

Bull Fighter or Spin Doctor? When Cues of Brand Liking Lose Their Truth Value

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This paper shows that cues of brand liking are not always accepted at face value, but are instead scrutinized for their diagnosticity when consumers have reason to doubt their truth value. Such doubts may arise either because consumers question the brand's motives (experiment 1) or because the valence of the cues does not correspond with their self-views (experiment 2), leading consumers to disregard those cues that they suspect may be strategically managed or "spun" to convey a desired impression (i.e., friendly brand actions). In contrast, self-brand similarity cues reliably exert a positive influence on brand attraction, presumably because consumers believe these cues are less likely to be strategically managed and, thus, are more diagnostic of the brand's true liking.

Bull Fighter or Spin Doctor? When Cues of Brand Liking Lose Their Truth Value

Consumers' opinions of brands are based on several factors. According to Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), consumers conceptualize brands as a host of associations, which include user imagery, employee imagery, marketing communications, etc. Thus, factors that affect the valence of these associations, such as positive or negative interactions with brand employees or users, may have implications for consumers' opinions of brands themselves. Extending this conceptualization further, other research has shown that consumers develop parasocial relationships with brands and that the nature of these relationships affects how consumers value and interact with brands over time (e.g., Fournier 1998; Aaker et al. 2004).

Exploring the premise that brands may serve as active relationship partners, recent research suggests that some cues by brands create the perception that the brand likes the consumer—cues that then lead the consumer to become more attracted to the brand (Harding 2011). Drawing from research on interpersonal attraction that shows that people are more attracted to those whom they believe like them (Eastwick and Finkel 2009), this work demonstrates that consumers are generally more attracted to brands that exhibit cues of liking for them, either through friendly brand actions (i.e., the friendly actions of brand employees or users; Backman and Secord 1959; Byrne and Rhamey 1965) or self-brand similarity (i.e., perceived similarity to the brand or other brand users; Condon and Crano 1988). Further, this work shows that the effect of these cues is mediated by the perceived liking of the brand for the self. However, the basis of consumer-brand relationships is consumption, so consumers must wonder at times whether these cues of liking are indeed sincere. That is, are these cues being used to

“spin” an image of the brand as a caring relationship partner, or are they the opposite—“bull-fighting” indicators of the brand’s true liking for the self?

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

If it is truly consumers’ perceptions of brand liking that lead to brand attraction, factors that raise doubts about the truth value of brand liking cues should affect their diagnosticity. Drawing from impression management theory, it is proposed that certain cues of brand liking may be perceived as more diagnostic of the brand’s true liking than others, particularly among consumers who have reason to doubt their truth value or sincerity. According to Goffman (1959/1973), people have lay theories about the extent to which the impressions others convey are governed by appearances versus reality. Frontstage cues are those that people believe are governed by a concern for appearances, and thus are strategically managed to convey a desired impression. In contrast, backstage cues are those that people believe reflect the impression maker’s true self, and thus are not managed to convey a desired impression. According to Grayson and Shulman (2000), brands—represented by managers, employees, and users—have front and back stages just as people do, and “consumers examine [these] cues ... and make a decision about whether this is frontstage or backstage information” (60; see also Grayson 1998). Applied in the present context, the actions of a brand may be considered frontstage cues because they are perceived to be more controllable by the brand and thus potentially managed to convey a desired impression, whereas self-brand similarity may be considered a backstage cue because it is perceived to be less controllable by the brand and thus reflective of the brand’s true disposition (Weiner 1985, 1986). Thus, it is proposed that when consumers have reason to doubt the truth

value of brand liking cues, self-brand similarity will be considered diagnostic of the brand's true liking, whereas friendly brand actions will not.

One reason why consumers may doubt the truth value of brand liking cues is that they question the motives behind these cues. A factor that affects consumers' beliefs about brand motives is their level of persuasion knowledge, or their perceived ability to recognize marketers' motives and persuasion tactics (Friestad and Wright 1994). People with low persuasion knowledge are relatively less suspicious of marketers' motives and actions, and therefore are less concerned about being unduly influenced by these actions. In contrast, people with high persuasion knowledge are relatively more suspicious of marketers' motives and actions—the latter of which they view as attempts at persuasion—and therefore are more concerned about being unduly influenced these actions. Thus, because consumers with low persuasion knowledge are not finely attuned to marketers' persuasion tactics, it is proposed that they will have no reason to doubt cues of brand liking. In contrast, because consumers with high persuasion knowledge are inclined to view marketers' motives as self-serving, it is proposed that they will be skeptical of brand liking cues and thus will only be receptive to those that they believe are unlikely to be strategically managed by the brand to convey a desired impression. Thus, it is predicted that:

H1: The diagnosticity of different brand liking cues for brand attraction will depend on consumers' persuasion knowledge. Specifically, brand liking cues that are less likely to be strategically managed by the brand (i.e., self-brand similarity) will be diagnostic for all consumers (H1a). In contrast, brand liking cues that are more likely to be managed by the brand (i.e., brand actions) will be diagnostic for

consumers with low persuasion knowledge (H1b), but not for consumers with high persuasion knowledge (H1c).

A second reason why consumers may doubt the truth value of brand liking cues is that such cues do not correspond with their self-views. Self-esteem has been shown to affect people's expectations for and acceptance of positive interpersonal feedback from their relationship partners (Swann 1987). In a nonconscious effort to maintain cognitive consistency and belief in a predictable world, people with high self-esteem expect, accept, and even solicit favorable feedback, whereas people with low self-esteem do not. Further, research on risk regulation in interpersonal relationships has shown that people with low self-esteem feel threatened by relationship partners' positive regard and in turn devalue those partners as a means of neutralizing the threat (Murray et al. 1998). However, these same authors note that self-other similarity serves as a cue to accept favorable feedback because "similarity allows [people with low self-esteem] to justify why their partner might value and care for them" (Murray, Holmes, and Collins 2006, 649; see also Condon and Crano 1988). Thus, because consumers with high self-esteem expect (and readily accept) positive interpersonal feedback, it is proposed that they will have no reason to doubt cues of brand liking. In contrast, because consumers with low self-esteem do not expect (and have difficulty accepting) positive interpersonal feedback, it is proposed that they will be skeptical of brand liking cues and thus will only be receptive to those that they believe are indicative of the brand's true liking. Thus, it is predicted that:

H2: The diagnosticity of different brand liking cues for brand attraction will depend on consumers' self-esteem. Specifically, brand liking cues that are less likely to be strategically managed by the brand (i.e., self-brand similarity) will be diagnostic for all consumers (H2a). In contrast, brand liking cues that are more

likely to be managed by the brand (i.e., brand actions) will be diagnostic for consumers with high self-esteem (H2b), but not for consumers with low self-esteem (H2c).

EXPERIMENT 1: PERSUASION KNOWLEDGE AND DIAGNOSTICITY OF BRAND LIKING CUES

The objective of this experiment was to determine whether the diagnosticity of different brand liking cues varies in accord with participants' persuasion knowledge, or their perceived ability to recognize marketers' motives and persuasion tactics (H1). The hypothesis was that brand liking cues that are less likely to be strategically managed by the brand to convey a desired impression would be diagnostic for all consumers (H1a), whereas brand liking cues that are more likely to be managed by the brand would be diagnostic for consumers with low persuasion knowledge (LPK) (H1b), but not for consumers with high persuasion knowledge (HPK) (H1c). Thus, I predicted that all participants would more attracted to brands they perceived to be similar (vs. dissimilar) to themselves (i.e., an unmanaged cue), whereas only participants with LPK would be more attracted to brands that exhibited friendly (vs. neutral) brand actions (i.e., a managed cue).

Method

Four hundred twenty-four adults from a U.S. national sample participated in an online survey and were entered into a lottery with a 1/50 chance of winning a \$25 gift card. First,

participants' persuasion knowledge was assessed using the persuasion knowledge subscale of the Consumer Self-Confidence Scale (six-item scale; Bearden, Hardesty, and Rose 2001). This scale includes items such as "I know when a marketer is pressuring me to buy" and "I can see through sales gimmicks used to get consumers to buy" (1 = extremely uncharacteristic [of me]; 7 = extremely characteristic [of me]). Next, the extent to which participants' believed they were similar to Chevrolet on the basis of shared attitudes was measured by first asking participants to report their attitudes toward eight topics (musical tastes, political views, etc.) and then, after a filler task, asking them to report their beliefs about Chevrolet's attitudes toward those same topics (adapted from Byrne 1971; see appendix A). (Chevrolet was selected because it was expected to elicit varied self-brand similarity assessments.) Self-brand attitude discrepancies that fell within one standard deviation were considered similar attitudes, the sum of which comprised the self-brand similarity index.

Participants then read one of two brand action scenarios in which brand users served as the vehicle representing the brand's actions. In the friendly brand actions scenario, the Chevrolet owners at an informational session were affable and eager to get to know the participant, whereas in the neutral brand actions scenario, the Chevrolet owners were polite but somewhat aloof (see appendix B). Finally, participants evaluated the brand using a two-item, seven-point scale (1 = unfavorable, dislike; 7 = favorable, like).

Results

To determine whether the brand actions and self-brand similarity cues had the intended effect, a regression analysis was conducted in which participants' perceptions of liking from

brand users ($r = .62$) were regressed on persuasion knowledge ($\alpha = .91$; centered), a brand actions dummy variable, self-brand similarity (centered), and all higher-order interaction terms. As expected, the results revealed a main effect of brand actions, such that participants in the friendly condition thought that the brand users liked them more than participants in the neutral condition ($M = 4.90$ vs. 4.06 ; $\beta = .36$, $t(416) = 8.01$, $p < .001$). The results also revealed a marginal main effect of self-brand similarity, such that the more similar participants perceived themselves to be to the brand, the more they thought that the brand users liked them ($\beta = .11$, $t(416) = 1.68$, $p = .09$). No other effects were significant ($ps > .30$).

To determine whether the diagnosticity of different brand liking cues (i.e., brand actions vs. self-brand similarity) varies in accord with participants' persuasion knowledge, brand attitude ($r = .97$) was examined using the same regression model. As expected, the results revealed a main effect of self-brand similarity, such that the more similar participants perceived themselves to be to Chevrolet, the more favorably they evaluated the brand ($\beta = .41$, $t(416) = 6.58$, $p < .001$; see figure 1, top panel). Thus, self-brand similarity was diagnostic for all participants regardless of their level of persuasion knowledge (H1a). The results also revealed a main effect of persuasion knowledge, such that participants evaluated the brand more favorably the higher their level of persuasion knowledge ($\beta = .16$, $t(416) = 2.47$, $p = .01$).

Insert figure 1 about here

Finally, the results revealed the predicted persuasion knowledge \times brand actions interaction ($\beta = -.18$, $t(416) = -2.84$, $p = .01$; see figure 1, bottom panel; no other effects were significant, $ps > .20$). To explore this interaction, a spotlight analysis was performed at one standard deviation above and below the mean of persuasion knowledge (Hayes 2013, PROCESS

model 1; see also Aiken and West 1991; Fitzsimons 2008), which showed that participants with LPK evaluated Chevrolet more favorably when brand users behaved in a friendly (vs. neutral) way toward them ($B = .49, t = 2.14, p < .05$) (H1b). In contrast, participants with HPK evaluated the brand somewhat less favorably when brand users behaved in a friendly (vs. neutral) way toward them ($B = -.43, t = -1.88, p = .06$) (H1c). Further, we examined the slopes of persuasion knowledge at each level of brand actions. When brand users behaved in a friendly way toward participants, those with LPK (vs. HPK) evaluated Chevrolet marginally more favorably, although this slope was not significant ($B = -.19, t = -1.52, p = .13$). In contrast, when brand users behaved in a neutral way toward participants, those with LPK (vs. HPK) evaluated Chevrolet less favorably ($B = .33, t = 2.47, p = .01$).

Discussion

The results of experiment 1 show that the diagnosticity of different brand liking cues (i.e., brand actions vs. self-brand similarity) for brand attraction varies in accord with participants' persuasion knowledge (H1). For participants who were not finely attuned to marketers' persuasion tactics (i.e., those with LPK), both perceived self-brand similarity and friendly brand actions increased brand attraction (H1a and H1b). This finding conceptually replicates past research (Harding 2011) using a U.S. national sample and suggests that when consumers *do not* have reason to doubt the truth value of brand liking cues, any cue of brand liking will be diagnostic and increase brand attraction. In contrast, for participants who readily interpreted friendly brand actions as persuasion attempts by the brand (i.e., those with HPK), only perceived self-brand similarity increased brand attraction (H1a and H1c). This finding suggests that when

consumers *do* have reason to doubt the truth value of brand liking cues, only those that are not likely to be strategically managed by the brand to convey a desired impression will be diagnostic and increase brand attraction. Further, the fact HPK (vs. LPK) participants were especially attracted to similar brands suggests that when consumers have reason to doubt brand liking cues, sincere cues may be particularly diagnostic.

Finally, the present results support the view that brand actions and self-brand similarity influence brand attraction by virtue of their implications for perceived brand liking rather than through an associative learning process by which the valence of the cue is simply transferred to the brand. This conclusion follows from the finding that certain cues of brand liking were diagnostic for all participants whereas others were not (De Houwer et al. 2001; Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2006) and offers support for the central premise that friendly brand actions and self-brand similarity serve as cues of brand liking, which in turn increase brand attraction.

EXPERIMENT 2: SELF-ESTEEM AND DIAGNOSTICITY OF BRAND LIKING CUES

The objective of this experiment was to determine whether the diagnosticity of different brand liking cues varies in accord with participants' self-esteem, or their expectations for and acceptance of positive feedback from relationship partners (H2). The hypothesis was that brand liking cues that are less likely to be strategically managed by the brand to convey a desired impression would be diagnostic for all consumers (H2a), whereas brand liking cues that are more likely to be managed by the brand would be diagnostic for consumers with high self-esteem (HSE) (H2b), but not for consumers with low self-esteem (LSE) (H2c). Thus, I predicted that all participants would be more attracted to brands they perceived to be similar (vs. dissimilar) to

themselves (i.e., an unmanaged cue), whereas only participants with HSE would be more attracted to brands that exhibited friendly (vs. neutral) brand actions (i.e., a managed cue).

Method

One hundred forty-five students from a Midwestern university participated in an online survey and were entered into a lottery with a 1/50 chance of winning a \$25 gift card. The procedure is identical to that used in experiment 1 except that instead of assessing participants' persuasion knowledge, their self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (10-item scale; Rosenberg 1965). This scale includes items such as "I am able to do things as well as most other people" and "I feel I do not have much to be proud of" (1 = strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree). Analyses are also identical to those used in experiment 1, but, for the sake of brevity, only abbreviated findings are reported.

Results

Regression results revealed a marginally significant effect of self-brand similarity, such that participants evaluated Chevrolet more favorably the more similar they perceived themselves to be to the brand ($\beta = .16$, $t(137) = 1.89$, $p = .06$; see figure 2, top panel). The results also revealed a brand actions \times self-brand similarity interaction ($\beta = -.16$, $t(137) = -1.96$, $p = .05$), conceptually replicating past research (Harding 2011). Specifically, a spotlight analysis showed that when Chevrolet was perceived to display any cue of brand liking, either through friendly brand actions or self-brand similarity, participants evaluated the brand more favorably than when

the brand did not display such cues (i.e., the neutral brand actions, dissimilar condition).

Importantly, these effects were qualified by the predicted three-way interaction ($\beta = -.17$, $t(137) = -2.01$, $p = .05$; see figure 2, bottom panel; no other effects were significant, $ps > .35$). Again, a spotlight analysis showed that whereas self-brand similarity was diagnostic for all participants regardless of their level of self-esteem (H2a), friendly brand actions were diagnostic for participants with high self-esteem (H2b), but not for participants with low self-esteem (H2c).

Insert figure 2 about here

Discussion

The results of experiment 2 show that the diagnosticity of different brand liking cues (i.e., brand actions vs. self-brand similarity) for brand attraction varies in accord with participants' self-esteem (H2). For participants who had positive self-views and therefore were likely to expect positive feedback from their relationship partners (i.e., those with HSE), both perceived self-brand similarity and friendly brand actions increased brand attraction (H2a and H2b). This finding is comparable to that from experiment 1 in which participants with LPK were receptive to both types of brand liking cues, and suggests that when consumers *do not* have reason to doubt these cues, either because they correspond with consumers' positive self-views (i.e., HSE, experiment 2) or because consumers do not suspect that the brand is trying to persuade them (i.e., LPK, experiment 1), any cue of brand liking will be diagnostic and increase brand attraction.

In contrast, for participants who had negative self-views and therefore were not likely to expect positive feedback from their relationship partners (i.e., those with LSE), only perceived

self-brand similarity increased brand attraction (H2a and H2c). This finding is analogous to that from experiment 1 in which participants with HPK were only receptive self-brand similarity cues, and suggests that when consumers *do* have reason to doubt the truth value of brand liking cues, either because they do not correspond with consumers' negative self-views (i.e., LSE, experiment 2) or because consumers suspect that the brand is trying to persuade them (i.e., HPK, experiment 1), only those cues of brand liking that they believe are unlikely to be managed by the brand will be diagnostic and increase brand attraction. Thus, either beliefs about the brand (experiment 1) or beliefs about the self (experiment 2) may prompt consumers to question the truth value of brand liking cues, leading them to disregard those cues that they suspect may be strategically managed by the brand to convey a desired impression or consumption outcome.

CONCLUSION

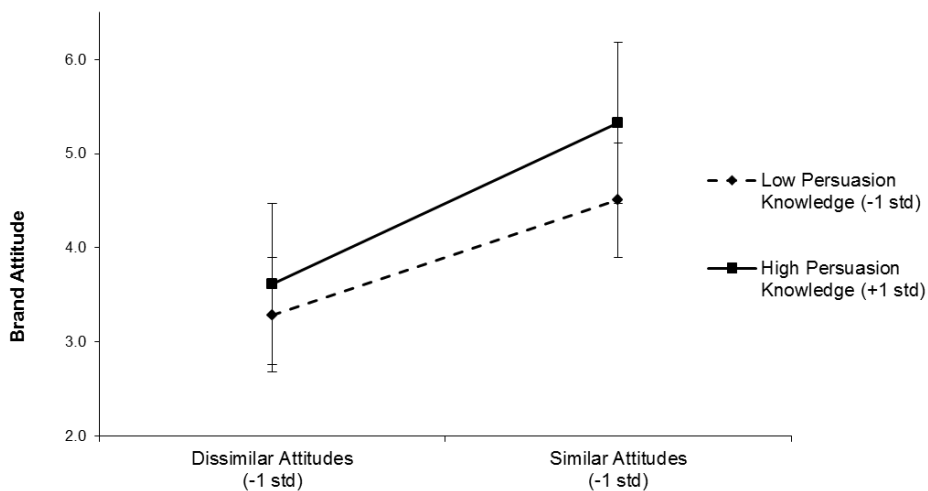
Collectively, these results reveal that cues of brand liking are not always accepted at face value, but are instead scrutinized for their diagnosticity when consumers have reason to doubt their truth value. Such doubts may arise either because consumers question the brand's motives (i.e., when they have high persuasion knowledge, experiment 1) or because the valence of the cues does not correspond with their self-views (i.e., when they have low self-esteem, experiment 2). In other words, either beliefs about the brand or beliefs about the self may prompt consumers to question the truth value of brand liking cues, leading them to disregard those cues (i.e., friendly brand actions) that they suspect may be strategically managed or "spun" to convey a desired impression. In contrast, self-brand similarity cues reliably exert a positive influence on brand attraction, presumably because consumers believe these cues are less likely to be

strategically managed and thus are more diagnostic of the brand's true liking. Therefore, finding ways to harness these "bull-fighting" cues will be an important task for brands seeking to foster authentic, long-lasting relationships with their customers.

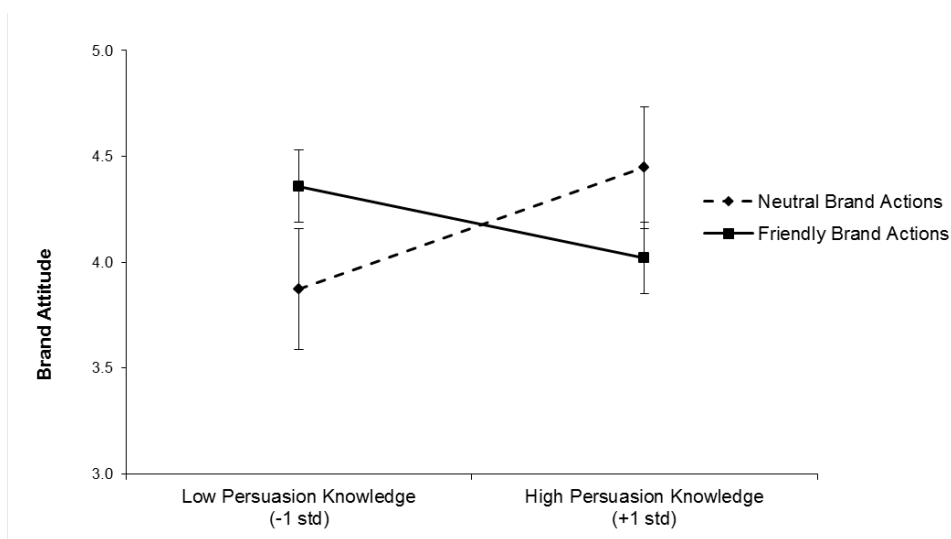
FIGURES

FIGURE 1:

SELF-BRAND SIMILARITY CUES DIAGNOSTIC REGARDLESS OF LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM (EXPERIMENT 1)

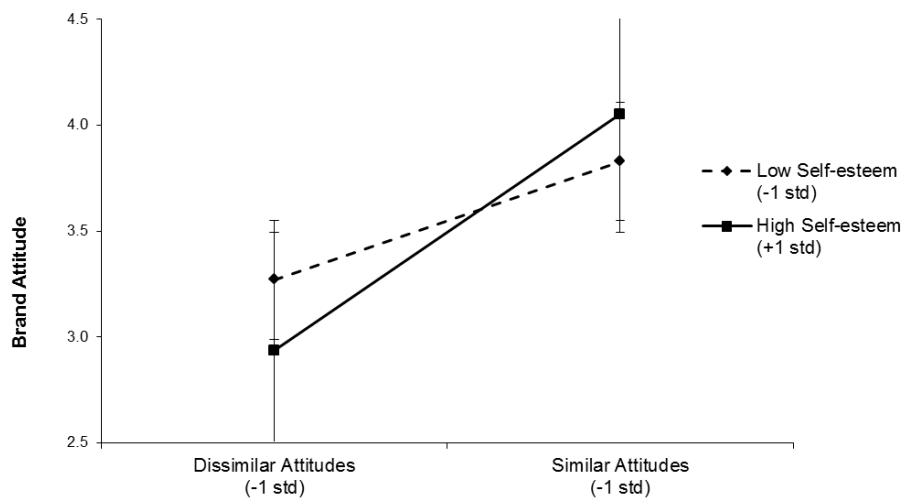


TRUTH VALUE OF BRAND ACTIONS CUES QUESTIONED BY PARTICIPANTS WITH HIGH PERSUASION KNOWLEDGE (EXPERIMENT 1)

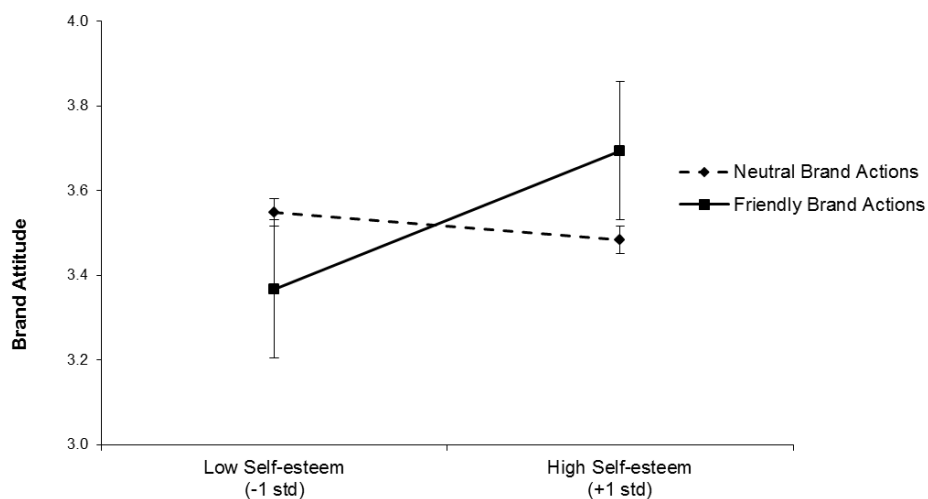


NOTE.—Larger model includes self-brand similarity as a third independent variable; thus, self-brand similarity and all inclusive higher-order interaction terms included in spotlight analysis as covariates.

FIGURE 2:
 SELF-BRAND SIMILARITY CUES DIAGNOSTIC
 REGARDLESS OF LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM (EXPERIMENT 2)



TRUTH VALUE OF BRAND ACTIONS CUES QUESTIONED
 BY PARTICIPANTS WITH LOW SELF-ESTEEM (EXPERIMENT 2)



NOTE.—Larger model includes self-brand similarity as a third independent variable; thus, self-brand similarity and all inclusive higher-order interaction terms included in spotlight analysis as covariates.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SELF-BRAND SIMILARITY MEASURE

(ADAPTED FROM SURVEY OF ATTITUDES, BYRNE 1971)

(EXPERIMENTS 1 AND 2)

Own Position on Various Attitude Issues

For each topic listed below, please select the response that best reflects your personal attitude.

Belief in God*

1. I strongly believe that there is a God.
2. I believe that there is a God.
3. I feel that perhaps there is a God.
4. I feel that perhaps there is no God.
5. I believe that there is no God.
6. I strongly believe that there is no God.

Classical Music

1. I dislike classical music very much.
2. I dislike classical music.
3. I dislike classical music to a slight degree.
4. I enjoy classical music to a slight degree.
5. I enjoy classical music.
6. I enjoy classical music very much.

Sports*

1. I enjoy sports very much.
2. I enjoy sports.
3. I enjoy sports to a slight degree.
4. I dislike sports to a slight degree.
5. I dislike sports.
6. I dislike sports very much.

Science Fiction*

1. I enjoy science fiction very much.
2. I enjoy science fiction.
3. I enjoy science fiction to a slight degree.
4. I dislike science fiction to a slight degree.
5. I dislike science fiction.
6. I dislike science fiction very much.

Money

1. I strongly believe that money is not one of the most important goals in life.
2. I believe that money is not one of the most important goals in life.
3. I feel that perhaps money is not one of the most important goals in life.
4. I feel that perhaps money is one of the most important goals in life.
5. I believe that money is one of the most important goals in life.
6. I strongly believe that money is one of the most important goals in life.

Political Parties

1. I am a strong supporter of the Democratic Party.
2. I prefer the Democratic Party.
3. I have a slight preference for the Democratic Party.
4. I have a slight preference for the Republican Party.
5. I prefer the Republican Party.
6. I am a strong supporter of the Republican Party.

Group Opinion

1. I feel that people should always ignore group opinion if they disagree with it.
2. I feel that people should usually ignore group opinion if they disagree with it.
3. I feel that people should often ignore group opinion if they disagree with it.
4. I feel that people should often go along with group opinion if they disagree with it.
5. I feel that people should usually go along with group opinion if they disagree with it.
6. I feel that people should always go along with group opinion if they disagree with it.

College Education*

1. I strongly believe it is very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
2. I believe it is very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
3. I believe that perhaps it is very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
4. I believe that perhaps it is not very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
5. I believe it is not very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
6. I strongly believe it is not very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.

Beliefs about Brand's Position on Same Attitude Issues

For each topic listed below, please select the response that best reflects the attitude that you think Chevrolet, as a person, would have.

Belief in God*

1. Chevrolet strongly believes that there is a God.
2. Chevrolet believes that there is a God.
3. Chevrolet feels that perhaps there is a God.
4. Chevrolet feels that perhaps there is no God.
5. Chevrolet believes that there is no God.
6. Chevrolet strongly believes that there is no God.

Classical Music

1. Chevrolet dislikes classical music very much.
2. Chevrolet dislikes classical music.
3. Chevrolet dislikes classical music to a slight degree.
4. Chevrolet enjoys classical music to a slight degree.
5. Chevrolet enjoys classical music.
6. Chevrolet enjoys classical music very much.

Sports*

1. Chevrolet enjoys sports very much.
2. Chevrolet enjoys sports.
3. Chevrolet enjoys sports to a slight degree.
4. Chevrolet dislikes sports to a slight degree.
5. Chevrolet dislikes sports.
6. Chevrolet dislikes sports very much.

Science Fiction*

1. Chevrolet enjoys science fiction very much.
2. Chevrolet enjoys science fiction.
3. Chevrolet enjoys science fiction to a slight degree.
4. Chevrolet dislikes science fiction to a slight degree.
5. Chevrolet dislikes science fiction.
6. Chevrolet dislikes science fiction very much.

Money

1. Chevrolet strongly believes that money is not one of the most important goals in life.
2. Chevrolet believes that money is not one of the most important goals in life.
3. Chevrolet feels that perhaps money is not one of the most important goals in life.
4. Chevrolet feels that perhaps money is one of the most important goals in life.
5. Chevrolet believes that money is one of the most important goals in life.
6. Chevrolet strongly believes that money is one of the most important goals in life.

Political Parties

1. Chevrolet is a strong supporter of the Democratic Party.
2. Chevrolet prefers the Democratic Party.
3. Chevrolet has a slight preference for the Democratic Party.
4. Chevrolet has a slight preference for the Republican Party.
5. Chevrolet prefers the Republican Party.
6. Chevrolet is a strong supporter of the Republican Party.

Group Opinion

1. Chevrolet feels that people should always ignore group opinion if they disagree with it.
2. Chevrolet feels that people should usually ignore group opinion if they disagree with it.
3. Chevrolet feels that people should often ignore group opinion if they disagree with it.
4. Chevrolet feels that people should often go along with group opinion if they disagree with it.
5. Chevrolet feels that people should usually go along with group opinion if they disagree with it.
6. Chevrolet feels that people should always go along with group opinion if they disagree with it.

College Education*

1. Chevrolet strongly believes it is very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
2. Chevrolet believes it is very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
3. Chevrolet believes that perhaps it is very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
4. Chevrolet believes that perhaps it is not very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
5. Chevrolet believes it is not very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.
6. Chevrolet strongly believes it is not very important for a person to have a college education in order to be successful.

* reverse-scored

APPENDIX B

BRAND ACTIONS MANIPULATION (EXPERIMENTS 1 AND 2)

Introduction

Browsing through *The Daily Northwestern* one day, you see an advertisement for an informational session about Chevrolet's latest car models. According to the ad, those who attend the session will be able to meet current Chevrolet owners to get their candid opinion of the products. Because you are currently in the market for a new car, you decide to attend.

Brand Action Scenarios

Friendly Brand Actions. Now imagine that today is the day you actually attend the informational session. When you arrive, you see people with "Chevrolet Owner" name tags standing in the corner. They turn and see you as you enter the room, at which point several of them eagerly walk over to introduce themselves. Taking a seat between two Chevrolet owners as company representatives set up for the presentation, one of them enthusiastically asks if you have ever owned a Chevrolet. You tell her, "No, I haven't, but I have heard good things about them," to which she replies, "I wouldn't drive anything else," and proceeds to describe several of her favorite features of her current car. At the end of the presentation, you are given a thick packet of information about Chevrolet's latest car models. You are also invited to leave your name and telephone number on a sheet of paper at the back of the room if you are interested in being contacted personally by a Chevrolet representative. As you leave the meeting, a few of the

Chevrolet owners you met come up and give you a hug, and one even gives you his phone number in case you have more questions. (200 words)

Neutral Brand Actions. Now imagine that today is the day you actually attend the informational session. When you arrive, you see people with "Chevrolet Owner" name tags standing in the corner. They turn and see you as you enter the room, at which point several of them smile and nod, then turn back to their conversation. Taking a seat between two Chevrolet owners as company representatives set up for the presentation, one of them politely asks if you have ever owned a Chevrolet. You tell her, "No, I haven't, but I have heard good things about them," to which she replies, "I wouldn't drive anything else," and turns her attention back to the projector screen. At the end of the presentation, you are given a thick packet of information about Chevrolet's latest car models. You are also invited to leave your name and telephone number on a sheet of paper at the back of the room if you are interested in being contacted personally by a Chevrolet representative. As you leave the meeting, you catch the eye of a few of the Chevrolet owners you met, who smile courteously as you wave goodbye. (190 words)