

When „New“ Is Not Better: The Effects of Novelty, Familiarity, and Openness to
Experience on Consumer Preference

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Abstract

This study examined the effects newness, familiarity, and trait openness to experience have on consumer preference, under the factors of interest, liking, and purchase intent of the advertisements presented. We hypothesized that there would be greatest novelty effect when the brands are familiar, and when individuals are high on openness to experience. As an exploratory variable, we predicted that regulatory focus would be correlated with openness to experience. Seventy undergraduate psychology students completed sets of questionnaires of 12 ads presented in the same order in both conditions, varying in the presence „new“ labels, followed by measures of interest, liking, purchase intent, and manipulation check of familiarity after each ad; and existing personality trait measures. We found significant main effects of familiarity on interest, liking, and purchase intent, and interaction between novelty and openness. Implications for rebranding are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As competition rises in the retail market, marketers are faced with the challenge of winning customers' preference over certain brands than others through the innovative strategy of rebranding. By creating a new identity for a brand or product through changes in logo and color, the innovative marketing strategy of rebranding aims to increase purchase intentions (Tang, 2009). However, with rebranding known to be risky and high in cost (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2005), recent research has explored a phenomenon called the novelty effect, which suggested higher consumer preference towards "products that are labeled as new" (B. Sung, personal communication, February 10, 2014). The emotion of "interest" has been found to be the core factor facilitating the novelty effect.

According to Krapp (1999), interest facilitates information seeking and learning of new stimuli. For instance, people with higher levels of interest have been found to be more willing to try new food (Martins & Pliner, 2005). People were also found to be more interested in complex and novel stimuli than simple stimuli (Silvia, 2005b). However, interest towards novel stimuli could be achieved only when individuals have adequate coping potential, such that enough information is provided for them to understand the new stimuli confidently.

Extensive research has suggested that familiarity has a role in inducing consumer preference as well (e.g. Zajonc, 1968; Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Coupey, Irwin, & Payne, 1998; Schwarz, 2004). For one, brands that are familiar appear to be more easily

detected and processed (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987), thus producing a more favorable evaluation automatically (Lange and Dahlen, 2003) and mere exposure could lead to liking (Zajonc, 1968; Whittlesea & Price, 2001). However, familiar brands fade quickly (Tallis, 1997) and consumers appear to get bored with them (Machleit, Allen, & Madden, 1993). Hence, familiarity could not possibly be the only factor in contributes to preference construction. In fact, Gordon and Holyoak (1983) suggested that mere exposure effects are not limited to “pure” familiarity, but generalizes to objectively new but categorically similar exemplars or prototypes (de Vries, Holland, Chenier, Starr, & Winkielman, 2010).

A potential moderator of the novelty effect could be openness to experience as it appears that those who are more open to experiences tend to be more curious, unconventional and creative (McCrae & Costa, 1999), traits which are associated with interest (Silvia, 2008).

Research question

Since much of the current research on novelty effect has focused on aspects of newness such as the visual design of the product (e.g. transformed shape) and not on the semantic meaning of newness, we want to examine whether the novelty effect generalizes to such aspect, namely when the product is labeled as new. Although there are studies investigating about consumer preference for new products with „new“ labels (B. Sung, personal communication, February 10, 2014), our study adds onto that by examining the interaction of novelty and familiarity with the openness trait and regulatory focus.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is built upon Cacioppo and Petty's (1979) framework which states that the effect familiarity is at its peak when it is moderate. This is because when familiarity is low, resources are not enough to be processed completely. At the opposite end, where familiarity is high, resources would lead to counter-argumentation.

Consistently, Mandler (1982) proposed the incongruity theory whereby the relationship of incongruity and liking is an inverted-U shape, such that moderate incongruity would induce a more positive response than when the information is either highly congruent or incongruent. It appears that entirely congruent stimulus only induces mild positive affective judgment from familiarity. Extremely incongruent stimulus, on the other hand, is not pleasing to the mind as highly discrepant information is usually resolved through deep structural changes which may not be successful and in turn lead to a less favorable judgment. In contrast, moderately discrepant stimulus only requires sub-categorization to resolve, and thus lead to mental arousal and cognitive elaboration. Familiarity appears to be an important moderator of this theory as the extent of incongruity an individual perceives depends on how familiar he is with the stimulus (Zhou & Nakamoto, 2007).

Literature Review

Novelty Effect in Interest, Memory, and Rebranding

Novelty effect has been discussed extensively in the literature on rebranding strategies. According to Silvia (2005b), the emotion of "interest" and coping potential, the ability to understand new events, have been found to be associated with high levels of

motivation towards viewing complex and novel stimuli. In her study, participants were shown a set of visual images and were instructed to point out the ones that they found most interesting. Indeed, findings showed that participants had greater interest in visual images that were complex and comprehensible. Participants looked at the visual images they found interesting for a longer time as well (Silvia, 2005a). Overall, the concept of newness itself alone isn't capable of stimulating interest unless enough information is provided for people to process new stimuli. The usage of complex and comprehensible labels and designs could be potentially more effective than simple designs when it comes to rebranding.

Novel stimuli are known to attract attention too. According to the explanatory choice paradigm (Berlyne; cited in Mendelson, 2001), individuals were more attracted to photographs with higher novelty levels. Participants were shown a pair of photographs that differed in novelty levels for 0.5 seconds and were asked to pick their preferred choice. With such a short amount of viewing time, participants seemed confused and intrigued by the new information presented, leaving them in a state of uncertainty. In order to satisfy their curiosity, participants developed a high tendency to pick the photograph with higher novelty level, in hopes of settling the state of uncertainty.

A similar attraction finding was depicted in Mendelson's (2001) study where participants were more attracted to novel photographs when presented alone. When photographs with high levels of novelty were presented in newspapers, no novelty effect was found due to the distractions of various stories, headlines, and other photographs. In

this case, interest was facilitated by story topics, instead of novel photographs.

Unexpected, novel stimuli that stand out were found to enhance memory as well. In Brewer and Treyners'' (cited in Mendelson, 2001) memory study, objects in an office were arranged either typically or atypically before participants brought into the room. Upon their entrance, participants were instructed to look around and point out the objects that caught their attention. As predicted, participants had a higher recall rate for objects arranged atypically. Participants were also better in noticing changes in unexpected objects rather than expected objects (Friedman; cited in Mendelson, 2001). Based on these findings, it could be inferred that novel and unexpected ads could potentially have a greater impact on accentuating new brands and products.

However, the core concepts of companies continue to influence how people react to new products as well. In fact, it should be noted that 69% of new products fail after their launch in a year (Matthews, cited in Lord, 2000). In order for new products to succeed, Matthews (cited in Lord, 2000) proposed the essentiality for new products to be in parallel with their brands'' concept promises and strategies. For instance, regardless of how successful Nike is in developing sportswear, it wouldn''t be advised for the company to start developing electronics because it isn''t what people would associate the brand with. Therefore, the core concept promises and strategies of companies should be taken into consideration when rebranding.

Though the concept of newness is generally expected by companies to result in a boom in sales, it could pose dangers to brand loyalty as well. Brand loyalty is the biased

selection of brands that it noticeable in purchasing behavior over time (Tang, 2009). According to Pimentel and Heckler (cited in Tang, 2009), loyal customers tend to be more tolerant toward slight visual redesigns of brand logos. However, negative attitudes among loyal customers were found to be higher as the visual identities of brands increased as well (Walsh, Page, & Mittal; cited in Tang, 2009). Therefore, greater novelty effects would be experienced among customers only when brand loyalty isn't damaged through excessive changes in visual identities of brands in rebranding.

Familiarity, Fluency, and Liking

Although novelty appears to have the characteristics to attract attention, which could to higher preference for such stimuli at times, people generally have a preference for things that are familiar. Indeed, Zajonc (1968) posited that mere repeated exposure of a stimulus could increase liking, a phenomenon known as the mere exposure effect. This was suggested to be due to the uncertainty that people associated with novel stimuli (the fear of the unknown), in contrast to the safety ("warm glow") associated with familiarity (Zajonc, 1980, 1998). In his studies, he observed that such caution for novel stimuli seems to decrease gradually over repeated exposure. This familiarity-safety association was evident as the risks perceived in technologies, investments, and leisure activities decrease as they get more familiar (Song & Schwarz, 2009). In addition, the connection is bidirectional, that is, familiarity could lead to liking and liking to lead to the perception that things are familiar, even in the absence of prior experience with the stimulus (Monin, 2003).

Much research suggests that fluency plays a central role in the positive affective judgment associated with familiarity. For instance, findings from cognitive research show that familiar stimuli are more easily processed compared to those that are novel (Song & Schwarz, 2009). They require less attention (Desimone, Miller, Chelazzi, & Lueschow, 1995), less cognitive effort (as some rules about the stimuli have been established, which results in a better knowledge structure or schema of the stimuli; Alba & Hutchinson, 1987), cause less mismatch with existing memories (Gillebaart, Forster, & Rotteveel, 2012), lead to faster recognition of stimulus, higher judgments of stimulus clarity and duration, and repetition leads to decreased activation in relevant brain areas (Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001). Essentially, such findings suggest a central role of processing fluency in driving the mere exposure effect (Reber, Schwarz, & Winkielman, 2004). Thus, the link between familiarity and fluency is greatly documented. In addition, people were found to mistakenly make inferences of familiarity based on fluency. Participants appeared to have the tendency to make inaccurate recognition judgments for stimuli that are perceptually fluent (Whittlesea, Jacoby, & Girard, 1990) and to report a strong sense of knowing (Song & Schwarz, 2009). Moreover, mere experimental manipulations of fluency such as repeating the stimulus over and over again may even lift mood, at least temporarily (Winkielman et al., 2006).

Research suggests that fluency induces a positive affect because it indicates that the stimulus is familiar and not likely harmful (Reber et al., 2004). Low processing fluency gives the sense that a stimulus is unfamiliar, which in turn leads to perceptions

that the stimulus is riskier than the stimulus that is easily processed (Song & Schwarz, 2009). In fact, Song and Schwarz (2009) found that when names of food additives were more difficult to pronounced, they were rated as potentially more harmful compared to when names were more easily pronounced. Preference for fluency is also evident in implicit, psychophysiological measures. For instance, Winkielman and Cacioppo (2001) observed on a facial electromyography (EMG) greater muscle activity over the zygomaticus major, region responsible for smiling, when stimuli were easy to processed, indicative of a positive reaction. These observations were found to be consistent with the self-reports of the same stimuli. Moreover, such favorability occurs for prototypes as well, for they also result in ease of processing (e.g. Winkielman, Halberstadt, Fazendeiro, & Catty, 2006). This occurs whether or not the stimuli were on positive dimension. Thus, anything that proves easy to the mind result in a favorable evaluation.

In consumer psychology, fluency determines whether a consumer would purchase a product at all, what product they would purchase, and which brand they would choose (Schwarz, 2004). Also, a consumer's decision is based on preference fluency (whether they feel their preference for a choice is easily or difficulty formed; Novemsky, Dhar, Simonson, & Schwarz, 2007). In one of their studies, they asked participants to make a decision after reading either from an easy or hard to read font. Results revealed that participants in the difficult condition had more indecision (71%), opting to defer choice, when compared to those in the easy condition (56%). In their other study, participants had to either provide two or ten reasons for a choice, and to rate how difficult the task

(coming up with reasons for their choice) was. Results revealed that participants chose to compromise (another sign of indecision) twice as much when they were asked to give ten reasons (44%) in contrast to two (22%), suggesting that fluency is important in how consumer's preference is constructed. Familiarity or a person's prior experience with a product category, on the other hand, has impacts on how a new product is evaluated and learned (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987).

Openness to Experience, Regulatory Focus, and Novelty

The trait openness to experience was also found to be highly correlated with novelty preference. According to McCrae and Costa (1997), open individuals actively seek out new and varied experiences, likely because openness involves motivation and needs for variety (Maddi & Berne, 1964). For example, those truly open would be willing to taste new dishes and go in quest of varied cuisines. Even daydreams of open individuals were characterized by novelty which was motivated by their intrinsic interest (McCrae & Costa, 1997).

Consistently, Fiske (1949) highlighted that open people tends to be interested in things like philosophical arguments because they lead to the exploration of new and surprising conclusions which were intellectually challenging. Eisenman, Grossman, and Goldstein (1980) also found supportive results among marijuana users in that they were motivated to use the drug in order to seek out new and unusual experience. In fact, the more a person uses marijuana, the more likely he is to try one or more other drugs. This was the typical characteristic of individuals with high scores on openness as they tend to

be curious and willing to entertain novel ideas. Zuckerman, Neary, and Brustman (1970) referred to these people as being high in sensation seeking, a quality identified by McCrae and Costa (1997) as significantly related to the trait openness to experience.

In addition, merely turning the hands of time in a clockwise manner could increase preference for novelty; and this, too, tends to be related to openness to experience. In a study, Topolinski and Sparenberg (2012) found that when participants were asked to turn the clock hand in a clockwise manner, they preferred novel over old stimuli (reversing the classic mere exposure effect), while those who turn the clock counterclockwise like old stimuli more than novel. This was because clockwise action represents progression in time, which was equivalent to the experience of novelty, whereas, counterclockwise represents regression to the past which was equivalent to being old and familiar. In addition, participants turning the hands of time in a clockwise manner report higher level of openness to experience. Thus, there is a link between novelty preference and openness to experience, such that open people show higher preference for novel stimuli.

Moreover, there was a significant correlation between openness to experience and resistance to change, such that people with low openness to experience were more likely to score high on resistance to change (Oreg, 2003). Results suggested that the higher the resistance to change score, the less likely people were to be using new products. In other words, people high on openness to experience (low on resistance to change) were more likely to use new products. This was shown in the amount of time it takes before the

person chooses to adopt the new product in that open people took less time prior to the adoption (Oreg, 2003).

Expanding further, Sylvia (2008) proposed that there was a relationship between openness to experience and interests. According to Berlyne (1960), stimulus features like novelty tends to evoke feelings of interest in a way that open people finds it interesting. Therefore, it could be said that interest motivates and attracts people to encounter new and unfamiliar things. Without interest, people would stick with what they like instead of trying new things (Sylvia, 2008). Since interest in turn connects to openness to experience, it could be argued that open people were also more inclined to favor new and unfamiliar things.

Another potential correlate of openness to experience is an individual's regulatory focus. According to Higgins (1997; cited in Gillebart et al., 2012), regulatory focus consists of two separate motivational orientations during the pursuit of a goal, namely promotion focus (when people focus on growth) and prevention focus (when people focus on preserving or achieving security). It has been proposed that novelty tends to be more appealing to people in a promotion focus than in a prevention focus and that the opposite is true for familiarity. In a promotion focus, people appear to be more inclined to "explore the world" and, therefore, find that novelty supports their pursuit of growth goals, which leads to more favorable evaluations. Hence, in a prevention focus, people tend to favor familiarity as it supports security goals with "warm glow" (Gillebaart et al., 2012; Zajonc, 1980, 1998). Given such behavior, regulatory focus as well as openness to

experience, lead to different perceptions of novelty; it is suggestive that the two concepts are, to some extent, related.

It has been demonstrated that an enduring personality trait like openness to experience is related to central constructs in marketing (Matzler, Bidmon, & Grabner-Krauter, 2006). Such trait, along with novelty and familiarity, therefore, would be the target of investigation in this study. The results of this study would contribute to the understanding of consumer behavior and preference, which could help marketers attract and bond with their customers effectively.

Objectives

1. We aim to find the effect of novelty on interest, liking, and purchase intent with „new“ labels.
2. We aim to find the effect of familiarity on interest, liking, and purchase intent with „new“ labels.
3. We aim to investigate whether openness to experience would have an effect on preference for products with „new“ labels.
4. We aim to investigate whether the novelty effect would be more pronounced with familiar products.
5. We aim to investigate the interaction between familiarity and openness to experience.
6. We aim to examine the relationship between regulatory focus and openness to experience.

7. We aim to examine the interaction between novelty, familiarity, and openness to experience on consumer preference.

Hypothesis

In line with Cacioppo and Petty's (1979) claim that familiarity works best at the moderate level and Mandler's (1982) incongruity theory which states that positive affective judgment is heightened at moderate incongruity, we hypothesize that there would be greatest novelty effect when the brands are familiar. Based on previous findings on the correlation between the trait openness to experience and novelty, we predict that there would be a greater novelty effect for those high on openness to experience. Specifically, brands that are both familiar and new would be preferred over those that are either only familiar and not new, or new and not familiar, particularly for those who score high on openness to experience scale. Also as an additional exploratory variable, we predict that there would be a correlation between regulatory focus (Higgins; cited in Gilbert et al., 2012) and openness to experience, such that those high on openness to experience would be promotion oriented, while those low on openness to experience would be prevention oriented.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Design

A 2 (novelty: without vs. with „new“ label) x 2 (familiarity: unfamiliar vs. familiar brands) x 2 (openness to experience: low vs. high) mixed design was used in this study. Novelty and familiarity were within-subject variables, while openness to experience was the between-subject variable. The dependent variables being measured were interest, liking, and purchase intent. In addition, regulatory focus (prevention vs. promotion) was an exploratory between-subjects variable.

Participants

A total of seventy ($M_{age} = 19$, 54 females and 16 males) undergraduate international students studying at Chulalongkorn University were recruited by convenience sampling. This study was conducted in 3 separate sessions. In each session, participants were randomly placed into 2 groups (Set A and Set B of the questionnaires) and were tested all at once.

Materials

Two sets of 12 ads (Set A and Set B) were generated for each condition in this study. To test the familiarity factor, 6 ads portrayed familiar brands of camera, drinks, apparel, oral products, tablets, and sunglasses in Thailand. In contrast, another 6 portrayed unfamiliar brands of the same product categories as the familiar condition. The novelty factor was tested with 6 ads containing a “new” label, while another 6 without.

The novelty factor was counterbalanced in both sets (Set A and Set B). All 4 conditions (unfamiliar–without „new“ label, unfamiliar–with „new“ label; familiar–without „new“ label; familiar–with „new“ label) were presented in both sets, as depicted in *Table 1*. It should be noted that the 12 ads were presented in the same order in both conditions and each ad was half an A4 page in size. The preference questionnaires were placed below each ad. Personality tests and demographic questions were placed last.

Preference. Interest was measured with a 1-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all interested*) to 5 (*very interested*). The question was “How interested are you in this product?” Higher scores indicated higher levels of interest in the product advertised. Liking was measured with a 1-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly dislike*) to 5 (*strongly like*). The question was “How much do you like this product?” Higher scores indicated higher levels of liking in the product advertised. Purchase intent was measured a 1-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 5 (*very likely*). The question was “How interested are you in this product?” Higher scores indicated higher likelihood of purchasing the product advertised.

Openness to experience. The trait openness was measured with the 10-item Likert Openness to Experience scale from the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999), ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). Sample questions include “I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas” and “I see myself as someone who prefers work that is routine”. Higher scores represented those who are more open. Scores were then dichotomized with a median split, to categorize participants

into high or low openness to experience. Those who scored higher than the median (3.45) were deemed as more open to experience and those who scored below the median as less open to experience.

Regulatory focus. Regulatory orientation was measured with the 11-item Likert Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins, 1997), ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always true*). Sample questions include “I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life” and “Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times”. High scores indicate promotion orientation while low scores indicate prevention orientation. Median-split was again conducted to categorize participants into prevention or promotion oriented. Those who scored higher than the median (4.55) were deemed as holding a promotion orientation and those who scored below the median as holding a prevention orientation.

Manipulation check. Manipulation check of familiarity and novelty was measured at the end of each ad where participants would be asked to report their familiarity level towards each product mentioned in the study through Likert scales ranging from 1 (*not at all familiar*) to 5 (*extremely familiar*). A higher score on this question indicated that participants perceived the products advertised as being familiar. This works as a manipulation check for novelty as well since novelty reflects unfamiliarity. Thus, high familiarity indicates low novelty.

Procedure

Before the participants were given a set of questionnaires, they received informed

consent forms which stated their voluntary rights. Each participant was given a packet of 12 ads, which consisted of 6 ads portraying products with a „new“ label and another 6 without a „new“ label, to be viewed individually. Then, participants rated their interest, preference, purchase intent, and familiarity for each product depicted in the set of ads on a 4-item Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all interested; strongly dislike; very unlikely; not at all familiar) to 5 (very interested; strongly like; very likely; extremely familiar). After participants have observed and rated 12 products, they were instructed to complete the 10-item Openness to Experience scale from the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) and the 11-item Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins, 1997). Afterwards, demographic information was collected. Participants were given a debriefing sheet which contained information regarding the aim and importance of the study, their rights to participation, and contact details of the experimenters.

However, a procedural mistake was made in counterbalancing the ads (Table 1). In set A, instead of having 3 ads for each condition (unfamiliar-without „new“, unfamiliar-with „new“, familiar-without „new“, familiar-with „new“), we had 2 ads for the familiar-with „new“ condition and 4 ads for the familiar-without „new“ condition and vice versa for set B. It should be noted that the unfamiliar conditions were correctly counterbalanced with 3 ads in each condition.

Table 1

Procedural Mistake Made in Counterbalancing

Condition	Label	Set A	Set B	Total
Unfamiliar	Without 'New' Label	2	4	6
	With 'New' Label	4	2	6
Familiar	Without 'New' Label	3	3	6
	With 'New' Label	3	3	6
Total		12	12	24

Chapter 3

Results

Three three-way mixed ANOVAs were conducted with openness to experience (low vs. high) as a between-groups variable and novelty (without vs. with label) and familiarity (unfamiliar vs. familiar) as within-participants variables. *Table 2* reports the means and standard deviations by condition.

Manipulation check

For manipulation check of familiarity condition, two paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare the effects familiarity (unfamiliar vs. familiar) and novelty (without vs. with label). The familiarity condition was found to have a significant effect on people's perception of product familiarity ($M = 1.35$, $SD = .76$), $t(69) = 14.76$, $p < .001$. Therefore, participants were found to be more familiar with familiar brands. However, no significant effect was found between novelty and the perception of product familiarity ($M = -.02$, $SD = .60$), $t(69) = -.30$, $p = .767$. Such finding suggested that „new“ labels did not affect how familiar people feel with the product.

Interest

No main effect was found for those who are high on openness and those who are low on openness on interest, $F(1, 68) = .14$, $p = .712$, $\eta^2 = .002$. There was also no main effect of novelty on interest, $F(1, 68) = 1.17$, $p = .284$, $\eta^2 = .017$. However, there was a significant main effect of familiarity on interest, with higher mean for familiar than for unfamiliar condition, $F(1, 68) = 19.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .28$ (Fig. 1). In addition, there was a

significant interaction between novelty and openness to experience, such that less open people were more interested in products with „new“ label ($M = 3.39$) than products without „new“ label ($M = 3.24$), whereas more open people were less interested in products with „new“ label ($M = 3.29$) than products without „new“ label ($M = 3.50$), $F(1, 68) = 4.10, p = .047, \eta^2 = .057$ (Fig. 4). A post-hoc t-test was conducted for simple effects of novelty on different levels of openness using Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of .025 per test (.05/2). Results revealed a non-significant effect of novelty on interest for less open people ($M = .06$), $t(34) = .63, p = .532$. In contrast, there was a marginally significant effect of novelty, such that more open people were more interested in products without „new“ labels than with „new“ labels ($M = -.21$), $t(34) = -2.34, p = .025$. Finally, there was no significant interaction between familiarity and openness, $F(1, 68) = .37, p = .545, \eta^2 = .005$.

Liking

For liking, no significant main effect was found on liking and openness to experience either, $F(1, 68) = .035, p = .851, \eta^2 = .001$. The predicted significant main effect of liking and novelty was also not significant, $F(1, 68) = .499, p = .482, \eta^2 = .007$ (Fig. 2). However, a significant main effect of liking and familiarity was found, $F(1, 68) = 23.2, p < .001, \eta^2 = .255$, such that participants liked familiar brands more than they liked unfamiliar brands. There was no significant interaction between novelty and openness to experience, $F(1, 68) = .69, p = .410, \eta^2 = .010$. No significant interaction

was found between familiarity and openness to experience, $F(1, 68) = .01, p = .913$, $\eta^2 < .001$.

Purchase Intent

There was no main effect for those who were high on openness and those who were low on openness on purchase intent, $F(1, 68) = .10, p = .756, \eta^2 = .001$. Also, there was no main effect of novelty on purchase intent, $F(1, 68) = .33, p = .567, \eta^2 = .005$. Significant main effect of familiarity on purchase intent was found, with higher mean for familiar than for unfamiliar condition, $F(1, 68) = 16.90, p < .001, \eta^2 = .199$ (Fig. 3). There was no significant interaction between novelty and openness, $F(1, 68) = .33, p = .567, \eta^2 = .005$. No significant interaction was found between familiarity and openness either, $F(1, 68) = .30, p = .583, \eta^2 = .004$.

Regulatory focus

As an exploratory variable, regulatory focus and interest were not found to be significantly correlated, $r = .202, p = .243$. Moreover, regulatory focus and openness to experience were not significantly correlated, $r = .099, p = .570$.

Novelty and Familiarity

Overall, participants reported highest means for interest on products of familiar brand without „new“ labels ($M = 3.59, SD = .72$) followed by familiar brands with „new“ labels ($M = 3.46, SD = .68$), unfamiliar brands without „new“ label ($M = 3.24, SD = .73$), and unfamiliar brands with „new“ labels ($M = 3.22, SD = .66$). For liking and purchase intent, participants reported highest means for products of familiar brands without „new“

label as well ($M_1 = 3.63$, $SD_1 = .51$ and $M_2 = 3.09$, $SD_2 = .78$) followed by familiar brands with „new“ labels ($M_1 = 3.52$, $SD_1 = .45$ and $M_2 = 2.97$, $SD_2 = .70$), unfamiliar brands with „new“ label ($M_1 = 3.33$, $SD_1 = .44$ and $M_2 = 2.73$, $SD_2 = .67$), and unfamiliar brands with „new“ labels ($M_1 = 3.29$, $SD_1 = .51$ and $M_2 = 2.70$, $SD_2 = .77$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Interest, Liking, Purchase Intent, and Familiarity

Independent Variable	Level	<u>Interest</u>		<u>Liking</u>		<u>Purchase Intent</u>		<u>Familiarity</u>	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Novelty	Without „new“	3.41	0.60	3.46	0.39	2.90	0.62	2.87	0.74
Novelty	With „new“	3.34	0.48	3.42	0.31	2.85	0.55	2.85	0.64
Familiarity	Unfamiliar	3.23	0.54	3.31	0.39	2.72	0.60	2.19	0.81
Familiarity	Familiar	3.52	0.54	3.57	0.34	3.03	0.56	3.53	0.65
Openness to Experience	Less open	3.40	0.38	3.43	0.27	2.86	0.41	2.81	0.59
Openness to Experience	More open	3.40	0.53	3.44	0.31	2.90	0.56	2.91	0.66
Regulatory Focus	Prevention	3.35	0.51	3.44	0.33	2.82	0.47	2.74	0.59
Regulatory Focus	Promotion	3.42	0.39	3.44	0.22	2.97	0.51	3.04	0.64

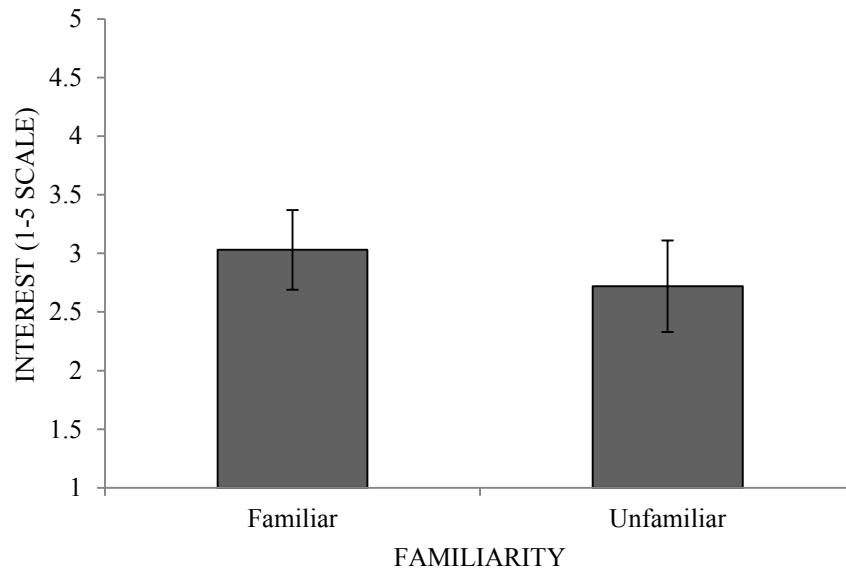


Figure 1. Interest level of familiarity condition of ads.

Error bars represent standard deviations.

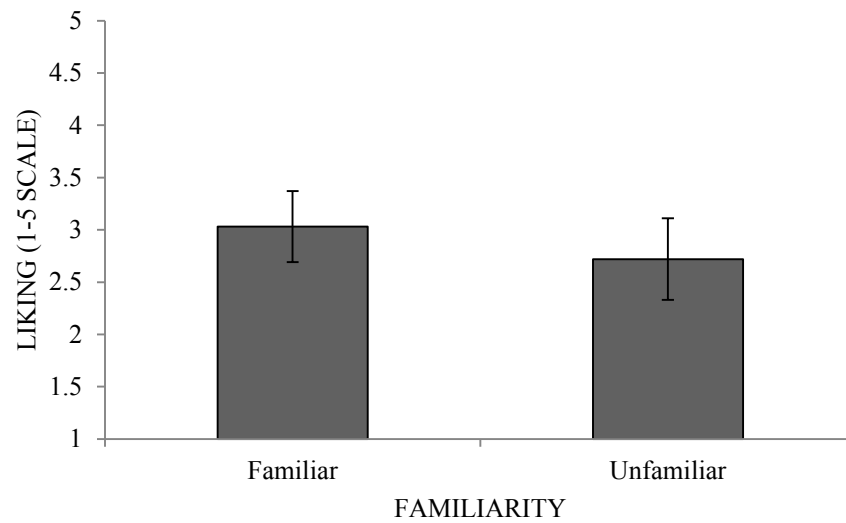


Figure 2. Liking level of familiarity condition of ads.

Error bars represent standard deviations.

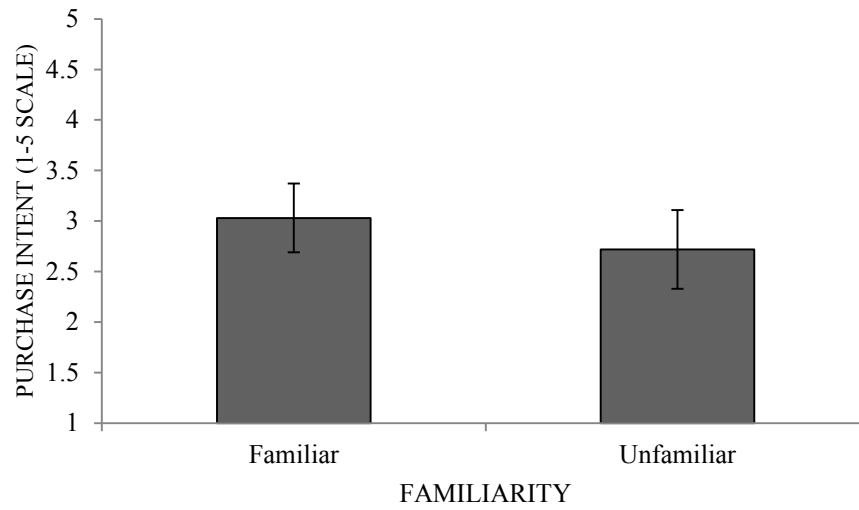


Figure 3. Purchase intent level of familiarity condition of ads.
Error bars represent standard deviations.

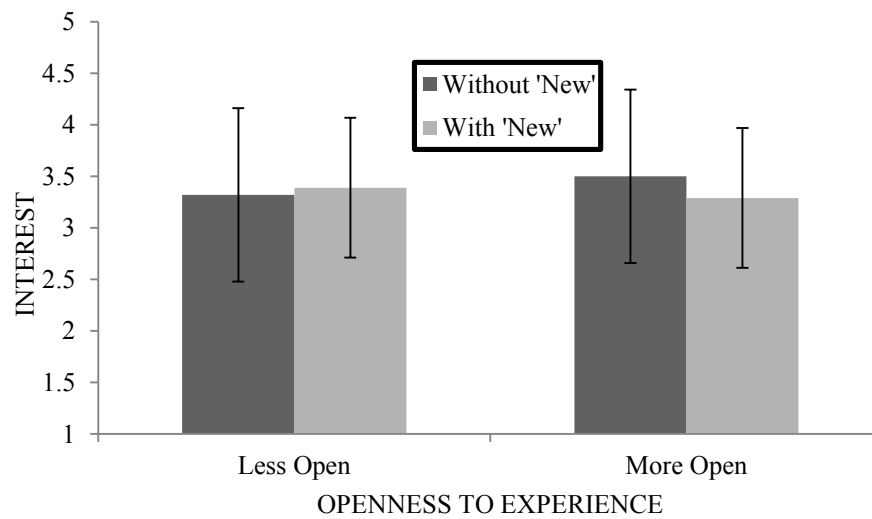


Figure 4. Interaction between novelty and openness to experience on level of interest.
Error bars represent standard deviations.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine how newness, familiarity, and Big Five personality trait openness to experience work together in determining consumer preference. Previous studies have shown people having a preference for stimuli that are moderately new in contrast to those that are either very familiar or very unfamiliar.

A manipulation check on familiarity confirmed that the participants were indeed more familiar with familiar brands. The findings of the current study depicted participants having greater interest for familiar brands than for unfamiliar brands. It also suggested that participants liked familiar brands more than they liked unfamiliar brands, regardless of the presence of „new“ labels. Participants were also found to have higher purchase intent ratings for familiar brands than unfamiliar brands. There was an inconsistency in the effect of novelty and openness to experience, such that more open people were more interested in products without „new“ labels than products with „new“ labels. In contrast, less open people were not affected by the presence of „new“ labels.

We returned to the Openness to Experience scale and interpreted the effect to mean that open people dislike the „new“ label due to its frequent usage among the market place. One of the items on the scale specifically asked the participants to rate whether they see themselves as someone who is curious about many different things. If „new“ labels are widely used, people would gradually become accustomed to it, making „new“

labels a turn-off for open people who prefer varied experiences. However, we decided to be conservative and overlook this effect, as it is inconsistent with previous literature.

It has been hypothesized that the novelty effect would be the greatest when the brands were familiar, as Cacioppo and Petty (1979) claimed that familiarity worked best at the moderate level and Mandler's (1982) incongruity theory which stated that positive judgment was heightened at moderate incongruity. This hypothesis has been partially supported, as the novelty effect has been found to be highest when products were familiar, such that the participants liked new things most when familiar. High interest has been observed among products that were high in familiarity as well, which was inconsistent with what both Cacioppo and Petty (1979), and Mandler (1982) suggested, that interest should be highest at the moderate level of familiarity (when familiar products had the „new“ label). Nonetheless, our findings conformed with Zajonc's (1968) study of the mere exposure effect, which stated that people generally have a preference for things that are familiar to them. We also predicted that such effect would be greater for those high on openness to experience compared to those who are low on openness to experience. This prediction was not supported as well, as previous literatures suggested a high correlation between openness to experience personality trait and preference for novelty, as open individuals actively seek out new and varied experiences (e.g. McCrae and Costa, 1997; Maddi and Berne, 1964; Fiske, 1949). However, a significant interaction was found between novelty and openness to experience, such that those who are more open tend to more interested in products without „new“ label and were not

interested in products with „new“ labels compared to those who are less open which were interested in the opposite. Nevertheless, the interaction was tested further to examine whether such effect was truly significant. A non-significant effect was found. In addition, this interaction was only significant for interest and not the other variables measured, which included liking and purchase intent. Moreover, such finding happened to be consistent with our manipulation check. The presence or absence of the „new“ label was found to have no effect on the participant“s perception of familiarity.

One possible explanation of our failure to replicate some of the findings is that there could be cultural differences in some of the consumer phenomena demonstrated in the literature, which is mostly done in the West.

As an exploratory variable, regulatory focus was predicted to positively correlate with openness to experience, such that those high on openness to experience would be promotion- oriented, while those low on openness to experience would be prevention- oriented. This prediction was once again unsupported. Higgins (1997) found the two variables, regulatory focus and openness to experience, to have a positive correlation. Inconsistently, we found a non-significant positive and low correlation between the two variables. This could be a consequence of usage of different openness scales between the original paper and ours.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of our study was the establishment of manipulation check. This method clarified the effects of our manipulation and the fact that the significant

effects found were not due to extraneous variables. In addition, good control of the experimental setting was taken into consideration. All of the participants completed the questionnaire in classrooms in the same manner, such that the atmosphere was controlled and distraction free. Under systematic control, participants received the same information and standardized format of questionnaires, ensuring consistency of the study. Moreover, the questionnaires were counterbalanced such that overall there was equal number of ads in each condition. In addition to the manipulation check of the independent variables, the use of existing validated scales of personality tests (openness to experience and regulatory focus) provided us with valid results. Furthermore, demographic information was collected last to reduce the likelihood of people being primed by their identity through the information given, which could influence answers to openness to experience and regulatory focus. Most importantly, our study contributes to building an evidence based research which is not commonly done in Thailand, through the strong research methodology and design.

However, this paper is not without flaws. First, the scale used for the openness to experience trait was not identical to the one adopted in the original study, which could potentially be the cause of the non-conforming result in terms of the correlation between regulatory focus and openness to experience. We used the Big Five Inventory Scale developed by John and Srivastava (1999), instead of the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1997) used in the original study. Secondly, although the personality scales used were valid and reliable, questions on the questionnaire which measured the participants’

interest, liking, and purchase preference weren't originated from a valid scale. Moreover, the wording of the questions could have potentially generated confusion among participants. For instance, one of the questions asked participants whether or not they were familiar with the product presented. Due to the potentially misleading wording with the exposure of various brands, participants could be confused in regards to whether they were asked for the level of familiarity they had for products or for brands. Another weakness of this study was the usage of self-report measure. Due to social desirability, participants could have potentially responded positively to the questions in order to identify themselves as more fashionable, in-trend, and up-to-date. Furthermore, with the sample limited to students, our findings could not be generalizable to the whole population. Additionally, counterbalancing could be improved by having the correct distribution of ads among the conditions, such that an equal number of ads for each condition were distributed to each participant.

Implications

The findings of this study could potentially provide a better view on ways to introduce products to a new market target, on rebranding, and for introducing new products in general. Based on our findings, it doesn't hurt to put a „new“ label on a product. However, „new“ labels wouldn't help increase preference among customers that much either. A more successful way to advertise would be to increase the level of familiarity people have for brands. Once customers have been exposed to brands for a period of time, it would be more likely for them to invest in products associated to those

brands, regardless of their level of openness to experience.

Future directions

Future studies could explore other aspects of newness, such as the semantic meaning where words that convey the same meaning and concept as „new“ could be tested instead of using the word itself. Potential audio influences on the novelty effect could be tested as well, such that people’s level of interest could be measured when listening to new music associated with the products presented. Additionally, another variable that could be discovered in future research is culture. As stated earlier, there might be cultural differences that led to the inability to replicate previous findings. Therefore, future research could investigate which consumer phenomena are universal and which are cultural specific.

Firstly, future studies could also improve and build on to our study by testing the participants with the same openness scale as Higgins (1997) had used for his research. This step could potentially test for the proposed correlation between regulatory focus and openness to experience. Secondly, future studies are strongly recommended to test truly randomized samples other than students in order to increase the generalizability of the findings to a larger population. Thirdly, questions listed on the questionnaire which asked for the participants’ level of interest, liking, purchase of intent, and familiarity should be tested for validity and reliability, followed up with the redesign of more comprehensible questions, which could potentially yield more accurate responses. Fourthly, there could be a potential confound of brand loyalty. As the brands used in this study were generally

well-known, participants could have favored those brands due to their commitment to the brands. Thus, future research could address this problem by presenting new products through repeated exposure to manipulate familiarity. Finally, physiological measures, such as EMG, which has been previously used in Winkielman and Cacioppo's (2001) study on preference, could be used in addition to self-reports to obtain a more valid representation of participants' preference.

Conclusion

All in all, we found that familiar brands resulted in a higher interest level than unfamiliar brands. When „new“ labels were added to the condition, people still preferred familiar brands. In addition, this preference for familiarity was evident in people's purchase intent, such that people found familiar brands more interesting even with the presence of „new“ labels. Moreover, people displayed a higher tendency of buying products of familiar brands than unfamiliar brands.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

The Faculty of Psychology at Chulalongkorn University supports the practice of protection of human participants in research. The following will provide you with information about the experiment that will help you in deciding whether or not you wish to participate. If you agree to participate, please be aware that you are free to withdraw at any point throughout the duration of the experiment without any penalty.

In this study we will ask you to complete a set of questionnaires regarding to consumer preference. All information you provide will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name. If for any reason during this study you do not feel comfortable, you may leave the room and receive credit for the time you participated and your information will be discarded. Your participation in this study will require approximately 15 minutes. When this study is complete you will be provided with the results of the experiment if you request them, and you will be free to ask any questions. If you have any further questions concerning this study please feel free to contact us through email: **Enya Chu** at [email given to participants], or **Dr. John McLean** at [email given to participants]. Please indicate with your signature on the space below that you understand your rights and agree to participate in the experiment. Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary. All information will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with any research findings.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Investigator

Print Name

Appendix B: Sample of Familiar Ad Without „New“ Label



Instructions: Please circle the number that best represents how you feel about the product.

1. How interested are you in this product?

Not At All Interested	Not Very Interested	Neutral	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested
1	2	3	4	5

2. How much do you like this product?

Strongly Dislike	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Strongly Like
1	2	3	4	5

3. How likely would you buy this product (now or in the future)?

Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

4. How familiar are you with this product?

Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C: Sample of Familiar Ad With „New“ Label



Instructions: Please circle the number that best represents how you feel about the product.

1. How interested are you in this product?

Not At All Interested	Not Very Interested	Neutral	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested
1	2	3	4	5

2. How much do you like this product?

Strongly Dislike	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Strongly Like
1	2	3	4	5

3. How likely would you buy this product (now or in the future)?

Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

4. How familiar are you with this product?

Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D: Sample of Unfamiliar Ad Without „New“ Label



Instructions: Please circle the number that best represents how you feel about the product.

1. How interested are you in this product?

Not At All Interested	Not Very Interested	Neutral	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested
1	2	3	4	5

2. How much do you like this product?

Strongly Dislike	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Strongly Like
1	2	3	4	5

3. How likely would you buy this product (now or in the future)?

Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

4. How familiar are you with this product?

Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E: Sample of Unfamiliar Ad With „New“ Label



Instructions: Please circle the number that best represents how you feel about the product.

1. How interested are you in this product?

Not At All Interested	Not Very Interested	Neutral	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested
1	2	3	4	5

2. How much do you like this product?

Strongly Dislike	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Strongly Like
1	2	3	4	5

3. How likely would you buy this product (now or in the future)?

Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

4. How familiar are you with this product?

Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Moderately Familiar	Extremely Familiar
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F: Openness to Experience Personality Scale

Instructions: Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

Disagree strongly 1	Disagree a little 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	Agree a little 4	Agree strongly 5
---------------------------	---------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

I see Myself as Someone Who...

- | | |
|---|--|
| ___ 1. Is original, comes up with new ideas | ___ 6. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences |
| ___ 2. Is curious about many different things | ___ 7. Prefers work that is routine |
| ___ 3. Is ingenious, a deep thinker | ___ 8. Likes to reflect, play with ideas |
| ___ 4. Has an active imagination | ___ 9. Has few artistic interests |
| ___ 5. Is inventive | ___ 10. Is sophisticated in art,
music, or literature |

Appendix G: Regulatory Focus Questionnaire

Instructions: This set of questions asks you about specific events in your life.

Please circle the number that best represents how you feel.

1. Compared to most people, are you typically unable to get what you want out of life?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Growing up, would you ever 'cross the line' by doing things that your parents would not tolerate?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. How often have you accomplished things that got you 'psyched' to work even harder?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Did you get on your parents' nerves often when you were growing up?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. How often did you obey rules and regulations that were established by your parents?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Growing up, did you ever act in ways that your parents thought were objectionable?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Do you often do well at different things that you try?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I do not perform as well as I ideally would like to do

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. I have found very few hobbies or activities in my life that capture my interest or motivate me to put effort into them

Never	Rarely	Sometimes but infrequently true	Neutral	Sometimes true	Usually true	Always true
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix H: Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic Information

*(Please note, your information will **not** be sold or given to outside entities. It is for internal use only.)*

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: _____

3. Nationality: _____

4. Religion: _____

5. What do you think this study is about?

6. Do you have any questions/comments/suggestions in mind? Don't hesitate!

7. May we contact you about your input at a later date?

If so, please provide your e-mail address: _____

Thank you ☺
Have a nice day!

Appendix I: Debriefing Sheet

Study Debriefing

What is this study about?

The aim of this study is to examine how newness, familiarity, and Big Five personality trait openness to experience work together in determining consumer preference. Previous studies have shown that people have a preference for stimuli that are moderately new in contrast to those that are either very familiar or very unfamiliar.

How was this investigated?

In this study, you were asked to report your preference for the products advertised by rating the advertisements based on questions regarding your interest, likeability, likelihood of purchase, and familiarity of the product. You were also asked to complete a set of questionnaires that reflect your level of openness to experience and regulatory focus. Regulatory focus measures your promotion and prevention orientation, in which the promotion oriented individuals would be likely to view newness as favorable while the prevention oriented individuals would view newness as unfavorable and would prefer familiarity instead. Lastly, you were asked to provide your demographic information and what you think the study was about.

All participants were asked to perform the same task.

Hypotheses and research question

We expect to find that individuals prefer new products when they are familiar than unfamiliar, and that this is particularly true with those who are more open to experience. Such results would be evident in individuals who are high in promotion focused as such orientation is linked to high levels of openness.

Although there are studies investigating about consumer preference for new products with “new” labels (B. Sung, personal communication, February 10, 2014), our study adds on by examining the interaction between the openness trait and regulatory focus.

Why should this be investigated?

The findings of this study could potentially provide a better view on ways to introduce products to a new market target, better view on rebranding, and introducing new products in general. This also provides a better understanding of people’s willingness to accept new products based on their openness personality trait.

If you would like to know more about what this experiment is about and the results, you may contact us at:

Dr. John McLean: [email given to participants]

Enya Chu: [email given to participants]

Bibliography

Mana Nampanwivat

Mana Nampanwivat is currently an undergraduate student enrolled in the Joint International Psychology Program at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, soon to be graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. During her years at the university, she has been one of the two students in her cohort to be granted a scholarship for academic excellence and had the opportunity to participate in poster presentation of her work at the 13th National Psychology Conference. In 2013, she has graduated from the University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, with a Bachelor of Arts with extended major in psychology as part of the joint program. During her time at UQ, she was awarded with the Dean's Commendation for High Achievement for semester 2 of academic year 2012.

Amita Likittheerakarn

Amita Likittheerakarn is a student in the Joint International Psychology Program at Chulalongkorn University. Her passion is within the field of social psychology, with particular interest in the psychology of marketing and consumer behavior. She received her BA from the University of Queensland as part of the program and is going on to obtain her BSc from Chulalongkorn University. In fulfilling the program requirement, she was given the opportunity to conduct an experiment on the topic of the effects of novelty, familiarity, and openness to experience on consumer preference, and presented her work at the 13th National Psychology Conference in Thailand. She has gained a

thorough understanding regarding the components of psychological research and a wealth of knowledge in her chosen field of study.

Enya Chu

Enya Chu is an undergraduate student pursuing her dual degree in Psychology at the University of Queensland in Australia and Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. Being a recent graduate of the University of Queensland, she is looking forward to receiving her second degree from Chulalongkorn University in July 2014. Furthermore, Enya is excited to pursue further studies in the Master of Business program at the University of Queensland this coming July too.