

Introduction

- Research on pro-environmental behaviors has focused on many important areas including recycling, household energy usage, and water consumption (see Osbaldiston & Schott, 2012).
- Consumers overconsume and desire “complete” products (Oskamp, 2000; Sevilla and Kahn, 2014).
- Every product is a collection of parts, a jacket contains cloth but also a zipper, a pair of glasses has lenses but it also has a frame.
- Consumers purchase the complete product and expect to consume the complete product, completeness is desired to incompleteness but the incomplete product may still be beneficial to others. For example, glasses with damaged frames can be donated to others who will use the lenses.

How does product completeness impact the decision to donate or discard?

Magnitude of Waste

- According to the Duke Center for Sustainability & Commerce (2016) the average person generates over 4 pounds of waste per day or 112 pounds per month. This translates into weight of one five foot flat screen television per person each month.
- 200 million tons of waste are generated each year, 55% of this waste ends up in landfills.
- Much of this waste can be reused or recycled or otherwise diverted from landfills.



Donating

- Giving the product to another for future usage
- Often confused with recycling, recycling generally refers to the altering of a product for future consumption (Granzin and Olsen, 1991).
- Prior work on the topic of donating has focused on the individual characteristics of a person that cause them to donate regularly (Granzin and Olsen, 1991).
- Donating is driven by social exchange theory, “actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others” (Blau, 1964).
- Consumers can derive pleasure from giving to others without knowing who they are giving to. It is the act that creates pleasure for the person who donates and this can be used to explain anonymous donating behaviors (Johnson and Grimm, 2010).



Hypotheses

The relationship between completeness and donating behaviors. Products that are not complete may not be viewed as useful. When a product is incomplete consumers can choose to keep the product, donate it, or dispose of it.

- **H1:** Perceived level of completeness and usefulness are positively correlated.
- **H2:** Consumers that choose to keep the product will view it as significantly more complete than consumers who choose to donate or discard of the product.
- **H3:** Consumers who choose to donate the product will view the product as less complete than those who choose to keep the product but more complete than those who choose to dispose of the product.

Pre-test for Completeness

- Experimental methodology
- We used a sample of 27 undergraduate students at a small liberal arts college to pre-test the completeness of four different products.
- The four products were:
 - 1) A laptop computer that only worked when plugged in
 - 2) A sweater with a stain
 - 3) A jacket with a broken zipper (see below)
 - 4) A pair of glasses with a broken lens (see left)
- On a scale of 1 to 5 anchored by not complete at all to fully complete the last two products were viewed as the least complete.



Methodology

- Experimental Methodology
- Sample contained 134 undergraduate psychology students from a small liberal arts college in the Mid-Atlantic region.
- Participants viewed one of the two products and a brief description of the product, they were then asked what they would like to do with the product: keep it, donate it, or discard it.
- After making their decision, participants responded to a series of items using a 5-point Likert scale anchored on one end by “1 – Strongly Disagree” and the other end by “5 – Strongly Agree.”
 - The product is useful to me
 - The product is complete
 - Owning/donating/disposing of the product makes me feel good
 - I like the product
 - I would be embarrassed to own the product
 - It is easier to keep/donate/discard of the product than keep it

Results

- H1 supported, completeness positively related to usefulness

| | Mean | St. Dev. | Glasses with Broken Lens | | | | |
|------------------|------|----------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | | | Completeness | Usefulness | Feel Good | Like the Product | Embarrassment |
| Completeness | 1.73 | .765 | | .265 (.002) | -.039 (.659) | .000 1.000 | -.062 (.486) |
| Usefulness | 1.77 | .942 | | | .028 (.752) | .021 (.921) | -.088 (.318) |
| Feel Good | 2.69 | .945 | | | | .726 (.000) | .354 (.000) |
| Like the Product | 2.71 | .999 | | | | | .119 (.579) |
| Embarrassment | 2.65 | 1.095 | | | | | |

- H2 and H3 supported, participants who kept the jacket thought it was the most complete, those who discarded thought it was the least useful, those who donated it thought it was less complete than a participant who kept it and more complete than a participant that discarded it.

Jacket with Broken Zipper - Completeness as the Dependent Variable

| | N | Mean | Std. Dev | Scheffe - Post Hoc Tests (level of significance between group differences) | | |
|---------|----|------|----------|--|--------|---------|
| | | | | Keep It | Donate | Discard |
| Keep it | 50 | 2.94 | .890 | | .073 | .000 |
| Donate | 20 | 2.54 | .941 | .073 | | .044 |
| Discard | 61 | 1.95 | .826 | .000 | .044 | |

Discussion

Managerial and Policy Implications

- All of these results provide support for the idea that researchers should focus on the perceived completeness of a product in order to better understand what consumers will do with products that are no longer functioning as they were originally intended to function.
- Efforts to encourage donations should focus on the usefulness of the parts vs. the complete product.

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