

Research Dialogue

Mindsets matter: Implications for branding research and practice

Deborah Roedder John ^{a,*}, Ji Kyung Park ^{b,1}

^a Department of Marketing, University of Minnesota, United States

^b Department of Business Administration, University of Delaware, United States

Accepted by Joseph R. Priester, Editor

Received 24 June 2015; accepted 24 June 2015

Available online 27 June 2015

Abstract

Implicit theories provide an important framework to help understand consumer behavior. In this article, we focus on applications within the context of branding research and practice. First, we explore application areas of relevance to branding practitioners, such as brand advertising and positioning, brand extensions, brand architecture, and brand dilution. We situate propositions forwarded by Murphy and Dweck into traditional areas of branding research to discuss their importance to branding and suggest extensions of these ideas. Second, we consider application areas of personal relevance to consumers. We discuss how mindsets can affect the benefits consumers derive from using brands, such as self-enhancement, self-threat recovery, and overcoming difficult challenges in their lives.

© 2015 Society for Consumer Psychology. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Mindsets

Introduction

More than two decades of research on mindsets have produced a vast and fascinating set of insights about the importance of beliefs about the fixed versus malleable nature of human characteristics. Researchers have found that these mindsets affect our lives in many ways, including self-regulation (Dweck, 2000), self-esteem (Robins & Pals, 2002), stereotype threats (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002), academic or intellectual challenges (Dweck & Elliott, 1983; Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, & Wan, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998), social challenges (Erdley, Cain, Loomis, Dumas-Hines, & Dweck, 1997), romantic relationships (Knee, 1998; Knee, Nanayakkara, Vietor, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2001), and social perception (Levy, Plaks, & Dweck, 1999). This seemingly simple difference in fixed and growth mindsets explains a wide swath of human motivation and behavior.

Despite the importance of fixed versus growth mindsets in understanding human behavior, only a handful of studies have applied these concepts to consumer behavior. These initial forays—showing how fixed and growth mindsets influence consumer response to brand advertising, brand extensions, and brand personalities—have proven the usefulness of mindset research in explaining phenomena of importance to our field. The Murphy and Dweck (2016—in this issue) article, which includes an abundance of good ideas for applying the concept of mindsets to marketing issues, should be an important catalyst for moving mindset research further into consumer research and marketing practice.

To encourage further work in this area, we identify and discuss areas of application for mindset theory within the context of branding research and practice. As noted earlier, topics in the branding area have already proven to be a fertile ground for the application of mindset research into consumer research. First, we explore application areas of relevance to branding practitioners, such as brand advertising and positioning, brand extensions, brand architecture, and brand dilution. In doing so, we situate ideas forwarded by Murphy and Dweck into traditional areas of branding

* Corresponding author at: University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management 3-150, 321 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, United States.

E-mail address: djohn@umn.edu (D.R. John).

¹ Both authors contributed equally to this manuscript.

research and practice to stimulate additional thoughts about their importance to branding and suggest extensions of these ideas. We also provide new ideas about how mindsets might affect consumer preference for brand architecture and how mindsets might affect the likelihood of brand dilution when consumers have negative brand or service experiences.

Second, we consider application areas of personal relevance to consumers. We discuss how mindsets can affect the benefits consumers derive from using brands, such as self-enhancement, self-threat recovery, and overcoming difficult challenges in their lives. In their article, Murphy and Dweck focus more on applications of relevance to organizations, who can benefit by applying mindset research to more effectively market their products to consumers and to enhance the work lives of their employees. In contrast, we focus on the benefits that consumers personally derive from using brands, and how that differs for individuals with fixed versus growth mindsets. In particular, we forward the idea that brands can serve an especially important role for individuals with fixed mindsets, who compared to individuals with growth mindsets, are at a disadvantage in building self-esteem, recovering from negative feedback and failure, and completing challenging tasks that require persistence and effort.

Implications for branding practice

Building and managing brands are key elements of marketing strategy (Keller, 2012). For many firms, brands are one of their most important assets. Recent brand valuations indicate Apple as the most valued brand in the world (\$98.3 billion), followed by Google (\$93.3 billion) and Coca-Cola (\$79.2 billion) (Interbrand, 2014). Brands also provide a strategic advantage for the firm. Competitors can often copy product features and discount prices, but cannot match a brand's distinctive positioning, personality, and special relationship with customers. And, finally, brands provide a platform for launching new products and services. Brands can be extended from the current product line(s) to new product/service categories, new consumer targets, and new applications. Well-regarded brands not only have high awareness with consumers, but are also associated with positive images (e.g., quality, reliability, prestige, and innovative) that can transfer to new products and services.

However, effectively building and managing brands requires consideration of many factors that influence how consumers relate to brands—including characteristics of the brand, factors in the competitive space, and characteristics of consumers. Within this context, differences in mindsets among consumers are likely to affect the way firms should build and manage brands. Below, we discuss a number of implications for firms in the context of five traditional areas of branding practice and research: (1) brand advertising; (2) brand positioning; (3) brand extensions; (4) brand architecture; and (5) brand dilution.

Brand advertising

One of the most promising areas for applying the notion of mindsets to consumer behavior is the area of brand advertising. The basic notion is that consumers with a fixed mindset, who

believe their personal qualities are fixed and cannot be developed through their own efforts, are more responsive to advertising messages that incorporate a signaling appeal for the brand. For example, advertising copy can highlight the use of the advertised product as a way for consumers to signal to others that they possess a trait(s) associated with the brand. In contrast, consumers with a growth mindset, who believe that their personal qualities are malleable and can be developed if they exert effort, should be more responsive to advertising messages that incorporate a self-improvement appeal for the brand. Illustrative of this approach would be advertising copy highlighting the use of the advertised product as a way to improve oneself to become more like the trait(s) associated with the brand.

Evidence to this effect has been reported in a study testing two different approaches for advertising a line of eye shadow marketed under the Victoria's Secret brand (Park & John, 2012). One focused on the brand's ability to help users signal their sense of fashion and good taste to others (“*there's no better way to show others that you have a modern up-to-date sense of beauty*”), while the other focused on the brand's ability to help users learn how to use make-up more effectively (“*there's no better way for you to learn how to have a modern up-to-date sense of beauty*”). The results showed that consumers with a fixed mindset preferred the first advertisement capitalizing on the *signaling* opportunities Victoria's Secret provides, while consumers with a growth mindset preferred the second advertisement capitalizing on the *self-improvement* opportunities the brand can offer.

These findings are particularly relevant for firms marketing products whose main benefit is to empower learning, growth, or change. Many consumer product categories incorporate these self-improvement themes. For example, women's cosmetics are typically sold as a way to improve one's appearance. Education programs, which include language learning products such as Rosetta Stone and even MBA programs, commonly stress the growth of one's knowledge and abilities as a primary benefit to potential consumers. Because these self-improvement benefits are most naturally appealing to consumers with a growth mindset, firms need to be especially careful about marketing these types of products and services to consumers with a fixed mindset. Advertising copy needs to incorporate benefits that appeal to consumers with a fixed mindset, such as being able to signal their sense of fashion or knowledge to others. For example, the advertising copy designed by Park and John (2012) highlighted the signaling value of the Victoria's Secret eye shadow compact, which featured a large distinct Victoria's Secret logo. For educational programs, advertising copy could highlight the signaling value of the brand name for work resumes, job interviews, and career networking.

Brand positioning

Related to our discussion of brand advertising is the topic of brand positioning. As an important part of brand building, positioning identifies the brand benefits that will accrue to consumers who use the brand, and establishes how the brand's benefits are different from competitor brands.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/882009>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/882009>

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