

Competent Consumer: Achievement Goal Theory and Consumer Evaluations

By

Efe amurda

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Business in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration

Dissertation Committee Members

Zeynep Grhan Canli, Migros Professor of Marketing, Koc University (Chair)
Alokparna (Sonia) Monga, Professor of Marketing, Rutgers University
Nilufer Aydinoglu, Assistant Professor of Marketing, Koc University
Zeynep Cemalciler, Associate Professor of Psychology, Koc University
Thomas Kramer, Associate Professor of Marketing, University of California, Riverside

Koc University
2016

Abstract

Competence, which is the feeling of being efficacious towards an action, is an inherent human motive and is one of the most fundamental aspects that individuals look for when making social judgments. Being perceived as competent is also crucial for companies. Competence is a central factor that consumers search for when evaluating brands and is one of the main factors that determine consumers' purchase intentions. Even though competence is a core assessment element for consumers and is a central pillar for firms, research still has not looked into how consumers themselves view competence and how it may affect their behavior in the marketplace. In my dissertation I base my framework on achievement goal theory to understand how the way consumers construe competence would affect their evaluations. The first essay of my dissertation focuses on a context in which the construct of competence is most explicitly used: comparative advertising. In this essay, I focus on achievement goal theory's effect on determining the effectiveness of direct versus indirect comparative advertising claims. In my second essay, I investigate motivational determinants of consumers' tendency to engage in brand dilution by looking into the interplay of achievement goal theory and self-brand connection.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Essay 1: Competence Construals and Effectiveness of Direct versus Indirect Claims	6
Conceptual Framework	8
Comparative Advertising Typology: Direct vs. Indirect Claims	8
Competence and Achievement Goal Theory	10
Performance Construal and Direct/Indirect Comparative Claims	12
Mastery Construal and Direct/Indirect Comparative Claims	14
Study 1	19
Study 2	23
Study 3	29
General Discussion	37
Essay 2: Dilution through Motivation: Achievement Goal Theory and Brand Dilution	41
Conceptual Framework	43
Study 1	46
Study 2	50
General Discussion	55
Appendix	58
References	67

INTRODUCTION

Competence, which is the feeling of being efficacious (to prevail and triumph) towards an action, is an inherent human motive (Ryan and Deci 2000). Manifestations of competence are very common in people's lives and lead to a number of positive outcomes including heightened life satisfaction, persistence and self-esteem (Deci and Ryan 2000; Levesque et al. 2004). Competence is one of the most fundamental aspects that individuals look for when making social judgments (Judd et al. 2005). Individuals' perceptions of others including confidence, intelligence and ambition usually falls under the broader competence category, as a result competence becomes a central stereotype content (Kervyn et al. 2012).

Competence is also a central factor that consumers search for when evaluating brands (Aaker 1997; Kervyn et al. 2012; Judd et al. 2005) and is one of the main factors that determine consumers' purchase intentions (Aaker et al. 2011). Accordingly, being perceived as competent is crucial for companies (Day and Wensley 1988). Firms' competence can be signaled to consumers through a number of means including having a portfolio of brands that have high equity (Erdem and Swait 1998), managing effectively perceptions of product quality (Zeithaml 1988) or creating an image that cues credibility (Aaker et al. 2011).

Even though competence is a core assessment element for consumers and is a central pillar for firms, research still has not looked into how consumers themselves view competence and how it may affect their behavior in the marketplace. Given that the way individuals interpret themselves and others strongly affects how they perceive firms and brands (Kervyn et al. 2012; Aaker 1997), I believe that understanding different ways that consumers construe competence and the role that plays in the decisions they make is worth investigating. In my dissertation I base

my framework on achievement goal theory to understand how the way consumers construe competence affect their evaluations.

According to achievement goal theory, there are two types of achievement construals that individuals adopt when faced with competence-related situations: mastery and performance. While individuals who construe competence in mastery terms aim for competence by focusing on outperforming themselves, individuals who construe competence in performance terms aim for competency by focusing on outperforming others (Murayama and Elliot 2011). Achievement goal theory posits that whenever mastery and performance achievement construals are made salient, individuals interpret the situations around them through these comprehensive mental frames (Kaplan and Maehr 2007).

In this dissertation, I tackle different research questions across two essays by focusing on how holding either mastery or performance competence construal would affect individuals' evaluations when they make decisions in consumption settings. I start my dissertation by selecting a context in which the construct of competence is most explicitly used: comparative advertising. Firms extensively use different comparative claims (e.g., "Dunkin' Beats Starbucks"; "Fairy is the Best Oily Grease Removal") in their marketing communication campaigns or as part of their branding strategy. However, despite the frequency of comparative claims in the marketplace, research on different types of comparative claims has been limited, and findings on their relative effectiveness have yielded mixed findings (Hsieh et al. 2012). In this essay, I focus on mastery and performance construals' moderating effect on the effectiveness of different comparative advertising claims (i.e., direct versus indirect).

I propose that consumers who are primed with mastery and performance competence construals would evaluate brands differently and express dissimilar purchase intentions when

they come across direct versus indirect comparative advertising claims. Results from multiple studies indicate that when they find the advertised product to be personally relevant, individuals who construe competence in terms of “performance” perceive brands that are communicated via indirect (versus direct) comparative claims to be more competent. As a result, they express higher brand attitudes and purchase intentions towards brands that use indirect (versus direct) comparative claims. In contrast, individuals who construe competence in “mastery” terms perceive brands that are communicated via direct (versus indirect) comparative claims to be more competent under high personal relevance. Hence, they express higher brand attitudes and purchase intentions towards brands that use direct (versus indirect) comparative claims.

In my second essay, I investigate motivational determinants of consumers’ tendency to engage in brand dilution by developing my framework from achievement goal theory. Negative information towards brands is highly prevalent in daily life and poses serious threat to many firms (Monga and John 2008). Previous research commonly agrees that one of ways to prevent individuals to be influenced by negative brand information is building strong self-brand connections (Ahluwalia et al. 2000). In this essay, I demonstrate across multiple studies that when consumers have weaker self-brand connections, holding a performance (versus mastery) construal makes them more susceptible to negative information about those brands and hence negatively affect their brand attitudes. In contrast, when consumers have stronger self-brand connections, holding a mastery (versus performance) construal makes them more susceptible to negative information about those brands and negatively affect their attitudes. I also show that these effects are mediated by information diagnosticity.

ESSAY 1:

Competence Construals and Effectiveness of Direct versus Indirect Comparative Claims

Every time a new generation of mobile telecommunications technology is introduced, mobile operator firms advertise extensively to promote their capability over the best use of this new technology. One of these firms, Verizon Wireless, has quite assertively displayed its competence during the introduction of both 3G and 4G mobile technologies. During the introduction of the 3G, Verizon signaled its competency by directly comparing its coverage to its main competition: AT&T (i.e., Verizon: "5X more coverage than AT&T"). On the other hand, during the introduction of the 4G, Verizon indicated its competency by comparing its coverage over the entire product category (i.e., Verizon: "America's largest 4G LTE network"). Even though these two different advertisements may seem quite similar at first, they are in fact using two different comparative advertising strategies: direct and indirect (Goodwin and Etgar 1980; Hsieh et al. 2012). Brands that use direct comparative claims (Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991) signal superiority by comparing themselves directly to their particular competition (e.g., "Verizon has 5X more Coverage than AT&T") In contrast, brands that use indirect comparative claims indicate superiority by comparing themselves to unnamed competitors. The most potent type of indirect claim (Miniard et al. 2006) is the one in which a brand signals superiority to the entire product category (e.g., "Verizon is America's largest 4G LTE network").

As it is with the Verizon case, different comparative claims are often used in firms' marketing communication activities (Barone and Jewell 2012). However, despite their common usage in the marketplace, limited existing research on the effectiveness of direct and indirect comparative claims has yielded mixed findings, which led to a recent call for research on their

relative effectiveness (Hsieh et al. 2012). In this work, we adopt a novel perspective based on achievement goal theory in order to bring a new understanding into how consumers interpret different comparative claims. According to achievement goal theory, competence is construed in two different ways: performance and mastery (Elliot and McGregor 2001). When individuals are under “performance” construal, they focus on *outperforming others* in order to reach normative competency (e.g., a student who wants to exceed other students in mathematics). When they are under “mastery” construal, they focus on *outperforming themselves* in order to reach task mastery (e.g., a student who wants to outperform him/herself to master the domain of mathematics). In this paper, we introduce achievement goal theory to the marketing literature and investigate its influence on the effectiveness of direct and indirect comparative claims. We make predictions based on schema (in) consistency, perceived strength of comparisons, and the relationship between competence perceptions and processing difficulty. We focus on achievement goal theory building on the assumption that how individuals construe competence may play a significant role in their evaluation of brands that demonstrate competence directly or indirectly.

By demonstrating how different ways consumers construe competence influence the relative effectiveness of direct versus indirect claims, we add to the comparative advertising literature. Even though firms extensively use different comparative claims as part of their marketing communication strategy, the relative effectiveness of different types of comparative claims has been largely unaddressed by the literature (Miniard et al. 2006; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991) and extant research yielded mixed findings (Hsieh et al. 2012). In this research, we propose and show that both direct and indirect comparative claims can be equally effective depending on the viewer’s competence construal. We also introduce the achievement

goal theory to the marketing literature. Even though achievement goal literature is highly established in social psychology, and other research streams such as management (Izadikhah and Jackson 2011), sports (Boardley and Jackson 2012), and education (Harackiewicz et al. 1997) have extensively studied the effects of mastery/performance approaches to competence on a number of outcomes, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first research that directly investigates achievement goal theory's role in consumer behavior. We think that understanding the different ways that individuals construe competence would bring insight into the marketing literature where perceived competence of firms play a prominent role.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Comparative Advertising Typology: Direct vs. Indirect Claims

Comparative claims are one of the most frequently used tools for companies to signal to consumers their competency over other alternatives. Microsoft's "Bing it on" challenge that was specifically targeted against the Google search engine, Sodastream's aggressive campaign against soda bottle manufacturers, and the famous Pepsi versus Coca Cola taste contest are examples of well-known campaigns that include comparative claims. Within this literature, there have been several attempts to (re) define a relevant comparative advertising typology. One of the most common and established ways to categorize different comparative claims is based on the level of brand specificity (Hsieh et al. 2012). According to this framework, comparative claims are categorized into two different types: direct and indirect (Goodwin and

Etgar 1980). In direct comparative claims (Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991), a brand explicitly demonstrates its competence over its specific competition (e.g., “Fairy lasts two times longer than Dawn”). In contrast, in indirect comparative claims, a brand is compared to unnamed competitors. The most potent type of indirect claim (Miniard et al. 2006) is the one in which a brand signals superiority over the entire product category (e.g., “Fairy is the best oily grease remover”).

Research has been limited in terms of the effectiveness of direct versus indirect claims (Grewal et al. 1997; Snyder 1992) and the existing literature yielded mixed findings (Hsieh et al. 2012). While some research found direct comparative claims to be more effective than indirect claims (Pechmann and Steward 1990; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991), others have demonstrated the superiority of indirect claims over direct comparative claims (Goodwin and Etgar 1980; Miniard et al. 2006). Authors who demonstrated the effectiveness of one type of claim over another have mostly based their arguments on brand-specific contingencies. For instance, Pechmann and Steward (1990) showed results in line with the effectiveness of direct comparative claims when the advertised brand had a lower market share than the comparison brand. On the other hand, Miniard et al. (2006) demonstrated that indirect comparative claims would be more effective depending on the firms’ positioning strategy.

These mixed findings initiated a call for further research on the effectiveness of direct versus indirect comparative claims. In their chapter that identified comparative advertising’s current and future research agenda, Hsieh and colleagues (2012) called for the investigation of possible situationally induced mindsets and/or individual differences in predicting the differential effectiveness of direct versus indirect comparative claims. In this research, we adopt an achievement goal theory perspective and propose that the way consumers construe competence

may influence the effectiveness of direct versus indirect comparative claims. Because competence is at the core of comparative claims, we believe that how consumers construe competence may play a prominent role in their brand evaluations and purchase intentions when they come across different types of competence claims.

Competence and Achievement Goal Theory

Competence is a fundamental human need (Elliot and Dweck 2005). According to self-determination theory, competence, which is the sensation of being efficacious in a requisite task or action, is an essential need for individuals (Ryan and Deci 2000). Individuals are driven to attain competence regardless of their age (Bong 2009), race (Hudley and Graham 2001), social status (Sirin 2005) and culture (Urdan 2004). Competence is in the center of achievement goal theory. According to achievement goal theory, achievement goals are defined as “cognitive representations that guide behavior to a competence-related end state” (Hulleman et al. 2010, pg. 423). Achievement goal theory identifies two different construal of competency: performance and mastery (Elliot and Church 1997). Individuals who are under performance construal focus on outperforming other people in order to reach normative competence (Elliot and McGregor 2001). For instance, chefs who construe competence in performance terms feel efficacious in their cookery through establishing their capability over other chefs. In contrast, individuals who are under mastery construal focus on outperforming themselves in order to reach task competence and mastery (Elliot and McGregor 2001). For instance, chefs who construes competence in mastery terms feel efficacious in their cookery when they exceed themselves in comparison with their past attempts in mastery. In this research we introduce

achievement goal theory into marketing literature by demonstrating its role in determining the effectiveness of different comparative claims. We suggest that direct/indirect comparative claims would differentially influence individuals' competency judgments of brands when individuals view those claims through mastery or performance competence construal.

Furthermore, we also posit that in order for comparative claims to potentially influence competency judgments of those individuals who are under competence construal, the advertised product should be perceived as personally relevant for them. In marketing literature personal relevance is often used interchangeably with the involvement construct and is conceptualized and operationalized quite broadly (Celsi and Olson 1988; Greenwald and Leavitt 1984; Petty et al. 1983; Zaichkowsky 1985). Having product knowledge and frequent product-related experiences (Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Celsi and Olson 1988; Park et al. 1994), holding strong and differentiating opinions about product attributes (Zaichkowsky 1985), or finding the product/category to be personally important (Malär et al. 2011) all makes consumers perceive the product-related information as personally relevant. Based on these descriptions, we define personal relevance as the extent that a product category or a feature matters to consumers. According to this literature once personally relevant knowledge is activated, consumers initiate search/shopping behavior and redirect their focus towards relevant information (Celsi and Olson 1988). Therefore, we suggest that when individuals who construe competence in terms of mastery and performance come across products that they find personally relevant, information regarding the competency of those products would also become relevant and hence direct/indirect comparative claims would influence their competency judgments of these products.

In order to explain how direct/indirect comparative claims would influence mastery/performance competence construal's perceptions of personally relevant products, we rely on schema-based processing. Schemas are organized knowledge structures that contain information about any stimulus including people, organizations, products or concepts (Fiske and Taylor 1984). Once a certain schema has been initiated, individuals become dedicated to them and resist adapting to other schemas (Stayman et al. 1992). We rely on schema processing when discussing the interaction between competence construals and comparative claims. We posit that while both direct and indirect comparative claims would be consistent with the competence schema of consumers who are under performance construal, consumers who construe competence in terms of mastery would have a harder time in fitting comparative claims into their competence schemas. The resulting schema consistency (for performance construal) and inconsistency (for mastery construal) would yield different outcomes in terms of the effectiveness of direct and indirect claims based on perceived strength of comparisons, and the relationship between competence perceptions and processing difficulty. Next we explain how each competence construal would differentially influence the effectiveness of direct versus indirect comparative claims.

Performance Construal and Direct/Indirect Comparative Claims

In direct comparative claims, brands cue superiority over their specific rivalry (Pechmann and Stewart 1990), whereas in indirect comparative claims, brands signal superiority to the entire product category (Miniard et al. 2006). We suggest that since performance construal focuses on outperforming others (Elliot and McGregor 2001), it would

be natural for them to use or rely on external/normative comparisons. Therefore, claims that emphasize normative competence either with reference to another specific competitor (i.e. direct claims) or the entire product category (i.e. indirect claims) would both fit into performance construal's competence schema. As a result, when individuals who construe competence in performance terms are assessing the competency of a personally relevant product, they can rely both on direct or indirect comparative claims.

However, we argue that even though both claims would speak to their understanding of competency, individuals under performance construal would perceive products that are advertised via indirect comparative claims as more competent than products that are advertised via direct comparative claims. The bases for our predictions come from the "outperformance" focus of performance construal. Individuals who construe competence in terms of performance aim to reach normative competence (Elliot and McGregor 2001). For them, competence is evaluated based on the degree to which they perform better or attain a greater skill than others (Elliot and Thrash 2001). Hence, they constantly strive to seem to be the best in comparison with others (Koul et al. 2009). Based on this literature, we suggest that individuals who construe competence in performance terms would find personally relevant products that signal outperformance or superiority to a greater extent to be more competent. Given that indirect claims indicate a greater degree of normative competence than direct claims due to their category-based superiority, individuals who are under performance construal would find personally relevant products that communicate their superiority through indirect (versus direct) claims to be more competent. Furthermore, this heightened perceived product competence would translate into higher attitudes and purchase intentions towards products that are communicated through indirect (versus direct) comparative claims.

H1a: Individuals who are under performance competence construal would express higher attitudes and purchase intentions towards products that they consider personally relevant when products are communicated through indirect (versus direct) claims.

H1b: Individuals who are under performance competence construal would find products that they consider personally relevant to be more competent when they are communicated through indirect (versus direct) claims.

H1c: Perceived competence of the product would mediate the effect of performance construal on attitudes and purchase intentions towards products that are communicated via indirect (versus direct) comparative claims.

Mastery Construal and Direct/Indirect Comparative Claims

Individuals under mastery construal focus on outperforming their own selves, and not the others, when defining competence (Elliot and McGregor 2001). Given that both direct and indirect comparative claims evoke a reference point other than the “self”, we suggest that they would not fit into competence schemas of consumers who construe competence in mastery terms. Since individuals tend to struggle against adapting unfitting schemas (Stayman et al 1992), we posit that when consumers under a mastery construal are assessing the competency of

a personally relevant product, they would resist inferring competency from direct and indirect comparative claims and hence experience cognitive effort and difficulty.

Recent research suggests that one of the ways that individuals infer competency is in fact through the effort they experience when undergoing processing difficulty (Thomson and Ince 2013). Even though previous research mainly focused on the negative consequences of processing difficulty, more recent research shows that processing difficulty may increase evaluations in contexts that are related to competency (Labroo and Pocheptsova 2016; Park et al. 2015; Thomson and Ince 2013). According to Labroo and Pocheptsova (2016) when individuals assess their or others' competence or the stimuli they come across is associated with competency, processing difficulty positively affects evaluations. Several empirical findings support this theory. Park et al. (2015) showed that when evaluating an IT product, individuals who experience processing difficulty focused more on the perceived security of the product (an attribute based on competence) and hence found the product to be more preventative against theft when compared to individuals who did not experience processing difficulty. Song and Schwarz (2008) demonstrated that individuals who had a harder (versus easier) time processing a certain recipe reported that a cook would need to be more skillful to execute the dish. Thomson and Ince (2013) presented a direct link between processing difficulty and competence by showing that individuals who processed the information about a service agent more difficultly evaluated that service agent to be more competent when compared to the condition in which information was processed more easily.

One of the underlying reasons why cognitive difficulty leads to more positive consequences under competence-related situations is consumers' naive theories about processing ease and difficulty. According to the literature, even though ease may simply feel

good for some individuals, others may infer effort from processing difficulty, which gives them the feeling of achieving something as achievement usually involves effort and is associated with difficulty (Labroo and Kim 2009). As a result, in contexts or situations in which effort is perceived as valuable, processing difficulty rather than ease may lead to more positive consequences. These situations include contexts in which individuals value effortful learning and mastery (Miele et al. 2011), contexts in which individuals are under a goal pursuit (Labroo and Kim 2009), or contexts in which competence is seen as an important evaluative dimension to individuals' judgments (Thomspon and Ince 2013). Recently, Labroo and Pocheptsova (2016) summarized these findings and suggested a positive link between processing difficulty and competency.

We form our propositions for mastery construal based on the relationship between processing difficulty and competency. We suggest that even though comparative claims may not fit into the competence schema of individuals who are under mastery construal, the effort that these individuals exert or experience when they process those claims would help them to infer competency when they assess personally relevant products. We further posit that although consumers who are under mastery construal would exert cognitive effort when processing both types of comparative claims, direct comparative claims would require greater processing and hence greater effort than indirect comparative claims in the case of schema inconsistency.

According to literature, when individuals come across self-relevant information that is not consistent with their expectancies, they would increase their cognitive effort in order to encode that information (Heckler and Childers 1992). However, the cognitive effort that is required for processing may be reduced when inconsistent information is constructed at a more generalized-trait form (Stangor and McMillan 1992). Research suggests that, since individuals

make evaluations and remember at a more generalized-trait level (Srull and Wyer 1989), information that is constructed at a more specific - behavioral level (Mary worked harder than Josh) may require greater processing than information that is formed at a more general – trait level (Mary is a hardworking person) in the case of schema inconsistency (Stangor and McMillan 1992). Therefore, when individuals come across self-relevant information that is inconsistent with their expectancies, level of generalization or specificity that information contains might influence their processing. We suggest that since direct comparative claims are formed at a more specific level than the generalized indirect comparative claims (Hsieh et al. 2012), they would require greater processing in the event of schema inconsistency. Therefore, when consumers under mastery construal assess the competency of a personally relevant product based on comparative claims, they would experience greater cognitive effort and difficulty when processing direct (versus indirect) comparative claims.

We form our hypotheses for mastery construal based on the above arguments and the link suggested between processing difficulty and competency. We propose that individuals who construe competence in mastery terms would perceive the personally relevant products that are advertised via direct (versus indirect) comparative claims to be more competent as they would exert or experience greater cognitive effort when processing direct (versus indirect) comparative claims. We also suggest that this perceived heightened competence would also translate into their brand attitudes and purchase intentions towards products that are communicated through direct (vs. indirect) comparative claims.

H2a: Individuals who are under mastery competence construal would express higher attitudes and purchase intentions towards products that they consider personally relevant when products are communicated through direct (versus indirect) claims.

H2b: Individuals who are under mastery competence construal would find products that they consider personally relevant to be more competent when they are communicated through direct (versus indirect) claims.

H2c: Perceived competence of the product would mediate the effect of mastery construal on attitudes and purchase intentions towards products that are communicated via direct (versus indirect) comparative claims.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted three studies. In study 1, we establish whether individuals who construe competence either through performance and mastery terms express dissimilar brand attitudes towards personally relevant products that are communicated through indirect versus direct comparative claims. In study 2, we examine the effect of competence construal and comparative claim interaction on consumers' purchase intentions. We also use a different product category for this study and a different operationalization of personal relevance. Furthermore, we examine to what extent individuals under mastery and performance construal experience cognitive effort and difficulty in the case of schema (in) consistency. In our third study, we test all our hypotheses. We examine the interaction between competence construal and direct/indirect comparative claims on purchase intentions, perceived competence of the

advertised brand, and on the processing difficulty. We also run a mediation analyses to see whether the heightened competence perceptions of the advertised product is the main driver of consumer's purchase intentions. For this study, we once again use a different product category and a real comparison brand to increase the study's validity. Lastly, contrary to its measurement in previous studies, in this study, we manipulate personal relevance.

STUDY 1

In this experiment, our goal is to test whether individuals who construe competence in terms of performance versus mastery would evaluate those brands that use direct versus indirect comparative claims differently when the aspects of the advertised product matters to them.

Design

We used a 2 (competence construal: performance, mastery) by 2 (type of comparative claim: direct, indirect) between-subjects design. We manipulated competence construal and type of comparative claim. We measured personal relevance.

Procedure, Stimuli and Measures

We hired one hundred and four participants (43% female, median age 26-35) through a large online panel to complete the study. The first part of the study included manipulation of competence construal through a priming task. Participants read a short interview that had been conducted with a person who had succeeded in life by either outperforming others or outperforming him/herself. Afterward, we asked participants to recall a time in their lives when they tried to outperform others (priming performance construal) or outperform themselves (priming mastery construal). We adapted this manipulation procedure from Poortvliet and colleagues (2007) (see appendix A for full text).

In the second part of the study, participants viewed different types of comparative claims based on a fictitious automobile brand named Damia. One version of the advertisement included comparisons with another fictitious brand named Allegre based on two attributes (“The new Damia U4i, with a more powerful engine than its closest competitor: Allegre,” “.... with faster acceleration time than its closest competitor: Allegre”) (direct claim). The other version of the advertisement included comparisons with the overall automobile category based on two attributes (“The new Damia U4i, with more powerful engine than any others in its class,” “... with faster acceleration time than any others in its class”) (indirect claim). Other than these differences, both advertisements were identical in terms of images and information contained (see appendix B for each stimulus).

After participants viewed different types of comparative claims, we indicated that we were interested in their opinions of this new brand. Participants indicated their attitude toward the Damia brand based on four questions on 7-point scales (“bad/good”; “unlikable/likable”; “worthless/valuable”; “interesting/not interesting”; $\alpha = .81$). Then, as part of the competence construal manipulation check, participants answered two questions on

7-point scales anchored at “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree” as to whether they “thought about performing better than others versus themselves” and whether they “thought about competition with others versus themselves while filling the survey” ($r = .78, p < .01$). Lower scores indicated an inclination toward a mastery construal, whereas higher scores indicated an inclination toward a performance construal. Afterwards, as a proxy of personal relevance, we measured whether or not the aspects of the advertised product mattered to consumers based on two items (“How important is power of engine for you?” and “How important is acceleration time for you?” 7-point scales anchored at “not at all” and “very much”; $r = .87, p < .01$). Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Results and Discussion

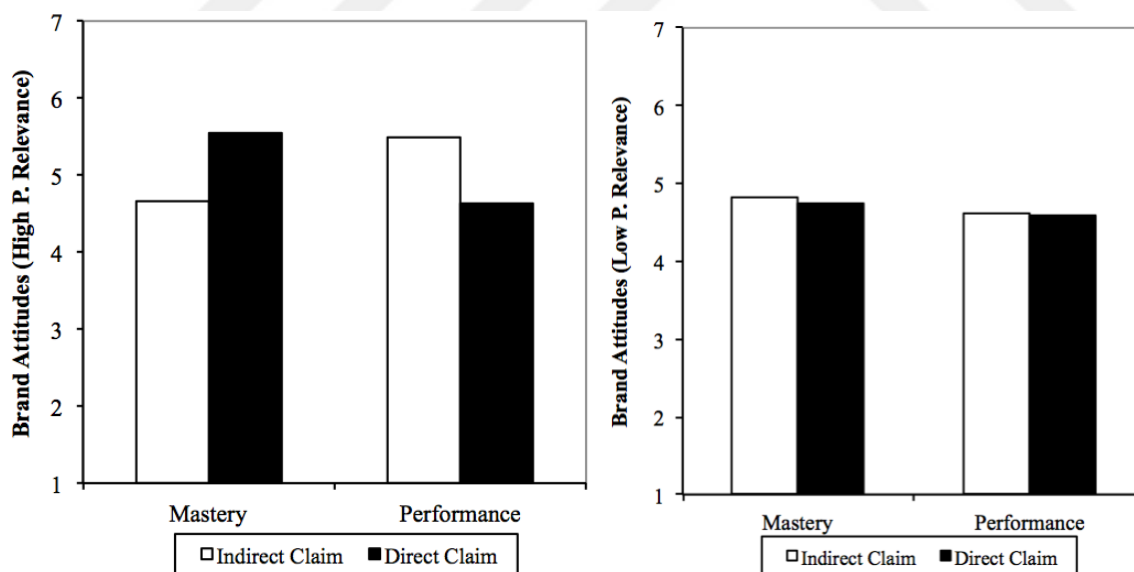
Manipulation checks. A regression on the index created for the manipulation check of competence construal revealed only a significant main effect of competence construal ($\beta = 1.22, t = 4.16, p < .01$). While participants under a performance construal focused on competition with others ($M = 4.09$), participants under a mastery construal focused on competition with themselves ($M = 2.74$).

Brand attitudes. To examine the effects of competence construal, type of comparative claim, and personal relevance on brand attitudes, we used Preacher and Hayes’ PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Preacher et al. 2007; Model 3). As expected, the three-way interaction was significant ($\beta = -.56, t = -2.18, p = .031$). We found a significant conditional effect of the interaction between competence construal and type of comparative claim on brand attitudes under high personal relevance (+1 SD on the index of personal relevance; $\beta = -1.75, t$

= -3.11, $p < .01$). Particularly, individuals under performance construal evaluated the brand that used indirect (vs. direct) comparative claim more favorably under high personal relevance ($M = 5.48$ vs. $M = 4.62$; $\beta = -.85$, $t = -2.29$, $p = .023$). In contrast, individuals under mastery construal evaluated the brand that used direct (vs. indirect) comparative claim more favorably under high personal relevance ($M = 5.54$ vs. $M = 4.65$; $\beta = .89$, $t = 2.11$, $p = .036$). We did not find a significant conditional effect of the interaction between competence construal and type of comparative claim on brand attitude under low personal relevance (-1 SD on the index of personal relevance; $\beta = .04$, $t = .06$, $p = .94$). Please see figures 1A and 1B.

FIGURE 1A and 1B

Effect of Competence Construal on Brand Attitudes Under High/Low Personal Relevance



Results from study 1 are in line with the proposition that consumers who hold performance versus mastery competence construal differ in the way they evaluate brands that use different types of comparative claims, but only under high personal relevance, corroborating H1a

and H2a. For Study 2, we aim to show that the mastery and performance competence construal and would also yield different outcomes in terms of consumers' purchase intentions towards personally relevant products that are advertised via direct and indirect claims. In this study we operationalize personal relevance differently to show that our results hold under different operationalization. We also focus on a product that belongs to a more household category to show that our results would hold for both important and less important categories. Lastly, we measure participants' experienced cognitive effort and difficulty to examine the pattern we suggested under schema consistency and inconsistency.

STUDY 2

In this study, we used a 2 (competence construal: performance, mastery) by 2 (type of comparative claim: direct, indirect) between-subjects design, similar to Study 1. We measured product' personal relevance based on participants' knowledge and usage pattern as opposed to attribute importance measure we used in the earlier study. Another goal of this study was to examine the differences between mastery and performance construal in terms of their experienced cognitive effort and difficulty when processing direct and indirect claims.

Procedure, Stimuli and Measures

We hired one hundred and eighty-four participants (56% female, median age 26-35) through a large online panel to complete the study. First, we executed the competence construal manipulation the same way as the previous study. Then, participants viewed different comparative advertising claims based on a fictitious cleanser brand: Star Plus. For the direct comparative advertisement, we used a fictitious competitor brand (Crown) and claimed, “When compared to Crown, Star Plus bleaches out tough stains better and is safer on delicate surfaces”. For the indirect comparative advertisement, we claimed, “Star Plus bleaches out tough stains and is delicate on surfaces than other cleanser on the market” (see Appendix C for full stimuli). We adapted these advertisements from Pechmann and Ratneshwar (1991).

After participants viewed different comparative advertising claims, we indicated that we were interested in their purchase intentions for this new brand. Participants indicated their purchase intentions based on a single item measure (“What would be your likelihood of purchasing this product if it was sold in the US?”; 7-point scale anchored at “not likely” and “very likely”). Then, as part of the competence construal manipulation check, participants answered the same set of questions as in Study 1 ($r = .78, p < .01$). Next, in order to measure personal relevance, we created an index based on three items (Compared to your friends and acquaintances, do you know a lot about cleansers?”; “How often do you use cleansers?”; “How often do you purchase cleansers?”; $\alpha = .76$). We measured the first item on a 7-point scale anchored at “not at all” and “very much”. We measured the last two items based on a 7-point scale including ascending usage and purchase intervals (see Appendix D for intervals). This index loaded into a single factor with 69% of variance. Then, to see whether participants under mastery and performance construal differed in their cognitive effort and difficulty towards direct versus indirect comparative claims, we asked participants how much they thought about

the advertisement (“To what extent did you think about the advert?; 7-point scale anchored at “not at all” and “very much”).

Results and Discussion

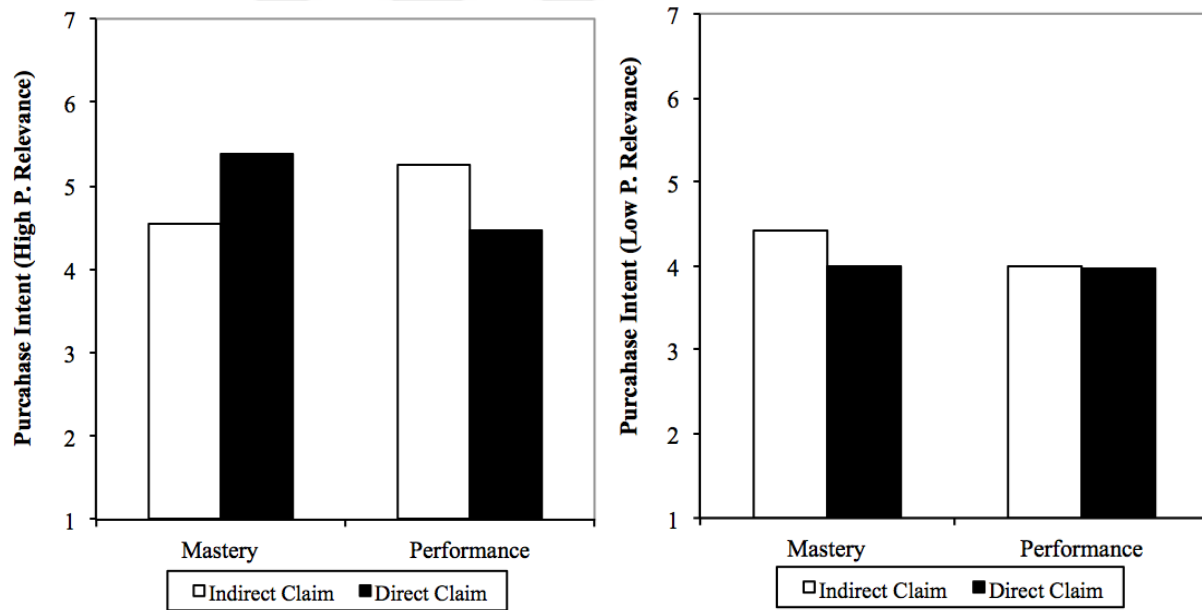
Manipulation checks. A regression on the index created for the manipulation check of competence construal revealed only a significant main effect of competence construal ($\beta = 1.51, t = 6.44, p < .01$). While participants under a performance construal focused on competition with others ($M = 4.41$), participants under a mastery construal focused on competition with themselves ($M = 2.90$).

Purchase Intent. We examined the effects of competence construal, type of comparative claim, and personal relevance on purchase intentions towards the Star Plus brand. We used Preacher and Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Preacher, Rucker and Hayes, 2007; Model 3). Three-way interaction among competence construal, type of comparative claim, and personal relevance was significant ($\beta = .39, t: 2.29, p: 0.022$). We found significant effect of the interaction between competence construal and type of comparative claim on purchase intent when personal relevance was high (+1 SD on the personal relevance index; $\beta = .81, t: 2.65, p < 0.01$). Specifically, individuals holding a performance construal had higher purchase intentions for the brand that used indirect (versus direct) comparative advertisement under high personal relevance ($M = 5.26$ vs. $M = 4.47$; $\beta = .39, t: 1.83, p: 0.067$). In contrast, individuals holding a mastery construal had higher purchase intentions for the brand that used direct (versus indirect) comparative advertisement under high personal relevance ($M = 5.37$ vs. $M = 4.54$; $\beta = -.41, t:$

-1.92, p : 0.056). We did not find a significant effect of the interaction between competence construal and type of comparative claim on purchase intent when the personal relevance was low (-1 SD on the personal relevance index; β = -.19, t : -.61, p : 0.53). These results support our hypotheses: H1a and H2a. Please see figures 2A and 2B.

FIGURE 2A and 2B

Effect of Competence Construal on Purchase Intentions Under High/Low Personal Relevance

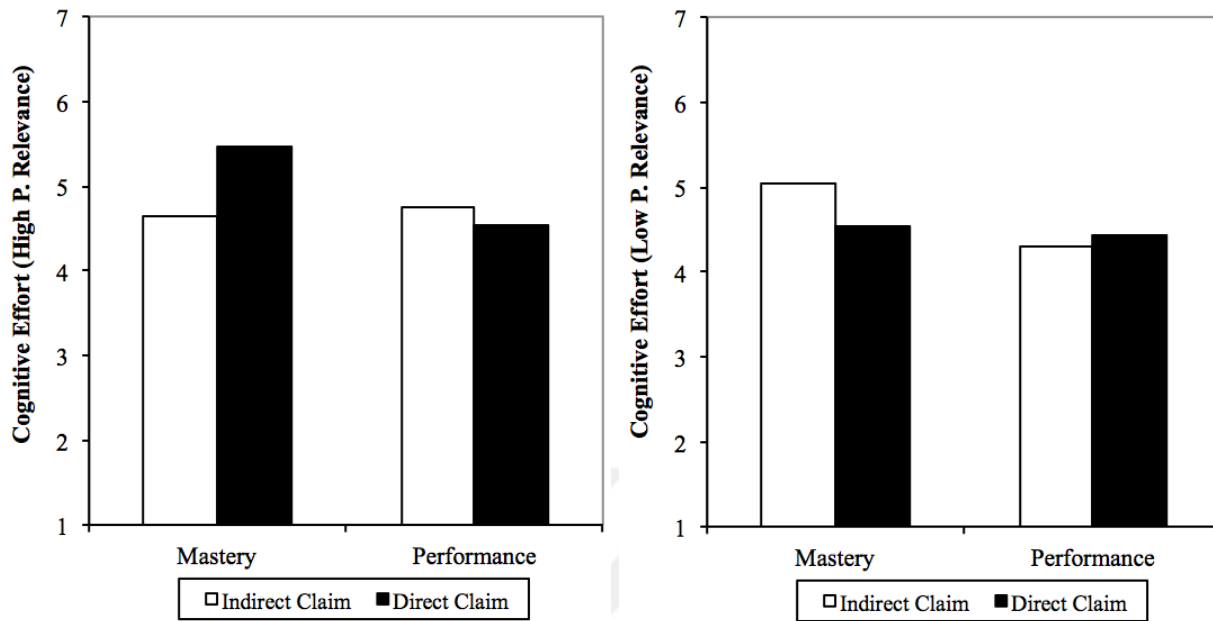


Cognitive Effort and Difficulty. We then examined the effects of competence construal, type of comparative claim, and the personal relevance on participants' processing effort and difficulty. We used Preacher and Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. The three-way interaction was marginally significant (β = .32, t = 1.92, p : .056).

We found a marginally significant effect of the interaction between competence construal and type of comparative claim on participants' processing effort and difficulty when personal relevance was high (+1 SD on the personal relevance index; $\beta = .51$, $t: 1.71$, $p: 0.088$). Specifically, individuals holding a mastery construal experienced more cognitive effort and difficulty in processing the direct comparative claim than the indirect comparative claim ($M = 5.46$ vs. $M = 4.65$; $\beta = -.40$, $t: -1.91$, $p: 0.057$). In contrast, individuals holding a performance construal experienced similar levels of cognitive effort and difficulty for both direct and indirect comparative claims under high personal relevance ($M = 4.54$ vs. $M = 4.76$; $\beta = .10$, $t: .51$, $p: .60$). We did not find a significant effect of the interaction between competence construal and type of comparative claim on participants' cognitive effort and difficulty when the personal relevance was low (-1 SD on the personal relevance index; $\beta = -.31$, $t: -1.01$, $p: 0.31$). These results support our predictions regarding the cognitive effort and difficulty that individuals under mastery construal experience when they are assessing personally relevant products' competency based on information that does not fit with their schema of competency. Please see figures 3A and 3B.

FIGURE 3A and 3B

Effect of Competence Construal on Participants' Cognitive Effort and Difficulty under High/Low Personal Relevance



The result from this study demonstrated that both direct and indirect comparative claims could lead to higher purchase intentions towards personally relevant products depending on the competence construal of the consumers. In this study we also increased the robustness of our results by focusing on different product category, brand name and a different operationalization of personal relevance. Furthermore we demonstrated that mastery and performance construal experienced different levels of cognitive effort and difficulty during schema consistency and inconsistency. For the next study, we aim to test all of our hypotheses and examine how the interaction between competence construal and comparative claims would make a difference in terms of consumers' purchase intentions, their perceptions of brand's competency, and their experienced cognitive difficulty. We also test whether perceived competence of the brand mediates consumers' purchase intentions that are based on different comparative claims. Given that so far we have

measured personal relevance, in this study we manipulate it, in order to further strengthen our study. Lastly, we use a real comparison brand in order to show that hypotheses we proposed would not change depending on the comparison brand's familiarity.

STUDY 3

In this experiment, we used a 2 (competence construal: performance, mastery) by 2 (type of comparative claim: direct, indirect) by 2 (personal relevance: high, low) between-subjects design. We manipulated personal relevance as opposed to measuring it to demonstrate that the interaction between competence construal, comparative claim and personal relevance is solely based on causal relationships. Given that in reality comparative advertisements are usually targeted against real rather than fictitious brands, one of our goals was also to replicate our findings in a different product category in which the comparison brand is real. In this study, we also measured to what extent participants perceived the brand as competent in order to test our mediation hypotheses.

Procedure, Stimuli and Measures

Two hundred and eighty-eight participants were hired (53% female, median age 26-35) through a large online panel to complete the study. After the competence construal manipulation, which was executed the same way as in the previous studies, we manipulated personal relevance

of the product for participants. We based our personal relevance manipulation on the indexes that we used in Study 1 and 2. It reads as follows:

“Now, we would you to visualize the following scenario: Imagine that you are a frequent (**seldom**) user of headphones and you are generally highly (**not**) interested in them. You are pretty (**not**) knowledgeable about headphones. In fact, you understand different features of headphones a lot more (**less**) than your friends and acquaintances. Overall, you (**do not**) care about headphones; it is a product category that (**does not**) matters to you.”

Afterwards, participants viewed a print ad for a fictitious brand named “Forward” using either a direct or indirect comparative claim. We manipulated different types of comparative claims by varying the wording in the advertisement copy. The text for the direct comparative advertisement emphasized Forward’s effectiveness in comparison with a direct competitor (Beats) and stated: “Forward provides 30% wider range of frequencies and delivers 25% more megapixels than Beats”. The text for the indirect comparative advertisement emphasized Forward’s effectiveness in comparison with the overall product category and stated: “Forward provides 30% wider range of frequencies and delivers 25% more megapixels than other brands of headphones” (see appendix E for full stimuli).

Then, participants indicated their purchase intentions of the advertised brand based on two items (“What would be your likelihood of purchasing this product if it was sold in the US?”; “What would be your possibility of purchasing this product if it was sold in the US?”; 7-point scale anchored at “not likely/not at all possible” and “very likely/very much possible” $r = 0.89$, p

<0.01). Next, participants rated to what extent they found the advertised brand to be competent based on two items (“Do you think “Forward” brand is a competent brand?”; “Do you think “Forward” brand is a skillful brand?”; $r = 0.83, p < 0.01$). Then, we measured participants’ perceived effort in processing the advertisement (Schwarz 2004) in order to infer their cognitive effort and difficulty (“How much effort did it require you to process the advertising message”; “How much effort did it require you to comprehend the advertising message;” 7-point scale anchored at “very little effort” and “very much effort” $r = 0.61, p < 0.01$). Lastly, participants answered the same set of manipulation check questions for competence construal as previous studies ($r = .82, p < .01$).

Results and Discussion

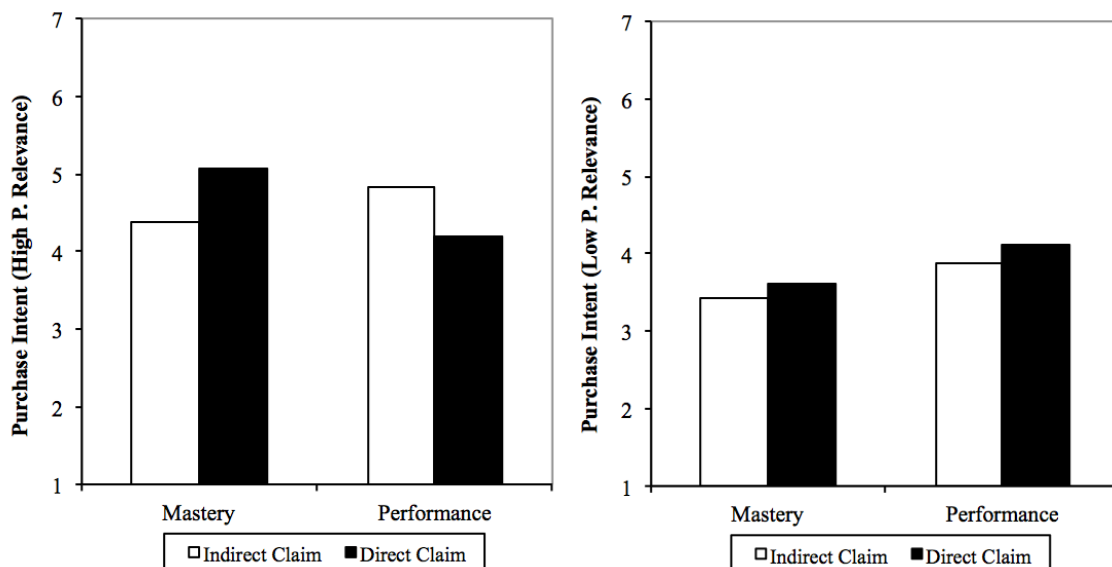
Manipulation checks. A regression on the index created for the manipulation check of competence construal revealed only a significant main effect of competence construal ($F(1, 287) = 53.80, p < .01$). While participants under a performance construal focused on competition with others ($M = 3.01$), participants under a mastery construal focused on competition with themselves ($M = 4.44$).

Purchase Intent. We used ANOVA to test the effects of competence construal, type of comparative claim, and personal relevance on purchase intentions towards the advertised brand (using the PROCESS yields the same results). The three-way interaction was significant ($F(1, 287) = 3.96, p: .048$).

We conducted further analyses in order to examine the three-way interaction. Contrast analyses reveal that individuals holding a performance construal had higher purchase intentions towards the brand that was featured in indirect (v. direct) comparative advertisement under high personal relevance ($M = 4.83$ vs. $M = 4.20$; $F(1, 147) = 3.40$, $p = 0.066$). In contrast, individuals holding a mastery construal had higher purchase intentions towards the brand that was featured in direct (vs. indirect) comparative advertisement under high personal relevance ($M = 5.02$ vs. $M = 4.38$; $F(1, 147) = 3.91$, $p = 0.049$). Differences between direct and indirect comparative claims were not significant under low personal relevance for both mastery ($M = 3.60$ vs. $M = 3.43$; $F(1, 147) = .25$, $p = 0.61$) and performance ($M = 4.12$ vs. $M = 3.87$; $F(1, 147) = .50$, $p = 0.47$) construal. These results support our hypotheses H1a and H2a. Please see figures 4A and 4B.

FIGURE 4A and 4B

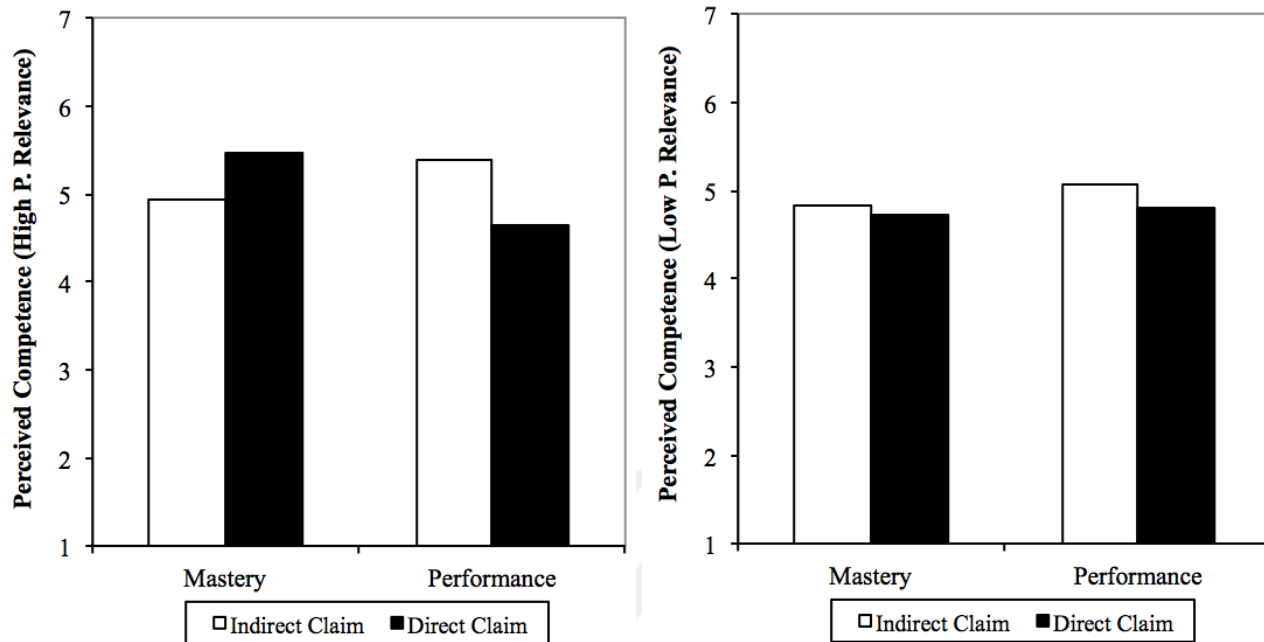
Effect of Competence Construal on Purchase Intentions Under High/Low Personal Relevance



Perceived Competence. We then examined the effects of competence construal, type of comparative claim, and the personal relevance on participants' perceived competence of the advertised brand. We used ANOVA to test the effects (using the PROCESS yields the same results), which yielded a significant three-way interaction ($F(1, 287) = 4.16, p: .042$). We conducted further analyses in order to examine the three-way interaction. Contrast analyses reveal that individuals holding a performance construal perceived the brand that was featured in indirect (vs. direct) comparative advertisement to be more competent under high personal relevance ($M = 5.38$ vs. $M = 4.63$; $F(1, 147) = 7.13, p: 0.008$). In contrast, individuals holding a mastery construal perceived the brand that was featured in direct (vs. indirect) comparative advertisement to be more competent under high personal relevance ($M = 5.46$ vs. $M = 4.94$; $F(1, 147) = 3.75, p: 0.054$). Differences between direct and indirect comparative claims were not significant under low personal relevance for both mastery ($M = 4.71$ vs. $M = 4.84$; $F(1, 147) = .21, p: 0.64$) and performance ($M = 4.81$ vs. $M = 5.08$; $F(1, 147) = .89, p: 0.34$) construal. These findings are in line with H2a and H2b. Please see figures 5A and 5B.

FIGURE 5A and 5B

Effect of Competence Construal on Perceived Competence Under High/Low Personal Relevance



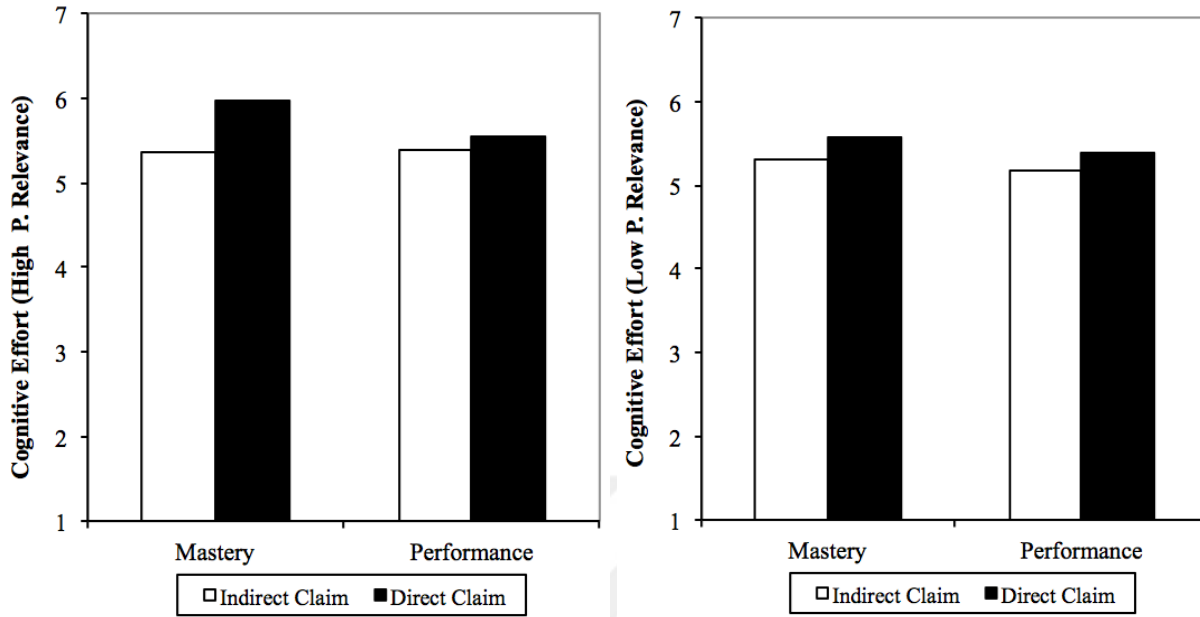
To examine whether perceived competence of the brand mediated the three- way interaction between competence construal, comparative claim and personal relevance on purchase intentions, we used Preacher and Hayes' PROCESS macro's moderated mediation model (number 12) with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. The indirect effect of the highest order interaction (competence construal, type of comparative claim, and personal relevance interaction) with perceived competence of the brand as the mediator was significant ($\beta = .41$, 95% CI [-.84, -.02]). This suggests that perceived competence of the brand mediates the competence construal, type of comparative claim, and personal relevance on purchase intentions corroborating H3a and H3b.

Cognitive Effort and Difficulty. Lastly, we examined the effects of competence construal, type of comparative claim, and the personal relevance on participants' cognitive effort and difficulty. We used ANOVA to test the effects (using the PROCESS yields the same results). The three-way interaction was not significant ($F(1, 287) = .34$, $p: .56$). However, contrast

analyses reveal that, as we expected, individuals holding a mastery construal experienced more cognitive effort and difficulty in processing the direct comparative claim than indirect comparative claim ($M = 5.96$ vs. $M = 5.36$; $F(1, 147) = 3.04$, $p = 0.082$). In contrast, individuals holding a performance construal experienced similar effort and difficulty in processing both the direct and indirect comparative claims ($M = 5.54$ vs. $M = 5.39$; $F(1, 147) = .16$, $p = 0.68$). Differences between direct and indirect comparative claims were not significant under low personal relevance for both mastery ($M = 5.56$ vs. $M = 5.30$; $F(1, 147) = .51$, $p = 0.47$) and performance ($M = 5.39$ vs. $M = 5.17$; $F(1, 147) = .37$, $p = 0.54$) construal. This finding is in line with our prediction that consumers who are under mastery construal would experience more cognitive effort difficulty when they come across direct (versus indirect) competence claims. Please see figures 6A and 6B.

FIGURE 6A and 6B

Effect of Competence Construal on Participants' Cognitive Effort and Difficulty under High/Low Personal Relevance



Results from this study confirm all of our hypotheses. We demonstrated that consumers under mastery and performance construal of competency express different purchase intentions towards personally relevant products depending on their interaction with direct and indirect comparative claims. Furthermore, we showed that the extent that the advertised brand was perceived as competent mediated the effect of competence construal and comparative claim interaction on purchase intentions. Finally, we strengthened our results by manipulating personal relevance as well as by using a real comparison brand in our stimulus. Note that we have also measured attitudes towards the comparison brand (i.e., Beats) in our study. The results that are reported above change only marginally when we use it as a covariate.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this research, we based our conceptual framework on achievement goal theory to show that how individuals construe competence may affect their competency judgments of personally relevant products that are advertised via direct versus indirect comparative claims. Relying on schema theory, we showed that while individuals who are under a performance mindset were able to infer competency from both direct and indirect comparative claims, individuals who were under a mastery mindset experienced cognitive effort and difficulty. This led to different findings for consumers who construe competence in terms of performance and mastery.

We demonstrated that even though both direct and indirect claims fit their understanding of competency, consumers under a performance construal expressed higher attitudes and purchase intentions towards personally relevant brands that are communicated via indirect (vs. direct) claims due to their heightened perceptions of competency. In contrast, although both direct and indirect claims did not fit their understanding of competency, consumers under a mastery construal held higher attitudes and purchase intentions towards personally relevant brands that are communicated via direct (vs. indirect) claims due to their heightened perceptions of competency. Through focusing on different product categories and using both real and fictitious comparison brands we showed that our findings appear regardless of the brand names or the product category. Different operationalization of personal relevance in addition to its manipulation helped us in demonstrating our findings' applicability and reliability.

This research has several contributions. Even though both direct and indirect comparative claims are extensively used, especially in the United States, previous work in marketing has mostly neglected the relative effectiveness of different types of comparative claims and the extant literature yielded mixed findings (Hsieh et al. 2012; Miniard et al. 2006; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991). In this research, we add to the marketing literature by bringing in consumers' competence construal as an important factor that determines the effectiveness of different comparative claims. We show that both direct and indirect comparative advertisements can be equally effective (or ineffective) depending on the way consumers construe competence.

To the best of our knowledge, this research is also a first to examine achievement goal theory and the mastery/performance construals directly in a marketing context. Given that companies commonly use achievement cues and superiority signals, we believe that incorporating consumers' own views of competence is central to fully understanding the role of competence in the marketplace. In this research, we took a step towards understanding how perceptions of personal competence may relate to perceptions of brands' competence for products that are personally relevant for consumers by focusing on comparative claims. However, future research should examine the effect of mastery/performance construals in other marketing contexts. For instance, given that competence is one of the dimensions of brand personality (Aaker 1997), research may look into the effect of consumers' competence construals on brand-related outcomes such as brand enhancement/dilution. Alternatively considering the differential focus of competence construals, another avenue for future research could be consumers' willingness to try, pay for or purchase new products to signal achievement to themselves or to others.

There are other potential avenues for future research that may stem from the limitations of this paper. We demonstrated that even consumers whose idea of competence do not match with products' competence claims may judge the products as competent due to the relationship between perceived competence and processing difficulty. However, in our studies, participants were not given any other cue to make competence judgments that they may have in real life. Future work might look into what happens when there are other – more peripheral signals of competency such as competence-related images/endorsers or labeling/packaging that reflects capability. It would be intriguing to see whether consumers would still struggle with unfitting schemas and hence experience cognitive difficulty or they would naturally rely on peripheral cues when making their judgments of competency. There are also highly prevalent advertisements in which brands compare their products to its previous versions (e.g., “iPhone 7, the best iPhone yet”; “New Ariel Max detergent, cleans two times faster than Ariel”). In this paper, we purposefully focused only on direct and indirect typology due to the call for research in their relative effectiveness. However future research might look into how consumers who construe competence in terms of outperforming themselves (i.e. mastery construal) would respond to these type of advertisements.

This research may also provide an insight to managers toward a deeper understanding of competence views of consumers. Being perceived as a competent firm is crucial for companies and is one of the main factors that determine consumers' purchase intentions (Aaker et al. 2011). Insight gained from our findings show that consumers' own perceptions of competence are also important especially when it comes to evaluating competence-related stimuli. These findings should help managers better understand motivational factors behind

consumers' evaluations of products and how marketing communication tools should be (re) considered based on the target market's perceptions of superiority.



ESSAY 2:

Dilution through Motivation: Achievement Goal Theory and Brand Dilution

Instances of negative information spreading about brands are becoming increasingly common (Ahluwalia et al. 2000; Monga and John 2008). Especially with the rising usage of social media, consumers can publicly share their unfavorable experiences and voice their adverse feelings instantly after a negative encounter with a brand. Furthermore, through likes, shares and re-tweets, a single undesirable experience can garner a significant amount of attention and the strong brand equity built carefully over many years can easily be diluted by a single instance of negative publicity. Besides negative publicity, incongruent brand extensions (Loken and John 1993; Ng 2010; Sood and Keller 2012), conspicuous brand usage (Ferraro, Kirmani and Matherly 2013) and product harm crises (Dawar and Pillutla 2000) all dilute brand equity. In this article, I base my framework on achievement goal theory and suggest that consumers' differential views of competence that are often triggered in marketing contexts would be another essential factor to consider in determining consumers' susceptibility to brand dilution.

According to achievement goal theory, there are two different ways that individuals interpret competence: mastery and performance (Elliot and McGregor 2001). While some individuals focus on competence with the aim of outperforming themselves (mastery construal), others focus on competence with the aim of outperforming others (performance construal) (Elliot and Church 1997). These achievement construals, beyond their prevalence in classroom (Ames 1992), sports (Adie and Jowett 2010) and management (Izadikhah and Jackson 2011) settings, are also common in daily life. An environmentally conscious individual who is trying to leave a lesser carbon footprint than the day before, someone dressing up to a party with the aim of

outshining others, or a consumer trying to save more money than previously are all applying their mastery or performance construals.

Mastery and performance construals are frequently triggered in marketing contexts. Footwear manufacturer Asics's slogan "better you best" and bodybuilding.com's brand motto "become your best self" are examples that make mastery construal more accessible. On the other hand, performance construal is often made accessible through comparative advertising (e.g., "Pepsi tastes better than Coke"). In this article, I introduce mastery and performance achievement construals and propose that these construals would interact with the consumers' level of self-brand connection to determine how consumers perceive negative information, and hence affect their susceptibility to brand dilution.

Self-brand connection (SBC), defined as the extent to which a consumer integrates a brand into his or her own self-concept (Escalas and Bettman 2003), is one of the central pillars of strong brand relationships (Fournier 1998). Individuals who have high SBC perceive the brand to be a part of their self-concept and become more attached to it (Fedorikhin et al. 2008; Park et al. 2010). As a result, when these individuals encounter negative brand information, they engage in defensive processing (Ahluwalia et al. 2000; Cheng et al. 2012; Fournier 1998) and ignore the negative information (Swaminathan et al. 2007). I propose that when consumers have high SBC, those under mastery construal would be more likely to find negative brand information diagnostic and as a result dilute their brand beliefs more than those under performance construal. In contrast, when consumers have low SBC, those under performance construal would be more likely to find negative brand information diagnostic and as a result dilute their brand beliefs more than those under mastery construal.

These findings make several important contributions. First, even though the brand dilution research is broad, research focusing on motivational constructs that would trigger or prevent brand dilution is not extensive. By demonstrating achievement construals' differential effect on brand dilution, I extend the brand dilution literature. Second, counter to the literature on SBC, I demonstrate that strong brand relationships do not always protect the brand from negative information. Rather, brand relationships may backfire depending upon the achievement construal of the consumer. Third, even though achievement goal theory is well established and has been studied across various domains (see Hulleman et al. 2010 for review), to my knowledge, I am the first to examine achievement construals in a marketing context. Lastly, I extend to achievement goal theory by demonstrating that the individuals' construals influence the perceived diagnosticity of negative information depending on whether they see brands as an extension of themselves or not.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Competence is an essential need for individuals (Ryan and Deci 2000). A student working toward achieving a high grade on an exam, a manager trying to find ways to demonstrate her/his skills, or a consumer searching online to find a product at the best price, are all partially aiming to fulfill their competence needs. Even though competence is prevalent in daily life and has been studied across different domains (Elliot and Churuch 1997), research has been mostly silent in terms of consumers' view of competence and how it may affect their responses. Studies on competence within marketing have mostly examined the competence perceptions of brands (Aaker 1997). I introduce achievement goal theory in order to examine

consumers' differential views of competence: mastery and performance.

Achievement goals are defined as “cognitive representations that guide behavior to a competence-related end state” (Hulleman et al. 2010, pg. 423). Therefore, competence is at the heart of achievement goal theory. According to achievement goal theory, individuals under mastery construal focus on outperforming themselves and emphasize on deeper forms of learning (Elliot et al. 1999). As a result of this learning focus, these individuals are eager to self-improve and make progress (Ames and Archer 1988). This focus on self-improvement of individuals under mastery construal naturally influences the way they respond to negative feedback. When individuals are under mastery construal, negative feedback is accepted more and leads to better performance (Ilgen and Davis 2000). Since individuals under mastery construal are focused on progression, they are receptive to negative feedback as it hints cues about possible changes that may be needed for improvement (Cron et al. 2005; Dweck and Leggett 1988).

On the other hand, individuals under performance construal focus on outperforming others and emphasize normative performance (Elliot et al. 1999). This concentration on normative competence influences the way they respond to negative feedback. When individuals are under performance construal, negative feedback does not lead to the anticipated desirable consequences (Ilgen and Davis 2000). Since individuals under performance construal focus on demonstrating their abilities to others, they are less receptive to negative feedback, as it is taken as a threat toward one's perceived ability and worth (Cron et al. 2005).

Prior literature suggests that there is a strong link between how individuals view information about themselves, and how they view information about brands to which they are strongly connected. When consumers with *high SBC* encounter negative information about those brands, they react to it the same way as they would respond to negative information about

themselves (Cheng et al. 2012). I posit that, since individuals under performance construal perceive personal negative information as a threat, when they have high SBC, they would also perceive the negative brand information as a threat, and thus find it less diagnostic. As a result, they would ignore the brand information. In contrast, since individuals under mastery construal perceive personal negative information as useful, when they have high SBC, they would also perceive negative brand information as useful, thus find it more diagnostic. As a result, they would be more susceptible to brand dilution. Stated formally:

H1: When consumers have high SBC, those under mastery construal would find negative brand information more diagnostic than those under performance construal.

H2: When consumers have high SBC, those under mastery construal would be more susceptible to brand dilution than those under performance construal.

On the other hand, when consumers have *low SBC*, they do not respond to negative brand information the same way they respond to negative information about themselves (Cheng et al. 2012). According to achievement goal theory, as individuals in mastery construals are predominantly interested in how they exceed their own previous performances rather than being interested in other people's performances, they form a strong self-reference focus (Poortvliet et al. 2012). I state that, as a result of their tendency to focus mostly on themselves, individuals under mastery construal would be less likely to attend to other-referenced stimuli such as information about brands to which they are not connected.

In contrast, since individuals under performance construal focus on normative competence, they see others as threats (Darnon et al. 2006) and think that for them to succeed, others need to fail (Johnson and Johnson 1989). I state that, as a result of their tendency to see others as rivals, individuals under performance construal would be more likely to attend to other-referenced stimuli such as information about brands to which they are not connected. As a result, when they encounter negative information about brands that they are not connected to, they would be more likely to find that information diagnostic leading to brand dilution.

H3: When consumers have low SBC, those under performance construal would find negative brand information more diagnostic than those under mastery construal.

H4: When consumers have low SBC, those under performance construal would be more susceptible to brand dilution than those under mastery construal.

STUDY 1

Design

Hypotheses 1 and 3 were tested in this study where there is one manipulated (achievement construal: mastery, performance) and one measured (SBC) variable.

Procedure and Stimuli

One hundred and one participants (45% female) were hired through an online panel to complete the study. To manipulate achievement construal, participants were given information about an interview of a person who succeeded in life by either outperforming him/herself (mastery construal), or outperforming others (performance construal). In order to strengthen the manipulation, I subsequently asked participants to recall a time in their lives when they tried to outperform themselves (for mastery construal) or others (for performance construal) and elaborate on it (see appendix A; adapted from Poortvliet et al. 2007). Next, participants read a fictitious newspaper article, which indicated a delay in the new Google product launch due to quality problems and poor ratings (see appendix F).

Afterwards, participants were asked to assess the diagnosticity of the newspaper article on 2 items (how useful/relevant was the article; 7-point scales anchored at 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*; $r = .68$, $p < .01$; Ahluwalia 2002). Then, participants answered questions that were intended to measure SBC with the Google brand (Google reflects who I am, I use Google to communicate who I am to other people; 7-point scales anchored at 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*; $r = .52$, $p < .01$; adapted from Escalas and Bettman 2003). To assess the success of achievement construal manipulation, participants answered a question on what they thought about while filling the survey (7-point scale anchored at 1 = *performing better than my past performance*, 7 = *performing better than others*). Lower scores indicated an inclination toward a mastery construal, whereas higher scores indicated an inclination toward a performance construal.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check. Participants under mastery construal focused on performing better than their past performance, whereas participants under performance construal focused on performing better than others ($\beta = 1.06, t = 3.10, p < .01$) confirming that the construal manipulation worked.

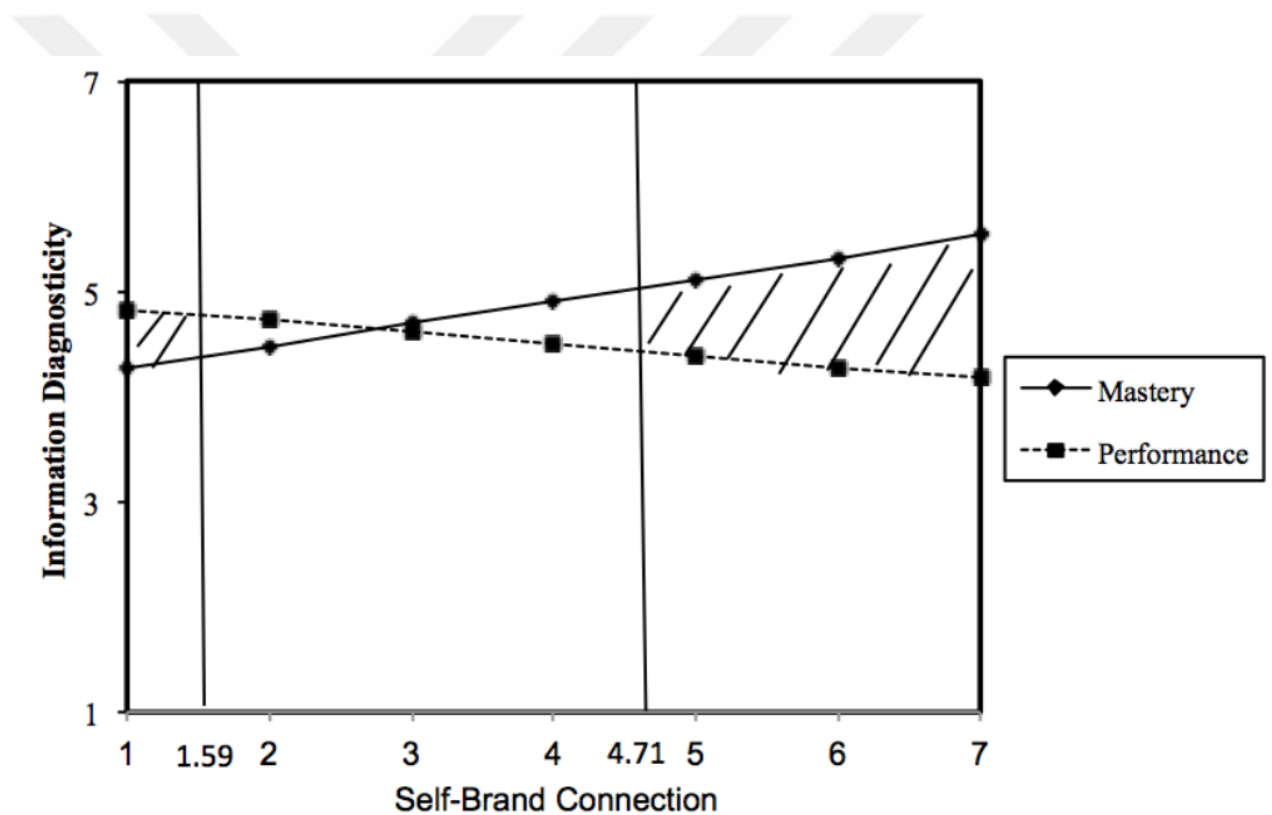
Diagnosticity of negative information. To examine the effects of achievement construal and SBC on the diagnosticity index, I used Preacher and Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Preacher et al. 2007; see also cf. model 1). I found a significant Achievement Construal x SBC interaction ($\beta = -.48, t = -2.80, p < .01$). I used Johnson-Neyman technique (floodlight analyses; Spiller et al. 2013) to decompose this interaction and identify regions of the SBC scale where the effect of achievement construal on diagnosticity index is significant.

The analysis showed that when participants scored 4.71 or higher on SBC (out of 7.0), individuals under mastery construal found the negative brand information to be more diagnostic compared to individuals under performance construal ($\beta = -.51, t = -1.98, p = .05$). Hence, when SBC is high, consumers under mastery (vs. a performance) construal are more likely to find negative information to be diagnostic. On the other hand, when participants scored 1.50 or lower on SBC (out of 7.0), individuals under performance construal found the negative information to be more diagnostic compared to individuals under mastery construal ($\beta = .99, t = 1.98, p = .05$). Hence, when SBC is low, consumers under performance (vs. a mastery) construal are more likely to find negative brand information to be diagnostic. These findings are consistent with the hypotheses. After testing the hypotheses, I also checked whether any differences between

individuals under mastery versus a performance construal occurred for mid ranges on SBC (i.e., for those who scored between 1.59 and 4.71), and I found no differences. Please see figure 6.

FIGURE 6

Effect of Competence Construals on Information Diagnosticity Based on Levels of SBC



STUDY 2

Design

All of the hypotheses were tested in this study where I manipulated achievement construals (mastery vs. performance). I used a different brand (Sony) for this study. To examine brand dilution, I measured participants' beliefs about the Sony brand twice, once at the beginning of the study and once after participants were exposed to the negative stimuli. I also measured participants' SBC with the Sony brand.

Procedure and Stimuli

One hundred and two participants (49% female) were hired through an online panel to complete the online study. At the beginning of the study, I measured participants' evaluations of the Sony brand (1 = *poor*, 7 = *excellent*) and whether Sony was perceived as a reliable brand (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Reliability perceptions were measured based on a pretest showing that Sony was perceived to be a highly reliable brand (5.54 on a 7-point scale; $N = 39$). Because these two items were correlated, I combined them to form a brand evaluation index ($r = .74$, $p < .01$). Next, participants read a fictitious newspaper article stating that the shipments of Sony's new TV line have been stalled by serious manufacturing problems and poor quality (see appendix G; adapted from Monga and John 2008). Subsequently, participants rated the Sony brand using the same items as before. Then, participants were asked to assess the diagnosticity of the newspaper article (how diagnostic/informative was the article on a 7-point scales anchored at

1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*; $r = .60$, $p < .01$) and completed the SBC scale ($\alpha = .94$; Escalas and Bettman 2003).

Finally, participants responded to the manipulation check question and the ancillary measures (i.e., items measuring mood, involvement and processing motivation) before they were thanked and debriefed. I took ancillary measures to rule out the possible alternative explanations that would suggest that the results were driven by differences in mood (individuals under mastery construal yields positive, whereas individuals under performance construal yields negative mood), involvement (individuals under mastery vs. performance construal are more involved in product category) and processing motivation (individuals under mastery vs. performance construal are more motivated; see appendix H for measurement details).

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check. Participants under mastery construal focused on performing better than their past performance, whereas participants under performance construal focused on performing better than others ($\beta = 1.85$, $t = 5.38$, $p < .01$) confirming that the construal manipulation worked.

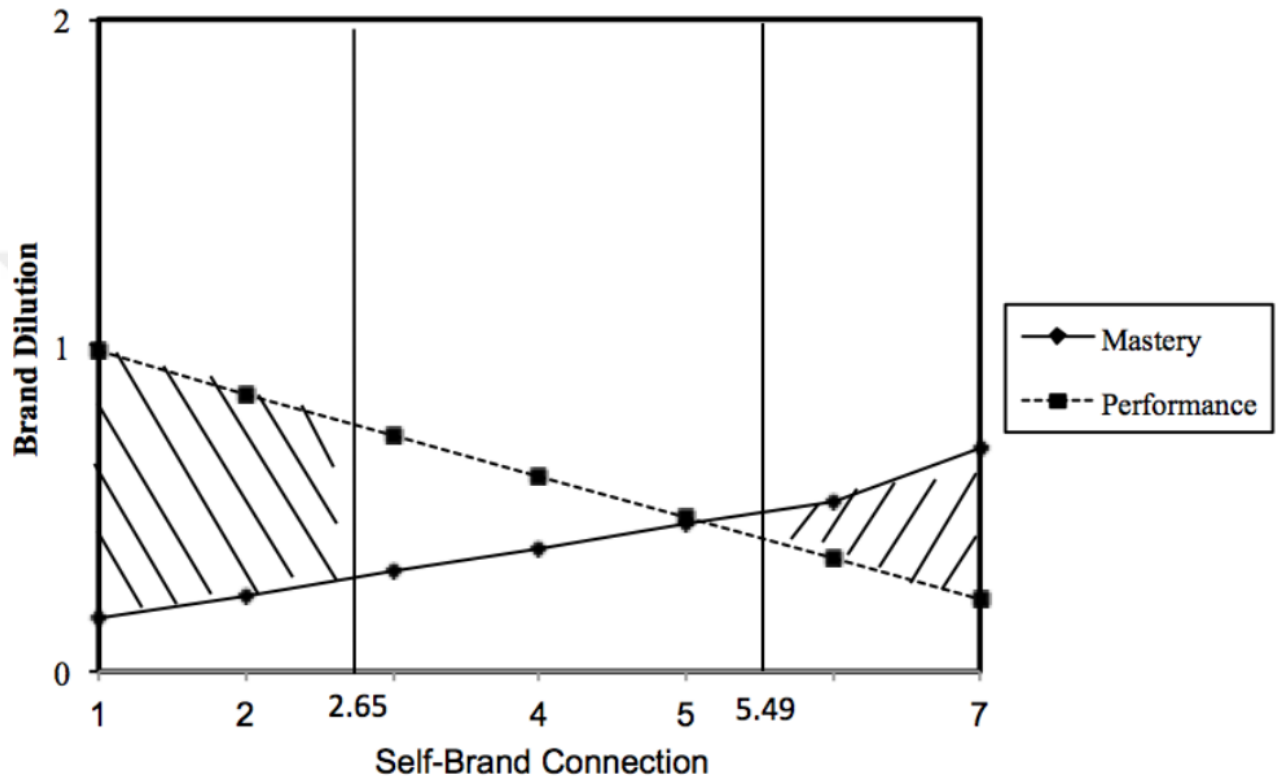
Brand Dilution. I subtracted the post-exposure mean of brand evaluation index from pre-exposure mean of brand evaluation index to create the brand dilution measure. To examine the effects of achievement construals and SBC on brand dilution, I used Preacher and Hayes' PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. I found a significant Achievement Construal x SBC interaction ($\beta = -.32$, $t = -2.76$, $p < .01$). I used Johnson-Neyman technique (floodlight

analyses, Spiller et al. 2013) to decompose this interaction and identify regions of SBC scale where the effect of achievement construal on brand dilution is significant.

The analysis showed that when participants scored 5.49 or higher on SBC (out of 7.0), individuals under mastery construal lowered their brand attitudes more compared to individuals under performance construal ($\beta = -.56$, $t = -1.98$, $p = .05$). Hence, when SBC is high, consumers under mastery construal are more susceptible to brand dilution than consumers under performance construal. On the other hand, when participants scored 2.65 or lower on SBC (out of 7.0), individuals under performance construal lowered their brand attitudes more compared to individuals under mastery construal ($\beta = .37$, $t = 1.98$, $p = .05$). Hence, when SBC is low, consumers under performance construal are more susceptible to brand dilution than consumers under mastery construal. These findings are in line with H2 and H4. After testing the hypotheses, I also checked whether any differences between individuals under mastery versus a performance construal occurred for mid ranges on SBC (i.e., for those who scored between 2.65 and 5.49), and I found no differences. Please see Figure 7.

FIGURE 7

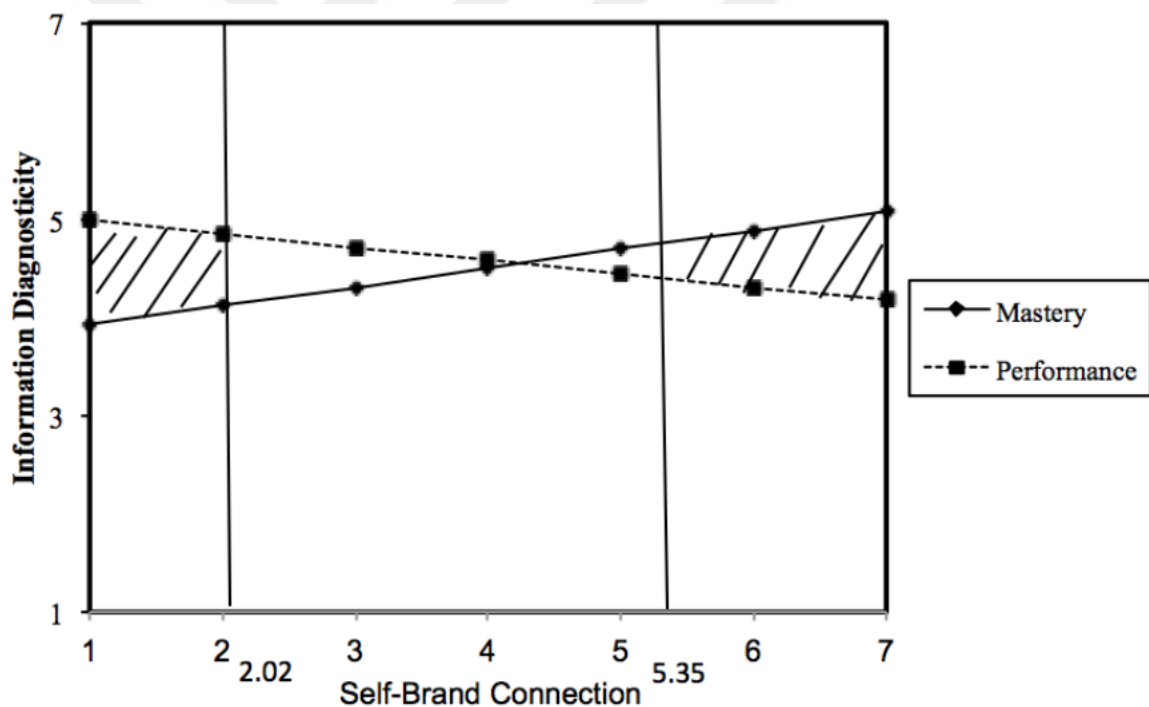
Effect of Competence Construals on Brand Dilution Based on Levels of SBC



Diagnosticity of negative information. To examine the effects of achievement construal and SBC on the diagnosticity index, I used Preacher and Hayes' PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. I found a significant Achievement Construal x SBC interaction ($\beta = -.49$, $t = -2.53$, $p < .02$). The Johnson-Neyman technique showed that when participants scored 5.35 or higher on SBC (out of 7.0), individuals under mastery construal found the negative brand information to be more diagnostic when compared with individuals under performance construal ($\beta = -.87$, $t = -1.98$, $p = .05$). On the other hand, when participants scored 2.02 or lower on SBC (out of 7.0), individuals under performance construal found the negative brand information to be

more diagnostic when compared with individuals under mastery construal ($\beta = .77, t = 1.98, p = .05$). These findings are in line with H1 and H3. After testing the hypotheses, I checked whether any differences between individuals under mastery versus a performance construal occurred for mid ranges on SBC (i.e., for those who scored between 2.02 and 5.35), and I found no differences. Please see Figure 8.

FIGURE 8
Effect of Competence Construals on Information Diagnosticity Based on Levels of SBC



To examine whether information diagnosticity mediated the effect of achievement construal and SBC interaction on brand dilution, I used Preacher and Hayes' PROCESS macro's moderated mediation model (number 8) with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. I used achievement construals as the independent variable, SBC as the moderator, information diagnosticity as the

mediator and brand dilution as the dependent variable. The index of moderated mediation was significant ($\beta = -.08$, 95% *CI* [-.214, -.016]) suggesting that of information diagnosticity is mediating the effect of achievement construal on brand dilution when SBC is taken into account.

Ancillary Analyses. To rule out the possibility that the effects are driven by differences in mood, involvement and processing motivation, additional analyses were conducted with these measures as dependent variables. I did not find any significant interaction effects ($ps > .2$). Furthermore, repeating the analyses and adding those variables as covariates also did not affect the significance of the results.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Crises, product failures and negative publicity are all significant incidences that companies try to avert. However, despite the firms' efforts to prevent negative publicity, it is still highly frequent (Ahluwalia 2002). In this article, I demonstrated that achievement construals that are commonly triggered in marketing contexts differently affect how consumers perceive negative brand information. In two separate studies, I found that when consumers have high SBC, those under mastery (vs. a performance) construal find negative brand information more diagnostic and become more susceptible to brand dilution. On the other hand, when consumers have low SBC, those under performance (vs. a mastery) construal find negative brand information more diagnostic and become more susceptible to brand dilution. Results are replicated by using two distinct brands (Sony and Google), across two different product categories (electronics and search engine), using different primes, and different dilution contexts (quality problems/poor ratings and manufacturing problems/poor quality).

By demonstrating how consumers' view of competence may alter the way they find negative information diagnostic and their susceptibility toward brand dilution, I foremost contribute to the literature on brand dilution. Previous literature demonstrated that differences in brand dilution effects might depend on a number of factors including typicality of brand extensions (Loken and John 1993), conspicuousness of brand usage (Ferraro et al. 2013), motivation to process information (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 1998), accessibility of brand extension information (Ahluwalia and Gurhan-Canli 2000) different brand name structures (Sood and Keller 2012), and culture (Monga and John 2008; Ng 2010). This research builds on these findings by suggesting that consumers' view of competence is another essential construct to consider.

Second intended contribution is to the literature on brand relationships. Counter to this literature, I identify instances when strong brand relationships do not protect brands from negative brand information. One of the possible reasons why strong brand relationships have been associated with protecting the brand from negative publicity is the activation of individuals' defense mechanisms. By demonstrating instances where high SBC consumers find negative information diagnostic as opposed to non-diagnostic, I hope to start a debate on the brand relationships literature. It would be beneficial if future studies would look into other boundary conditions in which SBC's effect on negative brand information is diminished or reversed. For instance, novices (vs. experts) who have high SBC may be more susceptible to brand dilution as they would be less likely to come up external, category-related explanations for brand failures and hence feel more betrayed by those brands.

To my knowledge, this research is also a first to examine mastery and performance achievement construals in a marketing context. Even though mastery and performance construals

are highly prevalent in daily life and are studied extensively in other literatures, how these construals operate in a marketing context such as branding has not been the focus of consumer research. Given that research on needs and motivations is still awaiting adequate inquiry in consumer research (Pham 2013), future research may look into the effect of mastery and performance construals in other marketing contexts. For instance, individuals in mastery and performance construals may yield dissimilar perceptions of fit due to their different information processing styles and as a result may evaluate high versus low fit brand extensions differently. Another context for future research may be word of mouth. Given that individuals under performance (vs. mastery) are more attentive to external information, they may not only be more likely to engage in WOM but also be more inclined to depend on it. Mastery and performance construals may also have differential effects in consumer evaluations of advertisements especially if they are delivered in comparative formats.

I also contribute to achievement goal literature by empirically demonstrating that when individuals see targets (e.g., brands) as extensions of themselves, those under mastery (vs. a performance) construal perceive negative information as diagnostic. In contrast, when individuals do not see targets as an extension of themselves, those under performance (vs. a mastery) construal perceive negative information as diagnostic. To my knowledge, this research is the first to delve into the process by which individuals under mastery or performance construal perceive negative information about targets other than themselves. Future research may further examine these processes across academic, sports and organizational contexts.

Appendix A: Competence Construal Manipulations

Mastery:

Interviewer:

What would you say your **secret to success** is?

Respondent:

Well it is no secret, really. In my entire life – even before I became a producer, I always focused on **outperforming myself**. Whether I was a student, athlete, professional or even a father, **I tried to do things better than before** and I aimed to achieve more than I previously did. Honestly, for me life is about constantly looking for opportunities to **improve your skills and capabilities and** challenging yourself to reach higher. I enjoy proving myself that I can **perform better than I did before** in almost every task I do. I surely like **competing with myself**.

Page Break

Now, that you have read about the respondent, we would like you to describe a situation in your own life where you were focused on **outperforming your own self**. This is a situation where you **tried to do things better than ever before** in order to achieve more. In the space below, please describe this situation as vividly as possible.

Performance:

Interviewer:

What would you say your **secret to success** is?

Respondent:

Well it is no secret, really. In my entire life – even before I became a producer, I always focused on **outperforming others**. Whether I was a student, athlete, professional or even a father, **I tried to do things better than other people** and aimed to achieve more than they did. Honestly, for me life is about constantly looking for opportunities **to demonstrate other people that your skills and capabilities are better than they are** and challenging yourself to reach higher than others. I enjoy proving myself that I can **perform better than other people do** in almost every task I do. I surely like **competing with others**.

Page Break

Now, that you have read about the respondent, we would like you to describe a situation in your own life where you were focused on **outperforming others**. This is a situation where you **tried to do things better than other people** in order to achieve more. In the space below, please describe this situation as vividly as possible.

Appendix B: Study 1 Stimuli

Direct comparative claim:

THE NEW «DAMIA-U4»

WITH MORE POWERFUL ENGINE THAN ANY OTHERS IN ITS CLASS

AND WITH FASTEST ACCELERATION TIME THAN ANY OTHERS IN ITS CLASS

MADE TO MAKE YOU THRILL FROM THE FIRST TIME YOU GET IN



«DAMIA»

Indirect comparative claim:

THE NEW «DAMIA-U4»

WITH MORE POWERFUL ENGINE THAN ITS CLOSEST COMPETITOR: ALLEGRE

AND WITH FASTER ACCELERATION TIME THAN ITS CLOSEST COMPETITOR: ALLEGRE

MADE TO MAKE YOU THRILL FROM THE FIRST TIME YOU GET IN



«DAMIA»

Appendix C: Study 2 Stimuli

Direct comparative claim:

Star Plus. The cleanser with a difference.

What's really different about Star Plus is its patented whitening formula. Laboratory tests show that Star Plus bleaches out tough stains better than Crown. Star Plus is also safer on delicate surfaces when compared with Crown. So you can confidently use Star Plus on stains and surfaces that needs attention. Try Star Plus and find out why it's different!

Indirect comparative claim:

Star Plus. The cleanser with a difference.

What's really different about Star Plus is its patented whitening formula. Laboratory tests show that Star Plus bleaches out tough stains better than any other brand of cleanser. Star Plus is also safer on delicate surfaces when compared with the other brands of cleansers. So you can confidently use Star Plus on stains and surfaces that needs attention. Try Star Plus and find out why it's different!

Appendix D: Personal Relevance Index for Study 2

Compared to your friends and acquaintances, do you know a lot about cleansers?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

How often do you use cleansers?

Never, Once a month, 2-3 Times a month, Once a week, 2-3 Times a week, Once a day, 2-3 times a day.

How often do you purchase cleansers?

Never, less than once in 3 months, once in 3 months, 1-3 times a month, once a month, 2-3 times a month, once a week or less

Appendix E: Study 3 Stimuli

Direct comparative claim:

Get the newest technology out there: the new Forward

Forward offers you a better sound quality with a lightweight design. Forward provides 30% better sound quality than Beats resulting in a richer sound. Forward is also 25% lighter than Beats, allowing you to experience a more comfortable fit.

Forward: Comfortable Headphones with a Rich Sound

Indirect comparative claim:

Get the newest technology out there: the new Forward

Forward offers you a better sound quality with a lightweight design. Forward provides 30% better sound quality than the other headphones resulting in a richer sound. Forward is also 25% lighter than other brands of headphones, allowing you to experience a more comfortable fit.

Forward: Comfortable Headphones with a Rich Sound

Appendix F: Stimuli used for Study 1 of Essay 2

Google Faces Quality Problems with Its New Product Line.

(PR NEWSWIRE) — April. 15

Larry Page, Chairman and CEO, Google, announced that Google will launch a new product line, named Gmessenger by Google, which will include versions compatible with both PC and Mac. New product launch is set to begin on June 1, 2013.

Although previous launch dates have been delayed due to serious quality problems and poor ratings, Google is committed to the August 1, 2014 launch date.

For More Information

Contact US

Email Carolyn.Everson@mbstaff.com or call her at 212-846-5524 for press inquiries

Appendix G: Stimuli used for Study 2 of Essay 2

Sony Faces Quality Problems with Its New Line of TVs.

(PR NEWSWIRE) — April. 15

Akira Ami, Chairman and CEO, Sony, announced that Sony will launch a new television line, named Ultraline by Sony, which will include 32, 42 and 50 inch versions. Shipments will begin on June 1, 2014. Manufacturing will take centered at the Sony factory in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Although shipments of the TVs have been stalled due to serious manufacturing problems and poor quality, Sony is committed to the August 1, 2014 launch date.

For More Information

Contact US

Email Carolyn.Everson@mbstaff.com or call her at 212-846-5524 for press inquiries

Appendix H: Ancillary Measures for Essay 2

Mood: “How would you describe your mood while filling the survey?” Three items on 7-point scales anchored at 1=*sad*, 7=*happy*; 1=*bad*, 7=*good*; 1= *irritable*, 7= *pleased*; $\alpha = .87$.

Involvement: “Are you knowledgeable about the TV category?”; “Are you interested in the TV category?”; “Do you understand the features well enough to evaluate the different brands of TVs?”; 7-point scales anchored at 1= *not at all*, 7= *very much*. $\alpha = .83$.

Processing Motivation: “In order to be completely informed about an issue, I feel that the more viewpoints I can get the better off I will be.”; “when a topic comes up, I always try to learn more about it.”; “I make a strong effort to carefully examine the scientific information.”; “When I encounter information about an issue, I am likely to stop and carefully think about it.” 7-point scales anchored at 1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*. $\alpha = .85$.

REFERENCES

Aaker, Jennifer (1997), "Dimensions of brand personality," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 347-356.

Aaker, Jennifer, Emily N. Garbinsky, and Kathleen Vohs (2011), "Cultivating Admiration in Brands: Warmth, Competence, and Landing in the 'Golden Quadrant'." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22, 191-194.

Ahluwalia, Rohini, Robert E. Burnkrant, and H. Rao Unnava (2000), "Consumer response to negative publicity: the moderating role of commitment," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 37(2), 203-214.

Ahluwalia, Rohini (2002), "How prevalent is the negativity effect in consumer environments?" *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(2), 270-279.

Ahluwalia, Rohini and Zeynep Gürhan-Canli (2000), "The effects of extensions on the family brand name: an accessibility-diagnostics perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(3), 371-381.

Alba, Joseph W., and J. Wesley Hutchinson (1987), "Dimensions of consumer expertise," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13.4, 411-454.

Ames, Carole (1992), "Achievement goals and the classroom motivational climate," *Student Perceptions in the Classroom*, 327-348.

Ames, Carole and Jennifer Archer (1988), "Achievement goals in the classroom. Student's learning strategies and motivational processes," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80, 260–267.

Barone, Michael J., and Robert D. Jewell (2012), "How category advertising norms and consumer counter-conformity influence comparative advertising effectiveness," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22, no. 4, 496-506.

Boardley, Ian D., and Ben Jackson (2012), "When teammates are viewed as rivals: A cross-national investigation of achievement goals and intrateam moral behavior," *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 34.4, 503.

Bong, Mimi (2009), "Age-related differences in achievement goal differentiation," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101.4, 879.

Briñol, Pablo, Richard E. Petty, and Zakary L. Tormala (2006), "The malleable meaning of subjective ease," *Psychological Science*, 17.3, 200-206.

Celsi, Richard L., and Jerry C. Olson (1988), "The role of involvement in attention and comprehension processes," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 210-224.

Cheng, Shirley YY, Tiffany Barnett White, and Lan Nguyen Chaplin (2012), "The effects of self-brand connections on responses to brand failure: A new look at the consumer–brand relationship," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 280-288.

Cron, William L., John W. Slocum, Jr, Don VandeWalle, and Qingbo Fu (2005), "The role of goal orientation on negative emotions and goal setting when initial performance falls short of one's performance goal," *Human Performance* 18, 55-80.

Day, George S., and Robin Wensley (1988) "Assessing advantage: a framework for diagnosing competitive superiority," *The Journal of Marketing*, 1-20.

Dawar, Niraj, and Madan M. Pillutla (2000), "Impact of product-harm crises on brand equity: The moderating role of consumer expectations," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 37, 215-226.

Deci, Edward L., and Richard M. Ryan (2000), "The" what" and" why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior," *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227-268.

Dweck, Carol S., and Ellen L. Leggett (1988), "A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality," *Psychological Review*, 95, 256.

Edson Escalas, Jennifer, and James R. Bettman (2003), "You Are What They Eat: The Infulence of Reference Groups on Consumers' Connections to Brands," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13, 339-348.

Elliot, Andrew J. and Marcy Church (1997), "A Hierarchical Model of Approach and Avoidance Achievement Motivation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 218–232.

Elliot, Andrew J., Holly A. McGregor, and Shelly Gable (1999), "Achievement goals, study strategies, and exam performance: A mediational analysis," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91, 549.

Elliot, Andrew J., and Todd M. Thrash (2001), "Achievement goals and the hierarchical model of achievement motivation," *Educational Psychology Review*, 13, no. 2, 139-156.

Elliot, Andrew J. and Holly A. McGregor (2001), "A 2 by 2 Achievement Goal Framework,"

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80, 501–519.

Elliot, Andrew J., and Carol S. Dweck (2005), "Competence and motivation,"
Handbook of Competence and Motivation, 3-12.

Erdem, Tülin, and Joffre Swait (1998), "Brand equity as a signaling phenomenon,"
Journal of consumer Psychology, 7, no. 2, 131-157.

Fedorikhin, Alexander, C. Whan Park, and Matthew Thomson (2008), "Beyond fit and attitude: The effect of emotional attachment on consumer responses to brand extensions,"
Journal of Consumer Psychology, 18, 281-291.

Ferraro, Rosellina, Amna Kirmani, and Ted Matherly (2013), "Look at me! Look at me! Conspicuous brand usage, self-brand connection, and dilution," *Journal of Marketing Research* 50, 477-488.

Fiske, Susan T. and Shelley E. Taylor (1984), *Social Cognition*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Fournier, Susan (1998), "Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343-353.

Greenwald, Anthony G., and Clark Leavitt (1984), "Audience involvement in advertising: Four levels," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 581-592.

Grewal, Dhruv, Sukumar Kavanoor, Edward F. Fern, Carolyn Costley, and James Barnes (1997), "Comparative versus noncomparative advertising: A meta-analysis," *The Journal of Marketing*, 1-15.

Goodwin, Stephen, and Michael Etgar (1980), "An experimental investigation of comparative advertising: impact of message appeal, information load, and utility of product class," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 187-202.

Gürhan-Canli, Zeynep, and Durairaj Maheswaran (1998), "The effects of extensions on brand name dilution and enhancement," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 464-473.

Harackiewicz, Judith M., Kenneth E. Barron, Suzanne M. Carter, Alan T. Lehto, and Andrew J. Elliot (1997), "Predictors and consequences of achievement goals in the college classroom: Maintaining interest and making the grade," *Journal of Personality and Social psychology* 73,1284.

Heckler, Susan E., and Terry L. Childers (1992), "The role of expectancy and relevancy in memory for verbal and visual information: What is incongruity?." *Journal of Consumer Research* 18, 475-492.

Hsieh, Meng H., Kyra Blower, Xingbo Li, Shailendra P. Jain and Steven S. Posavac (2012), "Comparative Advertising Research," *In Cracking the code: Leveraging consumer psychology to drive profitability*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 132–157.

Hudley, Cynthia, and Sandra Graham (2001), "Stereotypes of achievement striving among early adolescents," *Social Psychology of Education*, 5.2, 201-224.

Hulleman, Chris S., Sheree M. Schrager, Shawn M. Bodmann, and Judith M. Harackiewicz (2010), "A meta-analytic review of achievement goal measures: Different labels for the same constructs or different constructs with similar labels?" *Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 422.

Ilgen, Daniel, and Cori Davis (2000), "Bearing bad news: Reactions to negative performance feedback," *Applied Psychology*, 49, no. 3, 550-565.

Izadikhah, Zahra and Chris J. Jackson (2011), "Investigating the moderating effect of rewarding climate on mastery approach orientation in the prediction of work performance," *British Journal of Psychology*, 102, 204-222.

Johnson, David W., and Roger T. Johnson, (1989), *Cooperation and competition: Theory and research*. Interaction Book Company.

Judd, Charles M., Laurie James-Hawkins, Vincent Yzerbyt, and Yoshihisa Kashima (2005), "Fundamental dimensions of social judgment: understanding the relations between judgments of competence and warmth," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89, 899.

Kaplan, Avi, and Martin L. Maehr (2007), "The contributions and prospects of goal orientation theory," *Educational Psychology Review*, 19, 2, 141-184.

Kervyn, Nicolas, Susan T. Fiske, and Chris Malone (2012), "Brands as intentional agents framework: How perceived intentions and ability can map brand perception," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22.2.

Koul, Ravinder, Roy B. Clariana, Kalayane Jitgarun, and Alisa Songsriwittaya (2009), "The influence of achievement goal orientation on plagiarism," *Learning and Individual Differences*, 19, 506-512.

Labroo, Aparna A., and Sara Kim (2009), "The “instrumentality” heuristic why metacognitive difficulty is desirable during goal pursuit," *Psychological Science*, 20.1, 127-134.

Labroo, Aparna A., and Anastasiya Pocheptsova (2016), "Metacognition and consumer judgment: fluency is pleasant but disfluency ignites interest," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 10, 154-159.

Levesque, Chantal, A. Nicola Zuehlke, Layla R. Stanek, and Richard M. Ryan (2004), "Autonomy and Competence in German and American University Students: A Comparative Study Based on Self-Determination Theory." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96, 68.

Loken, Barbara, and Deborah Roedder John (1993), "Diluting brand beliefs: when do brand extensions have a negative impact?." *The Journal of Marketing*, 71-84.

Malär, Lucia, Harley Krohmer, Wayne D. Hoyer, and Bettina Nyffenegger (2011), "Emotional brand attachment and brand personality: The relative importance of the actual and the ideal self." *Journal of Marketing*, 75, 35-52.

Miele, David B., Bridgid Finn, and Daniel C. Molden (2011), "Does easily learned mean easily remembered? It depends on your beliefs about intelligence," *Psychological Science*, 22.3, 320-324.

Miniard, Paul W., Michael J. Barone, Randall L. Rose, and Kenneth C. Manning (2006), "A further assessment of indirect comparative advertising claims of superiority over all competitors." *Journal of Advertising*, 35, 53-64.

Monga, Alokparna Basu, and Deborah Roedder John (2008), "When does negative brand publicity hurt? The moderating influence of analytic versus holistic thinking," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 18, 320-332.

Ng, Sharon (2010), "Cultural orientation and brand dilution: Impact of motivation level and extension typicality," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 47(1), 186-198.

Park, C. Whan, David L. Mothersbaugh, and Lawrence Feick (1994), "Consumer knowledge assessment," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21.1, 71-82.

Park, C. Whan, C., Deborah J. MacInnis, Joseph Priester, Andreas B. Eisingerich, and Dawn Iacobucci (2010), "Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers," *Journal of Marketing* 74, 1-17.

Park, Yong-Wan, Paul M. Herr, and Byung Cho Kim (2015), "The effect of disfluency on consumer perceptions of information security," *Marketing Letters*, 1-11.

Pechmann, Cornelia, and David W. Stewart (1990), "The effects of comparative advertising on attention, memory, and purchase intentions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 180-191.

Pechmann, Cornelia, and Srinivasan Ratneshwar (1991), "The use of comparative advertising for brand positioning: Association versus differentiation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 145-160.

Petty, Richard E., John T. Cacioppo, and David Schumann (1983), "Central and peripheral routes to advertising effectiveness: The moderating role of involvement." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 135-146.

Pham, Michel Tuan (2013), "The seven sins of consumer psychology," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 23, 4.

Poortvliet, P. Marijn, Onne Janssen, Nico W. Van Yperen, and Evert Van de Vliert (2007), "Achievement goals and interpersonal behavior: How mastery and performance goals shape information exchange," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 1435-1447.

Poortvliet, P. Marijn, Frederik Anseel, Onne Janssen, Nico W. Van Yperen, and Evert Van de Vliert (2012), "Perverse effects of other-referenced performance goals in an information exchange context," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 106, 401-414.

Preacher, Kristopher J., Derek D. Rucker, and Andrew F. Hayes (2007), "Addressing moderated mediation hypotheses: Theory, methods, and prescriptions," *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 42.1, 185-227.

Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci (2000), "Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being," *American Psychologist*, 55, 68.

Srull, Thomas K., and Robert S. Wyer (1989), "Person memory and judgment." *Psychological review*, 96, 58.

Sirin, Selcuk R. (2005), "Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review of research," *Review of Educational Research*, 75.3,417-453.

Snyder, Rita. (1992), "Comparative advertising and brand evaluation: Toward developing a categorization approach," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 1.1, 15-30.

Song, Hyunjin, and Norbert Schwarz (2008), "If it's hard to read, it's hard to do processing fluency affects effort prediction and motivation," *Psychological Science*, 19.10, 986-988.

Sood, Sanjay, and Kevin Lane Keller (2012), "The effects of brand name structure on brand extension evaluations and parent brand dilution," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49, 373-382.

Spiller, Stephen A., Gavan J. Fitzsimons, John G. Lynch Jr, and Gary H. McClelland (2013), "Spotlights, floodlights, and the magic number zero: Simple effects tests in moderated regression," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50, 277-288.

Stangor, Charles, and David McMillan (1992), "Memory for expectancy-congruent and expectancy-incongruent information: A review of the social and social developmental literatures." *Psychological Bulletin* ,111, 42.

Stayman, Douglas M., Dana L. Alden, and Karen M. Smith (1992), "Some Effects of Schematic Processing on Consumer Expectations and Disconfirmation Judgments," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19, 240-255

Swaminathan, Vanitha, Karen L. Page, and Zeynep Gürhan-Canli (2007), "My" brand or "our" brand: The effects of brand relationship dimensions and self-construal on brand evaluations," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34, 248-259.

Thompson, Debora V., and Elise Chandon Ince (2013), "When disfluency signals competence: The effect of processing difficulty on perceptions of service agents," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50.2, 228-240.

Urdan, Tim (2004), "Predictors of Academic Self-Handicapping and Achievement: Examining Achievement Goals, Classroom Goal Structures, and Culture," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96.2, 251.

Zaichkowsky, Judith Lynne (1985), "Measuring the involvement construct," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 341-352.

Zeithaml, Valarie A. (1988), "Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: a means-end model and synthesis of evidence," *The Journal of Marketing*, 2-22.

