

Editorial

An extraordinary journal for extraordinary ideas

In the past few years, the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (*JCP*) has experienced remarkable progress in becoming a leading journal in the area of consumer psychology. The unprecedented number of submissions, the impact that it has on knowledge creation and dissemination (based on citation frequencies), the innovative institution of the Research Dialogue section, the timely and well-focused Special Issues, and the widely accepted view of the journal's mission and focus by the academic community convincingly demonstrates the secure base that the journal enjoys in the field of consumer psychology.

We are indebted to many individuals for their tireless commitment and sacrifice that has led to the impressive success of *JCP*. I personally feel grateful to previous editors, AEs, and reviewers for their contributions to the journal's success. In particular, I would like to extend my deep appreciation and hearty congratulations to Mahesh for his service in guiding the journal to achieve its current growth and reputation. During his tenure as *JCP* editor, he clearly sustained the momentum of the journal's success by maintaining and improving his predecessors' innovative policies. It is my intention to follow his approach in order to further enhance the current success of the journal. To this end, I would like to devote this editorial to sharing with the constituents my plan for the next three years of the journal. Before I proceed with my editorial below, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to fourteen AEs (Valerie Folkes, Zeynep Gürhan-Canli, Dawn Iacobucci, Debbie MacInnis, Steve Nowlis, Laura Peracchio, Richard Petty, Steve Posovac, Joseph Pricster, Norbert Schwarz, Sanjay Sood, Mita Sujan, Klaus Wertenbroch, and Youjae Yi) who shared their valuable insights with me regarding the future of *JCP*.

Where do we go from here? *JCP* publishes manuscripts (conceptual or empirical) that are concerned with the psychological processes of thoughts, feelings, decisions, and behaviors of consumers. It is a journal that involves psychological perspectives on the study of the consumer. It honors a theory-driven research orientation and publishes articles that identify and/or test theories regarding the psychological processes of consumers' thoughts, feelings, decisions, and behaviors. This specialized focus defines the niche that *JCP* occupies in the academic landscape and carves out a unique position for *JCP*, differentiating it from other journals.

Mahesh, in his editorial (Maheswaran, 2006), identified two different phases of knowledge development: knowledge creation and extension. To further the current success of *JCP* in knowledge

creation and extension, I would like to widen the knowledge domain of *JCP* as well as deepen it. First, I would like to see *JCP* widen its role as a facilitator of knowledge creation and extension by defining consumers as users, deciders, disposers, and/or purchasers of products and services (Jacoby 1976). While consumers can occupy all of the above roles, they can only occupy one role at any given point in time. Consumers playing the role of a "purchaser" are primarily concerned with the allocation of their scarce financial resources. Their decision processes differ from that of consumers playing other roles, such as "user", "decider" or "disposer". By adopting a perspective of consumers as potentially playing one of these four different roles at a given point in time, *JCP* can extend its knowledge of consumer psychology and behavior. In addition, *JCP's* adoption of this perspective of consumers would help define its area of focus.

Second, I would also like to see *JCP* deepen its understanding of the psychological processes underlying consumer behavior. Many important yet under-researched areas about the "why", "when", "what", and "how" of consumer behavior have not been adequately addressed. Among them include:

- (1) *The role of learning in consumer behavior* and its implications for dynamic processes (Howard and Sheth 1969) that range from the psychology of simplification-driven habitual behavior (e.g., brand loyalty) to the psychology of complication-driven variety seeking or exploratory consumption behavior (e.g., brand switching). How does the former develop? When does the former evolve into to the latter, if at all, and what determines such a transition?
- (2) *The role of aesthetic experience in consumption* with a focus on identifying unique effects that distinguish aesthetic experiences from other more general affective experiences. What are their conceptual meanings, measurements, and effects? What key dimensions of aesthetic experiences have uniquely powerful effects on consumer behavior and how do such effects occur?
- (3) *Perspectives on consumers' cognitive flexibility* that extend, modify, or defy the conventional view that consumers are cognitive misers and suffer limited processing capabilities. When and how do consumers become highly flexible and creative in their cognitive capabilities? As music conductors coordinate and integrate various instruments to produce meaningful and

coherent streams of sound, how do consumers similarly orchestrate two or more independent or incompatible concepts to create cohesive and coherent meanings?

- (4) *Better understanding of the different natures and types of hedonic consumption.* Are decision processes for various consumption activities (e.g., consuming a chocolate cake, appreciating a painting, or playing a video game) that fulfill the goal of pleasure and fun similar? Is the distinction between hedonic and non-hedonic (e.g., utilitarian) consumption an appropriate distinction for understanding various consumption behaviors? How do we approach the study of hedonic consumption?
- (5) *Developing knowledge on consumers' relationships with brands.* Are constructs like brand attachment and brand love redundant with other existing constructs such as brand attitudes and involvement? What are possible antecedents, measurements, and effects of the former that differ from the latter?
- (6) *Studies of culture and its relationship with consumer psychology.* Can cross-cultural psychology research on differences in style of thinking (e.g., analytic versus holistic thinking) and decision making be replicated and extended to other areas of consumer behavior such as styles of information processing and decision making, the phenomenon of loss aversion, weights assigned to decision-relevant information, and coping strategies associated with post-decisional discomfort?
- (7) *Applications of neuroscience to studies of consumer psychology.* What do recent research findings in the area of neuroscience imply for consumer psychology and behavior? Novel neuropsychological results and cutting edge thinking is also of interest to JCP, e.g., if a brain-physiological approach can help solve dilemmas with which we currently struggle, or where the neuroscience results and thinking underscores our demonstrated behavioral results.
- (8) *Studies of the temporal interdependence between (versus independence of) purchase and consumption activities.* Consumers tend to be myopic purchasers who are often unable to predict future needs and preferences. As Kierkegaard so aptly noted, "life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." Since consumers tend to be myopic, how do they plan and pursue happiness through product purchase and consumption over time? What strategies do they employ to get through life while being myopic?
- (9) *Studies of joint decision making in which users, deciders, disposers, and purchasers constitute independent parties in their joint decisions.* How do they perform their respective roles in a joint decision? How do their roles evolve over time in repeated joint decision making (e.g., family decision making)? How do they cope with the difficulty posed by the involvement of multiple parties with different goals? What common trade-offs do consumers make in joint-decision making contexts, and how do they affect post-decision variables like satisfaction and repeat purchase?

These topics are representative but certainly not exhaustive of the innumerable topics that can help *JCP* continue its upward trajectory as a leader in knowledge development.

Finally, there are a number of ways in which *JCP* can achieve its goal of becoming a source of extraordinary ideas within the knowledge domain of consumer psychology. I have listed the following seven elements as *JCP*'s mode of operations during my tenure as editor:

- (1) *Continuing the Research Dialogue section:* The Research Dialogue has been a successful feature of *JCP* since its institution by Editor Robert Wyer. Bob and AE Sharon Shavitt handled manuscripts of the RD section with great care and passion. Norbert Schwarz as the AE for the RD section has been absolutely superb in reflecting the original philosophy of the research dialogue section. Not only has his article (2004) "Metacognitive experiences in consumer judgment and decision making", become the most frequently cited piece among articles published in *JCP*, but his unending devotion to the RD section resulted in many other influential pieces that have been frequently cited and referred to by researchers in their work. The most recent articles by Fitzsimmons and Moore (2008) and Baumeister, Sparks, Stillman, and Vohs (2008) are great examples of his contribution. I am pleased to announce that Richard Petty and Joseph Priester have agreed to serve as the new AE's of the RD section. Their vision for the RD will continue to build on the momentum Norbert has created.
- (2) *Developing Special Issues:* I believe that actively promoting Special Issues is one of the most effective modes of rapidly creating and disseminating extraordinary ideas about consumer psychology. While success depends on a number of factors, *JCP* must overcome two critical challenges: 1) the innovativeness and interest-generating power of the topics of Special Issues and 2) securing manuscripts that are equally innovative and interesting. A set of plans are under way to address these two issues.
- (3) *Positioning JCP as the first publication outlet for manuscripts with extraordinary ideas:* In order to ensure that authors submit their manuscripts to *JCP* as the first publication outlet, *JCP* must offer outstanding benefits to them. An author-friendly review process (reviewing critically but commenting humbly) has been a distinguishing characteristic of *JCP*. I intend to continue this process and further it by having authors engage in a more interactive process with reviewers in order to facilitate the transformation of interesting ideas into extraordinary ideas. Moreover, I aim to minimize uncertainties associated with the authors' revision task by explicitly specifying the minimum revision standard for accepting a manuscript for publication in *JCP*. *JCP* continues to welcome replications, exploratory research, and also literature reviews as long as they contribute to new knowledge (idea) development.

- (4) *Ensuring that interesting ideas are published in a timely fashion:* *JCP* does not encourage authors to include an inordinate number of experiments in order to rule out all possible competing explanations. Pinning down the precise process mechanism through a number of experiments is highly desirable for any journal of psychological science, and *JCP* will certainly welcome such manuscripts. However, *JCP* intends to position itself as a journal that enjoys the first mover status of great ideas. Thus, authors would not be required to have many experiments in order to pin down exact process mechanisms, if and when such tasks may prolong the process of getting great ideas into publication. In this case, *JCP* encourages authors to focus on the most plausible explanation while specifying competing explanations in the discussion section. Placing an emphasis on getting great ideas into publication does not mean that *JCP* is compromising its methodological rigor or lowering its standard for quality. The critical issue is the number of time-consuming and publication-delaying experiments, not the quality and rigor of experiments themselves.
- (5) *Developing a global base of authors:* *JCP* welcomes a global audience. Many talented researchers around the world have ideas that may not be noticed or cultivated. As a global journal, *JCP* should secure more manuscripts with great ideas from researchers outside of North America. Active participation in various consumer psychology-related conferences held in other parts of the world is needed to help promote *JCP* and further its mission. Identifying authors with interesting and innovative ideas and helping them develop such ideas into high quality manuscripts is extremely beneficial for *JCP*. The AEs and I intend to pursue these tasks vigorously.
- (6) *Enhancing the dissemination of findings:* *JCP* intends to explicitly make authors as heroes and heroines by increasing world-wide exposure of their work through communications that announce their paper's acceptance, reveal the date of article publication, and disseminate key takeaways. *JCP* is currently exploring various means by which the best paper and dissertation paper awards can be

accompanied by a sizable monetary prize and increased publicity.

- (7) *Including area editors:* Area editors (AEs) will play a prominent role during my editorship. Their expert opinions will be fully valued and reflected in the final publication decision of a manuscript. When a manuscript is finally accepted for publication, authors will receive a letter from me that explicitly identifies the AE involved. The AEs name will also be listed at the end of the article when it is printed.
- (8) *Securing reviewers' commitments:* Reviewers' strong commitments and active participation in the entire review process are absolutely essential to maintaining and *improving JCP's* status as a journal for extraordinary ideas. *JCP* has an impressive list of eminent scholars in consumer behavior who have generously lent their time and effort to reviewing *JCP* manuscripts. *JCP* intends to recognize their contributions in a number of small but meaningful ways.

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