



Effects of perspective taking and entitlement on consumers



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ABSTRACT

Perspective taking involves mentally putting yourself in another's shoes and has been shown to offer interpersonal benefits, however, despite its use in campaigns targeting adolescents, it has been relatively neglected in marketing. This paper examines the moderating effect of entitlement in young adolescent consumers, focusing on perspective taking encouraging a prosocial behavior. This research extends existing marketing literature which to date has examined perspective taking in relation to adult behavior (Davis et al., 2004; Galinsky et al., 2008; Dietvorst et al., 2009), contributing to the study and understanding of adolescent consumers' consumer behavior.

Three experiments were conducted which demonstrate that perspective taking benefits occur for nonentitled adolescents but not for entitled adolescents. Effects for perspective taking and entitlement are driven by evaluative concern for nonentitled adolescents and a perceived lack of relational closeness for entitled adolescents.

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1. Introduction

Marketing campaigns encouraging adolescent prosocial behavior often focus on the need for adolescents to consider situations from the viewpoint of another person. For example, a current campaign against bullying encourages students to consider how the bullied student feels (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education (2005) advises parents to encourage adolescents to view situations from the perspective of other people. Research examining the effects of considering another's viewpoint is perspective taking, where a person mentally puts themselves in another's shoes. Perspective taking has been shown to result in a range of social benefits such as decreased stereotyping (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) and increased cooperation (Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008), yet it has been neglected in adolescent consumer research. This is surprising given the range of opportunities for perspective taking advocacies to adolescent consumers from health issues to the focus of this article, prosocial behavior. Yet recent research suggests that adolescent perspective taking does not always result in prosocial behavior (Van den Bos, van Dijk, Westenberg, Rombouts, & Crone, 2011). Why might perspective taking be ineffective for some adolescent consumers and effective for others, and what drives these effects?

To shed light on these questions, this research investigates the entitlement mindset (Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010) as a moderator for perspective taking effects on adolescent consumers. Research suggests that a sense of entitlement is increasing amongst today's adolescents (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). Twenge (2006)

suggests that messages promoting entitlement to adolescents are pervasive in the media. This indicates that an entitlement mindset may be a regular occurrence for an adolescent which is a challenge for marketers promoting prosocial behavior.

The research presented in this paper makes a number of contributions to the marketing literature. First, this research is the first to demonstrate that an entitlement mindset moderates the effects of perspective taking on judgments and behavior. It finds that entitled adolescents tend not to respond positively to perspective taking messages. The research extends prior research in marketing that has examined perspective taking in relation to adults (e.g., Dietvorst et al., 2009), but not adolescent consumers. Second, it sheds light on the underlying process for the observed findings. The data suggest that evaluative concern (concern of how other people will evaluate the perspective taker; studies 1 and 2) and relational closeness between the adolescent and another person (study 2) mediate the findings. Third, this research responds to recent calls for research on young people and social marketing advocacies (Lemarié & Chebat, 2013; Mason et al., 2013). Fourth, from a managerial perspective it shows how entitled adolescent consumers can be encouraged to act prosocially by using a relationally close other person.

2. Background

2.1. Early adolescence

Early adolescence is defined as people aged 11 to 14 years (John, 1999). In psychology, a stream of research characterizes adolescence as a developmental period which produces major changes in social behavior, such as moving from competitive to prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, Miller, Shell, McNalley, & Shea, 1991). Developmental

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research suggests that a key influence on adolescent prosocial behavior is the development of perspective taking skills in early adolescence (Eisenberg et al., 1991). For example, Harter (2006) suggests that early adolescents can not only consider another person's perspective but also develop the ability to view themselves from another person's perspective.

In consumer research, John (1999) proposes that early adolescents can engage in social perspective taking. Consumer research highlights that early adolescents have a heightened social awareness regarding others' perspectives (Chaplin & Lowrey, 2010; John, 1999). However no consumer research has studied perspective taking effects for adolescent consumers. Thus, existing theory predicts that early adolescent consumers are able to perspective take, which should lead to more prosocial outcomes than for non-perspective taking adolescents. This research builds on this work by proposing a key moderator of perspective taking effects, the entitlement mindset of early adolescent consumers.

2.2. Perspective taking

Perspective taking involves a person actively imagining a situation from another person's vantage point (Galinsky et al., 2008). Early research in psychology suggested that perspective takers show an increased overlap between mental representations of the self and the target other (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). The implication of these findings is that since perspective taking increases the self–other overlap, a favorable self view should lead to more favorable evaluations of the target other. Recent research, however, suggests that perspective taking does not always generate positive outcomes. Epley and Caruso (2008) argue that a key barrier to perspective taking is the need for a person to overcome their own egocentric perspective. Thus, it seems plausible that highly egocentric individuals would prioritize their own goals and desires even if perspective taking. Consistent with this view, Trötschel, Hüffmeier, Loschelder, Schwartz, and Gollwitzer (2011) showed that perspective taking does not turn egocentric negotiators into prosocial negotiators in zero-sum negotiations.

In marketing, perspective taking has received little attention compared to psychology. In general, marketing research views perspective taking as a cognitive component of empathy (e.g., Dietvorst et al., 2009). Yet few studies have examined what underlies consumer responses to perspective taking prosocial appeals.

2.3. Entitlement mindset as a moderator

This research suggests that an important moderator of when perspective taking will positively influence adolescent consumers is whether they have an entitlement mindset. Entitlement is defined as the pervasive sense that one is more deserving than others (Zitek et al., 2010). In psychology, entitlement research derives from work on narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988) where narcissistic entitlement refers to narcissists (individuals with high levels of self-admiration and self-centeredness) seeing themselves as deserving of more benefits and rights than other people. Entitlement has been measured as a trait representing a stable and pervasive sense that one deserves more than other people (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004). Research has demonstrated a variety of entitlement effects including less interpersonal loyalty and more aggression by entitled individuals towards people who criticize them (Campbell et al., 2004).

In marketing, research on adults has found that entitlement can justify indulgent consumption choices. Kivetz and Zheng (2006) show that consumers who feel entitled by considering their hard work on a prior task are more likely to engage in indulgent consumption for an unrelated decision. An implication of such findings is that entitlement can be viewed as a situational state in rather than solely as a trait. Indeed recent research in psychology examines entitlement as a mindset. For example, Zitek et al. (2010) suggest that entitlement can be activated when people feel wronged. They found that when participants were

instructed to recall a time in their lives when they had been treated unfairly, they acted in a more selfish manner.

In this research, it is proposed the extent to which early adolescents feel entitled determines whether perspective taking will have a positive effect on their prosocial judgments. Because entitlement implies the primacy of the individual relative to others, we anticipate that the beneficial effects of perspective taking will be attenuated for entitled adolescents. In contrast, nonentitled individuals should respond positively to perspective taking.

H1a. Nonentitled individuals will exhibit more prosocial consumption behavior when exposed to the perspective taking message than the nonperspective taking (objective-focus) message.

H1b. Perspective taking differences in adolescent consumer prosocial behavior will be attenuated for entitled individuals.

2.4. Mechanism underlying the effects

It was expected that the extent to which a message generates evaluative concern to mediate the effects. Evaluative concern relates to an individual's concern about how they are evaluated by others (Kivetz, 2005; Vorauer, Martens, & Sasaki, 2009). Evaluative concern has been shown to affect the monitoring of one's behavior to avoid potentially offensive comments or actions (Vorauer et al., 2009). It is argued here that evaluative concern has direct implications for how adolescents respond to perspective taking, and proposed that nonentitled adolescents will experience evaluative concern when perspective taking the plight of a peer. Early adolescence involves an increased sensitivity to peer evaluations (Harter, 2006). Further, Wentzel, Filisetti, and Looney (2007) demonstrate that adolescents engage in prosocial behavior not only for altruistic reasons but also because of the perceived social costs associated with not acting prosocially.

It is not expected that empathy (experiencing another person's emotion) or sympathy (concern for a person's welfare) will drive the responses of adolescents in this research. The contexts that do not result in high levels of suffering, where it seems unlikely that an adolescent would vicariously experience empathy are examined. They could however sympathize with an individual although research indicates that perspective taking may not result in sympathy where an individual is egocentric (Trötschel et al., 2011), as one could argue for entitled individuals. Thus, it is expected that nonentitled adolescent consumers who are exposed to a perspective taking message experience evaluative concern about their prosocial behavior which will result in more prosocial consumption behavior than entitled adolescents. In contrast, entitled adolescents should be less prosocial based on less concern with how other people view their actions. Consistent with this view, entitled people demonstrate negative interpersonal behavior, such as promoting themselves at the expense of others (Zitek et al., 2010). Thus, in contrast to nonentitled adolescents, we expect entitled adolescents who are exposed to a perspective taking message are less likely to experience evaluative concern which will result in less prosocial behavior.

H2. Evaluative concern will mediate the effect of perspective taking and entitlement on early adolescent behavior.

3. Study 1

The purpose of study 1 was to provide an initial test of hypotheses 1a and 1b. Study one examines three alternative explanations. First, sympathy, which can be evoked by perspective taking (Batson et al., 2003; Eisenberg, Zhou, & Koller, 2001). Thus entitled adolescents may experience less sympathy than non-entitled adolescents when perspective taking. Second, negative affect. Entitled adolescents may experience negative affect when processing a message that does not involve focusing on themselves. Third, ease of retrieval, which relates to the ease with

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