

## Editorial\*

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### ***Introduction***

Starting with the October 2009 issue, all the articles in *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (JCP) are published under my editorship. As indicated in my inaugural editorial (Park 2008), I would like to *widen* as well as *deepen* the role of JCP as a journal for the acquisition and dissemination of extraordinary knowledge. First, I would like to see JCP *widen* its role as a facilitator of new knowledge acquisition and dissemination by expanding both the *means* of acquiring new knowledge and the *definition* of consumers as users, deciders, disposers, and/or purchasers of products and services (Park, 2008). Since I already addressed the latter issue (definition broadening) in my earlier editorial (Park, 2008), in this editorial I will focus my discussion on the former issue (means expansion). Secondly, I would like to see JCP deepen our understanding of the psychological processes underlying consumers' judgments and behaviors in several under-researched or emerging areas, some of which I listed in my inaugural editorial.

### ***Widening JCP's Role in Knowledge Acquisition and Dissemination***

With regard to expanding the means for acquiring new knowledge, JCP has been publishing articles not only through the traditional review process but also by soliciting manuscripts from leading psychologists and consumer behaviorists about new/emerging paradigms or theories relevant to consumer psychology. These invited articles are published in what is called the Research Dialogue section. JCP also places a strong emphasis on special issues dedicated to emerging areas of research as a way to acquire new knowledge in a timely fashion. It plans to offer four special issues which will be published over the next three years (see SCP or JCP websites for more specific information). Additionally, an announcement was made a few months ago about JCP's decision to publish short articles (less than 5,000 words excluding references) and review articles (less than 45 pages excluding references). These additional means to timely acquire new knowledge are noteworthy differentiators of JCP from other journals. In this editorial I will share with the JCP readers more specific information about JCP's goals and editorial policy for short articles.

### ***Goals for Short Articles***

As persuasively argued by Rozin (2009), there are many interesting and real phenomena in this world (the consumer behavior field included) of whose existence we are unaware. Equally important is the fact that there are many other consumption-relevant phenomena about which we have little understanding in terms of "why", "when", and "how" in spite of being generally

aware of their existence. One common characteristic across these phenomena is that they are not yet ready for the sophisticated experimental falsification and the formal hypothesis testing traditionally employed in behavioral research. Before such rigorous experiments and hypotheses testing can be conducted, these phenomena need to be fully examined and understood in their own right. In other words, path-breaking and novel ideas need to be first unearthed, shared with others, empirically explored, and conceptually refined before moving to the next step of rigorous scientific testing. To better illustrate the type of phenomena and questions I am referring to, I will offer a few examples below.

First, let us consider the recent death of Michael Jackson, and consumers' surprisingly strong renewed interest in his life and artistic performance. How sustainable would such positive reactions be and under what conditions are they most likely to be sustainable? The public's admiration for and attachment to celebrities such as Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe does not seem to fade away with the passage of time, a fascinating phenomenon that begs for an explanation. Furthermore, how would consumers react if these celebrities were to come back to life? Although this is not a feasible question to address with human brands, it is a highly relevant issue in the case of product/service brands. For example, we may consider a situation in which a firm pulls its flagship brand off a market and then reintroduces it later, as was the case with Coca-Cola (the New versus Coke Classic episode). How did consumers react to Coke Classic when the company brought it back to the market? Moreover, how did consumers react to the two versions of Coke (the Coca-Cola company kept both the new brand and Coke Classic on the market simultaneously, albeit somewhat briefly)? What were the brands' individual and joint effects on Coke's competitors and substitutes during that period or thereafter? What theory or theories would explain consumers' relationships with these two different versions of Coke? What would be the precise "process" explanation available for such relationships? What are boundary conditions for such an explanation? Directly addressing these questions in a rigorously controlled experimental setting appears to be somewhat premature. To do so may require more substantive knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon itself.

Consider a second example. It has become a real phenomenon in some parts of the world to observe that fake luxury brands are sometimes indistinguishable from real ones in terms of visual appearance and functional performance. Although the most recent research addressed highly relevant questions about this phenomenon in an experimental setting (see Wilcox, Kim, and Sen 2009), there are other equally pressing questions that need to be addressed. For example, one interesting question is what types of consumers are refusing to buy such fake brands and stay loyal to the authentic brands, willing to pay considerably higher prices for them. Why do these consumers behave the way they do, and what is the precise underlying processing mechanism for their behavior? Are moral beliefs the only and most viable variable that accounts for their refusal to buy fake brands? Finally, are those consumers who buy fake

brands more likely to be switchers from authentic brands or previous non-buyers of luxury brands who have expanded their consideration sets due to the fake brand accessibility? We may need to come up with, share with others, empirically explore and refine some novel and insightful ideas (or theories) about this phenomenon before rigorously addressing these questions either in a full scale experiment or in a controlled survey setting.

The third and final example is about the direction and magnitude of change in consumers' preferences and purchases with age. We are aware that people do change their preferences and consumption behaviors with aging (see Yoon, Cole, and Lee, 2009). The interesting question is to what extent, in what areas, and why such changes may occur. For example, does age increase consumers' ability to exert self-control over hedonic product consumption that elicits sensory pleasure? What circumstances impact this self-control? After having experienced many instances of pain and heartache as well as happiness and joy over time (which may have caused psychological resources needed for experiencing emotions to become gradually depleted), would aging consumers also become less sensitive to emotion-triggering (affective) messages? While previous research (see Yoon et al., 2009 for more specific information) shows a shift in goals from information acquisition towards emotion regulation (i.e. higher preferences for emotional rather than rational messages) with aging, such a shift may still indicate a net reduction in aging consumers' sensitivity or responsiveness to emotion-triggering messages when compared to their younger peers. Perhaps there may be more effective ways to communicate to aging consumers than by choosing between emotional or rational messages. Considering the possibility that aging leads consumers to feel less confident, or more insecure (perhaps inversely U-shaped), would they become more receptive to a self-augmenting type of symbolic brands? In light of empirical evidence that implicit memory is preserved in older adults (see Yoon et al. 2009), is it also conceivable that the power of habit becomes stronger in aging consumers, that is, behaviors of aging individuals are more habit-driven relative to those of younger consumers (perhaps, due to the decrease of newly learned behaviors over time)? Again, it would be highly valuable to approach this topic using some tentative but insightful ideas or theories that may open up greater opportunities for more rigorous experimental testing.

In summary, I would like short articles to address questions pertaining to real consumer psychology-relevant phenomena such as those indicated above, of whose existence or nature we have only limited understanding. This characterization of short articles resembles the concept of substantive phenomena-driven research (Simonson, Carmon, Dhar, Drolet, and Nowlis 2001). I hope that JCP's short articles will serve as a catalyst for more elegant and rigorous experimental or survey research about these phenomena. To be brief, JCP is very interested in publishing short manuscripts about various consumer psychology-relevant phenomena that contain either novel and interesting theories (ideas or thoughts) with

preliminary and tentative empirical findings, or novel and interesting empirical findings with plausible but tentative theoretical explanations. JCP will therefore not evaluate short manuscripts in terms of whether they identify, test, and offer a precise, single “process” explanation for the phenomenon under investigation, since such evaluation criteria are reserved for follow-up research. Consequently, an experiment or survey employed in a short article would be smaller in scale, less complex in design, yet still rigorous enough to avoid any serious errors in methodology.

### ***Deepening JCP’s Role in Knowledge Acquisition and Dissemination***

In my inaugural editorial (Park, 2008) I also specified nine under-researched or emerging areas among the many domains in which JCP would like to *deepen* our understanding of the psychological processes underlying consumers’ judgments and behaviors. It is fortunate that the current issue is able to publish several articles that pertain to some of these nine areas along with articles in other areas that further enhance our understanding of consumer psychology. I will briefly comment on these articles below.

Steve Posavac’s article (“***On Values and Phenomenology***”) is based on his SCP presidential address (2009) and fits very well with one of the nine under-researched/emerging areas, namely, *the temporal interdependence between (versus independence of) purchase and consumption activities*. The primary issue in this area is how consumers plan and pursue happiness through product purchase and consumption over time, considering that they tend to be myopic. Steve Posavac argues that academic consumer psychologists are clearly consumers who need to decide how to allocate their scarce resources such as time and energy in order to increase the happiness with their professional life. He describes core factors that tend to drive happiness in consumer psychologists and illustrates behaviors and decision-making strategies that lead to happier and more satisfied consumer psychologists. His article, a thoughtful and inspiring one, strongly suggests that the discrepancy between what we know and what we do is the primary cause for the “life happens to us without us being able to make life happen” syndrome.

The article by Wendy Wood and David T. Neal (“***The Habitual Consumer***”) explains with impeccable logic and empirical evidence how habits (beneficial or bad) are formed and can potentially be broken, and why they have such a prepotent impact on consumer behavior. The second article by Peter M. Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran (“***Self-Regulation of Consumer Decision Making and Behavior***”) argues with equally impeccable logic and empirical evidence that consumers do not have to be passive victims of their internal shortcomings or external obstacles that prevent effective decision making and decision enactment. These two articles are complementary in the area of how consumers can break their bad habits. Habits can be broken through a variety of methods, including context changes which prevent people from relying on their previous habit cues (Wendy and Neal 2009, published in this issue), a goal-driven self-

regulatory strategy, such as vigilant monitoring of the unwanted habit (Wood and Neal 2009, this issue), or if-then plans, as indicated by Gollwitzer and Sheeran (2009, published in this issue). Both articles address issues related to the second of the nine under-researched/emerging areas indicated earlier, *the role of learning in consumer behavior and its implications on the dynamics of consumer behavior*.

The article by Hagtvedt and Patrick ("**Unlocking the Secrets of Luxury Brands: Hidden Benefits of Luxury's Promise of Pleasure**") demonstrates an advantage that luxury brands have over value brands, namely the transportability of the brand name across a wide range of product categories. The authors propose a very interesting and appealing reason for this advantage, that is, by virtue of their inherent potential for eliciting pleasure, luxury brands in one category can transport themselves across a range of product categories. The authors also point out the boundary conditions for this transportability. This article pertains to the third under-researched/emerging area of research, namely, *developing knowledge about consumers' relationships with brands*.

Gibbert and Mazursky's article ("**How Successful Would a Phone-Pillow Be?**") demonstrates the interesting and counter-intuitive differences in consumers' reactions to product hybrids as determined by whether the hybrid represents a combination of features from similar versus dissimilar products. Their work shows consumers' ability and flexibility in comprehending and appreciating the novel combination of seemingly different features or concepts from dissimilar products. Häfner and Trampe's article ("**When Thinking is Beneficial and When It Is Not**") further contributes to this area by addressing different consumers' reactions to different types of advertising models depending on consumers' mode of product evaluations. Specifically, the effectiveness of thin and round models varies based on whether participants' product evaluations are impulsive or reflective. These findings are again unique and interesting. These two articles address issues related to the fourth under-researched/emerging area, *perspectives on consumers' cognitive flexibility*.

Kramer, Lau-Gesk, and Chiu's article ("**The Interactive Effects of Duality Expertise and Coping Frames on Responses to Ambivalent Messages**") addresses bicultural consumers' emotional ambivalence and focuses on how individual differences in "duality expertise" affect liking for emotionally ambivalent advertisements (e.g., ads that evoke simultaneous negative and positive emotions such as happiness and sadness). This article shows that individuals who are skilled in managing dual cultural identities respond more favorably to emotionally ambivalent message than those who are less skilled. This article addresses issues pertinent to the fifth under-researched/emerging area, *studies of culture and its relationship with consumer psychology*.

In addition, we have two articles that pertain to other equally important areas of research in consumer psychology. Freeman, Shapiro, and Brucks's article ("**Memory Issues Pertaining to Social Marketing Messages about Behavior Enactment versus Non-enactment**") examines the effect of two opposite linguistic strategies on learning and remembering a persuasive message. Their experiments demonstrate that it is easier for consumers to learn and remember information about terms denoting engagement (affirmations) versus non-engagement (negations). Their findings offer very interesting and important implications regarding communication methods designed to promote changes in beliefs, behaviors, and even bad habits. Murali and Pons' article ("**Regulatory Fit from Attribute-based versus Alternative-based Processing in Decision Making**") addresses the effects of fit between consumers' brand information processing (attribute- versus alternative-based) and regulatory focus (prevention versus promotion) on choice satisfaction and perceived monetary value of consumers' choices. What makes this research unique and interesting is the linking of brand evaluation strategies to motivational focus with regard to important consumer-related variables (satisfaction and perceived monetary value).

Finally, Dawn Iacobucci's article ("**Everything You Always Wanted to Know about S.E.M.**") addresses several important issues about a structural equation model. This article (two-part series to be published in two consecutive issues) is tutorial in nature, and reflects JCP's intention to publish tutorial articles about methodological or statistical issues that consumer psychologists are strongly interested in.

I believe that these and other articles that will be published in JCP over the years will deepen JCP's role in the acquisition and dissemination of extraordinary knowledge.

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