



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Intern. J. of Research in Marketing

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijresmar

Replication

A dirty store is a cost forever: The harmful influence of disorderly retail settings on unethical consumer behavior

Saar Bossuyt^{a,*}, Patrick Van Kenhove^a, Tine De Bock^b^a Department of Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Business, Ghent University, Tweekerkenstraat 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium^b Center for Business Management Research, Faculty of Economics and Business, KU Leuven Campus Brussels, Warmoesberg 26, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

First received on June 29, 2015 and was under review for 4½ months

Available online 29 December 2015

Replication Editor: Eric T. Bradlow

Keywords:

Ambient cues

Disorder

Norms

Retail

Unethical consumer behavior

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we employ insights from the field of environmental psychology to investigate whether consumers are more likely to engage in unethical behavior in disorderly retail settings than in orderly retail settings. In particular, we investigate whether the *spreading of disorder* (Keizer, Lindenberg, & Steg, 2008), a theory used to explain norm-violating behavior in urban settings, can also explain norm-violating behavior in retail settings. The results from two behavioral experiments and one online study confirm that consumers shopping in retail settings that deviate from the norm that a store should be clean are more likely to engage in different forms of unethical behavior.

© 2016 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The spreading of disorder, or the idea that urban deterioration stems from minor signs of disorder, has inspired both policy makers and researchers over the past decades (Keizer, Lindenberg, & Steg, 2008; Wilson & Kelling, 1982; Zimbardo, 1973). In a highly influential paper, Keizer et al. (2008) showed in six studies (see Table 3 in Appendix for an overview) that the spreading of disorder originates from a cross-norm effect: People who observe that others violate(d) a certain norm (e.g. littering) are more likely to violate the same or other norms (e.g. stealing). According to Keizer et al. (2008), the mechanism behind this effect is goal-driven: observing norm-violations weakens the salience of the goal to act appropriately, that stimulates people to do the right thing, and strengthens the salience of hedonic and gain goals, that stimulate people to do what makes them feel good (e.g. by being lazy and not making an effort to do the right thing) or to gain resources (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007).

The present study explores whether the spreading of disorder effect drives norm-violating behavior in retail settings too. Building on the norm that a store should be clean, organized, and clutter-free (i.e. orderly), we investigate whether consumers are more likely to engage in norm-violating behavior while shopping in a retail setting that violates this cleanliness norm. Based on the cross-norm effect, we expect that consumers who observe that others (such as staff or other consumers) did not respect the norm that a store should be kept clean are more likely to disrespect other norms as well. Such behavior that violates generally accepted norms of conduct in commercial environments is often referred to as *unethical consumer behavior* (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Vitell & Muncy, 1992). This term covers a wide array of norm-violating behaviors, going from severe (e.g. shoplifting) to less severe (e.g. benefiting from a cashier's mistake) (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Vitell & Muncy, 1992). Our hypothesis is thus

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: S.Bossuyt@ugent.be (S. Bossuyt), Patrick.Vankenhove@ugent.be (P. Van Kenhove), Tine.Debock@kuleuven.be (T. De Bock).

formulated as follows: ‘Consumers shopping in a disorderly retail setting are more likely to engage in unethical behavior than consumers shopping in an orderly retail setting.’

This paper not only replicates the findings of Keizer et al. (2008), but also extends the work in three important ways. First, by investigating the spreading of disorder in controlled circumstances where the likelihood of being sanctioned is equal in the orderly and the disorderly setting, this paper rules out an alternative explanation for the findings of Keizer et al. (2008). In particular, the cues of disorder in the experiments of Keizer et al. (2008) may have conveyed to people that previous norm-violations were left unsanctioned and that they can violate additional norms with impunity (Keizer, Lindenberg, & Steg, 2013). Second, by investigating the impact of disorder cues in retail settings, we are able to investigate a different set of norm-violating behaviors and, in that way, assess the external validity of the findings of Keizer et al. (2008). Third, by exploring consumers’ thoughts and feelings in (dis)orderly retail settings, we gain insight into the mechanism behind the spreading of disorder.

2. Study 1

2.1. Procedure

The first experiment was set up to replicate the spreading of disorder effect in a retail setting. A sales booth selling bags of sweets was set up in the halls of a Western European university restaurant (see Fig. 1 in Appendix). This location was chosen because it regularly features sales booths. The experiment consisted of an orderly and a disorderly condition. In the orderly condition, the environment surrounding the sales booth was clean and the bags of sweets were orderly arranged. In the disorderly condition, the sales booth was surrounded by clutter and the bags of sweets were randomly scattered across the setting, which clearly deviates from the norm of how a clean sales booth should look like. We ran an online pre-test ($N = 37$; 23 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 22.84$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.94$) to determine whether the disorder manipulation was successful. Participants saw pictures of either the disorderly ($n = 19$) or the orderly ($n = 18$) sales booth and indicated to what extent they agreed with the statement “this sales booth gives an orderly impression” on a five point Likert scale, ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree.” The results confirmed that the disorderly sales booth ($M = 1.11$, $SD = .32$) was rated significantly less orderly than the orderly sales booth ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.33$), $t(18.81) = 5.90$, $p < .001$.

The sales booth was manned by two sales clerks, each positioned behind a table. One of them was occupied with the selling process, answering questions and referring customers to the second sales clerk, who was occupied with the cash register. A customer would thus choose a bag with the first sales clerk and then check it out with the second sales clerk. One bag of sweets was priced €1.20, which was clearly displayed on the sales booth. Nevertheless, the sales clerk would consistently undercharge customers €0.20 and say out loud “That will be €1 please.” Not reporting a cashier’s mistake in your favor is classified as unethical consumer behavior (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Vitell & Muncy, 1992). The other sales clerk kept track whether customers corrected the mistake made in their favor (yes = 1, no = 0) and wrote down the sales booth’s condition (1 = disorderly, 0 = orderly).

2.2. Sample

In total, 291 customers (students and university staff) bought a bag of sweets from our sales booth. Sixty-nine participants were excluded from the analysis because they paid the amount due before the cashier had the opportunity to make a mistake in their favor. In addition, 18 participants were not included in the sample because they frequented the sales booth in group. Engagement in unethical behavior can be influenced by the presence of others (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009), and we wanted to avoid this potentially confounding factor. Our final sample consisted of 204 customers (79 females), of which 96 bought something from the disorderly sales booth.

2.3. Results and discussion

Confirming our hypothesis, results showed that customers shopping in the disorderly retail setting were more likely to engage in unethical behavior than customers shopping in the orderly retail setting: 59.4% of the customers did not report the cashier’s mistake in the disorderly retail setting compared to 43.5% in the orderly retail setting, $\chi^2(1, N = 204) = 5.11$, $p = 0.024$, $V = 0.16$.

3. Study 2

The rationale for the second study was twofold. First, we wanted to show the robustness of the effect by replicating it in a different retail environment and with a different outcome variable. Second, we wanted to rule out the possibility that the findings from Study 1 might have been affected by self-selection bias. In particular, the disorderly sales booth might have been more appealing to nonchalant consumers who are probably less likely to notice a miscalculated bill.

We addressed both objectives by changing the environment from field to lab (to avoid self-selection bias), and by altering the outcome variable to an active form of unethical behavior. We created a lab store that was set up either orderly or disorderly and explored whether the degree of unethical behavior was related to the store’s condition (see Fig. 2 in Appendix). We set up

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/880067>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/880067>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)