Look for the Signature: 
Personal Signatures as a Cue for Quality

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Research Question

How does the presence of a personal signature influence consumption behavior?

Personal Signatures as Extrinsic Cues

Extrinsic Cue
- Factor that can be altered without changing the properties of the product
- e.g., price, brand name, label

Consumers rely on extrinsic cues
- Inferences about the product
- Unable to sample product pre-purchase
Propositions

1) Personal signatures signal quality
   - Signer's identity
   - Consumer's identity

2) Personal signatures make identity salient
   - Signer's identity
   - Consumer's identity

Hypothesis

H1: Personal signature enhances perceived quality

Personal Signatures Signal Quality

- Artists and Craftsmen
  - Italian Renaissance
  - Specialty products

Personal Signatures Cue Identity

- Signatures represent identity in writing
  - Signing activates self-identity
    - Kettle & Haubl 2011
- Signatures are associated with identity
  - Personal signatures copyright protected
  - Personal brand
  - Artist signature = copyright
Hypotheses

H1: Personal signature enhances perceived quality

H2: Effect moderated by perceptions of signer
   • Greater (lesser) when signer is perceived to be of greater (lesser) quality

H3: Personal signature makes the consumer’s identity salient
   • Direct effect of signature on preference moderated by shared identity between consumer and signer.
   • Greater direct effect when consumer shares identity with signer

Personal Signatures might Cue Consumer’s Identity

• Signatures cue the signer’s Identity
  • Associations with signer
    • e.g., Nationality – Canadian, for example
  • Signatures cue the Consumer’s Identity
    • Identity salience influences consumption
      • Reed 2004; White and Dahl 2007

Model

Perceptions of Signer + Presence of Personal Signature + Preference

Perceptions of Quality + Consumer Shared Identity
Study 1: Initial Evidence

- Riverview Estate Winery
  - “Angela’s Reserve Chardonnay” - $19.95
  - Tracked Sales in February of each year
  - 2011 & 2012 – No Signature
  - 2013 – Signature (on back label)

Study 1: Proportion of Store Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No Signature</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study 2: Signatures and Quality

- Objective:
  - Test Hypothesis 1
  - Test “Mere Signature Effect”
- Cheddar Cheese
  - Organic Valley
  - Farmer’s Signature
    - “Farmer from Wisconsin”
    - “Farmer, Matt Fendry, from Wisconsin”

Study 2: Perceived Quality of Cheese

- Signer’s Name Absent: 7.8, 8.0, 8.2
- Signer’s Name Present: 8.0, 8.2

Arrows indicate the perceived quality of cheese with and without the farmer’s signature.
Mediation Model

Perceptions of Quality

β = 0.13, t(137) = 2.73, p < .01

β = 0.19, t(136) = 2.01, p < .05

Preference

β = 0.26, t(136) = 2.12, p < .05

Indirect Effect 90% CI: [0.002, 0.005]

Study 3: Signatures and Identity

Objectives:
- Test Hypothesis 2
- Differentiate Signature from Personal Touch

Wine Bottles:
- Fetzer / Florio Wines
- Winemakers' signatures
  - Dan Morris (Fetzer)
  - Vincenzo Florio (Florio)
- Measured Perceptions of Winemaker
  - "How do you perceive the ability of …”

Study 3: Manipulation

2 (Signature) x 2 (Touch) Within Ss Design
- No information
- No Signature + Not Hand-Touched
  - “this bottle was hand-selected by the winemaker …”
- No Signature + Hand-Touched
- “the winemaker has printed his signature …”
- Signature + Not Hand-Touched
- “the winemaker has personally signed …”
- Signature + Hand-Touched

Study 3 Stimuli

No Signature

Signature
Study 3: Perceived Quality of Wine

- Antonia Mantonakis & Keri Kettle
- Sept 6, 2013

### Mediation Model

- **Perceptions of Signer**
  - $\beta = 0.12$, $t(161) = 2.75$, $p < .01$ (at mean of signer expertise)

- **Indirect Effect 95% CI: [0.011, 0.078]**

- **Preference**
  - $\beta = 0.18$, $t(160) = 1.84$, $p < .10$
  - $\beta = 0.56$, $t(160) = 5.56$, $p < .01$

### Study 4: Field Study

- **Objective:**
  - Test Hypothesis 3
  - Moderating role of shared identity
  - Examine effects in a field setting
    - Actual consumption
    - Actual purchases
  - Riverview Estate Winery
    - Malbec - $29.95

- **March 2013 – Wine Tasting**
  - Consecutive Saturdays
    - 1st week: no signature on label
      - 103 guests – 71 participated
    - 2nd week: signature on label
      - 80 guests – 60 participated

- **Participants received $2 discount on any purchase**
- **Questions:**
  - How much did you like the wine?
  - Please rate the quality of the wine.
  - Indicate age and where you live.
Study 4: Field Study

- Predictions:
  - Enhance Perceived Quality
  - Increase Purchases
  - Moderated by Shared Identity
    - Ontarions

Study 4: Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Signature on Label</th>
<th>Signature on Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study 4: Sales (Number of Bottles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Signature on Label</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>Bottles Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature on Label</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study 4: Effect of Shared Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Signature - No Shared Identity</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>Bottles Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature - No Shared Identity</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature - Shared Identity</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Shared Identity</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature - Shared Identity</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mediation Model

- Presence of Personal Signature
- Perceptions of Quality
  - 0.16 (90% CI: [0.011, 0.334])
- 0.64 (95% CI: [0.158, 1.246])
- Preference
- Consumer Shared Identity
  - Shared Identity: 177.98 (95% CI: [5.79, 340.46])*
  - No Shared Identity: -0.36 (95% CI: [-1.81, 1.00])
- Indirect Effect 90% CI: [0.0001, 0.2442]

Study 5: Shared Identity

- Objective:
  - Test Hypothesis 3
- Cheddar Cheese
  - Organic Valley
  - Farmer’s Signature
    - “Farmer, Matt Fendry, from (your state)"
- Strength of State Identity (measured)
Mediation Model

Perceptions of Quality

β=0.14, t(130)=3.25, p < .01

β=0.32, t(129)=3.14, p < .01

Preference

State Identity 8/10: β=0.32, t(129)=2.51, p < .05
State Identity 7/10: β=0.20, t(129)=1.48, p > .10

Presence of Personal Signature

Consumer Shared Identity

Indirect Effect 95% CI: [0.012, 0.093]

Summary

• Personal signature enhances perceived quality
  • Non-celebrities
  • Not autographs
• Moderated by perceptions of signer
  • Signer’s identity
• Personal signature enhances preference
  • Partially mediated by perceived quality
  • Direct effect moderated by shared identity

Implications

Thank-You

Kellogg's

McCain

Knorr

Lindt

Mott's

Antonia Mantonakis & Keri Kettle
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