EFFECTS OF SITUATIONAL INVOLVEMENT ON CONSUMERS' USE OF STANDARDS IN SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION PROCESSES

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ABSTRACT

This study provides support to the experience-based norms concept in CS/D. Consumers use different product and brand references as the amount of consumer involvement with a consumption experience fluctuates. In addition, situational involvement affects the disconfirmation paradigm's role in satisfaction development by influencing CS/D process variable relationships. Implications for CS/D research and segmentation opportunities are reviewed.

INTRODUCTION

Consumers routinely make judgments on how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with a product, and yet neither researchers nor managers are sure what these consumers use as reference points to make such evaluations. Focal brand expectations, or predictions of how the brand about to be used will perform, often have been assumed as the consumer's reference point. However, there is growing evidence that focal brand expectations are just one of several possible performance standards (Gilly, Cron, and Barry 1982; LaTour and Peat 1979; Summers and Granbois 1977; Swan and Trawick 1979, 1981; Swan and Martin 1981; Cadotte, Woodruff, and Jenkins 1987). Woodruff, Cadotte, and Jenkins (1983) have proposed a model of experience-based norms to integrate these findings, using the consumer's prior experience with the focal brand, other brands, and other product types to highlight conceptual differences.

These experience-based norms form the pre-usage comparison standards in the disconfirmation paradigm, a conceptual framework linking pre-usage references to post-usage judgments. The framework itself has been validated in many CS/D studies, and yet there is little understanding of the way different experience-based norms affect the post-usage evaluation process. This study focuses on one possible mediating variable in consumers' selection of frames of reference and CS/D development--situational involvement. Situational involvement represents the amount of concern or interest an individual may have for the intended use of a product or brand. As such, the construct is an antecedent consumer characteristic to a more expansive disconfirmation paradigm.

BACKGROUND

Standards of Comparison

Researchers apparently have considerable difference of opinion on the meaning of a standard of comparison. Focal brand expectations were assumed to be the only logical reference point in early satisfaction studies. Researchers defined these focal brand expectations as predictions of how well or how poorly a brand would perform on predetermined product dimensions (Oliver and Linda 1981; Olson and Dover 1979) or in supplying salient benefits (Day 1977). These predictions are all created prior to actual product use and reflect a multiattribute view of benefits and product dimensions used in performance evaluations.

The thought that individuals might draw from personal or relevant others' experiences to generate ideas of what they ought to get from a product led to the examination of "types" of expectations other than predictions. Summers and Granbois (1977) suggested two qualitatively different kinds of expectations: predictive and normative expectations. Miller (1977) proposed four types of expectations which an individual might use for performance evaluation: (1) the ideal--what the respondent believes the performance "can be;" (2) the expected--what the respondent believes performance probably "will be;" (3) the minimum tolerable--the minimum level the respondent believes performance "must be;" and (4) the desired level--what the individual believes performance "ought to be" or "should be," in light of personal investment. Using Miller's typology, Swan and Trawick (1979) conceptualized two types of expectations: predictive and desired expectations. These same authors (1981) reported some support for differences in satisfaction prediction between predictive and desired forms of expectations. Gilly (1979) and Gilly et al. (1982) reported moderate support for Miller's theory of separate and independent expectation types.

These idea papers and studies all suggested that predicted and desired forms of comparison standards were useful in CS/D studies, but better explanation of the relationships between the two concepts still was needed. Predictive expectations are the consumer's pre-usage estimates of performance levels which the product is anticipated to achieve. Desired expectations are the consumer's pre-usage specifications for the levels of product performance which would be necessary to satisfy the consumer. Woodruff et al. (1983) labeled these desired predictions as norms, what performance ought to be. A consumer must have some prior experience with one or several brands of a product category to develop a normative standard. Prior experience with the focal brand, i.e., the one being used, is always possible, but there are other brands which can be used as reference points.

The Woodruff et al. (1983) model proposed an expansion of the standards of comparison concept to include both focal brand expectations and norms as reference points. Brand-based norms operate when one brand comprises the evoked set. Thus, experience with the focal brand or some other brand can influence the selection of a dominant brand. Product-based norms are desired product performance levels which result from a pooled experience with several brand alternatives from within a product set. A typical or average product norm develops which can be used to evaluate subsequent consumption experiences with that product class. Cadotte et al. (1987) found that a best brand norm, a typical or average brand, i.e., a product norm, and focal brand expectations are separate concepts and vary in predicting satisfaction for different restaurant usage situations.

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The Influence of Triggering Cues on CS/D

If these concepts offer alternative reference points for an evaluation experience, one needs to know which standard a consumer will be most likely to use. In particular, market strategies must focus on the consumer's frame of reference and show how a specific consumption experience relates to that standard. Day (1977) felt that a purchase or consumption experience would have variable importance or meaning to an individual, and could affect the entire evaluation sequence, including the choice of a comparison standard and the development of CS/D. He outlined several circumstances which can be "triggering cues" for an evaluation experience: (1) an item and/or purchase occasion with special significance; (2) a social context surrounding purchase and/or consumption of the item; (3) previous personal experiences and/or advice from others which suggest consumer caution regarding the item; and (4) inexperience and poor information about the item, leading to more consciousness of all aspects of purchase and consumption.

Many of Day's (1977) triggering cues revolve around the usage situation and its importance. Different usage situations or task settings can have unique consequences for the consumption of a product and create variable levels of consumer involvement with the intended use of the product. However, no single study could be found that compares situations which lead to differences in consumer involvement for the evaluation process. Of particular concern is the role of situational involvement on the selection of a comparison standard. Depending on whether an individual uses the focal brand, some other brand, or an average or typical brand representative of the entire product category, there are likely to be corresponding differences in the evaluation process and development of CS/D.

Situational Involvement and the Disconfirmation Paradigm

Situational involvement is the term frequently used to denote the consumer's expression of concern or interest for task consequences (Arora 1983; Bloch and Richins 1983; Clarke and Belk 1979; Houston and Rothschild 1977). These consequences can be quite varied. First, there are utilitarian needs and product dimensions which represent different concerns for the consumer. Some examples of functional needs and product dimensions include the intended use of the product, product complexity, brand availability, time constraints, and product cost (Antil 1984; Clarke and Belk 1979; Houston and Rothschild 1977). Secondly, products frequently have an impact on the way others perceive us. Social psychological concerns which affect situational involvement include the expected presence or absence of other persons during the time of consumption, and product identification with relevant reference groups (Belk 1982; Houston and Rothschild 1977). These consequences relate to how others will evaluate an individual as s/he uses certain brands or products publicly.

Involvement and choice of a comparison standard. Consumers are likely to more critically evaluate product performance information when they are more concerned with the outcome (Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall 1965). High situational involvement will entail more intense information processing, more complex cognitive judgments, and hence, more exacting performance demands (Assael 1984; Houston and Rothschild 1977). Thus, higher standards for comparison will be in effect for high involvement usage occasions than low involvement situations.

Oliver and Bearden (1983) tested this hypothesis using only expectations for a reference point. They found no evidence of higher expectations for subjects experiencing high involvement than those having low involvement. However, there are two reasons why their results do not necessarily disprove more demanding performance requirements in highly involving usage contexts. First, their study measured involvement differently than what is proposed here. Involvement research has indicated there are two distinct involvement components, enduring and situational involvement dimensions (Arora 1982; Bloch 1982; Bolfing and Woodruff 1987; Clarke and Belk 1979; Parkinson and Schenk 1980). The Oliver and Bearden study measured enduring involvement, an ongoing attachment to a product class, issue, or object. There was no specific situational context in their study which measured evaluation processes for flu inoculations. Second, focal brand expectations may not represent the appropriate comparison standard for their consumer sample, but it was the only frame of reference used in their study. There are other comparison standards which may better typify critical performance demands.

Which norms become comparison points may differ for high and low involvement scenarios. Under high situational involvement, one is more likely to process information about a multiple brands product category. Both the felt personal relevance and the experience with many brands is likely to cause consumers to set higher standards for brand performance. Further, certain kinds of norms become likely. For instance, pooling of information about multiple brands when forming a comparison standard results in a product norm. This norm is the perceived typical performance for the product category. An alternative kind of norm would be the typical performance of a high performing, known brand, such as a perceived "best" brand. A consumer's objective for selecting a product norm or a best brand norm would be to make sure a brand being used for a very important occasion is above average or even the best possible choice for a use situation. Both involve significant information processing to create the standard.

Under low involvement, there is less concern for a consumption experience, less effort is expended in the choice process, and lower standards for evaluating performance of a brand are more likely. Further, not much effort is likely to be made to select which standard is used. Consumers who have a great deal of experience with a product category may opt to use a favorite brand norm. It is easy to recall typical performance of a favorite brand. Notice that this favorite brand could be the same as the focal brand, but certainly does not have to be (Woodruff et al. 1983). Another possibility is that focal brand expectations might serve as the standard simply because these expectations are easy to access from memory when evaluations are being made.

Involvement and the CS/D model. Consistency in the relationships between all the major evaluation process variables is lacking in much CS/D research. Oliver's (1981) literature review and Oliver and Bearden's (1983) research showed disconfirmation as the strongest influence on satisfaction. But Churchill and Surprenant (1982) found different post-evaluation relationships in their study of two different products. When consumers evaluated plants, a low involvement-type product, disconfirmation was the strongest influence on satisfaction. A video disc player, a presumably highly involving product, yielded performance as the best determinant of satisfaction. These differences in evaluation process relationships suggest that involvement is a mediator in CS/D determinations.

In particular, high situational involvement may increase sensitivity to the actual performance experience itself. Thus, consumers may not be as likely to retrieve standards from memory because they are so focused on the current occasion which is fraught with important risks and consequences. In fact, a consumer may be evaluating a product's performance in the current situation as if it were the first time using the product. Any satisfaction or dissatisfaction which develops would be influenced much more by performance than by disconfirmation.

Consumers experiencing low situational involvement are not as likely to be quite so caught up in the current consumption situation. Prior experiences forming standards may be more likely to be retrieved from memory and used to evaluate a focal brand's performance. Thus, post-usage satisfaction would be more strongly influenced by disconfirmation than by performance alone.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This study investigates the moderator role of situational involvement on consumers' use of comparison standards when evaluating post-use performance as part of a CS/D process. Two research hypotheses were developed from the above theoretical discussion:

1. Consumers experiencing high situational involvement situation will choose different and higher standards of comparison for evaluating brand performance than consumers experiencing low situational involvement.

    1a. A consumer experiencing high situational involvement will be more likely to use a product norm than a favorite brand norm or focal brand expectations when evaluating focal brand performance.

    1b. A consumer experiencing low situational involvement will be more likely to use a favorite brand norm or focal brand expectations than a product norm when evaluating focal brand performance.

2. Consumers experiencing high situational involvement will employ different evaluation processes to arrive at satisfaction/dissatisfaction judgments than those experiencing low situational involvement.

    2a. A consumer experiencing high situational involvement will attach greater importance to perceptions of focal brand performance when forming feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction than to disconfirmation, regardless of the standard used.

    2b. Consumers experiencing low situational involvement will attach more weight to disconfirmation, regardless of the standard used, when forming feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction than to perceived performance of the focal brand.

THE STUDY

Procedure and Design

An experimental design was used to create high and low levels of situational involvement. The product under study was domestic chablis wine. Wine is served for several different occasions which incorporate many of the situational dimensions previously reviewed. Therefore, different amounts of situational consequence could develop.

Subjects first used a self-administered questionnaire to answer questions on wine usage and overall interest in the product. Next, subjects received the situational involvement manipulation. For high situational involvement, subjects were asked to imagine a Saturday night dinner party at home with friends and business associates. Subjects receiving the low situational involvement were to imagine a different usage occasion--a weekday supper at home with just the family. Subjects then viewed a simulated advertisement for a domestic chablis (no identifying labels were shown) depicting the previously described scenario. The tape showed friends (or family) in the dining room (or kitchen), reviewed the meal being served featuring an elaborate (or simple) poultry dish, and showed the people having a glass of domestic chablis.

Subjects were periodically reminded of their respective usage setting as they answered questions on salient wine attributes, performance demands for a typical brand of chablis (product norm), their favorite brand of chablis, focal brand expectations of a brand described during the study, and pre-usage focal brand attitudes. After tasting the focal brand, subjects completed questions on post-usage performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction, and lastly demographics. Subjects were then debriefed and a lottery with a bottle of wine as the gift was conducted in each class.

Sample of Consumers

Subjects for the study were consumers who had purchased and consumed wine in the past. The sample consisted of students at a large state university in a mid-sized, southeastern U.S. city. The students were enrolled in continuing education programs and were older and more experienced consumers of wine products than typical college students. Student classes were randomly assigned to the situational treatment conditions. Ninety-one consumers participated in the study, with 48 and 43 receiving the high and low situational involvement treatments, respectively.

Measurements

Focus groups and pretesting were used to determine salient wine attributes, phrasing for the norms, focal brand expectations, and performance items, and optimal manipulations for situational involvement.

Pre- and post-use attribute measures. Seven wine attributes were used for attribute-based measures. Subjects indicated how important was each attribute for the situation manipulation, with ratings ranging from 1 = "Not at all important" to 5 = "Essential for me to have." Attribute importance ratings were combined later with attribute pre- and post-use performance beliefs for the norms, focal brand expectations, and performance measures.

Consistent with past research, pre- and post-usage attribute performance beliefs were measured using bipolar, seven-point scales (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Olshavsky and Miller 1972; Olson and Dover 1979). An example of this attribute scaling is

"Suitability with meal": 1 = "Very well suited" to 7 = "Not at all suited." Items were recoded with higher scores indicative of more favorable attribute evaluations.

Subjects were asked to indicate their beliefs about how a typical domestic chablis brand (product norm), their favorite brand (favorite brand norm), and a focal brand would perform across the seven wine dimensions. The norm questions were asked first, then a description of a popular domestic chablis brand was given before the focal brand expectation beliefs were measured. Following a taste test of the focal brand, perceived performance beliefs for the same attributes were collected. Similar to LaTour and Peat's (1979) formula, the importance weight for each attribute was multiplied by the respective belief score, with all attributes summed to yield multi-item pre- and post-use norms, expectations, and performance measures. In addition, single item measures on overall perceptions were taken on the two norms, focal brand expectations, and performance.

Other evaluation process measures. Oliver (1980) included pre-usage focal brand attitude in his research and found that it did influence satisfaction. This study also measured pre-use attitude toward the wine brand tasted and evaluated. A single, five-point scale of "like-to-don't like" was used. Separate perceived disconfirmation scores were obtained for each of the three standard of comparison measures (product norm, favorite brand norm, and focal brand expectations), using a five-point scale ranging from "Much worse than (the standard)" to "Much better than (the standard)." Consistent with emerging consensus in the literature, the concept of satisfaction/dissatisfaction was defined as an affective or emotional response following a cognitive evaluation (i.e., disconfirmation) of the focal brand's performance (Oliver 1980; Westbrook 1982; Woodruff et al. 1983). Correspondingly, satisfaction feelings were measured by using five bipolar, five-point scales. Each scale measured a different dimension of these feelings: warm glow/cold feeling, impressed/unimpressed, delighted/upset, pleased/displeased, contented/frustrated. To construct an overall satisfaction measure, the five items were summed.

Manipulation check. A single item manipulation check for situational involvement asked subjects to indicate how concerned each was overall with the evaluation of a wine for the usage occasion just viewed. Scoring ranged from "Definitely not concerned" = 1 to "Definitely concerned" = 5.

Behavioral and demographic measures. Several behavioral and demographic measures were obtained. The behavioral variables included number of times wine was drunk in past week, occasions when wine was consumed over the past month (different occasions were summed to yield universality of the product usage), number of wine appreciation or wine tasting sessions one had attended during the past three years, and an overall statement of knowledgeability with regard to wines.

FINDINGS

Sample Characteristics

Subjects experiencing high and low situational involvement were examined for demographic and behavioral differences. Chi square tests of significance and analyses of variance showed no significant differences between groups, except for education (Table 1). However, this difference can be considered an artifact of random class assignment to treatments and of little importance. All subjects have relatively high amounts of educational experience. In general, subjects held professional or student occupations, enjoyed moderate incomes, consumed wine for many different occasions, but were not heavy users. They considered themselves somewhat knowledgeable wine consumers.

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC AND WINE USAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF INVOLVEMENT GROUPS

Variable	Involvement High	Involvement Low	Test
Sex			
male	67 %	54 %	chi
female	33	46	square
Marital Status			
single	73	70	chi
married	27	30	square
Age			
25 and under	44	26	
26 - 35	46	63	chi
over 35	10	12	square
Number of Children			
none	83	88	chi
one or more	17	12	square
Occupational Status			
employed/unemployed	52	42	chi
full time student	48	58	square
Income			
less than $20,000	38	28	
$20,000 - $39,999	40	51	chi
$40,000 or over	23	21	square
Education			
college degree	44	21	
some graduate work	54	56	chi
complete graduate degree	2	23	square[a]
Average number wine drinking occasions of past month	2.2 (1.53)[b]	2.4 (1.63)	t-test
Average number time wine drunk in past week	1.3 (1.43)	1.3 (1.60)	t-test
Average wine knowledge-ability score	2.5[c] (0.90)	2.7[c] (0.81)	t-test

[a] $p < .001$

[b] Numbers in parentheses represent standard deviations of mean scores.

[c] Wine knowledgeability scores range from 1=not at all knowledgeable to 5=very knowledgeable.

Manipulation Check

It was crucial that the subjects role played during the study and that the two consumption occasions generated different amounts of situational involvement. T-test results indicated there was a significant difference between the two involvement manipulations ($T=4.41$, $p < .001$). The Saturday night dinner manipulation was successful in generating more feeling of personal relevance than was experienced for the weekday, informal supper ($\bar{x}$ (high involvement) = 3.97, S.D.=0.79; $\bar{x}$ (low involvement) = 3.09, S.D. = 1.09).

TABLE 2

PAIRWISE CORRELATIONS

	MI PN	SI PN	MI FBN	SI FBN	MI FBE	SI FBE	SI ATT	MI PER	SI PER	PN DIS	FBN DIS	FBE DIS	MI SAT
MI PN	(78)	[68]	52	50	52	51	37	43	44	01	08	-06	22
SI PN			31	40	43	49	46	37	44	-05	13	-10	29
MI FBN			(59)	[60]	23	14	05	21	26	-05	-16	06	15
SI FBN					28	39	12	28	37	-03	-08	04	26
MI FBE					(81)	[84]	70	75	54	23	42	-01	48
SI FBE							65	73	65	27	46	03	54
SI ATT								67	57	28	46	05	50
MI PER								(85)	[82]	53	65	43	77
SI PER										55	55	56	82
PN DIS											62	49	58
FBN DIS												43	63
FBE DIS													59
MI SAT													(89)

Entries in parentheses are reliability coefficients. Entries in brackets are convergent validity correlations. All decimals are omitted.

MI PN = multi-item product norm
SI PN = single item product norm
MI FBN = multi-item favorite brand norm
SI FBN = single item favorite brand norm
MI FBE = multi-item focal brand expectations
SI FBE = single item focal brand expectations
SI ATT = single item pre-use focal brand attitude
MI PER = multi-item performance
SI PER = single item performance
PN DIS = product norm disconfirmation
FBN DIS = favorite brand norm disconfirmation
MI SAT = multi-item satisfaction
FBE DIS = focal brand expectations disconfirmation

TABLE 3

TESTS FOR SIGNIFICANT MEAN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STANDARDS OF COMPARISON

Involvement Level	Means[a]	Comparison	T-Values	Level of Significance
High	FBN = 76.91	FBN - FBE =	3.20	<.01
	FBE = 69.02	FBN - PN =	3.42	<.01
	PN = 71.58	FBE - PN =	-1.29	N.S.
Low	FBN = 68.24	FBN - FBE =	2.80	<.01
	FBE = 64.84	FBN - PN =	4.53	<.01
	PN = 61.26	FBE - PN =	2.12	<.05

[a]Standards of comparison: FBN = Favorite brand norm
FBE = Focal brand expectations
PN = Product norm

TABLE 4

TESTS FOR SIGNIFICANT MEAN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT LEVELS

Standard of Comparison	Standard Means: High Inv.	Standard Means: Low Inv.	T-Value	Level of Significance
Favorite brand norm	76.91 (15.95)	68.24 (12.38)	2.80	< .01
Product norm	71.58 (15.57)	61.26 (14.90)	3.22	< .01
Focal brand expectations	69.02 (17.04)	64.84 (16.19)	1.20	N.S.

Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations of standard means.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability. Cronbach's alpha and item to total correlations were used to assess internal consistency for the multi-item scales. Three of the seven wine attributes were dropped from the multi-item wine attribute scales to achieve unidimensionality; all five satisfaction feeling measures were unidimensional as well. Remaining product dimensions included product quality, suitability with main course, prestige/status of brand, and value for price. All item to total correlations of remaining scale items were above 0.400. As shown in Table 2, all but one of the multi-item measures had alpha coefficients suitable for basic research. The exception is the favorite brand norm measure where subjects' responses were skewed toward the upper end of the scale and variance was small.

Validity. This study proposes that three different constructs be used as standards of comparison: product norm, favorite brand norm, and focal brand expectations. As a check for separate constructs, several validity tests were conducted.

First, the multi-item and single item measures for the three standards were evaluated for convergent and discriminant validity. Table 2 shows the pairwise

correlations between these measures and other evaluation variables. Multiple measures were taken only on the attribute-based variables. Correlations between different measures of the same construct were quite high; all convergent validity correlations were above 0.60. Also, the convergent validity correlations all were greater than discriminant correlations. Given the excellent reliability and validity checks for the multi-item wine attribute measures, subsequent analyses involving these constructs were limited to multi-item constructions.

An additional check for discriminant validity was provided by an examination for differences in means for the three standards. This check was conducted for each situational involvement group (see Table 3). Comparison of means across the three standards for subjects in the high situational involvement treatment yielded the following pattern: the favorite brand norm was higher than either the product norm or focal brand expectations, and the difference between the product norm and focal brand expectations was not significant. Subjects in the low situational involvement treatment evidenced a slightly different pattern: the favorite brand norm mean was greater than that for focal brand expectations, which was, in turn, greater than that for the product norm, and all means were significantly different from each other. These results suggest that consumers can differentiate between these three comparison standards. However contrary to original predictions, the favorite brand norm turned out to be the most rigorous of all the references. Interestingly, focal brand expectations were about the same as the product norm only in the high involvement treatment. In the low involvement treatment, expectations for that same focal brand were above the product norm standard, suggesting that consumers perceived different product categories as relevant in forming a product norm in the two treatment situations.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis predicted that the comparison standard used when a consumer experiences high situational involvement would be higher or more rigorous than corresponding standards used when experiencing low situational involvement. Table 4 summarizes the results of the test for differences in standard used by the high and low situational involvement treatment groups. The favorite brand norm mean is much higher for the high involvement group than for the low ($T = 2.80$, $p < .01$; $\bar{x}$ (high involvement) = 76.91, $\bar{x}$ (low involvement) = 68.24). Product norm means are also significantly different ($T = 3.22$, $p < .01$; $\bar{x}$ (high involvement) = 71.58, $\bar{x}$ (low involvement) = 61.26). Thus, consumers appear to have higher standards for focal brand comparisons when they are faced with high situational involvement than when they are experiencing low involvement. Not surprisingly, there were no significant differences for focal brand expectations. Consumers expect the same performance from the focal brand regardless of the situation.

In addition, it was hypothesized that the three disconfirmation models would differ in their ability to predict satisfaction across the involvement treatments. Correlations between individual variables were examined first in Table 5. Expectations was the only pre-use standard which was significantly associated with satisfaction, but only for high situational involvement subjects ($r = .53$). The product norm and favorite brand norm measures are not correlated with satisfaction measures in either treatment condition. The post-usage measures of perceived focal brand performance and all three disconfirmation measures correlated significantly with satisfaction for both high and low involvement subjects. Product norm and favorite brand norm disconfirmation measures were better satisfaction predictors

TABLE 5

EVALUATION VARIABLE CORRELATIONS FOR
HIGH AND LOW SITUATIONAL INVOLVEMENT GROUPS

	PN	FBN	FBE	ATT	PER	PN DIS	FBN DIS	FBE DIS	SAT
					High involvement				
PN		74[a]	64[a]	10	62[a]	28[b]	04	08	19
FBN	76[a]		29[b]	-28[b]	35[a]	12	-30[b]	-03	-09
FBE	75[a]	76[a]		51[a]	85[a]	43[a]	42[a]	17	53[a]
ATT	33[b]	06	45[a]		52[a]	29[b]	45[a]	15	52[a]
PER	65[a]	66[a]	77[a]	43[a]		61[a]	52[a]	41[a]	64[a]
PN DIS	-29[b]	-19	-13	25	22		63[a]	43[a]	60[a]
FBN DIS	00	03	19	46[a]	51[a]	61[a]		45[a]	68[a]
FBE DIS	-25	-04	-30[b]	-08	19	56[a]	39[a]		56[a]
SAT	04	07	06	45[a]	49[a]	55[a]	57[a]	61[a]	
					Low involvement				

PN = Product norm
FBN = Favorite brand norm
FBE = Focal brand expectations
ATT = Pre-use focal brand attitude
PER = Performance

PN DIS = Product norm disconfirmation
FBN DIS = Favorite brand norm disconfirmation
FBE DIS = Focal brand disconfirmation
SAT = Satisfaction

Decimals are omitted.

[a] $p < .01$

[b] $p < .05$

TABLE 6

STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH SATISFACTION AS CRITERION

Model	Beta Coefficient, Predictor, Change in R^2						
	β_1	(ΔR^2)	β_2	(ΔR^2)	β_3	(ΔR^2)	R^2
			High Involvement				
Product Norm	.66 PER[a]	(.41)	-.31 PN[c]	(.08)	.29 PN DIS[c]	(.06)	.54
Favorite Brand Norm	.49 FBN, DIS[a]	(.45)	.36 PER[b]	(.10)			.55
Focal Brand	.34 PER[b]	(.41)	.37 FBE DIS[b]	(.11)	.29 ATT[c]	(.06)	.58
			Low Involvement				
Product Norm	.46 PN DIS[a]	(.30)	.39 PER[b]	(.14)			.44
Favorite Brand Norm	1.00 PER[a]	(.38)	-.60 FBN[a]	(.20)			.58
Focal Brand	.65 FBE DIS[a]	(.37)	.50 ATT[a]	(.25)			.62

PN = Product norm, FBN = Favorite brand norm, FBE = Focal brand expectations, ATT = Pre-use focal brand attitude, PER = Performance, PN DIS = Product norm disconfirmation, FBN DIS = Favorite brand norm disconfirmation, FBE DIS = Focal brand disconfirmation, SAT = Satisfaction.

[a] $p < .001$
[b] $p < .01$
[c] $p < .05$

for subjects experiencing high situational involvement (r = .60 and .68, respectively) than they were for those exposed to low situational involvement (r = .55 and .57). But disconfirmation of focal brand expectations under low situational involvement correlated higher with satisfaction (r = .61) than it did for the highly involving usage context (r = .56).

Stepwise regression analyses (Table 6) were used to determine each disconfirmation model's ability to predict satisfaction. Six regressions were run, one for each of the three standards of comparison across both high and low involvement scenarios. The focal brand model did a slightly better job of predicting satisfaction for low involvement contexts (R^2 = .62) than it did for high involvement (R^2 = .58). The product norm disconfirmation model, however, did a better job of predicting satisfaction in the high involvement treatment (R^2 = .54) than in the low involvement treatment (R^2 = .44). There is also substantial difference in predictive ability of the favorite brand norm model for the high (R^2 = .55) and low (R^2 = .64) involvement treatments.

When disconfirmation models were compared within each involvement treatment, an interesting pattern emerged. For high situational involvement, there was not much difference among the three disconfirmation models. All accounted for approximately 55 percent of variation in the satisfaction measures. Thus, hypothesis 1a is not supported. In the low situational involvement condition, the focal brand and favorite brand norm models were much better at predicting satisfaction (R^2 values of .62 and .58, respectively) than the product norm model (R^2 = .44). Given the fact that all standards of comparison for the low involvement occasion are lower than those for the high involvement context (Table 4) and there is a tendency to use simpler standards to predict satisfaction under low situational involvement (Table 6), hypothesis 1b is supported.

In summary, hypothesis 1 was supported in that situational involvement appears to moderate use of standards in CS/D processes. Predicting specific standards under different situational involvement conditions is not so easily determined as originally proposed, however.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis predicted that the influence of different evaluation process variables on satisfaction would vary according to the degree of situational involvement experienced by consumers. The stepwise regressions in Table 6 show the order in which various CS/D process measures were entered into the prediction model. The minimum criterion for variable inclusion was that its contribution to predicting satisfaction be significant at $p < .05$.

For high involvement, perceived focal brand performance was the first significant measure to enter in two of the regression models--product norm and focal brand expectations. Pre-usage measures (e.g., pre-use focal brand attitude) and disconfirmation followed perceived focal brand performance. Only when the favorite brand norm was used to predict satisfaction did a different pattern appear. Here, disconfirmation entered the model before performance.

In the low involvement treatment, there was no difference in the order of measures entering for the product norm and focal brand models. Disconfirmation entered first as a satisfaction predictor, followed by perceived focal brand performance. The favorite brand norm model showed performance as the first predictor, followed by favorite brand norm.

The hypothesis stated that perceived focal brand performance would be more important than disconfirmation as a predictor of satisfaction for high involvement, while the reverse would hold for low involvement. The results are mixed when the specific standard for evaluating focal brand performance is considered. The hypothesis was supported when the standards were the product norm and focal brand expectations, but was not

supported for the favorite brand norm model. In general, the results largely support the findings from the Churchill and Surprenant (1982) and Oliver and Bearden (1983) studies, which suggest that involvement is a moderating variable in consumer satisfaction processes.

DISCUSSION

While many CS/D studies have examined the role of focal brand expectations, there have been few attempts to incorporate alternative reference points when studying CS/D processes. This research considered focal brand expectations as well as selected norms as standards when examining the role of situational involvement in post-use brand performance evaluation.

A basic assumption of an experience-based norm theory of CS/D is that the consumer's perception of the use situation affects CS/D processes (Woodruff et al. 1983). Actually, the use situation appears to trigger consumer reaction to an evaluation process. The usage occasion can create high and low concern for the consumption experience, which in turn, makes prior experience with products and brands vary in importance.

Different standards appear to be used when the usage occasion changes and creates different consumer involvement states. Specifically, product norms are more useful in high involvement use settings, because they incorporate so much product/brand information. Consumers are willing to spend time and effort evaluating all possible brands so they may benefit from this knowledge in the next important consumption experience. They will not be such active information processors for a low involvement occasion, however. Prior experience with a very familiar brand, either the focal brand or a favorite brand, is enough to judge satisfaction with subsequent low involvement use occasions.

Consumers have several possible comparison standards at their disposal, which complicates attempts at understanding CS/D development. This study focused on focal brand expectations, favorite brand norms, and product norms, but Woodruff et al. (1983) propose other experience-based norms. Marketers need to determine what usage occasions are relevant for their brands. Matching a usage occasion with the appropriate standards in a marketing communication will insure that the brand has the best opportunity of meeting consumer needs. Otherwise, linking the wrong standard of comparison to a usage situation may inadvertently penalize the brand, leading to negative evaluative perceptions and subsequent negative intentions to use that brand in the future.

Past research has shown how useful a CS/D process approach can be for explaining and predicting satisfaction. This study reinforces the disconfirmation paradigm's role in CS/D, but also shows that the CS/D process depends on high or low usage involvement. For all but favorite brand norm models, performance was the first predictor of satisfaction for highly involving consumption occasions, but variables capturing both pre- and post-use judgments were more important for low involvement occasions. It may be that high situational involvement sensitizes an individual to the immediate consumption experience. One will forsake or downplay the brand expectations or norms for a product, if the occasion triggers exceptional attention to specific performance capabilities. Halo effects are diminished and post-usage evaluations become most important to the development of satisfaction. No matter what the standards may be, a highly involving consumption occasion motivates the consumer to review cognitively each specific bottle of wine without using past experience or brand messages as guidelines for performance judgments. The consumer relies much more on immediate, personal experiences to evaluate the brand than past history.

Low involvement occasions will however cause a consumer to elicit past experience and expectations to help formulate post-usage evaluation. Halo effects are strong here, and adaptation-level theory is the likely explanation for the continued use of pre-usage variables for satisfaction development.

Research in the CS/D area has reached a critical point, with refinements needed in the basic adaptation-level theory and disconfirmation paradigm. This study expands an existing research stream by introducing situational triggering cues to CS/D research. Such mediating constructs will necessitate some modifications in current theory, but marketing implications will be more focused and more realistic. The most productive future work in consumption evaluation may well be identification of market segments, based on different antecedent conditions, and further study of CS/D process differences among these groups. Although these antecedent conditions may not be the most powerful influences on CS/D, they can affect product positioning and communication strategies and hopefully, consumer satisfaction and marketer profits.

While the present study offers some interesting theoretical and practical implications, it is not without limitations. The findings are limited with respect to external validity. Subjects were from a unique population and not truly representative of the wine-drinking public. However, the experimental results do show that exogenous conditions cannot be ignored in CS/D processes. Consumers do use situational guidelines and find these situations to be different in terms of importance for evaluation decisions.

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