesse, 1857, for one of the earliest, and perhaps most influential, examples of this). At the same time, however, there has also been sporadic interest in trying to compose and deliver "smell concerts" (see Hartmann, 1913, for an early example; and Wasselin, 2012, for a more recent example; and see Di Stefano, Murari, & Spence 2022; Spence, 2021a, for reviews). In their review, Deroy et al. (2013) highlighted how a wide variety of attributes from other sensory modalities (for example, pitch, timbre, brightness, and sweetness) can all be meaningfully applied to describe olfactory stimuli/percepts (e.g., "a dark scent", though see also Cohen, 1934). This is likely due to the existence of various crossmodal correspondences (e.g., associations between seemingly unrelated features across the senses, Spence, 2011a) that can serve as a link, or bridge, between olfaction and the other senses.

Relative to earlier research, though, two things have changed in the recent past. First, we now have a different conceptual framework for thinking about these crossmodal correspondences; In particular, it turns out that they are consistent across individuals, and are not necessarily related to synaesthesia, which is a condition whereby stimulation of one sense leads to a concurrent sensory experience in another (e.g., Deroy & Spence, 2013). The consensuality of the crossmodal mappings means that they 'speak' to the majority of people/consumers. Intriguingly, most people will, for example, agree that the aroma of coffee or a smoky aroma should be associated with a lower pitched sound than the smell of lemon or lychee (Deroy et al., 2013). By contrast, the relation between inducer and concurrent in the case of synaesthesia is, by definition, idiosyncratic (Grossenbacher & Lovelave, 2001), meaning that experience design based on synaesthesia are unlikely to resonate with the consumer/audience (though see Haverkamp, 2014). Second, while early commentators, such as the chemist and perfumer Septimus Piesse intuited that there was an affinity between sound and scent, it is only very recently that academics and experience designers have come to the realization that they can use these surprising crossmodal correspondences in order to systematically influence people's perception (cf. Crisinel et al., 2012), and possibly also their behaviour (Biswas, Lund, & Szocs, 2019; Mahdavi et al., 2020; Motoki, Saito, Nouchi, Kawashima, & Sugiura, 2019; Spence, 2021a).

Currently an intriguing but open question remains as to why such crossmodal correspondences between olfaction and the other senses might exist in the first place. The crossmodal correspondence between specific olfactory stimuli and particular colours (hues) is often explained by their co-occurrence in foodstuffs (think only of the red colour of strawberries and the associated smell, see Spence & Levitan, 2021; Spence, 2022, for reviews). Note, though, how it is simply far harder to come up with an environmental explanation that would explain why it is that people would reliably (or consistently) associate specific musical parameters, such as pitch or timbre, with particular olfactory stimuli (see Belkin et al., 1997; Deroy et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2021). That is, the majority of olfactory stimuli do not make a noise nor have any kind of distinctive sound that is associated with them. In other words, statistical crossmodal correspondences are likely to be relatively arbitrary according to the particular terminology of intermodal relations outlined by Walker-Andrews (1994).

Crossmodal Correspondences between Olfaction and the Other Senses in the Context of Multisensory Experiences

The last couple of decades has seen an explosive growth of interest in the various crossmodal correspondences that exist between olfaction and the other senses: Examples include those that have been demonstrated between odours and colours (Demattè et al., 2006a; Kemp & Gilbert, 1997; Stevenson et al., 2012; see also Spence, 2020a, for a review), abstract symbols (Blazhenkova & Kumar. 2018; Hanson-Vaux et al., 2013; Metatla et al., 2019; Seo et al., 2010; see Deroy, et al., 2013, for a review), felt textures (Churchill et al., 2009; Demattè et al., 2006b; Krishna et al., 2010; Marinetti, 1932/2014), speech sounds (Speed et al., 2021; Uchida et al., 2021), music (Levitan et al., 2015; Velasco et al., 2014), and the pitch of sounds (Belkin et al., 1997; Crisinel & Spence, 2012).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, several companies and marketing agencies, have recently started to become interested in the application of such crossmodal correspondences, and their potential use in the design of enhanced multisensory experiences for their customers (for example, Starbucks and Le Nez Du Vin; see Crisinel et al., 2013; Spence, 2011b; Spence et al., 2021). Indeed, throughout the customer journey, people are exposed to a number of sensory touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef 2016), whose sensory elements can be mixed and matched to deliver a given a given experience (Velasco & Obrist, 2020, 2021, see Figure 1, for a summary of multisensory experiences). One example of the pairing of scent with sound occurred in the context of Pantone's colour of the year in 2020, namely Classic Blue (19-4052). Pantone developed a marketing campaign where, together with a creative team, they developed what they claimed to be a soundtrack and a scent that matched the year's colour. As Fixsen (2019) put it: *"To augment the 2020 reveal, Pantone included a twist of its own: As part of its marketing campaign, the company partnered with several brands to develop the smell, sound, taste, and texture of Classic Blue. The resulting package included a swatch of suede-like fabric from the Inside, a musk-and-sea-salt-scented candle, a blue, berry-flavored jelly, and a three-minute audio track titled "Vivid Nostalgia.""*[1] What the case does not make explicit, though, is whether the mapping follows a specific rational (e.g., crossmodal correspondences) or perhaps just the intuition of the creative team.

[1] Access the Audio UX track Vivid Nostalgia at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVa6eQ1oRt8.

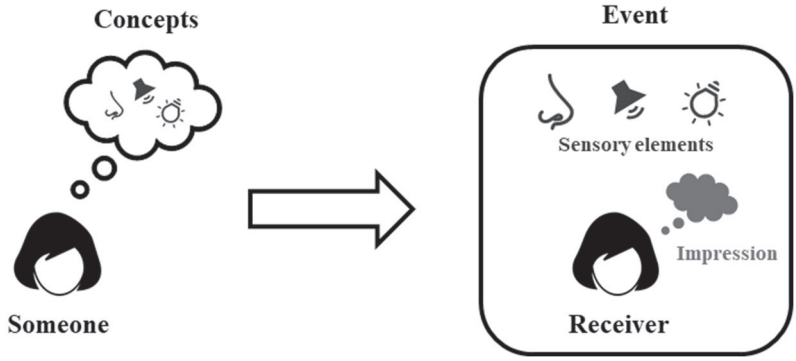

Figure 1. Schematic representation of multisensory experiences, that is, impressions formed by specific events, whose sensory elements have been elaborated following principles associated with the way in which our senses interact with one other. Relevant to the present chapter, smells and sounds may be used by a designer in a given event, following specific concept of audio-olfactory associations, to deliver a specific multisensory experience. Figure modified from Velasco, C. and Obrist, M. (2021) Multisensory Experiences: A Primer. *Front. Comput. Sci.* 3:614524.

Ever since the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin first expressed his desire to incorporate a scented element into his Prometheus – Poem of Fire work in the opening decades of the 20th Century, there has been interest in the incorporation of scent into musical performance (Spence, 2020b). The last decade or so has also seen something of a re-emergence of artistic interest in the area. One can find, for example, a performance for scent and chamber ensemble called Odophonics, that took place a few years ago (Goeltzenleuchter, 2017). A representative scented music performance (performed in near-total darkness) "*Green Aria: A Scent Opera"*, took place at The Guggenheim Museum in New York. The scents for the latter event were delivered by means of a system of tubes, one connected to each seat, thus allowing audience members to bring the scent delivery as close to their nose as they liked throughout the musical performance (see also Alter, 2009; Finn, 2008; Lubow, 2009; Tommasini, 2009).

Crossmodal Correspondences between Olfaction, Taste, and Audition

While the crossmodal interactions (or correspondences) between visual and olfactory stimuli, for instance, have attracted the interest of a growing number of researchers and practitioners (Demattè et al., 2006a, b; Gottfried & Dolan, 2003; Österbauer et al., 2005; see Spence 2020a, for a recent review), the interaction between olfaction and audition in non-food contexts has, to date at least, received far less attention (see Deroy et al., 2013; Spence, 2021a, for reviews). In fact, even the context of food and drink experiences provides a particularly good example of how audition has received far less attention, despite the fact that this sense can influence our perception of a variety of food and drinks (Galmarini et al., in press; see also Spence, 2012a; Spence et al., 2019, for reviews).

Over the last couple of decades, there has been a growing research interest in assessing the potential influence that auditory cues can exert over olfactory perception. For example, scientists have demonstrated that background music can influence people's performance in odour discrimination tasks (Seo et al., 2011). Moreover, Seo and Hummel (2011) reported that olfactory stimuli are rated as more pleasant when paired with congruent sounds (sounds that are crossmodally better semantically matched to the odors; i.e., the smell of potato chips while listening to the sound of crunching crisps) as compared to incongruent sounds (i.e., listening to the sound of someone drinking coffee in the above example; see also Seo et al., 2014; see Stanton & Spence, 2020, for a review of audio-tactile interactions in bodily and movement perception). One intriguing example of audio-olfactory interactions in experience design comes from the Dunkin Donut's flavor radio campaign (Garber, 2012). In a campaign that ran in Seoul, South Korea, marketers used digital devices to deliver coffee aroma on buses in the city whenever the sound of Dunkin Donut's jingle (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2tP-FAn6u8) played on the radio. While, in this case, semantically-related sound and smell cues were used, similar initiatives may be developed from crossmodal corresponding cues (Spence, 2021a). Meanwhile, Crisinel and Spence (2012) have demonstrated that people reliably associate certain aromas that are commonly reported in wines with specific musical notes and even classes of musical instrument (i.e., timbres). These insights have led to many multisensory experiential events in the marketing of wine (Burzynska, 2018; see Spence, 2019, for a review).

A number of the studies that have attempted to assess crossmodal correspondences have, for example, had their participants rate fragrances in terms of attributes such as the pitch of pure tones based on what they feel to be right (e.g., Belkin et al., 1997; Cohen, 1934; Crisinel & Spence, 2010, 2012; von Hornbostel, 1931). However, over-and-above any basic feeling of rightness, or correspondence, between particular fragrances and specific auditory parameters (see Koriat, 2008), there is an interesting question as to whether changing what one hears can also change, or modify, the olfactory experience. That is, an important distinction should perhaps be drawn here between the documenting of the existence of such surprising crossmodal correspondences (e.g., between olfaction and audition) on the one hand, and the subsequent claim, or possibility that by systematically manipulating the stimuli presented in one modality, it is possible to influence how the stimuli presented in another sense are experienced (see also Fukumoto & Ohno, 2016; Fukumoto, 2019, 2020).

In one study, for instance, Velasco et al. (2014) demonstrated how listening to white noise influenced their participants' perception of the sweetness of a smell. Six odors, one from Le Nez du Café (Brizard and Co, Dorchester, UK) and five from Le Nez du Vin kits, were perceived as less sweet when listening to white noise as compared to when listening to other musical sounds (e.g., consonant and dissonant melodies). Here, it is important to note that sweetness is not, originally, a property of smell but of taste (gustatory) perception; indeed, much of what we think of as sweet in olfactory perception is a result of the scent having been experienced previously in the context of sweet-tasting food (see Spence 2022). Considering this fact, and the limited scientific research that has been published to date concerning how auditory cues influence the perception of specific olfactory qualities, below, we present some of the research that has demonstrated the crossmodal influence of audition on taste/flavour perception (note here also how the majority of what we think we taste, we actually smell; see Spence, 2015, for a review). In the future, this kind of research will hopefully help to inform our conceptualization of the nature of olfactory–sound correspondences.

Crisinel et al. (2012) reported that the bitter or sweet taste in a bitter-sweet toffee could be emphasized simply by playing music that contains either high- or low-pitched sounds (see Knöferle & Spence, 2012, for a review of the literature in this area). What is more, North (2012) has also demonstrated that people's rating of the attributes of a wine can be influenced by background music (i.e., playing "zingy and refreshing" music can lead people to perceive wines as more "zingy and refreshing"). North suggested

that the particular attributes that people may associate with certain sounds (that is, the symbolic nature of auditory cues) can influence their perception of the stimuli presented in other sensory modalities (Spence & Deroy, 2013).

While the fact that the presentation of certain sounds can help to emphasize certain taste (gustatory) qualities is consistent with the idea that information from one sensory modality can influence the way in which the information in the other modalities is processed (Spence, 2011a), further research is needed in order to clarify the crossmodal influence that auditory cues can have on various aspects of olfactory perception. It is likely that certain of the most profound effects of manipulating atmospheric cues on the perception of food and drink, not to mention on the perception of fragrance, occur when changes to the atmosphere involve a combination of sensory features, be they presented within the same sensory modality, or across different sensory modalities (see Sester et al., 2013; Spence, 2002; Spence et al., 2014; Velasco et al., 2013) rather than consisting of just single isolated sensory elements. This is, for instance, the case of soundscapes and music; the combination of various sonic features (e.g., as in a soundscape or song), instead of single auditory features (e.g., pitch or tone), give each piece of music (or soundscape) its own distinctive character (Kellaris & Kent, 1992; Morin, Bube, & Chebat 2007).

Intriguingly, Bronner, Bruhn, Hirt, and Piper (2012) created music to match the flavours of citrus and vanilla. However, given the close association between these flavours/aromas, and the tastes of sour and sweet, it remains unclear whether the soundscapes they created matched the associated basic tastes, namely sour and sweet, rather than the flavours/aromas themselves. In other words, the majority of scents take on their taste (and maybe other) qualities as a result of associative learning. Hence, one might say that the sweet and dry scents used in the present study are not so straightforwardly linked to specific tastes in foods, thus meaning that demonstrating a crossmodal effect here with these scents is more interesting from an olfactory matching to music perspective.

Evaluating the Role of Soundscapes on Olfactory Experiences

Below, we present a small experimental study that was designed to assess whether certain auditory stimuli (specifically, brief specially composed soundscapes) would crossmodally influence people's perception of the sweet and dry notes associated with, or found in, various fragrances. Notice

how 'sweet' and 'dry' are both commonly used attributes when describing fragrances in, for instance, the field of perfumery, where the terms are sometimes used as polar opposites (Zarzo & Stanton, 2009).[2] Moreover, there has been a growing academic interest in the fragrances that are described as sweet since, initially, sweetness is an attribute that refers literally to taste (gustatory) perception (Spence, 2022; Stevenson & Boakes, 2004; Stevenson & Tomiczek, 2007). The same rationale could also be considered with respect to dryness as well, since the latter term is widely used by, for example, those writing about wine (Lehrer, 2009). Nonetheless, as has already been pointed out, both attributes are widely used in the context of perfumery as well. Further research is still needed to determine exactly how the perception of these attributes interacts with (congruent/incongruent) information presented to one or more of the other senses. We presented two soundscapes in order to assess the crossmodal influence of auditory stimuli on the perception of sweetness and dryness in a putatively 'sweet' odour, a 'dry' odour, and in an odour that was considered to combine both sweet and dry notes.

Methods and materials

Participants: Thirty-six participants (mean age of 24.4 years, SD = 6.3, range from 18 to 40 years), 8 males and 28 females took part in the study. Each participant completed a simple questionnaire designed to assess any potential chemosensory dysfunction (e.g., respiratory problems, any disease, or breathing problems) that they might have. All of the participants reported having a normal sense of smell and hearing and signed an informed consent form. The experiment was reviewed and approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee of the University of Oxford. The experiment lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

Apparatus and stimuli. The stimuli consisted of samples of the Roja Parfums Reckless collection, Dewberry (sweet), and Vetiver (dry). The stimuli were selected and provided by the internationally renowned perfumier Roja Dove with the idea of incorporating a sweet fragrance, a dry fragrance, as well as a fragrance that had notes related to both attributes. The Roja Parfums perfume Reckless, created by Roja Dove, was presented

[2] Zarzo and Stanton (2009) performed a principal component analysis on two odor databases of perfume materials in order to further understand perfumers' descriptor space of fragrances. One of the most important findings in terms of the present study was that the most dissimilar attribute to sweet, was tart (dry). They suggested that when an odour is dry, it usually means that it lacks sweetness.

at a concentration of 20% in alcohol. The fragrance is composed of a mixture of jasmine, ylang, rose, violet, and amarylis, warmed by a note of peach, held captive in a blend of vetiver, sandalwood, and mosses, and a base of orris, musk, castoreum, leather notes, and tonka bean. It is also warmed by cinnamon and clove with hints of a blend of geranium, bergamot, and other citrus notes; the inclusion of aldehydes added an effervescent shimmer to the fragrance. According to the perfumer, the fragrance comprises both sweet and dry notes. The sweet fragrance (Dewberry) was composed of berries and fruity notes, making it intensely sweet-smelling, and presented at a concentration of 20% in Dipropylene Glycol (DPG), while the dry fragrance (Vetiver) was composed of leathery and woody notes, making it naturally dry, also at a concentration of 20% in DPG.[3]

The auditory stimuli were created by Condiment Junkie (London, UK) based on prior research demonstrating that people tend to associate higher-pitched piano notes with sweet tastes (see Crisinel & Spence, 2012; Crisinel et al., 2013). Note that the soundscapes used in the present study had been used previously to sonically season foods including bittersweet cinder toffee and dark chocolate (see Crisinel et al., 2012).

The two soundscapes were developed using the Logic 9 music production software. The sweet soundscape used the Yamaha Grand piano plug-in and was passed through the Space Designer reverb unit set to 100% wet (amount of reverb) and 10% dry (amount of original signal). The notes were based on the F scale pitched around C4-C6 (midi notes 60-84) and superimposed with a sinewave-based synthesized tone generated in the Sculpture Modeling synth plug-in in the same pitch. The dry soundscape consisted of a combination of tones created using the Sculpture Modeling synth and ES2 synth plug-ins, pitched at F2 (midi note 41) and C3 (midi note 48). A trombone note also played at F2, and a low frequency roar, were superimposed over these sounds. Listen to the soundscapes at: https://soundcloud.com/xmodal/sets/sweetdry. A no soundscape condition was also included in order to provide a baseline.

[3] We conducted a preliminary study in order to assess whether there was any difference in the perceived intensity of the three fragrances. Fifteen participants, aged 18-51 years (M = 24.4 years), were randomly presented with the three fragrances, and instructed to rate their intensity on an 8-point Likert scale (0 = Not at all intense, 8 = Very intense). The mean ratings were as follows: 4.55 for the sweet rating, 5.12 for the dry fragrance, and 4.54 for Roja fragrance. Importantly, no significant differences were detected between the fragrances in terms of their intensity.

Procedure. We used a within-participants experimental design with two factors: Soundscape (sweet, dry, and no sound) and Fragrance (sweet, dry, and the Roja Parfums Reckless). The three fragrances were presented once in each sound condition giving rise to a total of nine conditions. Both the order in which the soundscapes were presented, and the order in which the fragrances were delivered, was randomized across participants.

At the start of the experiment, the participants were seated in front of the researcher at a table. The experimenter described the procedure to the participants. The participants were told that they would receive a paper smelling strip with an odour and, in some trials, they would also hear a soundscape. The participants were instructed to sniff the fragrance until they were told to stop by the researcher, and then to respond using the pencil-and-paper scales provided.

The participants wore a pair of over-ear JVC HA-D424 headphones. The soundscapes were presented at more or less the same time that the fragrance was sampled, with the sound level set to 70 dB. The fragrances were presented using regular fragrance strips. The end of each card smelling strip was submerged 1 cm into the appropriate fragrance for approximately 2 seconds, resulting in the end of the smelling strip (an area of approximately 1.0cm x 0.4cm) being soaked in the fragrance.

At the start of each trial, the participants received and sniffed each of the strips for 10 seconds. After each presentation, they were instructed to rate the fragrances on different paper-and-pencil line scales anchored with the words: dry-sweet and dislike-like (see Figure 2). After completing these scales, the participants responded to another two scales designed to assess the influence of sounds in sound and shape symbolism concerning the fragrances (see Spence, 2012b); however, the scales are not included in this report, given that they fall outside the scope of this chapter.

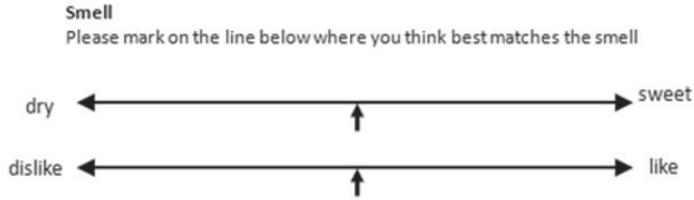

Figure 2. Scales: After each trial, the participants had to rate the fragrances on the response scales anchored by the labels dry/sweet and dislike/like.

Results

The mean ratings on each scale (see Figure 3) were analysed using a repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the factors of soundscape (sweet, dry, no sound) and fragrance (sweet, dry, and Roja Parfums Reckless). Significant main effects of Fragrance, $F(2, 70)=94.19$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.73$, and Soundscape, $F(2, 70)=4.77$, $p=.011$, $\eta^2=.12$, were observed on sweet-dry ratings, whilst there was no interaction, $F(4, 140)=.76$, $p=.553$, $\eta^2=.02$. Pairwise comparisons (using the Bonferroni correction) revealed that participants rated each of the fragrances as expected; that is, the sweet fragrance was rated as smelling significantly sweeter than either of the other two fragrances; the Roja fragrance was also rated as smelling significantly sweeter than the dry fragrance ($p<.001$, for all comparisons). The fragrances were rated as smelling significantly sweeter when the participants listened to the sweet, as compared to the dry soundscape ($p=.028$), while there were no differences between the no sound baseline condition and the other two conditions (all ps>.212). Nevertheless, notice how ratings of the fragrances in the no sound condition fell in-between those obtained in the sweet and dry conditions, as expected.

A significant main effect of fragrance was observed on the liking scale, $F(2, 70)=33.07$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.47$, though no significant main effect of soundscape, $F(2, 70)=2.90$, $p=.062$, $\eta^2=.08$, nor any interaction between fragrance and soundscape, $F(4, 170)=.391$, $p=.815$, $\eta^2=.01$, was observed. Pairwise comparisons revealed that the participants liked the sweet fragrance more than either the Roja Parfums Reckless or the dry fragrance (both comparisons, $p=.001$); The Roja Parfums Reckless fragrance was also liked significantly more than the dry fragrance ($p=.008$). Note that this finding is consistent with the idea that people generally prefer sweet aromas (i.e., the smell of caramel, strawberry, vanilla, etc.; Spence, 2022; Stevenson & Boakes, 2004).

We also tested the correlations among the participants' responses on the two scales used for this study for each sound condition and fragrance. A summary of the Pearson's (*r)* between the rating scales is presented in Table 1. Correlations were observed across all sound conditions and fragrances between dry/sweet and dislike/like ratings. Overall, therefore, it would appear that those fragrances that are rated as sweeter are liked more, while those that are rated as dryer are liked somewhat less.

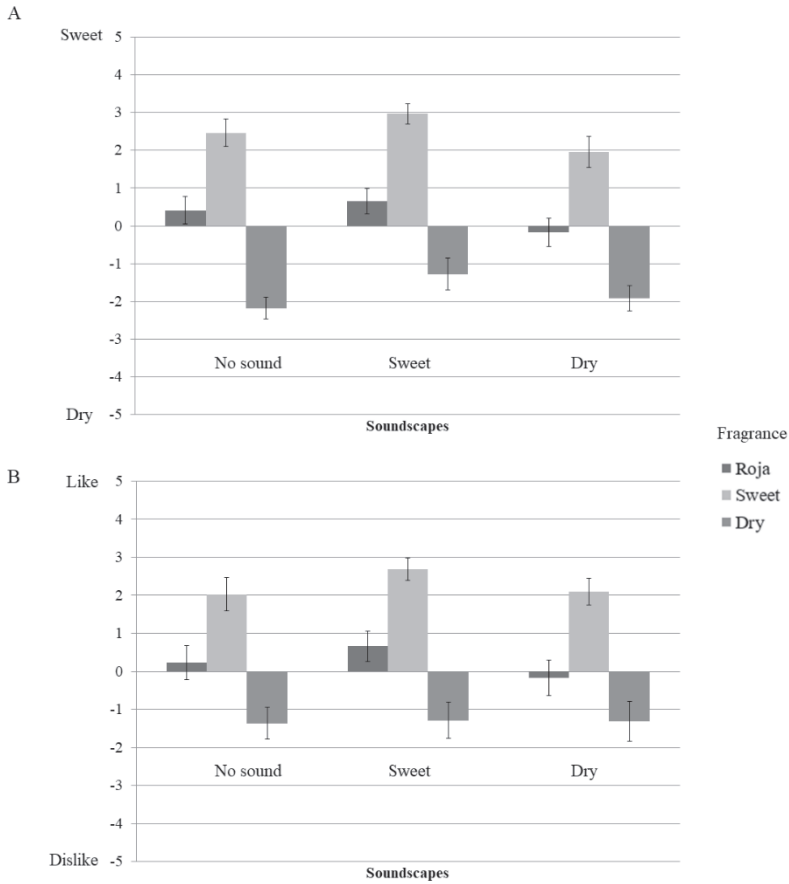

Figure 3. Mean ratings (from -5 to 5) for each of the fragrances for the two scales: A) Dry/sweet, B) Dislike/like, while participants listened to either one of the soundscapes or else while in silence. The error bars correspond to the standard errors of the means.

Table 1. Correlations between the rating scales for each fragrance in each sound condition. Significant correlations (* $p<.05$, ** $p<.001$) are highlighted in bold.

Paired scales	No sound			Sweet soundscape			Dry soundscape		
	Roja	Sweet	Dry	Roja	Sweet	Dry	Roja	Sweet	Dry
Dry/sweet - Dislike/like	**.439****	**.629****	**.442****	**.455****	**.675****	**.722****	**.589****	**.458****	**.412***

Discussion

These results indicate that auditory stimuli which, in this case, consisted of soundscapes characterized as sweet and dry, can indeed influence people's perception (or at the very least their rating) of different fragrances crossmodally, at least when they can be described using the same polar adjectives, that is, when evaluated using scales anchored with the contrasting sweet and dry descriptors (i.e., as typical of the semantic differential technique approach, Dalton et al., 2008). Two soundscapes (one associated with sweetness and the other with dryness) and three fragrances were used in the present study; one sweet, one dry, and one containing both sweet and dry elements. Consistent with our predictions, the sweet and dry notes in the three fragrances were rated differently when presented together with the putatively 'sweet' and 'dry' soundscapes.

Although these results demonstrate an effect of both fragrance and soundscape in the dry/sweet ratings, an effect of fragrance was only obtained in terms of the liking ratings. These results are in line with previous research showing that auditory stimuli, such as music, can influence people's perception of the sensory-discriminative/semantic attributes in, for example, drinks, without necessarily impacting on how much people like them (North, 2012; Spence et al., 2020; see also Spence & Deroy, 2013b). Indeed, a growing body of research now suggests that the more a given piece of music, or soundscape, is liked, the more it can influence how much one likes what is tasted or smelled, a phenomenon known as 'sensation transference' (e.g., Reinoso Carvalho et al., 2019, 2020).

At the same time however, semantically congruent soundscapes, such as the sounds of the sea when eating a seafood dish have been shown to influence enjoyment of a dish without necessarily affecting the dish's perceived saltiness (Spence, Shankar, & Blumenthal, 2011). It may, in other words, be possible, in at least certain circumstances to crossmodally influence either just hedonic ratings, just sensory-discriminative ratings, or both types of ratings simultaneously. It is though also worth noting that at least according to Reinoso Carvalho et al.'s (2019, 2020) results, the crossmodal effects of sensation transference (i.e., on hedonic responses) may be larger than the effects of sonic seasoning (i.e., on sensory-discriminative responses). It will be an interesting question for future research to determine whether the same generalization also applies to orthonasally-experienced fragrances as it does to the taste/flavour of food (see also Plailly et al., 2007).

The results reported here can be seen as extending previous findings regarding the influence of the presentation of soundscapes and music on taste/flavor perception (see Crisinel et al., 2012; North, 2012; see Spence et al., 2021, for reviews) to the case of orthonasal olfactory perception. Moreover, our results also provide additional evidence to build on previous research regarding the influence of auditory cues on olfactory perception (e.g., Seo et al., 2010; Seo & Hummel 2011). It now seems clear that people's perception of a variety of fragrance attributes can be influenced by the presentation of soundscapes that are in some sense representative of those attributes (representative in the sense of sharing a crossmodal correspondence; Deroy et al., 2013), that have a similar connotative meaning (e.g., as assessed by means of research using the semantic differential technique; see Dalton et al., 2008), or which share a common identity or meaning (i.e., semantic congruence, Seo & Hummel, 2011; Spence, 2011b).

While previous research suggests that a number of the crossmodal correspondences that have been documented to date between olfaction and vision (specifically colour) result from the internalization of the statistical correlations between sensory features that are present in the environment (Spence, 2011a, 2020a; Spence & Levitan, 2021; Spence et al., 2010), the crossmodal correspondences between olfaction and audition may not so easily be explained (see Deroy et al., 2013; see also Spence, 2020a, 2021a; Stevenson et al., 2012). This is because it is simply much harder to point to where in the environment such correlations might be picked up from. For while every object necessarily has a particular visual appearance associated with it, the same is not true of sound. That is, the majority of olfactory stimuli are not associated with any noise or sound. That said, intriguing evidence comes from Wesson and Wilson (2010). These researchers conducted a study in mice showing that certain units of the olfactory tubercle respond to auditory tones, and that certain units showed superadditive or suppressive responses to the combination of tones and odors, thus hinting at the existence of strong crossmodal associations between the senses of audition and olfaction. Although further research is still needed in order to understand the relationship between these two senses in the case of humans, the work that has been published over the last decade or so in the animal model does at least suggest that there may be a strong evolutionary relationship between this particular pair of senses (Cohen et al., 2011).

Conclusions and Implications

This chapter highlights the importance of understanding how audition and olfaction interact and how companies and also artists in areas such as the drinks and perfume industries can potentially benefit from studies regarding crossmodal correspondences and the interactions between the senses (see Spence et al., 2021). At the practical level, there are multiple ways in which combining scent and sound can be used to help in the design of specific multisensory experiences. For example, in 2016, the Australian Art Quartet AAQ used scents to augment a classical music concert. This experimental project was entitled "Scent of Memory" and involved the presentation of several classical music pieces that were paired with scented elements on a related theme (Yellow House Sydney, 2016; Sebag-Montefiore, 2016). In the different sell-out shows, perfumes, designed by fragrance designer Carlos Huber, were presented together with the music of Tchaikovsky (*String Quartet Op70/1)*, Gurdjieff (*Hymns, Prayers and Rituals*), Arvo Pärt (*Fratres*), and Mountfort (*Song for Charlie*). For his 2013 project, "Essence in Space", engineer Chang Hee Lee adapted a keyboard such that sounds and fragrances were connected. Playing a particular musical note, resulted in a corresponding drop of perfume being collected in a vial. After playing an entire piece of music on this specially adapted keyboard, the performer was left with a small vial of so-called 'Symphonic Perfume' (Lee, 2013). Both Scent of Memory and Essence in Space, in a way, are reminiscent of the scent organ in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. This was a fictional device that was designed to compose smell pieces (as analogous of musical pieces). They are also evocative of early music-inspired olfactory experiences such as the 1920s olfactory organ based on Piesse's famous 'Gamut of Odours', which mapped the keys of an organ with a set of smells (Novak, 2017, see Figure 4).

Figure 4. The "smell organ" as presented in the June 1922 issue of Science and Invention (illustrated by Frank R. Paul).

Other cases such as that of Le Nez de Courvoisier (Le Nez Du Vin; http://courvoisier.com/uk/le-nez-de-courvoisier-app/; see Crisinel et al., 2013) are perhaps representative of how crossmodal correspondences will, in the future, be used to enhance (or at the very least alter) the consumer´s multisensory experiences (Spence et al., 2021). One might also think here of the link between music and olfaction that has been embodied in the scent organs that have appeared sporadically in literature over the years, e.g., see Huxley, 1932; Huysmans, 1884). By presenting sounds with particular attributes that can also be applied to the stimuli presented in other sensory modalities (this was very much the idea of early work on the amodal perception of brightness, e.g., see Cohen, 1934; Collier & Hubbard, 1998; von Hornbostel, 1931), it may be possible to emphasize those attributes, no matter whether they happen to be sensory or emotional in nature. This kind of approach may also be applied in contexts such as food and drink development and experiential restaurants (Spence, 2017). It would, for example, be interesting in future research to assess other attributes such as the fragrance intensity and specific fragrance notes that can, perhaps, also be emphasized by using specific congruent sounds (Crisinel & Spence, 2012).

Last but not least, it is perhaps worth mentioning that in the context of multisensory cinema, there have been several attempts over the last century to combine scent with film experiences (e.g., Odorama, Smell O' Vision, etc.; see Velasco et al., 2018; Spence, 2020c, for reviews). In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in this experience design space with initiatives like 4DX cinema and multisensory virtual reality (Velasco & Obrist, 2020). Audio-olfactory experiences may prove useful when it comes to film but also novel immersive multisensory entertainment experiences (Parkin-Fairley, 2020; Persolaise, 2020; Spence, 2021c; Velasco et al., 2018). There is also a long history of the use of scent in a live-performance setting (Spence, 2021b). At the same time, aroma jockeys, such as Austrian artist Erich Berghammer "ODO7" (OdO7, 2010; http://odo7.com/), have, for a number of years now, been curating popular music events in which a sequence of aromas are delivered via wind devices (often Dyson bladeless fans) while the DJ chooses the tunes (Chester, 2017; Orb Mag, 2018).

Returning, finally, to the quote with which we started this piece, as eminent sensory science researchers Avery Gilbert (2008, p. 150) notes when discussing Aldous Huxley's scent organ: "Even if the scent organ delivered odors with the brisk precision that Huxley imagined, the audience would have trouble keeping up… The human nose works on a longer time scale; it can't follow a smellody the way the ear follows a tune. Anything faster than a *largo ma non tropo* would leave an audience in the dust." In other words, while our emerging knowledge of the crossmodal correspondences that exist between auditory and olfactory stimuli undoubtedly provides an intriguing start for those wanting to design the most engaging and immersive of multisensory experiences, there is also undoubtedly still further work to be done in terms of coordinating the senses, given the very different information processing limitations associated with each sense (Gallace et al., 2012).

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Conflict of Interest

The research reported here resulted from a voluntary collaboration between the Crossmodal Research Laboratory, University of Oxford, Condiment Junkie, and Roja Dove Limited. The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

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SECTION 3:

A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE ON EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

CHAPTER 6

EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING: A SUPPORTING ROLE FOR PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS

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Abstract

This chapter looks at the potential that promotional products have in supporting an experiential marketing experience with consumers. In this conceptual article, we propose that having consumers think about a brand can create experiential connections with the brand, when (i) those thoughts are favorable and/or relevant to the brand's identity, and (ii) if the thoughts occur when the consumer is not necessarily interacting with a branded product they have purchased. Within the broader framework of experiential marketing, we also propose that a functional and/or aesthetically attractive and interesting promotional product can influence a consumer to experience extemporaneous thoughts not just about the brand but potentially about the attributes for which the brand is known. Methodologically, we propose to test a promotional product's ability to make the consumer think about the brand in general (as a category prototype, for example), think about its unique attributes, and have positive favored thoughts about the brand. Specifically, our propositions can be tested, e.g., via tests of top-of-mind awareness, word association, reaction time, brand attitudes, etc., through presenting various conditions of the stimulus (promotional product), e.g., Functional vs Decorative, Branded vs Unbranded, changing brand-relevant attributes, etc. We finally conclude with statements of theoretical and practical implications of our research.

1 Introduction

> "Brand experience is conceptualized 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." (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009, pg. 52)

Well before experiential marketing became a recognized topic in business, Holbrook and Hirschman wrote about experiential consumption, which they defined as "an experiential view that focuses on the symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic nature of consumption" (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, pg. 132). Much like our current understanding and practice of experiential marketing, their analysis looked at the consumption *experience* as a behavior pursuing not just the functionality for which the product/service was bought but also as a way to stimulate whimsy, positive sensations, and fun.

Although some of the earliest scholarly work on experiential marketing defined the term as a multi-faceted construct, with a number of different consumer outcomes (Schmitt, 1999, 59-62), the practice of experiential marketing is routinely limited to the practice of marketers facilitating a physical and direct interaction between current and prospective consumers and their products; only rarely have adding other fun or instructional activities centered around the brand and/or product.

In order to discuss how experiential marketing and any interactions between consumers and brands can work, and the expected result of each, there are two aspects of human memory that need to be explained first: Different *types* of memories/knowledge that reside in our mind and where and how we believe our brain processes and stores information during the learning process.

2 Human Memory

Need recognition occurs when a consumer becomes aware of a need that could be met by the acquisition of a product or service. This is the first step in consumer decision making. In order to explain the process, it is necessary to first understand how consumer learning takes place, because the next step in the process is to search through one's memory to see what one already knows about how to satisfy that need; and quite simply, one cannot recall what one has not yet learned. It may also help to understand this simple reality: memory is knowledge and knowledge is memory; memory reflects our existing knowledge.

As far as what resides in our mind/brain the two are indistinguishable, primarily because the process for encoding and recalling both is practically identical. But we have a natural tendency to think of a memory as information we remember and knowledge as things we have learned. This is an arbitrary and immaterial distinction. However, when discussing different types of knowledge/memories, it has been argued that the experience of remembering is very different from the experience of 'knowing' (Tulving, 1985; Gardiner, 2001). This distinction will also help us to understand why it may be equally important to be able to remember our experiences with branded products as well as information about those products and their corresponding brands.

2.1 Types of Memories/Knowledge

There are a number of different types of memories/knowledge that exist. We first must distinguish between explicit/declarative memory and implicit/non-declarative memory.

Non-declarative memory is more easily thought of as 'knowledge' since it represents an assorted collection of abilities, skills, habits, perceptions, and automatic responses to some stimuli – those we have been 'conditioned' to respond to. This is also knowledge/information we either generally do not or cannot put into words and share with others. It is of limited use in trying to understand consumers' interactions with brands or marketing in general – with the possible exception of conditioned responses to marketing stimuli.

To discuss experiential marketing and the use of promotional products as one of its elements, we will limit our discussion to the more relevant Declarative memory, which is comprised of Episodic Memory and Semantic Memory.

2.2 Episodic Memory

Episodic memories are essentially autobiographical memories and are defined as "specific, personal, long-lasting, and (usually) of significance to the self-system or as forming one's personal life history" (Nelson, 1993, p. 8). Autobiographical memory represents knowledge we have about ourselves and our past experiences as well as an awareness of the emotions and sensations tied to these experiences.

When autobiographical memories are retrieved, consumers often pay less attention to semantic information such as product attributes and other

information a consumer might use to evaluate a product (Baumgartner, Sujan, and Bettman, 1992). That could mean even if such attributes were somehow successfully incorporated as part of an immersive experiential marketing experience, this otherwise valuable information, which would ordinarily support a brand choice, may not be as readily available upon retrieval of that memory.

2.3 Semantic Memory

Semantic memory is a term used to describe part of our long-term memory store. It consists of the meaning of concepts and words, things that are common knowledge, personal beliefs and opinions, as well as facts about the world (Tulving, 1972). Of special significance to the discussion of promotional products as an element of experiential marketing, semantic knowledge includes information about objects and their properties.

Much of the knowledge represented in Semantic memory is not directly related to an especially memorable event. Nevertheless, Semantic memory is generally derived from episodic memory, in that we learn new facts or concepts from our experiences, and episodic memory reinforces Semantic memory (Zimmerman, 2014).

A personal example within a consumption context will help illustrate how this can commonly occur. When my first car needed its battery replaced, I chose a Diehard battery and never had battery problems again. This exact same pattern continued with my next few cars. My memory for each of these episodes can be accurately described as autobiographical episodic memories, but it is safe to say after the second or third time it happened, I developed a belief about the superior durability of Diehard car batteries; a belief that is more accurately described as semantic knowledge. If I am asked today why I believe Diehard batteries are so good, I may not need to (or perhaps can't even) faithfully recall any of those individual autobiographical memories that informed that belief.

Ratnayake and her colleagues (2010) explained autobiographical and Semantic memory within the context of brand information. Brand Related Semantic Memory (BRSM) relates to cognitive brand knowledge (knowledge of the brand, its history, its products' features and attributes, etc.); whereas Brand Related Autobiographical Memory (BRAM) is comprised of an individual's personal and emotionally significant brand interaction history, which may also be related to the individual's self-perception. BRSM is comprised of factual information (including one's beliefs about the brand

and its products – which although may not be factual per se, it will reflect what the individual believes to be true), and BRAM consists of brand-related personal experiences that may be stored as episodic memories along with contextual and affective details; which is how BRAM is conceptualized (Ratnayake, Broderick, and Mitchell, 2010).

To further understand how a brand's promotional efforts (and all advertising, for that matter) are meant to work, it helps to understand how humans encode information; and how they recall that information.

3 Encoding and Retrieval of Memories

How experiences are encoded into memory is of vital importance to marketers. Ultimately, marketers would like consumers to associate positive beliefs and emotions to their brands and products. This can take the form of a direct correlation between using a product and achieving the desired results. However, marketers would prefer to have these types of associations made before or even without the consumer necessarily using the product successfully; and the more positive emotions that become part of those associations, the better. In essence, the most important association marketers would like to have consumers derive is one between a positive emotional state and their brand. This necessitates inclusion of the self into the episodic memory resulting in a positive autobiographical memory. This takes place as a result of what is called self-referent processing.

Self-referent processing consists of autobiographical thoughts (thoughts about life experiences) and thoughts about targets associate with the self (Ogilvie and Ashmore 1991). Prior research has shown that information related to the self has an advantage over other types of processing in terms of the strength and accessibility of the resultant memory (Rogers, Kuiper, and Kirker 1977). Self-referent processing results in increased elaboration of a message (Andersen, Glassman, and Gold 1998; Craik and Lockhart 1972), and more elaboration makes strong arguments more persuasive (Burnkrant and Unnava 1995).

The self can also serve as an efficient organizing framework (Klein and Kihlstrom 1986), and organized or categorized elements are easier to recall. Self-referent processing also facilitates positive thoughts and memories, the affect for which can get transferred to the advertisement or brand (Stayman and Unnava 1997).

These associations occur as a result of what cognitive psychologist call the spreading of activation (Anderson, 1983) whereby when one concept is activated within an individual's Associative Network (a set of concepts connected by links) other concepts may become activated as well via those links. These links are often referred to as memory traces between concepts; and the stronger the trace, the more easily it is activated when adjacent concepts are activated (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). In that regard, the ultimate goal most marketers share is for a representation of their brand to be able to activate other positive emotions, beliefs, and/or behaviors directed at the brand. Implicitly, this is what they hope will happen during, and later as a result of, one of their experiential marketing events.

Assuming a brand can accomplish this, once that connection is established, how does it go about priming those pleasant memories in order to make them accessible later? If the trace strength between the brand and pleasant memories is great enough, a simple exposure to a brand stimulus (logo, slogan, jingle, etc.) may be enough to access those memories. But how does a marketer make sure one of the strongest memory traces for an experiential marketing experience occur between the brand and the most joyful and positively charged aspects/elements of that experience? Unfortunately, there is no clear or definitive answer.

Before we turn our focus to experiential marketing, a brief description of the three memory stores and how they are implicated during the process of experiencing, encoding, and retrieving experiential marketing experiences may be helpful and informative.

3.1 Memory Stores

Sensory Memory

This memory space stores sensory experiences only temporarily as our senses are exposed to the stimuli. The duration is very brief, generally lasting from a fraction of a second to several seconds.

This memory store can hold information from any of our senses, but the most common are echoic (sound) memory and iconic (visual) memory. These are the two types of stimuli to which we are most easily exposed; unlike smell, taste, and touch we do not have to interact with these types of stimuli directly or at a very close range.

The stronger and more unique a stimulus is, the more likely it is to get our attention and work its way into the next memory store. Consequently, so many experiential marketing events feature over the top sights and sounds (Crain Communications, Inc., 2020).

Short Term (Working) Memory

This memory space is where we first interpret and then encode inbound information using our existing knowledge (which is retrieved from long-term memory) as a reference. This space is limited in size and short in duration, only several seconds.

It is commonly referred to as "working memory" because this is where most information processing takes place. The information we process here can be verbal or visual.

Once the prominent aspects of an experiential marketing event capture our attention, we begin to try to make sense of these stimuli in our working memory. This is where we reference existing knowledge (from the long-term store) in order to encode the information we are receiving. This process also helps reinforce and strengthen any existing memory traces between the brand and positive thoughts and emotions. If a consumer is able to encode brand information along with the positive thoughts and emotions they are experiencing, the groundwork will be laid for forming the associations brands want us to have – those that will lead to positive thoughts and behaviors toward the brand and its products.

Long-Term Memory

Some might argue this is the only memory space that can be rightfully called a "memory store," since this is where all memories are stored for later recall. The information in long-term memory is permanently stored for later use.

As mentioned above, of particular importance to marketers, the information in long-term memory serves as a reference point during information processing in working memory. Long-term memory is where several associative networks reside, including those with brand information, which marketers hope will have strong memory traces to positive thoughts and emotions. In a perfect world, a marketer would be able to reactivate those positive thoughts and emotions by exposing the consumer to a representation of the brand (logo, slogan, jingle, etc.), as long as previous experiences have formed a strong memory trace between the brand and positive thoughts and emotions. This will increase the likelihood that the

consumer will behave – through words and/or actions - in a way that ultimately favors the brand and its products.

4 Experiential Marketing and the Role of Promotional Products

Now that we understand how and why experiential marketing may help a brand build a strong favorable personal and emotional connection with consumers – and the part our memory system plays in the process, we can start to build our case for why we believe promotional products can serve a similar purpose in support of the same end goal: to increase the likelihood that those consumers (and any others whom they may influence) will behave in a positive manner towards the brand's products/services.

The multi-sensory, often deeply immersive consumer experience that has come to be known as experiential marketing is not very different from traditional promotional activities in that its ultimate goal is for consumers to think about the focal brand in positive terms, which may lead to positive word of mouth, a future purchase of the brand's products, and ultimately, to gain consumer loyalty in the hopes that this will shield it from competitive activities. Studies have shown that loyal customers spend more than their non-loyal counterparts (Russell-Bennett et al., 2007); are less price sensitive (Ramirez and Goldsmith, 2009) and may even actively resist competitive brand information (Chaiken, Liberman, and Eagl, 1989).

To be fair, there is an added component experiential marketing attempts to establish, a positive very personal, even singular connection between the consumer and the brand. However, at the end of the day, this is all done in service of a simpler goal – achieving top of mind awareness, albeit with the added benefit of a meaningful personal connection. The premise of most traditional advertising has always been to achieve top of mind awareness in consumers' minds because this is a good indication that the next time that consumer has a need that one of the brand's products could fulfill, the consumer will be more likely to buy that branded product over those from its competitors. The creation of memories and their subsequent retrieval influence the way we act and the decisions we make as consumers. Consumers receive promotional information at one time and use that information to make purchase decisions later (Plassmann et al., 2007)

Except for some traditional direct marketing and today's digital marketing – especially the type that involves mobile marketing – it was never

marketing/advertising's goal to have consumers purchase their products immediately upon seeing their selling messages.

The goal of experiential marketing is also based on the long game, not an immediate call to action for consumers. This is one of the main reasons why we contend promotional products can play a prominent role in support of the underlying goal of all advertising – achieving top of mind awareness. Of course, the focus of experiential marketing is to associate positive thoughts and feelings with a brand and that is something a well-thought-out promotional product can do simply by being an entertaining and/or useful reminder of what the brand represents.

The more creative and immersive the experience, the more likely it is to be remembered, but this strength could also be its greatest weakness. It is imperative to make sure the brand name, logo, identity, its products features or functions, and/or essence end up as a prominent part of that consumer memory, and that is far from a certainty.

To illustrate this difficulty, one rather bizarre experiential marketing event comes to mind. In 2019 PepsiCo's Cheetos brand put on a fashion show during New York's Fashion Week where every outfit had some element of the product, most notably its bright orange color (Rearick, 2019). Imagine having witnessed such an event, what would one remember the most? What parts of the experience would one share and how would one share it?

This event was absolutely memorable but primarily for its absurdity; judging by their advertisements featuring the recognizable colorful and eccentric animated spokes character, Chester Cheetah, the Cheetos brand does seem to want to project a sense of outrageousness, but will the farcicality of a Cheetos fashion show translate into the irreverence communicated by their eccentric spokes character in their commercials?

In that regard, a promotional product that is functionally or aesthetically relevant to the brand identity or essence can be a more effective daily reminder of the brand; and more importantly, the reasons why a consumer favors that brand's products over those of its competitors.

This observation is more practical than it is cynical, but at the end of the day the value of evoking such memories should be based on whether or not they lead to an eventual positive behavior toward the brand by the individual or by others with whom he/she has shared those memories and the positive word of mouth they may represent.

5 Limitations of Experiential Marketing Events

Recirculation is the process by which information is moved into long-term memory, where it can be accessed later. This is why repetition aids later recall, and why it is commonly understood that one single exposure to a selling message is rarely sufficient to influence a consumer. This brings up an interesting dilemma: experiential marketing events are generally one-time affairs. This limits the potential for recirculation – repeated exposure to the sights and sounds and the resulting thoughts and feelings experienced during the event unless the individual actively re-lives those experiences. Although possible, it is difficult to imagine why an attendee of these events would later also want to visit a chronicle of that event via social media. In that sense, experiential marketing events need to be so entertaining, unique, and impactful that one exposure will make an individual want to actively remember it (in order to form a long-lasting memory of it) and hopefully share it with others.

There is another hurdle companies engaging in experiential marketing may need to overcome. Source misattribution is a well-documented cognitive phenomenon whereby a consumer will remember a message but not the source that delivered that message (Schacter, 2001). Within an experiential marketing framework this could mean the thoughts, feelings, and emotions experienced during an experiential marketing event will become detached from the source that facilitated them.

This is practically conceivable given the rather organic and low-pressure spirit experts suggest such events should have. The presence of too many brand elements or associations may run the risk of overly commercializing the event and the resulting consumer experience. Those who promote experiential marketing as the new and compulsory frontier in consumer marketing stipulate that moving the product should not be a central goal of any experiential marketing activity; in fact, they argue the biggest mistake in any experiential marketing endeavor is to make it too sales oriented (Kuligowski, 2019).

Regardless of audience size at these events, brands count on the additional social media exposure, but social media can’t convey the same sensations, feelings, and emotions experienced by the live attendees.

In a perfect world, companies could compel consumers who participate in their experiential marketing events or those who experienced it second-hand via social media, to once again experience the positive thoughts and

emotions they felt during the event by exposing them to a relevant stimulus; preferably some representation of the brand (name, logo, slogan, jingle, etc.). However, this implies the same or a similar representation of the brand became not just a significant part of the memory encoded during the original event, but also resides in that associative network of related concepts as an aspect of that memory that also has a very strong memory trace leading to those positive thoughts and feelings. And if a representation of the brand is not significant enough to bring back those thoughts and feelings, it is not clear how else a marketer can elicit those thoughts and feelings.

In contrast, a consumer who interacts regularly with a promotional product may have thoughts about the meaning of the brand, its attributes, and even functional characteristics, depending on the nature and utility of the branded product. Such repetitious exposure can serve a similar purpose as experiential marketing – to make the consumer experience positive feelings and thoughts and to associate those with the brand.

6 Notable Examples of Promotional Products

Here I will share two personal experiences with prototypical promotional products that may show how they are likely to be experienced by consumers as well as how and to what extent they ultimately favor the elicitation of positive brand thoughts and emotions.

When my daughter was a toddler, we took her to see the now defunct Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey circus many times. Of all the branded merchandise sold at the circus, perhaps none was a better example of an effective promotional product than a molded rubber photo frame that came with a polaroid picture taken at the event.

Figure 1. Ringling Bros, Barnum & Bailey 3-D circus picture frame.

These raised 3-D frames featured circus imagery under their recognizable logo. And because they were magnetic, they were most likely hung on countless families' refrigerator doors.

Just like all other entertainment events, in this example the product is the experience, so having a promotional product that can reinforce the value one received from the last consumption episode could not be a more direct or relevant reminder of one's experiential product consumption. This will undoubtedly be a challenge for market offerings that are not inherently experiences in and of themselves, or for experiential marketing events where consumption of the product or service is not a given.

Another possible limitation lies in the subject of the memories such a promotional product can cue. For the child, it may be elements of the experience, but for a parent it is just as likely the memory will be of one's child having the time of their life. It may be impossible not to think of the 'branded product' when looking at the picture frame, but the emotions and feelings attached to those memories will likely focus on the child, not on the brand.

An ideal example of a promotional product that reinforced a brand identity and did so with both a visual and an auditory stimulus is Staples' "Easy"

button. A small round plastic button with the word “easy” in white letters against the same color red as the Staples logo, which when pressed would repeat their advertising slogan “That was easy.” It served no other function except perhaps as a gag gift. In spite of its popularity at that time, the folks at AdWeek hated it! (Nudd, 2005). But perhaps the most foreboding aspect of this promotional product is the fact that I had to do some research to make sure it was a Staples creation instead of one from Office Max. Even though it repeated their slogan, that was not enough to elicit a definitive brand memory from me. This is a challenge many advertisers have faced – to make a memorable, fun, entertaining sales pitch but prevent the “punch line” so to speak, from overshadowing the identity of the message sponsor.

Figure 2. Staples “That was easy!” button.

Given the high bar many experiential marketing efforts have now set, this is even more so of a pressing concern for brands creating and orchestrating experiential marketing events in the 21st century. After all, the goal has become to immerse the consumer in a multi-sensory and hopefully unforgettable experience. How does one accomplish this while making sure the brand and or any of its properties remain a prominent aspect of that episodic memory?

7 Promotional Product Considerations

To aid in the creation, reinforcement, and use of BRSM and the possible reinforcement of BRAM from other experiential marketing events, we believe a promotional product should meet one or more criterion, it should:

- Be a symbolic representation of the brand – through its aesthetics and/or functionality, a promotional product should correspond with consumers' expectations of the brand and its products. Logo inclusion may not suffice; promotional product's main attributes should match attributes commonly associated with the brand and its products.
- Be functionally and/or aesthetically relevant to the brand – the function the product serves should correlate with one or more of the product lines bearing the brand name. Although some branded products achieve notoriety and preference along both of these broad dimensions, many more do not. So, if a brand's products are known and desired primarily for their look, that company's promotional products need to also stand out aesthetically; whereas promotional products for a brand whose products are known for their functionality should instead stand out for their own functionality.
- Be easily and readily accessible – to aid in the repetition that is necessary for the formation and reinforcement of long-term memories, the promotional product should be one which the consumer will at least see and preferably use often. A promotional product should offer year-round utility as opposed to seasonal or situational utility – Christmas ornament vs key chain, wallet/money clip, smart phone case, etc.
- Be as easy or complex to use as the brand suggests it should be. Ease of use should reflect this dimension of the brand identity – it would be easy to recommend that a promotional product should be easy to use; however, for a brand that is known for complex offerings, this may work against the brand identity.

There are other characteristics of a promotional product that may be worth manipulating in an advantageous way:

- Obvious vs obscure/nuanced connections to the brand; for example, a BMW model car vs. a pocket multi-tool with the BMW logo. This distinction may facilitate more thoughts about the brand attributes vs. its products overall. In this example, a car's aesthetics vs the world class engineering the brand's products represent.

- A promotional product may also be designed to facilitate thoughts regarding the history/legacy of a brand. Keeping with the BMW model car example, a miniature scale model of an Isetta, a 2002, or the M1 is more likely to make the recipient think about the history and achievements of the brand, something a miniature scale model of a newer model car is less likely to facilitate. A similar approach can be taken by long standing brands whose products or promotional images may promote nostalgic thoughts about the brands history and notable accomplishments.
- Acquisition considerations – Consumers' perceptions of having received a promotional product from the brand itself (as opposed to from a representative of the brand) may result in a stronger memory trace of the "brand" as the donor, which may facilitate experiential feelings/thoughts of the brand. This may be especially relevant for service brands where a consumer is likely to have a relationship with the human representative of the brand (insurance, investments, wellness, etc.) This may inform/dictate how the promotional product should be gifted - in person by a representative of the brand vs. shipped with a letter identifying only the brand as the donor.

8 Proposed Research

Most of the propositions we suggest can be tested in a two-way between-subjects full factorial design in which the initial promotional product conditions will be branded vs unbranded and functional vs aesthetic utility; this design will allow us to test for expected interaction effects. The stimuli can be a 3-dimensional rendering of a promotional product on a tablet computer or in some cases, a physical prototype of these (perhaps a 3-D printed version). We have a choice of different dependent variables to measure, including top of mind awareness for the brand and/or its primary product category; recognition of focal brand (reaction times); brand attitudes, beliefs, and/or preference via word-association tests and/or choice tasks.

It would be impractical to test the utility of promotional products as a conduit for experiential marketing effects against the more traditional event-related executions of this technique. As such, the experiments we propose will test the promotional product's ability to influence consumers' resulting memory for the brand and its attributes and attitudes toward the brand, which certainly, are ultimately all underlying objectives of experiential marketing.

We defend this decision by pointing out our central argument is not that promotional products can take the place of traditional experiential marketing activities, but rather that promotional products can support a company's existing experiential marketing strategy by sustaining a brand contact point which has the potential to reinforce and strengthen the positive outcomes resulting from traditional experiential marketing activities; all the while increasing semantic brand related knowledge, which normal experiential marketing activities may not be as well-suited to create and maintain.

Based on the preceding ideas and arguments, these are the effects we expect to observe:

P1: Promotional products that prominently feature a recognizable element of the brand (logo, slogan, characteristic shape/color) will elicit more relevant and positive responses from subjects – higher recognition, more positive attitudes, and higher preference for the brand than promotional products not bearing any clear brand identifying elements.

P2: Brands whose primary product category is renowned for their aesthetic value will benefit more from subjects' exposure to a promotional product whose main feature/attribute is its look/feel – its aesthetic appeal.

P3: Brands whose primary product category is renowned for their functional value will benefit more from subjects' exposure to a promotional product whose main feature/attribute is its functional utility.

P4: We expect to see an interaction effect whereby branded products whose utility matches that of the brand's most prominent product category will elicit the most favorable dependent variable measures.

Subjects will be told they are being asked to evaluate one of several promotional products. In all cases the name of the sponsoring company will be given to them. It is suggested that popular/well-known existing company/brand names be used. This is necessary since whatever effect the promotional product is likely to have will be contingent on the existing knowledge each subject has about the brand. Random assignment to each condition should eliminate concerns of any confounding effect resulting from subjects' differential existing brand knowledge or attitudes. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to ask subjects how well they feel they know the brand and its products, as a control measure.

They will then receive either a 3-dimensional rendering of a promotional product on a tablet computer, which they will be able to manipulate to see it from different angles, or a physical prototype of the promotional product (depending on budget and logistics). In either case, subjects will receive a thorough description of the promotional product.

8.1 Implications of proposed research

Practical

If observed, the expected results will provide a solution for how companies can maintain/support brand related thoughts and feelings after the experiential marketing event is no more than a distant memory. Expected results would suggest promotional products can serves as a continuous reminder of the reason(s) for a consumer's brand preference.

Theoretical

Exposure to and use of promotional products helps create and reinforce brand-related semantic memories, which traditional experiential marketing events are less likely to do. This is also the type of information a consumer will seek during an initial internal search for information before making rational – rather than emotional – decision in the marketplace. Most significant/important/consequential purchases are based on rational decision making.

As one would expect, anytime a business trend takes hold, soon thereafter there will be an overabundance of companies that claim some level of expertise in the subject matter. Nowadays those companies are easy to find online. These firms will usually give the prospective client a "best practices" guideline presumably as a teaser and a reassurance that they know what they are doing. When searching for firms that specialize in experiential marketing, one thing most of them have in common is their recognition that an experiential marketing event is not enough to bring about the long-term effects brands are trying to realize, most will mention there need to be follow-up communications/interactions with consumers. This is where a well planned and executed promotional product may fill in the gap.

9 Looking Beyond

This chapter was conceived and written with traditional promotional products in mind; therefore, depending on the results of the proposed

research, the creation of some seemingly ideal promotional products may not be as plausible as others. This could be due to restrictions on design, manufacture, materials, etc.

However, today's technology allows for an entire class of promotional products all of which can be accessed through a multitude of smart devices.

The flexibility of digital apps allows firms to offer a branded, relevant, and functional promotional product which can reinforce the brand identity; by its visual or auditory features; and what the brand stands for, by its functional or aesthetic attributes. Following are some simple ideas for useful apps which can serve the latter purpose:

- A Toyota app that reports a vehicle's driving characteristics.
- A Betty Crocker app that helps measure cooking ingredients.
- A DeWalt app with a digital measuring function.
- A Bank of America app that performs financial/investment calculations.
- A Revlon app that allows you to digitally apply cosmetics to your selfie.

These are simple, spontaneous examples. The possibilities are truly endless; persistent technological advances will make it possible to create future "promotional product" apps ideally and singularly suited to evoke strong and meaningful thoughts and feelings in support of the brands they represent.

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CHAPTER 7

UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: ASYMMETRY EFFECTS OF TOUCHPOINTS ON HOTEL BOOKING DECISION

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Abstract

Customer experience represents internal and subjective responses to a company's integrated activities and efforts. Understanding customer experience is not only a critical topic for professionals to improve a company's financial performance but also an important factor for academia to seek the underlying mechanism of the customer decision process. Despite the importance of customer experience, a company is not always able to control it as the range of the relationship stretches beyond the direct control of the company. Customer experiences are collected at various touchpoints through multiple channels. As an intersection with the product and brand, touchpoints describe social events where customers face and collect information related to the target product. In this research, four types of experiences (brand, social, channel, and irrelevant experiences) collected from various touchpoints were applied to examine their effects on hotel evaluation in an online travel agency (OTA) setting. The results revealed that people first take online ratings into account to assess the value of a hotel, prior to determining whether or not they add brand experience to decision making process as secondary information. The effect of brand experience was attenuated when the social experience was positive, whereas hotel evaluation was determined by brand experience when the social experience was negative. However, irrelevant experiences from a consecutive activity with a primary task were not considered in hotel booking decisions. Additionally, this research investigated the effect of familiarity to an OTA

website as a channel experience. The result indicated that the interaction effect between social and brand experiences was moderated by channel experience. Overall, the research contributes to advancing our understanding of the distinctive influences of customer experiences from different touchpoints on customer decisions.

Introduction

Establishment of a positive customer experience is a critical process to maintain a customer relationship with a brand and a chance to take a competitive advantage in the target market. Ninety percent of CEOs consider the customer as the most important factor in their business and building strategies, and seventy-three percent of companies delivering above-average customer experience show better financial performances over competitors (Morgan 2019). In the field of academic research, the importance of customer experience has long been emphasized (Meyer and Schwager 2007; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Verhoef et al. 2009), demonstrating relationships with brand image, service quality, customer-based brand equity, satisfaction, loyalty, revisit intention, word-of-mouth, and purchase decision (Yu et al. 2021; Manhas and Tukamushaba 2014; Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Khan and Rahman 2017; Liu and Hu 2021; Handarkho 2020; Shaw, Bailey, and Williams 2011; Grewal, Levy, and Kumar 2009; Alnawas and Hemsley-Brown 2019). These studies evidenced the paramount function of customer experience as a reflection of a company's integrated performances that include all aspects of a product and communication (Meyer and Schwager 2007).

Given the importance of customer experience on building attitudes and behaviors, an integrated point of view to understand the distinctive value of customer experience is required for generating favorable consequences. To provide a positive customer experience, companies put enormous efforts and expenses on building and maintaining customer relationship management. However, those efforts are insufficient for achieving complete satisfactions to meet the customer expectations because it is not possible for companies to fully control customer experiences. Although customers build experiences through a true relationship with a company, the range of the relationship stretches beyond the direct control of the company (Meyer and Schwager 2007). Customer experience is generated through a "customer corridor" that describes the series of touchpoints to interact with the product, company, and source of information related to the product (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Meyer and Schwager 2007 108). Touchpoints indicate the intersection that

customers collect customer experience (Baxendale, Macdonald, and Wilson 2015; De Keyser et al. 2020; Meyer and Schwager 2007; Lemon and Verhoef 2016). Customers experience the brand by means of a company's marketing activities that contribute to forming brand knowledge. Customers also establish experiences through third-party channels (e.g., online travel agencies) while they collect the information and purchase the product. As a social influence, word-of-mouth from other customers also creates customer experience to represent the product's evaluation. Additionally, an irrelevant experience gained from a consecutive activity with the primary task can also influence judgment.

Customer experience embeds the essential value, especially for a service brand. Customer experience conceptualizes the service brand's identity by representing intangible factors, such as service quality and employees' performances (Manhas and Tukamushaba 2014). Due to a competitive online travel market environment, hotels provide various information, offering deals and marketing campaigns to attract customers. In the similar fashion, previous research paid attention to multiple cues and examined their effects on customer attitudes and behaviors towards the travel products (Manhas and Tukamushaba 2014; Alnawas and Hemsley-Brown 2019; Liu and Hu 2021). Customers take account of multiple information collected from various sources for determining the purchase decision (Pan, Zhang, and Law 2013). However, the effects of multiple cues are asymmetry depending on touchpoints.

Meyer and Schwager (2007) asserted that customer experiences collected at divergent touchpoints can function differently, delivering inequivalent value. However, it is unclear that how customers recall their experiences to understand multiple cues in an online booking setting. The meaning of the information presented on OTA websites is interpreted relying on previous experience as a reference to judge the information. Therefore, travel sectors need to understand the mechanisms of how customer experiences are utilized to interpret the information presented on OTA websites and determine purchase decisions.

This research proposes a novel approach to understand the mechanism of customers' judgment on hotel booking. This research investigates the impact of multiple cues available on online travel agency websites by applying four touchpoints of experience: brand experience, social experience, channel experience, and irrelevant experience. Although the same information is provided in the OTA websites, customers' evaluations of the information differ by each individual's experiences. The results from

the present study advance our understanding of the distinctive value of customer experiences generated at various touchpoints when booking a hotel.

Theoretical Background

The mechanism of how a customer collects experience and stores the memory is critical for understanding the customer decision process in all B2C businesses. Particularly, customer experience plays an essential role in forming the identity and value of hospitality products due to the intangible feature (Mahrous and Hassan 2017). With a broad perspective, customer experience refers to "a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey (Lemon and Verhoef 2016)." Meyer and Schwager (2007, 108) defined customer experiences as "the internal and subjective responses customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company" indicating consequences resulted from all interactions with the company or the product.

Professionals have paid attention to customer experience as one of the top priorities to create value for the product and the company. In today's shopping environment, a company's direct interaction with customers alone hardly contributes to generating customer experience, such that multiple channels including various online commerce websites, social media, or communication platforms between the customers are available for customers to provide further information related to the product (Verhoef et al. 2009; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Mahrous and Hassan 2017).

Previous research suggests that customer experience is built in three stages (i.e., prepurchase, purchase, and post-purchase) and through multiple touchpoints across the customer journey (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; De Keyser et al. 2020; Sultan 2018). While the three stages of customer experience identify different key aspects generated by the procedure of the purchase, the four touchpoints emphasize the intersection where customers gain experience (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). Brand-owned touchpoints, brand-controlled elements, are generated by a firm's marketing activities, such as promotion, advertising, or loyalty program. Thus, it is closely related to building customer attitudes and preferences of the brand. Partner-owned touchpoints indicate customer interactions with third-party channels to experience the target product. An online travel agency is an example of this touchpoint in a travel purchase setting. The customer experience at social touchpoints occurs by communicating with external sources, such as

other customers. Such experiences gathered through social touchpoints can exert the stronger impact on customer decisions than the effect from company's marketing activities. Customer-owned touchpoints are an internal process to co-create the value of the product regardless of the firm or partner's effort. These points related to customers' actions and thoughts occurred in pre-touch and post-touch stages (Sultan 2018).

Brand experience

A brand contains comprehensive values and meanings, reflecting customers' perceptions built through direct and indirect experiences. The name of a brand represents its identity of the brand that is established by continuous performances and activities of the company (Keller 1993). As a highly diagnosable cue, brand indicates the brand equity, including the quality and value of the product (Akdeniz, Calantone, and Voorhees 2013; Brucks, Zeithaml, and Naylor 2000). In a hotel booking situation, the name of a hotel brand recalls customers' feelings and memories toward the brand beyond the features and services of the hotel (Cai and Hobson 2004). That is, a brand for a hospitality product contains brand knowledge and information representing the value of intangible factors. This inherent value of the brand increases credibility and reduces risks, thereby contributing to determining purchase decisions (Kayaman and Arasli 2007; 2007).

In general, brand knowledge and customer attitudes are built upon an experience of the brand. Brand experience is subjective internal reactions and behavioral responses that represent accumulated experience related to the brand (Yu et al. 2021). A customer experiences a brand through various interactions where the customer faces the name, for example, by searching, shopping, purchasing, and consuming the product (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). The continuous exposure to the brand via a gradual process in multiple channels forms a concrete brand experience (Yu et al., 2021; Trudeau and Shobeiri 2016). Customer experience is considered even more important in the service context (Khan and Rahman 2017; Liu and Hu 2021; So and King 2010; Mahrous and Hassan 2017; 2017; Manhas and Tukamushaba 2014). Although customer perspectives toward the service brand are initially affected by marketing activities, customer experience through positive interactions with employees who provide a consistent quality of service also becomes a crucial factor in determining brand perception (So and King 2010; Berry 2000).

As a brand-owned touchpoint, the customer experience of a brand often engages in brand-controlled elements of the marketing mix managed by the

company (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). The company's marketing efforts and strategies to manage customer relationships, such as loyalty programs, contribute to accumulating brand experience. Previous studies demonstrated the impact of brand experience on brand equity including loyalty and brand image in a tourism context (Liu and Hu 2021; Yu et al. 2021; Manhas and Tukamushaba 2014). Similarly, customers' behavioral outcomes, such as revisit intention and word-of-mouth, are predicted by hotel brand experience constructed with various factors (i.e., location, facilities, service, online activities, social influence) (Khan and Rahman 2017). Corroborating this, a study seeking for the determinant of brand equity evidences the strong impact of customer's direct experience that overrules the impact of external communications, such as word-of-mouth and publicity to build brand equity (So and King 2010). In addition, a study exhibits that the competitive advantage of brand experience is that customers made fewer clicks for alternative options and spent less time making a purchase decision when a highly recognized brand was available (Lee and Cranage 2010).

When a customer faces a brand, the accumulated brand experiences are used to identify the brand, and it instantly delivers its value attached to the brand. Here, signaling theory provides a theoretical contribution for understanding the effect of accumulated experience related to a brand. The brand sends an easily diagnosable cue to perceive the quality of the product as a credible source, representing a "bundle of information" (Brucks, Zeithaml, and Naylor 2000, 363). The credibility attached to the brand name is then transferred to evaluate the product's quality and increase purchase intention (Erdem and Swait 2004; Baek, Kim, and Yu 2010). As such, a product with a favorable brand has a competitive advantage over alternatives containing connotated value collected from brand experience (Cai and Hobson 2004).

Social experience

Peer connection is one of the benefits of shopping online that the past and the potential customers can communicate with each other about common interest with which they share. Due to advances in online platform, customers easily access others' experiences as a credible reference to decide a purchase (Lo and Yao 2019). As an example of the social commerce platform, an online travel agency utilizes on social technology and community interaction to link with online shopping (Handarkho 2020). In the online travel agency setting, online reviews and ratings serve a crucial role in moderating customer perspectives, booking intention, and willingness to pay by providing summarized evaluations of the travel products based on

the direct experience of others. (Book et al. 2018; Noone and McGuire 2014; Vermeulen and Seegers 2009; Browning, So, and Sparks 2013).

Online ratings refer to an average score of customer preference to the target product. The review valence can be simplified the overall value and its effect is amplified by presenting online ratings (Sparks and Browning 2011). The symbolized customer evaluations are a strong determinant to predict purchase decision as a salient and easily accessible cue (Sparks and Browning 2011; Vermeulen and Seegers 2009). This is because, in order to save mental efforts and energy, people tend to use the cognitive miser principle that simplifies the decision process based on selective information (Fiske and Taylor 1991. Since an online rating is an instant indicator delivering a cue to represent the quality of a hotel, a good rating is often used as a convincing marketing source to distinguish the hotel from competitors (Xia et al. 2019). Conversely, an unfavorable rating can severely damage the hotel's reputation and sales (de Langhe, Fernbach, and Lichtenstein 2016).

Previous studies have demonstrated that online reviews and ratings as one of the multiple cues available on the OTA settings that outweigh the impact of other information (Book et al. 2018; Sparks and Browning 2011; Gavilan, Avello, and Martinez-Navarro 2018; Lo and Yao 2019). The predominant power of online reviews and ratings stems from their credibility, based on which people tend to follow the recommendations from others (Handarkho 2020; Lo and Yao 2019). Further, the motivation to generate and share the online reviews and ratings are purely for a customer, just like "me," but not intended for a marketing purpose (Casaló et al. 2015; Gavilan, Avello, and Martinez-Navarro 2018). The underpinning mechanism can be understood with social influence theory that an individual refers to many others' opinions to form own thoughts by conforming and complying with the majority (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Based on the principle, the opinions from the reference group are accepted as evidence to guarantee the quality of the product (Book et al. 2018; Gavilan, Avello, and Martinez-Navarro 2018).

An individual includes online reviews and ratings to determine the purchase decision, and simultaneously affects others' judgments by joining in the social conversation (Handarkho 2020). Such information generated by others can be categorized as a social experience, activities interacting, and communication with people (Handarkho 2020). As a part of social touchpoints that encircle customers in all three stages of purchase, the social experience can be achieved through word-of-mouth, or peer observation

(Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Baxendale, Macdonald, and Wilson 2015). The social experience can be differentiated from brand-owned experience as it is unable to control and manage touchpoints with customers (De Keyser et al. 2020). As such, a company merely maintains the social touchpoints, even which can cause a negative consequence. Thus, social experience is solely generated and controlled by peer customers, thereby forming attitudes and behaviors in a shopping environment (Lemon and Verhoef 2016).

The primary role of experience is to construct customer attitudes and behaviors throughout multiple touchpoints (Chen and Shen 2015; Handarkho 2020; Meyer and Schwager 2007). However, the impact of each touchpoint can be inconsistent. For example, the effects of the social experience can outweigh a company's marketing outcomes delivered through brand-owned touchpoints. The impact of online ratings is deemed more salient than other cues, however, subjective attributes of the hotel, such as brand knowledge accumulated from an individual's direct experiences, can modify the strengths of online ratings (de Langhe, Fernbach, and Lichtenstein 2016; Handarkho 2020). That is, customers place inconsistent values on information reflecting different experiences. Therefore, this research proposes that social experience will influence the effect of brand experience when multiple cues representing both experiences are available in an online hotel booking setting.

H1. The effect of brand experience on hotel evaluations will be moderated by social experience.

> *H1a. The effect of a well-known brand (vs. private brand) on hotel evaluation will be increased when social experience is negative.*
>
> *H1b. The effect of a well-known brand (vs. private brand) on hotel evaluation will be attenuated when social experience is positive.*

Irrelevant experience

Customers' purchase decision is often influenced by various information related to the target product in the online shopping environment that reflects direct and indirect experiences. Although the main task is booking a hotel in an OTA setting, customers are easily distracted by other activities, such as phone calls, emails, or social media. With the easiness of communication and accessibility to information, social media has a great impact on an individual's daily life. By increasing the penetration of social media, internet users worldwide in 2020 spent an average of 145 minutes per day

on social media, which was increased by approximately 146% from 2012 with a daily usage of 90 minutes in average (Tankovska 2021). Thus, it is conceivable that tasks are interrupted more frequently by the notifications that alarm new posts and text messages from social media. For example, people frequently check social media in between tasks or while they are in the middle of something. Although information received from social media may be irrelevant to the task, it can affect the process of judgment toward the primary task by priming attitudes and emotions.

As an experimental framework, priming activates a certain idea and thoughts in the human mind and increases cognitive accessibility by processing associated information prior to the main task (Allen 2017; McNamara 2005). Affective priming utilizes affect-loaded stimuli (e.g., words, sentences, or pictures) to manipulate emotions and feelings (Minton, Cornwell, and Kahle 2017; Janiszewski and Wyer 2014). The stimuli cause polarized consequences in judgment, leading to unrelated decision-making (Storbeck and Clore 2008). Positive stimulus tends to produce an intuitive view to judge based on a heuristic process of information, whereas a negative stimulus is likely to operate a systematic process taking into account all accessible information (Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Howden and Meyer 2011; Dijksterhuis 2004). Thus, judgment can be processed in a different path by the momentary emotion, which causes various behavioral responses.

Information achieved from social media can subconsciously trigger emotional changes depending on the valence of the contents. A previous study evidenced that affective priming using social media was effective in altering customer perspectives toward the corporate social responsibility statement of a hotel, and in turn, it influences customers' behavioral responses toward the hotel (Tanford, Kim, and Kim 2020). This study proposes that customer judgment in an OTA setting can be altered by feelings and emotions that are stimulated with social media posts. Therefore, the relationship of brand and online rating to evaluate hotel value will differ as a function of irrelevant experience by affecting emotion.

H2. The interaction effect of brand experience and social experience will be moderated by irrelevant experience.

Channel Experience

In a hotel booking environment, the internet has changed consumer behaviors in many ways. To date, people show a higher dependency on the

internet for gathering information and booking a hotel online due to its high accessibility regardless of time and place (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer 2012). It is also noteworthy that customers show different behaviors and attitudes to achieve information and purchase travel-related products, depending on choosing an online channel for shopping versus traditional off-line shopping (Couture et al. 2015; Amaro and Duarte 2015).

Due to the intangible nature of tourism, customer experience of travel products is critical not only for evaluating the quality and functions of the products, but also for making a decision to purchase them (Shaw, Bailey, and Williams 2011). Furthermore, the degree of experiences toward the channel also plays an important role in the decision process by affecting how customers understand the information (Verhoef et al. 2009; Grewal, Levy, and Kumar 2009). A high level of channel experience reflected by frequent usage of the platform can modify customers' shopping behaviors in a positive way (Mahrous and Hassan 2017). The channel experience represents a customer's interaction with the product at partner-owned touchpoints where a third-party firm, such as multichannel distribution partners, plays a role in managing customer experience (Lemon and Verhoef 2016).

Channel familiarity indicates the degree of customer's experience of the channel, and it also refers to the familiarity on the structure and the layout of the platform. Customer familiarity manifests previous experience with the product or end-seller (Kim, Kim, and Park 2017). Familiarity, representing the frequent interaction, improves the cognitive structure of customers, thereby increasing trustworthiness and the accuracy of judgment (Söderlund 2002; Kim, Chua, and Han 2021). Thus, the information obtained from a familiar channel is more easily accessible because the ability to process the information has been enhanced with the structure in customers' minds (Wu and Law 2019; Söderlund 2002). In an OTA setting, customer perspective toward a hotel can be moderated by channel familiarity, which consequently influences booking intention (Kim, Chua, and Han 2021). Previous studies have indicated the relationship between familiarity and customer perspectives, where customers with a high familiarity level tend to be satisfied more on the purchase and thus, have a greater repurchase intention with positive WOM than the customers with low familiarity (Söderlund 2002). In a similar manner, channel familiarity helps customers learning its features and functions that affects potential purchase behaviors (Gensler, Verhoef, and Böhm 2012). Kim, Chua, and Han (2021) provided evidence that hotel evaluations, satisfaction, and repeat intention through a mobile device are highly related to the mobile channel familiarity because

customers are aware of the procedures and services to achieve their goals of booking a hotel.

As an important channel for purchasing travel-related products such as a hotel, flight, or rental car, OTAs take up the biggest fraction of the online travel market (Jelski 2019). Since most of the sales occur through OTAs, the information presented on the OTA websites is considered to determine the purchase decision. Furthermore, the channel experience also controls the levels in customer's understanding of information displayed on OTA website, which consequently moderates the judgment. That is, online rating list was more credible and useful when the degree of customer familiarity was high (Casaló et al. 2015). Therefore, this study proposes that the degree of customer's familiarity with an OTA website will exert the combining effect between brand experience and social experience.

H3. Channel experience will moderate the interaction effect of brand experience and social experience on hotel evaluation.

Method

Sample and Study Design

An online survey was utilized to collect responses using online panel data, Qualtrics. The sample was qualified with age (older than 18 years old) and previous experience of OTAs to reflect realistic travel purchase behaviors. A total of 132 participants for the pretests and 450 participants (35-38 per condition) for the main test were recruited. Approximately 50% of participants were female; 57% were married; 84% finished college; and 79% were Caucasian.

This research used an experiment to investigate the effects of various experiences on hotel evaluation. A 2 (brand: well-known brand vs. private brand) x 2 (online rating: high rating vs. low rating) x 3 (emotion: none vs. negative vs. positive) quasi-experimental design was employed. The stimuli depicted an online booking situation on online travel agency websites where customers can search a hotel and achieve detailed information about each hotel. The brand indicates the name of a hotel manipulated with a well-known and private brand to reflect brand experience. A corporate hotel name (i.e., Hilton) was used as a well-known brand, while a fictitious name (i.e., Rockwellton) was utilized as a private brand. Online rating refers to an overall score that represents other customers' experiences toward the target hotel. Scores using a numeral value ranging from 1 to 10 with two decimal

points express the online ratings. Two levels of rating scores selected from the pretest indicate high and low evaluations. Emotion manipulates a mode of processing information stimulated to test the effect of irrelevant experience that occurred in a sequence. Affective priming method was employed to prime participants to evoke polarized emotion using social media. The messages from social media containing affective-loaded words are considered suitable because text-based contents with emotional words manipulate feelings and attitudes (Minton, Cornwell, and Kahle 2017).

Procedures and Measures

Qualified participants randomly received a set of priming and main stimuli. First, priming stimuli were presented to manipulate emotion. Participants were requested to write down five words displayed in the social media posts while participants in a no-emotion condition proceeded to the main survey without priming stimulus. Next, a description and scenario for the main survey were displayed that captures a hypothetical setting to search and book a hotel for traveling to New York City via an OTA website. Following the main stimuli, participants were asked to rate the overall evaluation of the hotel and OTA familiarity. Overall hotel evaluation includes four items (e.g., I have a positive opinion about this hotel) on a 7-point Likert scale (Casaló et al. 2015). OTA familiarity was measured to examine the effect of channel experience on hotel evaluation. Manipulation checks and demographics conclude the survey.

Results

Pretests

In order to develop appropriate degrees of stimuli, three sets of pretests (brand, ratings, and priming) were conducted. A total of ten hotel brands, including four well-known brands (Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott, and Wyndham) and six private brands with fictitious names (i.e., Avony and Rackwellton), were examined using three items (Cronbach's alpha=.866) of an overall brand value scale (Yoo and Donthu 2001). The results showed that Hilton has the highest brand value (M=6.10) among ten hotels, and Rockwellton was rated at the lowest level (M=3.23). Two hotel brands indicated significantly different levels of brand value ($F_{1,63}$=191.88, p<.001).

For online ratings, the credibility of online ratings with 11 options ranging from 2.9 to 9.9 out of 10 scores was rated with three items (Casaló et al.

2015). Although a score 9.9 out of 10 (M=6.64) showed the greatest credibility, 9.2 (M=6.51) was chosen for a high rating to prevent excessive positive impact. Similarly, a moderate level of a rating score, 6.4 (M=4.84), was selected for a low rating to avoid unnecessary negative influence but distinguished enough from a high rating ($F_{1,56}$=163.01, p<.001).

To test the effect of affective priming to arouse polarized emotion, an emotion scale was employed (Kim, Kang, and Mattila 2012). A total of 20 Facebook posts were used to select three negative and positive posts. Negative posts included negative words (e.g., pain, depressed, or cry), while positive posts contained positive words (e.g., happy, grateful, or love) to arouse disparate feelings. Three positive posts with a mean value ranging from 6.14 to 6.18 and three negative posts with a mean value ranging from 2.42 to 2.73 were selected. Emotions after watching all positive posts were significantly different from emotions after watching all negative posts (p<.001).

Manipulation checks

A series of ANOVAs were conducted to test manipulations of three independent variables. Brand awareness was used for testing brand manipulation resulting that Hilton has higher brand awareness (M=6.40) than Rockwellton (M=3.53, $F_{1,433}$=379.10, p<.001). Online ratings were measured with how high or low the rating for the hotel was. The result indicated significant differences between high rating (M=6.15) and low rating (M=5.11, $F_{1,433}$=84.84, p<.001). For priming, participants were asked to rate how positive or negative the Facebook posts were. The result revealed that at least one group was significantly different from other groups ($F_{2,456}$=146.09, p<.001). A Bonferroni post-hoc test was performed to specify the difference among three priming conditions, indicating the valence between all three groups was significantly different from each other ($M_{positive}$=5.86, M_{none}=5.10, and $M_{negative}$=2.80). Thus, manipulations for the brand, online ratings, and priming were effective.

The effects of multiple experiential cues

A 2 x 2 x 3 ANOVA on overall evaluation was performed to test H1 and H2. The analysis revealed a significant two-way interaction between brand and online ratings ($F_{1,423}$=8.05, p=.005, η_p^2=.019), supporting support H1. To determine the source of the two-way interaction, a further analysis testing the simple effects of a brand on overall evaluation was performed at

each level of online ratings. The result was depicted in Figure 1. When online ratings were low, the overall evaluation of a well-known hotel brand (M=5.82) showed significantly greater compare to a private hotel (M=4.94, $F_{1,217}$=25.69, p<.001, η_p^2=.106). On the other hand, the effect of hotel brand was not observed when online ratings were high ($F_{1,214}$=3.07, p=.081, η_p^2=.014). Thus, H1a and H1b were supported. In addition, the simple effects of online ratings were tested at each level of brand. The results indicated that the effect of online ratings was only observed when a hotel brand was private (5.74 vs. 4.94, $F_{1,216}$=20.11, p<.001, η_p^2=.085). The negative impact of low rating was attenuated for a well-known hotel ($F_{1,215}$=1.35, p=.247, η_p^2=.006), showing an insignificant difference between low (M=5.82) and high rating (M=5.97). The analysis also examined three-way interaction involving brand, online rating, and priming, but no significant interaction was found ($F_{1,423}$=2.35, p=.096, η_p^2=.011). Therefore, H2 was not supported.

Figure 1. The Effect of Brand with Online Ratings

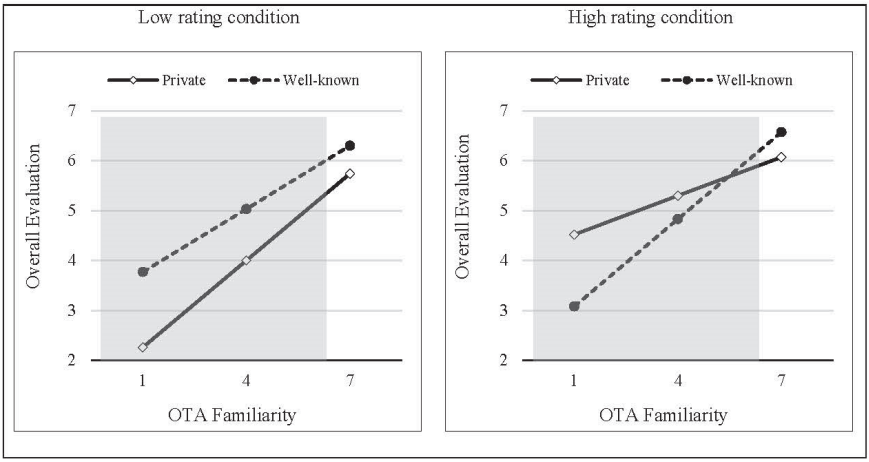
Note. ★: p<.001

The effects of channel experience

This study hypothesized that the degree of channel experience influences the effect of multiple experiential cues on overall evaluation. A PROCESS analysis (Hayes 2018) using model 3 was conducted to examine the moderating effect of OTA familiarity. The model of the regression for brand, online ratings, OTA familiarity and their interactions on overall

evaluation was significant ($F_{7,427}$=21.28, p<.001, R^2=.26). The results revealed that OTA familiarity significantly moderated the effects of brand and online ratings on overall evaluation, supporting H3 (β=.48, se=.20, t=2.37, p=.018, LLCI=.08, ULCI=.88). The Johnson-Neyman technique was applied to identify the significant regions of OTA familiarity that change the effect of brand at each level of online ratings (Hayes 2018). The significant moderation effect was observed when OTA familiarity was lower than 6.22 out of 7 scale. In other words, the changes in the interaction effects between brand and online rating on overall evaluation were observed only when people have low or moderate degrees of OTA familiarity. When online rating was low, overall evaluation of a well-known brand was constantly higher than a private brand regardless of the level of OTA familiarity. The results specify the effect of OTA familiarity that a private hotel brand was evaluated better than a well-known brand when OTA familiarity was low under the high rating condition. The significantly greater evaluation of the private brand (vs. well-known) was attenuated by collecting more OTA experiences. However, the significant moderating effect of OTA experience was observed only when OTA familiarity was lower than 6.22.

Figure 2. Moderating Effects of OTA Familiarity



Note. Shaded regions (OTA familiarity < 6.22) are significant at p<.05.

Discussion

The main contribution of the current research is to demonstrate the asymmetry effects of experiences that identifies relationships among the various types of experiences collected from different touchpoints. The current research employs a novel approach to explain how various experiences are used for customers to process multiple cues, which consequently affects hotel booking decisions. The results indicated the relevance of three types of experiences for a hotel evaluation on an online travel agency (OTA) setting: brand experience, social experience, and channel experience. The findings of this study confirmed that the effects of multiple cues reflecting direct or indirect experience can differ by a paired cue, and the relationship between different sources of experiences also varies by channel experience.

First, this study found that the effect of a cue reflecting different experiences is altered by paired cues. Many previous studies claimed that the impact of online reviews and ratings overrides the effect of other cues in the combination (Book et al. 2018; Casaló et al. 2015; Gavilan, Avello, and Martinez-Navarro 2018; Lo and Yao 2019). In line with this notion, the current study evidenced that online ratings strongly outweighed other information. A favorable online rating represents the overall positive experiences of others as a sufficient signal for proving the quality of the hotel. When a hotel holds a favorable rating, it dominates factors to evaluate the hotel and thus, the effect of brand is minimized during the decision process.

This research also highlights the relationship between the cues where the powerful influence of the online rating changes as a function of a brand. In cases where an online rating is negative, customers tend toward relying on brand information as a secondary process for the hotel's evaluation. As such, a brand is considered and utilized as evidence to confirm or disprove the negative information generated from the online rating. For example, a private-brand hotel with which customers share very limited experience, received an unfavorable hotel evaluation when the online rating was low. In a clear contrast, a well-known brand hotel was positively evaluated despite the low online rating. It is noteworthy that the degree of positive evaluation on the well-known brand hotel with a low online rating was similar to those of the hotels with high ratings. Statistical insignificance at p=.247 (Figure 1) suggests further that the negative influence generated by other's experiences can be protected by well-managed brand value.

Second, this study revealed the function of channel experience to specify the interpretation of a paired cue, containing online rating and brand. The finding indicated that customer perception toward a hotel can be different depending on the extent of the OTA channel familiarity even though all the factors that describe the hotel are identical. Overall evaluation of the hotel was unfavorable when OTA familiarity was low (vs. high). Regardless of the rating score, hotel evaluation of a well-known brand was depreciated when customers were less familiar with an OTA website. Similarly, the evaluation of a private brand hotel was unfavorable when OTA familiarity was low (vs. high). Taken together, the significant role of OTA familiarity in hotel evaluation was observed at each level of online rating and brand, suggesting. That is, the more familiar with the OTA website, the better evaluation of the hotel.

The effect of a brand turned out to be more salient when OTA familiarity was low (vs. high OTA familiarity). When customers were not familiar with the OTA website, the evaluation of a private brand with a high rating was even higher than that of a well-known brand. This phenomenon can be explained as a perception toward a luxury boutique hotel. In the case that the hotel level was classified as luxury, the expectation of the hotel was higher for the private brand by providing a unique and authentic experience that is differentiated from a corporate brand (Kim, Baloglu, and Henthorne 2021). Well-known corporate hotels, such as Marriot or Hilton, promise a consistent level of service and quality, however, it is relatively difficult to exceed the certain level. In contrast, a private boutique hotel is an independent hotel that has more freedom to exceed standard service, customizing customers experience to a special moments or levels. Therefore, if OTA familiarity is low but the online rating was high enough to ignore all other factors that are included in the hotel deal, a corporate brand may have a limitation to amplify the customer expectation.

The results of the study showed that experience of social media prior to the purchase phase has a distant relationship with the booking intention. Although people are frequently exposed to random information that may or may not be related to the following decision, the irrelevant information merely affects hotel evaluation. Previous studies demonstrated that irrelevant information can activate a mode of processing and change how people access information (Tanford, Kim, and Kim 2020; Kim, Tanford, and Book 2020; Tan et al. 2018). However, the results of this study indicated that irrelevant experience achieved from social media activities has a negligible influence on the consecutive judgment, online booking, suggesting that it may be relatively too distant from the decision process

compared to the other three touchpoints. Further, there might be a little impact of irrelevant experience on activating a mode of processing information.

Conclusion

This research identifies three salient touchpoints that influence customer booking decisions in an online booking setting. Many practitioners and researchers have emphasized the importance of customer experience. However, it is necessary to identify factors associated with experiences that represent customers' direct and indirect activities collected at various touchpoints. Customers simultaneously accumulate experience across multiple channels, and the experience is used to judge and evaluate a product. To provide an effective customer experience, companies need to draw a map to identify touchpoints and understand the distinctive effects of different experiences (Rawson, Duncan, and Jones 2013).

The findings from elucidating the interaction between brand and online ratings indicate that customers have information priority principle to conclude the judgment. Customers prioritize online ratings to evaluate a hotel over other information. An online rating is the first information to be used in the hotel evaluation and thus, it determines whether a cue from a brand will be included in the decision process. In other words, the effect of brand on hotel evaluation varies depending on the valence of the online rating. As a summarized score, online ratings are perceived as a credible source to represent others' direct experience (Casaló et al. 2015; Lo and Yao 2019). The social experience works as a salient cue to determine whether to include other information in the decision-making process.

The present study supports the perceived herd behaviors that people tend to comply their behaviors to others' actions when it is adopted by many others (Shen, Zhang, and Zhao 2016; Handarkho 2020). There is a consensus among social science targeting online reviews that social influence is considered a salient cue to outweigh other information (Book et al. 2018; Casaló et al. 2015; Gavilan, Avello, and Martinez-Navarro 2018). The findings of this research appear to be consistent with the literature, but the conditional effect of social influence was observed. In this research, social experience through many others' opinions has a powerful impact on forming the decision, however, the social experience does not always have a great influence. In an online booking setting, customers heavily rely on online ratings when the score is positive, which is in line with a previous study demonstrating that positive online reviews are useful only when their

valence is consistent with online ratings (Gavilan, Avello, and Martinez-Navarro 2018). The positive perspectives from many others are credible enough to convince people to follow the mass. Conversely, negative online ratings require additional information to conclude the judgment. Customers do not just comply with the unfavorable social influence, but they seek evidence to agree or disagree with the opinion. That is, interestingly, there exists a condition for customers to accept the social experience.

This study had some limitations. We assumed that disparate emotion manipulated with affect-loaded words would activate different modes of process. However, the results of the study showed that irrelevant experience from social media has no impact on the relationship between brand and social experience. In the present study, irrelevant experience was employed to prime participants to operate disparate modes of processing information. However, it is unclear whether the dual-processing mode has no influence on hotel evaluation, or the social media experience did not adequately activate the process mode. Although the study conducted the manipulation check to test the effectiveness of social media information, it is limited to verify how positive or negative the social media posts were. Since dual-processing occurs in the human mind, it is difficult to figure out which mode operates the action. Alternatively, this study employed a prevalent method to confirm the effectiveness of the manipulation. To test the effect of dual-processing mode accurately, multidisciplinary studies in collaboration with the field of neuroscience that employs brain imaging can be considered in the near future.

In addition, this study assumed that variables reflecting the various customer experiences represent the touchpoints. For example, well-known and private hotel brands were used to represent brand experience, and online ratings were applied as a social experience. Although there are previous studies to support the assumption, it may differ from the effects of actual customer experience. A future study to measure the actual experiences and test their effects would reduce the gap caused by the assumption based on empirical evidence.

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