

Self-(In)Congruence in Consumer Behavior: Exploring the Role of the Undesired Self in Brand Evaluation and Purchase Intention

Michael Bosnjak
Department of Psychology II
University of Mannheim, Germany

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Theoretical Background (I)

- Self-image congruence hypothesis
(e.g., Dolich, 1969; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Levy, 1959; Sirgy, 1986)

Consumption-related constructs (attitudes, purchase intentions, etc.) are – among other factors – influenced by the perceived match of the consumers self-concept and certain aspects of the brand's "image" (user imagery, brand/product personality, etc.).

Theoretical Background (II)

- Most variants of the self-image congruence hypothesis are telic in nature, emphasizing implicit comparisons between the self as now experienced and an imagined desired end state:
 - Telic self-concept facets in Sirgy's SICT, driven by different approach motives:
 - Actual congruity (consistency motive)
 - Ideal congruity (self-esteem motive)
 - Social congruity (social consistency motive)
 - Ideal social congruity (social approval motive)
 - Telic operationalization of the brand personality concept in Aaker's (1997, p. 350) scale: *"Primarily positively valenced traits were used because brands typically are linked to positive (versus negative) associations and because the ultimate use of the scale is to determine the extent to which brand personality affects the probability that consumers approach (versus avoid) products."*

Theoretical Background (III)

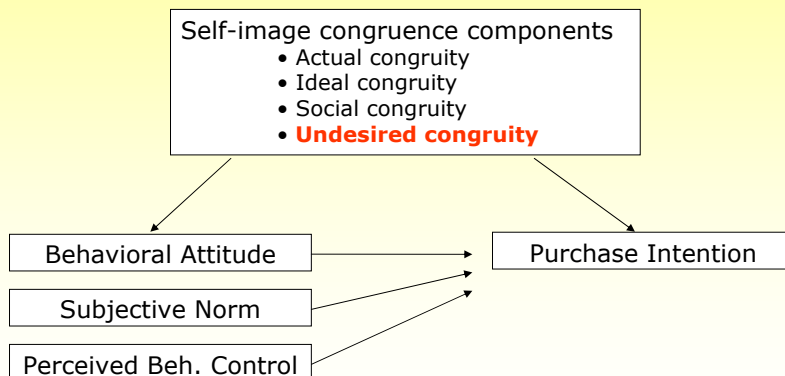
- Role of avoidance motives to explain consumer behavior?
 - Evidence in psychology that avoidance motives may influence behavior even stronger than approach motives, e.g. in life-satisfaction judgments and happiness/depression-related emotions (Carver et. al., 1999; Heppen & Ogilvie, 2003; Ogilvie 1987).
 - Evidence in marketing that 'undesired end states' ("undesired self") may serve as a useful extension to understand (anti-) choice for certain brands/products (e.g., Banister & Hogg, 2004; Hogg, 1998; Hogg & Banister, 2001).
- Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)
 - ... as an overall framework specifying purchase related antecedents. TOPB is open for extensions (such as symbolic aspects of behavior).

Research Questions

Overall: Role of the 'undesired self congruity' (closeness of a products 'image' to an undesired self-concept) in explaining purchase-related attitudes and intentions?

- Which constructs known to affect consumer behavior are most strongly influenced by the undesired self congruity?
- Is the undesired self congruity component an attitudinal or an intentional antecedent?
- Predictive value of undesired self congruence over and above established self-congruence facets?

Conceptual Framework



Methods

Study	Target Brand	Brand Category	Target Behavior	Congruence Measure	Sample
1	Chevrolet	Cars	Buying a Chevy in the next 3 years	Indirect measure: 24 item German brand personality Scale(Hufschmidt 2005). City-block metric (MAD type) used.	107 consumers planning to buy a car in the next 3 years
2	Marlboro	Cigarettes	Smoking frequency of M. in the next 2 weeks (in relation to other brands)	Indirect measure: 20 item German brand personality scale (Bosnjak et al., in press). City-block metric (MAD-type) used.	211 smokers
3	Croatia	Travel	Traveling to Croatia for next summer holiday	Direct congruence measure as proposed by Sirgy et al. (1997).	280 consumer panel members planning summer holidays in the upcoming season

Results: Study 1 / Chevrolet (I)

Step	Predictor variables	r	β	R ²
1	Behavior Attitude	.76**	.44**	.70**
	Subjective Norm	.77**	.48**	
	Perceived Behavioral Control	.23**	-.03	
2	Behavior Attitude	.76**	.43**	.70**
	Subjective Norm	.77**	.48**	
	Perceived Behavioral Control	.23**	-.02	
	Ideal Congruity	.52**	.02	
	Undesired Congruity	.12	-.02	

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Relating TOPB Predictors (step 1) and Self-Image Congruence Facets (step 2) to Chevrolet Car Purchase Intentions (N= 107).

Results: Study 1 / Chevrolet (II)

Step	Predictor variables	r	β	R ²
1	Ideal Congruity	.63**	.63**	.40**
2	Ideal Congruity	.63**	.72**	.44**
	Undesired Congruity	.09	-.22**	

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Relating Self-Image Congruence Facets to the Attitude Towards Purchasing a Chevrolet Car (N= 107).

Results: Study 2 / Marlboro (I)

Step	Predictor variables	r	β	R ²
1	Beh. Attitude	.65**	.62**	.42**
	Subjective Norm	.16**	.01	
	Perceived Behavioral Control	.25**	.08	
2	Beh. Attitude	.65**	.51**	.46**
	Subjective Norm	.16**	-.04	
	Perceived Behavioral Control	.25**	.08	
	Actual Congruity	.46**	.20*	
	Ideal Congruity	.42**	-.04	
	Undesired Congruity	-.37**	-.11^{p=.07}	

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Relating TOPB Predictors (step 1), Self-Image Congruence Facets (step 2), and Past Behavior (step 3) to Marlboro Purchase Intentions (N= 211 smokers).

Results: Study 2 / Marlboro (I)

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Relating TOPB Predictors (step 1), Self-Image Congruence Facets (step 2), and Past Behavior (step 3) to Marlboro Purchase Intentions (N= 211 smokers).

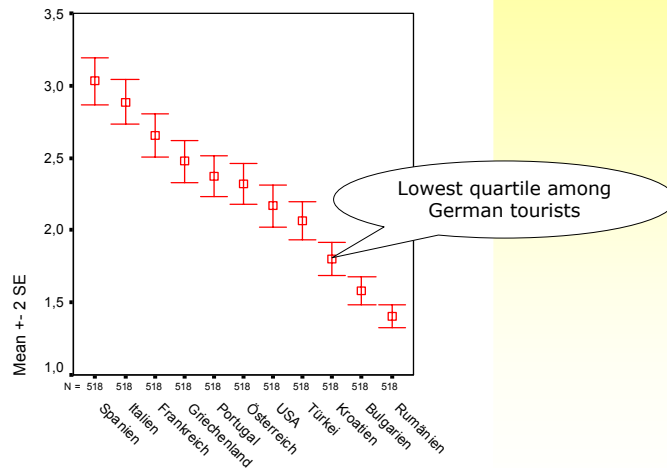
Step	Predictor variables	r	β	R ²
3	Beh. Attitude	.65**	.32**	.70**
	Subjective Norm	.16**	-.05	
	Perceived Behavioral Control	.25**	.05	
	Actual Congruity	.46**	.03	
	Ideal Congruity	.42**	.08	
	Undesired Congruity	-.37**	-.05	
	Past Behavior	.75**	.56**	

Results: Study 2 / Marlboro (II)

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Relating Self-Image Congruence Facets (step 1) and Past Behavior (step 2) to the Attitude Towards Purchasing Marlboro (N= 211 smokers).

Step	Predictor variables	r	β	R ²
1	Actual Congruity	.48**	.30**	.28**
	Ideal Congruity	.47**	.12	
	Undesired Congruity	-.39**	-.22**	
2	Actual Congruity	.48**	.17	.36**
	Ideal Congruity	.47**	.17	
	Undesired Congruity	-.39**	-.16*	
	Past Behavior	.45**	.31**	

Croatia as a Travel Destination: "Anti-choice" tendency



Probability of Choosing Croatia for Next Summer Vacation Among Members of a Representative German Consumer Panel on a Five-Point Scale (5= high, 1= low; N= 518).

Results: Study 3 / Croatia (I)

Step	Predictor variables	r	β	R ²
1	Functional	.37**	.37**	.19**
2	Functional	.37**	.14*	.24**
	Actual Congruity	.45**	.19	
	Ideal Congruity	.41**	.04	
	Social Congruity	.40**	.19**	
	Undesired Congruity	-.19**	-.08	

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Relating Functional and Self Image Congruence Facets to the Likelihood of Booking the Next Summer Vacation in Croatia (N= 280).

Results: Study 3 / Croatia (II)

Step	Predictor variables	r	β	R ²
1	Functional	.44**	.44**	.19**
2	Functional	.44**	.34**	.22**
	Actual Congruity	.35**	.10	
	Ideal Congruity	.28**	-.02	
	Social Congruity	.23**	.05	
	Undesired Congruity	-.22**	-.13*	

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Relating Functional and Self Image Congruence Facets to the Intention to Search for Further Information on Croatia as a Travel Destination for the Next Summer Vacation (N= 280).

Summary

The undesired self-image congruence component ...

- ... primarily affects behavioral attitudes (study 1 and 2) and pre-purchase information search (study 3), and not directly purchase intentions.
- ... has predictive value beyond established self-image congruence components.
- ... appears to be valuable in a broad set of product categories with varying degrees of involvement and symbolic value (cars, cigarettes, tourist destinations).
- ... appears to be robust for different congruity operationalizations (direct measure, indirect measure) and behaviors, because it still had predictive value after a measure of past behavior was included (see study 2).

Discussion and Outlook (I)

- Undesired self-congruity as a promising addition to explain consumer behavior on a pro-/anti-choice continuum.
- Research questions currently addressed at U Mannheim:
 - Moderators of undesired self-congruity effects: Exploring its role for a broader set of product categories (fashion, motorcycles, more service areas, etc.) and congruence operationalizations (Euclidean metrics, etc.).
 - Self-awareness of undesired self-congruity effects: Exploring the relation of symbolic versus utilitarian aspects in self-reports.

Discussion and Outlook (II)

- Long-term questions to be addressed:
 - Automatic versus deliberate processes?
 - Marketing implications: Persuasion strategies to convert anti-choice into pro-choice?

Thank you for your attention!

bosnjak@consumer-psychology.info
<http://www.consumer-psychology.info>