Lea H. Dunn

Sauder School of Business
2053 Main Mall
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC V6T1Z2
Canada

Phone: (778) 235 – 8709 (Cell)
E-mail: lea.dunn@sauder.ubc.ca

Education

Ph.D., Marketing, June 2014(expected)
Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

B.A.(Psychology), May 2007
Reed College, Portland, Oregon

Title of Dissertation and Name of Supervisor

Impact of Fear on Brand Attachment
Co-Chairs: Prof. Darren Dahl and Prof. JoAndrea Hoegg
Committee Member: Prof. Karl Aquino
Proposal Defended: February 1st, 2013

Consumers come in contact with brands multiple times a day. As such, it is not uncommon for consumers to interact with brands during emotional experiences, some of which are negative. Examining these circumstances, work on incidental emotion (i.e., emotion unrelated to the object of evaluation) has shown both mood-congruency effects (Bower 1981; Cohen, Pham and Andrade 2008; Forgas 1995; Gardner 1985), wherein consumers’ evaluations and judgments are biased in accordance with the valence of their mood, and affect transfer effects (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986), such that the meaning of the emotion transfers directly onto an unrelated object. Taken together, these theories suggest that incidental negative emotions will lead to negative brand evaluations. As such, practitioners are wary about having their brands associated with negative emotional experiences. My dissertation explores circumstances in which a particular negative emotion, fear, has positive implications for brand relationships.

Fear is a basic emotion that arises in the presence or anticipation of a threat. As with most negative emotions, consumers are motivated to cope with and regulate fearful experiences. Research in group dynamics and social psychology has found that one way that people cope with fear is by affiliating with others (Schachter 1959). In fact, fear increases desire for affiliation in times of threat and results in stronger group cohesion and solidarity (Fritz and Williams 1957; Sherif 1966). While this research has focused on the positive effects on interpersonal outcomes, my dissertation will demonstrate that in the absence of an interpersonal other, consumers undergoing a fearful experience can cope with the negative emotion by affiliating with an available product.

This hypothesized effect is drawn from research on consumer-brand relationships, which shows that consumers come to think of brands in ways similar to interpersonal others (e.g.,
friendship, love, passion, etc). As such, one contribution of my dissertation is to expand the understanding of consumer-brand relationships as more than metaphorical in nature. Specifically, I will show that under certain circumstances, brands can directly fulfill interpersonal needs such as desire for affiliation which, subsequently, facilitate emotional brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005) to an unfamiliar brand.

Across the first two studies, I show that a fearful experience (compared to a happy, sad, or exciting experience) can facilitate initial emotional brand attachment to an unfamiliar brand. In addition, these studies identify desire for affiliation as the underlying mechanism through both mediation (Study 1) and moderation of affiliation (Study 2). In Study 3, I show that emotional brand attachment created during a fear experience enhances brand loyalty, brand attitude, and broader measures of attachment (i.e., brand prominence and self-brand connection; Park et al. 2010) at a later date. In addition, this study highlights the necessity of brand presence during the actual experience in order to facilitate brand attachment. In Study 4, I provide further proof of the robustness of the fear-attachment effect across different degrees of product consumption.

In studies 5 and 6, I aim to disentangle the influence of the symbolic “brand” versus the physical product on the fear-attachment effect. Specifically, study 5 will explore whether the physical presence of the product is necessary or if the effect can occur with more symbolic brand representations such as logos or brand extension products. In addition, given the interpersonal nature of the fear-attachment paradigm, study 6 will look at the degree to which brand anthropomorphism enhances or mitigates brand attachment.

With this dissertation, I hope to contribute to several theoretical streams. First, I contribute to work on incidental emotion by demonstrating that there are circumstances in which negative affect has positive implications for brand outcomes. Second, this work contributes to brand attachment research by establishing that under certain circumstances consumers can form brand attachment without extensive time or experience with the product. In addition, this research highlights that measures of initial emotional brand attachment do provide a platform to initiate and enhance broader measures of attachment that may be more cognitive in nature (i.e., brand prominence and self-brand connection). Third, this dissertation contributes to the work on consumer-brand relationships by providing empirical evidence that, in some ways, the consumer-brand relationship is more than a metaphor. There are situations in which the brand can actually take the place of an interpersonal other and fulfill interpersonal needs.

**Journal Publications** (see appendix for abstract)


**Working Papers**

Dunn, Lea H. and JoAndrea Hoegg, “The Impact of Fear on Brand Attachment,” *Revise and resubmit* at *Journal of Consumer Research*. (see appendix for abstract)


**Book Chapters**


**Work in Progress**


Dunn, Lea H. and Rui (Juliet) Zhu, “Art and Risk-Taking,” *One study completed and one in preparation.*

**Conference Presentations**


**Other Presentations**


**Research Interests**

Consumer brand attachment, identity and social group influence, and the role of emotion in consumer behavior.

**Teaching**

Instructor, Marketing Division, University of British Columbia
Buyer Behavior (undergraduate), Fall 2013

Instructor, Marketing Division, University of British Columbia
Introduction to Marketing (undergraduate), 2011 (Ratings: 4.58/5).

Teaching Assistant, Marketing Division, University of British Columbia
Consumer Behavior (MBA, for Prof. Dale Griffin), 2013

Teaching Assistant, Marketing Division, University of British Columbia
Market Research (MBA, for Prof. Dale Griffin), 2013

Teaching Assistant, Marketing Division, University of British Columbia
Topics in Marketing – Creativity (MBA, for Prof. Darren Dahl), 2012.

**Teaching Interests**

Introduction to Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Branding, Integrated Marketing Communications, Advertising, Social and New Media

**Relevant Coursework**

Consumer Behavior, taught by Dr. JoAndrea Hoegg

Multivariate Analysis, taught by Dr. Bruno Zumbo

University & College Teaching, taught by Dr. Shawna Faber
Consumer Behavior, taught by Dr. Darren W. Dahl and Dr. Rui (Juliet) Zhu

Survey of Social Psych, taught by Dr. Elizabeth Dunn

Buyer Behavior, taught by Dr. Darren W. Dahl and Dr. Dale Griffin

Research Seminar in Marketing – Quantitative, taught by Dr. Charles Weinberg

Awards, Distinctions, and Scholarships

- Paul Chwelos Memorial Graduate Scholarship (for excellence in teaching), University of British Columbia, 2012.
- Dean Earle D. MacPhee Memorial Fellowship, University of British Columbia, 2010-2012
- International Student Tuition Scholarship, University of British Columbia, 2009-2012
- Sauder School of Business Graduate Award, University of British Columbia, 2010-2012
- Lusztig Fellowship, University of British Columbia, 2010-2011
- Academic Commendation from the Division of Philosophy, Religion, and Psychology, Reed College, 2006 and 2007

Professional Affiliations

- Association for Consumer Research
- Society for Consumer Psychology
- Society for Personality and Social Psychology

Academic Service

- Trainee Reviewer, Journal of Consumer Research
- Reviewer, Society for Consumer Psychology conference, 2012
- Reviewer, Consumer Brand Relationships conference, 2013

Media Coverage (research)

References

*Darren W. Dahl  
Fred H. Siller Professor of Marketing  
Sauder School of Business  
University of British Columbia  
darren.dahl@sauder.ubc.ca  
Tel: 1-604-822-1890

*JoAndrea Hoegg  
Assistant Professor of Marketing  
Sauder School of Business  
University of British Columbia  
joey.hoegg@sauder.ubc.ca  
Tel: 1-604-827-4541

Rui (Juliet) Zhu  
Associate Professor of Marketing  
Sauder School of Business  
University of British Columbia  
juliet.zhu@sauder.ubc.ca  
Tel: 1-604-827-3158

* Katherine White  
Associate Professor and Chair, Marketing  
Sauder School of Business  
University of British Columbia  
katherine.white@sauder.ubc.ca  
Tel: 1-604-827-3711

(*) Names and contact information for three letters of references
Appendix

Description of Research


Previous research in complaining behavior has shown that after a product failure, consumers feel better if they complain about it. Most of this research has focused on product or service failures in which the organization is responsible for the failure. The limited work that has examined situations in which the consumer is to blame for failure has generally found that consumers are, unsurprisingly, unlikely to complain. However, with modern technology and social media, the temporal and social costs of complaining have decreased, making it more likely that consumers will complain, even in situations that may be their own fault. My research shows that when consumers are to blame for product failure, complaining has a detrimental effect on consumer reactions to the product. In this context, self-threat from the product failure is shown to motivate defensive processing in both the content of the complaints and the subsequent downstream product evaluations. I establish the role of self-threat in product failure in two ways: 1) by varying the intensity of the threat from product failure and 2) mitigating negative outcomes through self-affirmation. Interestingly, I find that affirming consumers prior to either the product failure or the complaining opportunity results in comments that are constructive and beneficial for the companies in question.


Previous research examining the influence of incidental negative emotion on brand evaluations has generally found effects consistent with mood-congruent processing, wherein negative emotions lead to negative evaluations. As a result, many marketers tend to avoid associating their brands with fear-inducing contexts. However, group dynamics research has found that one way that people cope with fearful experiences is through affiliation with others. In fact, fear increases desire for affiliation and, thus, enhances group cohesion and solidarity; both positive interpersonal outcomes. Drawing from research that finds that consumers think of brands along interpersonal dimensions, I show that fear can have positive implications for brand attachment. Specifically, I show that through desire for affiliation, fear can cause consumers to become emotionally attached to an unfamiliar brand. I identify the desire for affiliation as the driver for the fear-attachment effect through both mediation and moderation. Importantly, this research shows that the emotional attachment induced by the fearful experience provides a platform for later enhancement of broader measures of attachment (e.g., identity connection and automaticity of thoughts), brand loyalty, and brand attitude.

This research proposes that abstract art may be beneficial for processing specific types of negatively valenced products. I hypothesize that advertisements for products associated with negative emotions low in uncertainty (e.g., sadness induced by an ad for a funeral home) will be rated more favorably if they feature abstract versus representational art. I argue that, due to the processing disfluency inherent in the art form, abstract art pushes consumers into a far distance mindset and provides consumers with an emotional buffer to process certain negative emotions. In Study 1, I show that consumers rate sad compared to neutral products higher when they feature abstract versus representational art. Study 2 explores the idea that the disfluency generated by processing abstract art provides an emotional buffer for consumers. Specifically, this study manipulates mindset and shows that only in the near psychological distance mindset does abstract art result in higher ratings for sad products. This study also provides evidence that the art provides an emotional buffer which mediates the relationship between featured art and product evaluation. Finally, Study 3 explores a boundary condition of negative emotion type. When processing advertisements for products associated with negative emotions high in uncertainty (e.g., fear), the beneficial effects of abstract art disappear.