UNDERSTANDING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER DECISIONS

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In
Social Science: Interdisciplinary Studies

by

Marla Simpson

San Francisco, California

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Understanding Socially Responsible Consumer Decisions* by Marla Simpson, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts in Social Science: Interdisciplinary Studies at San Francisco State University.

Stanley Bailis
Professor of Social Science

Jack Osman
Professor of Economics

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Marla Simpson
San Francisco State University
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Socially responsible consumer decision-making is examined within the framework of an interdisciplinary model of decision-making. The disparity between preferences reflected in survey responses and consumer actions was discussed. Literature on decision theory was reviewed to provide background information for the model. Promotional materials from socially responsible businesses are then compared to materials from businesses without a stated social agenda to determine if the promotional strategies between socially responsible and mainstream businesses are functionally the same or different. By examining the presence or absence of certain promotional tactics, it was determined that promotional materials used by socially responsible businesses contained more items of attribute-based claims, humor, and comparison whereas other companies' promotional materials used relatively more photographic imagery and accentuated social considerations through photographs of people and by placing social references high in the text.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

Stanley Bailis

Chair, Dr. Stanley Bailis

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WHY SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR?

My mother and sister are small business owners who are also opinionated liberals. Not only are they concerned about costs, profits and competitors, but also their personal values. Every time the minimum wage increases, my mother weighs the options of raising prices, cutting employee hours, or searching for some way to eke higher productivity out of the high-school students who account for most of her staff. My sister and her business partner once faced the uncomfortable choice between accepting a video job that offended their feminist sensibilities, or turning it away when everyone who worked for them was struggling financially. Watching my relatives' struggles and tradeoffs between personal values and attending to the bottom line made me wonder about how much or little support consumers give to socially responsible producers and what producers can do to garner more support.

My mother's and sister's experiences prompted me to question if individuals did not overlook the marketplace as an arena for forwarding a social agenda and also to examine the way that consumers either include or exclude a products social impact in their buying criteria.

Definition

There are many terms to describe purchasing decisions based on a social agenda: consumer activism, socially conscious consumer behavior, and socially responsible consumer behavior. Although the terms are, for the most part, analogous, their usage tends to vary according to the disciplinary orientation of the author. For my purposes, I will use the term socially responsible consumer behavior (SRCB). SRCB is the process whereby consumers link their individual desires for a specific social outcome to their decisions for or against buying from a particular business, industry, or buying a particular product.

Although the term is intentionally broad enough to encompass both religious activists boycotting Disney to protest the company airing a lesbian sit-com and gay–rights activists purchasing goods from Levi's in support of a strong gay-rights record, the available literature tends to focus on progressive causes such as the environment, minority rights, workers rights, human rights, anti-animal testing etc. In this way, my definition of the term is not intended to exclude a particular ideological orientation, but is rooted historically in a concept of social responsibility that emphasizes environmental, human rights, charitable giving and animal-rights pursuits. For research purposes, I will focus on these efforts.

Because consumer behavior is such an integral part of American life, this topic is both relevant and important. Most adults living in the U.S. make daily consumer decisions, and most would hardly think of leaving home without their wallets. Those decisions then affect the socio-political milieu in which we live. Sometimes, as with environmentally-friendly or deleterious products, the product itself is considered to have an impact. Other times, as with the Nestle boycott, the product may not be considered objectionable, but the producer is.

Consumer decisions affect how both money and power will be distributed in a society by empowering specific businesses. Industry and politics are hopelessly intertwined. For example, the technology industry celebrated two major legislative victories in July 1999. First, Congress and the White House agreed to limit corporate liability for Year 2000 software problems. Second, President Clinton announced his support for allowing computer exports to politically sensitive nations such as China. However, victories like these do not come cheaply. The computer industry is slated to contribute about $18 million to political lobbying for the 2000 political races. Still, the tech-industry's largesse pales in comparison to the $52 million in contributions from securities firms. (Borus & Carey, 1999) Industry campaign contributions buy influence and influence affects legislative outcomes. Of course, candidates need money as much as businesses need political influence. According to a report on the 1998 elections by The Center for Responsive Politics (1999), in 96% of contested

House races and 91% of contested Senate races, victory went to the biggest spender.

In such a tangled web, it is difficult to decide where to begin. The neo-classical economic paradigm, on which the U.S. economic system is grounded, relies on self-interest. In terms of consumer behavior, the paradigm hinges on consumers expressing their preferences through market forces, turning to political resolutions as a secondary venue. In this way, the system places the onus on consumers to demonstrate how highly they value socially responsible product attributes.

Paradox Introduced

Environment

Here is where it becomes a little tricky. Economic theory assumes that consumers are rational, and that they make rational decisions regarding their own interests and preferences. If you ask them, people regularly espouse their devotion to SR causes such as the environment and environmentally-motivated purchasing behavior. A full 87% claim to be concerned about the environment, with 44% asserting that they are "very concerned" (Phillips, 1999). Eighty two percent believe that they buy and consume too much, and 58% believe that it would benefit the environment to teach children to be less materialistic.

(Marketing News, 1998) Most survey respondents considered themselves environmentalists, and 85% believed that American business and industry were not worried enough about the environment (Gallup Poll,1990). Seventy five percent (Speer,1997) say that they themselves should do more for the environment, and 50% (Phillips,1999) claim to look for environmental labeling and to have switched brands as a result. Sixty percent of women and 40% of men have reportedly switched to household products that protect the environment. (Household & Personal Products,1999)

However, when purchasing behavior is examined, the results are less encouraging. Based on survey responses (Speer,1997), consumers were divided into various consumer categories. Using averages for each group, researchers estimated the groups' buying habits. The most earnest group, representing 5% of the population, were willing to pay a top-dollar 20% premium for environmentally responsible products. Thereafter, the premium decreased. A group consisting of about 10% of the population would pay 7%. A large portion, 33%, reported that they would pay 4% extra. But the remaining 48% of respondents were not willing to pay extra.

Survey results portray a confusing, inconsistent and contradictory picture of consumer interest in social responsibility. For instance, in 1999, American Demographics reported that 50% of shoppers looked for environmental labeling and had switched brands as a result (Phillips,1999), but in 1996, the same magazine reported a study indicating that only about 20% read labels for

environmental claims (Speer,1999). While it is possible that label reading grew 150% between 1996-1999, this would be surprising in light of the other 1996 findings, that reading labels for environmental claims slackened from 25% in 1990 to 20% in 1996 (Speer,1999).

Organic products

The same inconsistencies appear in survey responses on organic purchasing behavior. Fifty percent of respondents say they buy organic or natural products at least once a month, and 35% claim to seek "organic" on labels(Fetto, 1999). In spite of consumers' avowed interest, the market for organic products remains slight, amounting to only 2% of overall food sales (Private Equity Week, 1998).

Renewable Energy

People also send mixed messages about their interest in renewable energy programs. Public Utilities Fortnightly (August 1998) reported that 40% - 70% would pay extra for renewable energy. Specifically, survey results indicated that 23-45% favored renewable energy and would be willing to pay 5% extra, and that another 1%-7% of respondents would pay 5%-20% extra (Public Utilities Fortnightly, July 1998). In practice, only 1%-2% of energy customers enroll in renewable energy programs.

Sweatshops

There is evidence that concern about sweatshops is widespread. In surveys, consumers assert that they would be willing to make financial tradeoffs for the assurance that apparel products were not produced in sweatshops. For example, a 1996 study reported in the Los Angeles Times (Johnson, 1996) revealed that about 80% of respondents said they would avoid shopping at a retail outlet that sells goods made in sweatshops. Sixty percent were reportedly more likely to shop at retailers who they knew were trying to end abuse of garment workers. In addition, most respondents (80%) claim to be willing to pay an extra 5% for the guarantee that an item was not made in a sweatshop. (Johnson) These results were similar to those reported in a 1998 issue of the San Diego Union-Tribune (Spar, 1998) that cited 78% preferring to shop with retailers who were committed to ending garment-worker abuse and 84% of respondents willing to pay an additional 5% for sweatshop-free clothing.

Because clothing is a highly differentiated product in an industry within which consumer perceptions of value include such intangibles as brand recognition and celebrity endorsements, and where market trends are as elusive as changing styles, it is nearly impossible to isolate the influence that anti-sweatshop preferences exert. However, it is notable that consumer support for boycott efforts to end sweatshops has been erratic. For example, a recent boycott of Nike athletic shoes failed to gain marketplace support from many

young African-Americans even though they sympathized with the objectives of the boycott which included placing more African Americans in executive positions (Friedman, 1996).

Exxon Valdez

The Exxon boycott was an example of a boycott that attracted expansive media attention. Public sentiment against Exxon was very strong after the 1989 Valdez oil spill. In response, 41% of Americans vowed to boycott Exxon, but in the end, a paltry 7% actually did (Ellen, Wiener and Cobb-Walgren, 1991).

Charitable Giving

In contrast to the examples above, consumers have responded enthusiastically, under some circumstances, to producer promotions involving charitable giving and cause-related marketing. According to John Beachum, director of in-store publicity and promotion for Carson Pirie Scott & Co., a Milwaukee-based retailer, customers were receptive to promotions that allowed them to trade used clothing donations (to contribute to Goodwill Industries) in exchange for store coupons (Malone,1997) Of course, contributing unwanted clothing for discounts hardly counts as paying a social responsibility premium.

As these studies demonstrate, attitudes and intentions often fail to translate into behavior. In spite of widespread concern about social responsibility, the belief that businesses should do more for the environment and society, and recognition that individuals should also improve their efforts, consumers appear reluctant to shoulder the bill.

Surveys and Measurement

When disparities like this surface, survey researchers often argue that a survey's poor predictive ability results from unspecific measuring techniques, ambiguous relationships between the attitude and behavioral constructs, and little concern for the importance of intention.

Building on the earlier work of Ajzen & Fishbein (1977), Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior established a theoretical framework for questionnaire design that emphasized the importance of 1) precision between measures, 2) using aggregate measures to determine general scales, 3) including questions that measure intentions and, 4) predicting intention according to a measure that combines attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control

Because studies that attempt to link environmental concern with environmentally responsible consumer behavior regularly lacked predictive ability, Mainieri,

Barnett, Valdero, Unipan & Oskamp (1997) developed a questionnaire that was grounded in the theory of planned behavior. These researchers sought to determine which specific attitudes predicted environmentally responsible consumer behavior. The questionnaire featured:

1. Aspects of ERCB
2. Confusion over products' environmental claims
3. Consumer beliefs addressing respondent's specific attitudes toward environmental consumerism
4. General environmental concern
5. Political contacts
6. Socio-demographic variables

Each attitudinal and behavioral measure included several specific questions that, when aggregated, formed each of the above constructs. They mailed the questionnaire to 800 households in western Los Angeles. Two hundred one were returned.

Despite efforts by Mainieri et al. to measure as accurately as possible using 1) multiple indicators with aggregate measures, and 2) attitudes and behaviors that correspond to one another in terms of both content and level of specificity, Mainieri et al. found that attitude measures lacked significance as predictors of any of the behavior scales. Even with this carefully constructed

survey, the mean score for buying behavior lagged behind those for pro-environmental attitude and for consumers' beliefs about their environmental responsibility.

Market Considerations

If even careful studies report a gap between attitudes and behavior, what divides the two?

Whenever I mention SRCB, people always mention price, convenience or information as determinants of participation. I will come back to these later as "product attributes" when I discuss the focal aspects of decision-making, but would like to discuss them briefly now as market/economic influences.

Price

Price is certainly an important determinant of buying behavior and price differences can be quite significant. Organic produce often runs not 30% more, but twice or three times the price of regular produce. Even the most sincere consumers might balk at 200% premiums. Unfortunately, producers have limited control over keeping costs low in cases like this. For example, the average price per bushel of organic soybeans is $16.50. For inorganic it is $6.47 (Fetto, 1999).

Since businesses usually cannot afford to absorb these costs, they need consumer support to carry out SR business decisions.

If we assume that people pay for things according to how much they value them, it begs the question, "Why do consumers assign such low monetary values to product attributes that they strongly prefer?" According to benchmark surveys, respondents reported that they would pay premiums averaging about 5%-10%. Since product categories that include SR options only account for a portion of consumer spending, and considering that consumers often regarded SR issues as "very important," this would be a relatively modest offering.

Furthermore, simplifying SRCB as a price-for-value exchange obscures the fact that people offer greater economic premiums for social responsibility when they are acting in roles other than their consumer role.

Research shows that, in terms of employment, social responsibility commands a high premium. According to Frank (1996), the differences in pay that survey respondents sais they were willing to accept, based on scales of differences in occupational social responsibility and employer social responsibility, were approximately 43% and 19% respectively. While responding to a survey does not involve actual monetary exchanges, evidence of starting salaries for first year law graduates supported the argument that individuals are willing to trade social responsibility for income, with public interest lawyers

accepting approximately 33% of the pay that lawyers in their first year of private practice received in 1990. Additionally, there was no evidence that the pay differences reflected differences in productivity.

Legislative decisions.

It is also likely that people are more open to SR premiums associated with SR legislation than purchasing. To illustrate, consider the hotly debated living wage ordinance that San Francisco legislators have proposed. The goals of this proposal are very similar to those of anti-sweatshop advocates – to insure that workers receive a living wage in exchange for their toil. Estimates of the cost to implement the ordinance range from $109 to $250 million. (Epstein, 1999) With San Francisco's population of 723,959 (U.S. Census, 1990), the per capita cost would be $150-$345. If the living wage ordinance were paid for through social responsibility premiums instead of through mandates, and premiums were 10-15% extra, each San Franciscan would need to purchase between $1000-$3450 worth of SR goods to cover the cost. Retailers report that the extra cost for SR household products is about 20-30 cents on a product (Balino, 1997). If each person contributed equally under the ordinance through $.30 social responsibility premiums, every child, man and woman in San Francisco would need to make about 500 - 1150 SR household product purchases per year. Such high demand for SR products would have a radical impact on the market for household products in San Francisco.

Obviously, this illustration oversimplifies the political process and how costs are distributed, but it does demonstrate the relative purchasing implications and shows how differently similar choices may look in different contexts.

Willingness to pay.

A 1996 study by Baron and Maxwell demonstrated how influential framing could be in determining how much consumers would pay. In a series of experiments, researchers asked respondents to indicate their willingness to pay for various public services in their community based on hypothetical situations such as an environmental cleanup. The authors manipulated cost of the service, prior per person expenditures, implied costs, potential benefits, and number of people in the community. The authors held the potential benefits (number of people helped) constant in most cases. Participants were asked to indicate how much they would be willing to contribute toward a given community solution.

Across the board, respondents relied on cost information to determine their willingness to pay. The value respondents assigned to their willingness to pay tended to increase as cost increased and decreased as the number of people in the community increased. This was true even when participants could explicitly see that the benefits of the service would not increase with the higher cost.

These variances suggest that the monetary values people assign to social responsibility are situation-dependent and contingent on how many others are also covering the costs. Moreover, if price alone determined consumer choices, they would always choose the cheapest brand and that is not what happens.

Convenience

Lack of convenience is another buying aspect often suspected of inhibiting SR buying. If the goods were more widely available, more people would buy them, one might argue. However, some SR products enjoy widespread distribution. In fact, organic and natural foods are now available in 73% of all supermarkets and grocery stores (Fetto,1999).

Yet, convenience arguments are a double-edged sword. Retailers are hesitant to allot shelf space for products that consumers don't buy. If people would buy them, retailers assert, we would stock them. According to Charlie Lane, a buyer for Minyard Food Stores, Coppell, Texas: "We tried to purchase these items (SR paper goods and household cleaners) in the past and we continue to do so to a degree, whether it's bathroom tissue, detergents or other items." He also said, "...there are some items we don't stock any more because the sales just weren't there" (Balino, 1997).

Information

Another common explanation for the disparity between attitudes and SRCB is that consumers lack information about social responsibility issues and product attributes. Clearly, consumers who are completely unaware of SR benefits and social consequences will not take these into account. Still, information is no panacea and efforts to penetrate public consciousness, even when they are effective, do not always stimulate corresponding behavioral changes.

Linn, Vining and Feely (1994) attempted to increase environmentally responsible consumer behavior (ERCB) through an educational intervention and tagging program. Before and after the program, they interviewed people in the community according to their self-reported shopping behavior and the portion of shopping that respondents did at either experimental or control group stores. The program consisted of point-of sale tags to highlight ER attributes in tandem with informational brochures in the experimental stores explaining the program, newspaper advertisements and educational programs in elementary schools. The results showed no increase in ERCB after the intervention and additionally revealed no difference between shopping behavior of consumers who frequented the experimental stores and those who shopped at control stores.

Also, both the Nike and Exxon boycotts were widely publicized and as a result, people were generally aware of the issues, understood well enough to sympathize with the boycott goals, but in many cases elected to purchase from these producers anyway.

Free Rider?

On the surface this looks like a classic free rider problem – a population of consumers who believe in SRCB but do not practice it and who want businesses to take responsibility for social outcomes, often at extra expense to producers, but will only support minor cost increases that result from these efforts. Yet, not only does this situation present free riders with an incentive to cheat, there are literally no restraints on cheating. Why does anyone do it at all?

In spite of the dismal aggregate numbers, *growth* for SR products is strong. Sales of organic food are growing at a rate of about 20-25 percent annually (Fetto, 1999). Socially responsible investing is growing rapidly. From 1995-1997, the number of socially responsible funds tripled and assets under management in socially screened portfolios grew 227% compared to 84% for the broad market (Social Investment Forum, 1999). The percentage of health and beauty aids purchasors buying natural products went from 55% in 1997 to 64% in 1999 (Bittar, 1999), and company mission statements with explicit social goals are becoming increasingly common. To reach a deeper understanding than the

economic theory can provide, it is necessary to examine this topic in an interdisciplinary manner.

DISCIPLINES AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Definitions

What is a *discipline*? Bailis (1974) defines disciplines as "...systems composed of related conceptions, methodologies and subject-matter claims pertaining to a material field – i.e., to a common-sense domain of objects and events that the discipline studies." Social science disciplines are conceptual structures for examining how people rely on or react to other people either explicitly or implicitly, individually or collectively. The disciplines of Economics, Psychology and Sociology each contribute important perspectives on the topic of SRCB.

The central concepts of Economics are supply and demand, exchange, choice and opportunity costs. Based on an assumption of individual and producer rationality, economic analyses focus on examining and modeling quantitative indices of market behavior – price, volume and supply (Miller, 1996).

For the examination of SRCB, the economic approach would regard social responsibility like a commodity or a service traded on the market. Hence, an economic analysis of SRCB would be concerned with questions about the monetary value of social responsibility, the relationship between products with socially responsible attributes and other products (competing, complementary, inferior or superior goods), and the economic impact of SRCB.

Economic analyses of consumer preferences treat preferences as if they were static, self-interested and rational. Beyond the assumptions of utility maximization, decision processes are not usually a strong consideration in economic analyses. Economists are generally interested in aggregate trends resulting from the decisions, rather than the process of making them.

Economic approaches are often criticized because examining aggregate data does not allow economists to isolate effects. Therefore, links between economic theory and market behavior can not be proven by market outcomes.

The central concepts in Psychology are mind, personality and motivation. Individuals are the focus of attention. Exploratory methods include experimentation, interviews, brain scans, statistics and case examinations of individuals who have suffered brain damage (Miller, 1996).

The psychological perspective views SRCB as a response to stimuli. In psychological studies, individuals and their social values are regarded as constants, while stimuli are manipulated to produce various effects on perception, judgement and decisions. Thus, the psychological approach to examining SRCB would orient questions toward inquiries about which circumstances alter individual behavior, which personality traits contribute to SRCB, and which data presentations facilitate or enhance the behavior. In psychological experiments, the goal is to isolate specific effects. Consequently, psychological studies are often criticized for lacking external validity. Furthermore, Psychology does not address certain key concerns regarding SRCB, such as the unselfish aspects of SRCB, the relationship between individual decisions and the impact on the market, and how social identity or social context contributes to SRCB.

Sociology studies social groupings, social structure and roles (Miller, 1996). In sociological studies, individuals are portrayed as fluid actors who are able to assume different roles to fit different social situations. Individual preferences are examined and compiled as data on the group with which the individual is associated. Sociological questions pertaining to SRCB focus on determining which social groups (demographic group especially) are most likely to engage in SRCB, which social connections correlate with SRCB, and which social structures induce SRCB. The preferred form of sociological evidence is statistical correlation derived from questionnaire results. Critics object to this

inferential method on the grounds that correlation does not indicate causal relationships, and that survey responses are removed from actual situations and are, therefore, subject to a number of survey biases.

SRCB engages people in multiple roles simultaneously. It involves individual choices that take place in a market arena for the purpose of achieving socially motivated goals. Therefore, to develop a dynamic understanding of SRCB it is necessary to take economic, psychological and social factors into account. Examining SRCB from the perspective of a single discipline is like testing a ship on dry land. With an interdisciplinary approach, the subject of SRCB is more like a ship at sea – full of activity, always with someone at watch, but where tides, wind, and currents all act to push the ship in different directions.

Rationale for Focusing on Decision-Making

Once in a store with a friend, I watched him select between two related brands of cleanser for exactly the same price. When I asked him why he selected one over the other, his answer was simply, "I don't know."

The campaign to win public sentiment has been successful. People like the idea of SRCB. But it seems that the campaign to cause people to change their consumer behavior is just beginning. Could part of the secret be locked inside my friend's simple statement?

Rather than searching for ways to change the economic or social system, I decided to look for ways to reinforce something that people already do regularly – changing their minds.

ANATOMY OF A DECISION

With the many socially responsible products now available, it is no longer rare for consumers to face decisions regarding socially responsible purchases. Although consumers usually require only a few seconds to make routine purchasing decisions, this every day process has been the subject of research and controversy for 50 years. What is it about these seemingly simple decisions that renders them so difficult to predict, so controversial to explain?

Focal Aspects

Understanding the disparity between the attitudes expressed in the polls and those expressed in the marketplace requires examining decision making on three levels – focal, proximal and social. Consumers incorporate analytic information about product attributes (price, quality, convenience, etc.) with indirect information about the buying environment as well as characteristics inherent in individual decision-makers. Also, the way that SRCB fits into a social context also plays an influential role. By examining general decision making

research, consumer decision-making and SRCB specifically, we can begin to see the many layers behind a seemingly simple purchasing decision.

Analytic Models -Background

Analytic models were the point of departure for decision theory. The term *analytic*, refers to an understanding of decision-making components, usually at the attribute level. The analytic decision process consists of weighing discrete, sometimes minute, constituents and factoring the likelihood that each prospect will occur into an overall tally. Often referred to as choice models, analytic approaches maintain close ties with Economics.

Models of analytic decision making focus on comparing among a set of alternatives through a logical reasoning process. One way to express those comparisons explicitly is to use expected value (EV) calculations to represent each possible choice. EV is the formalized mathematical representation of value of each constituent benefit weighted by the chance that a decision-maker will realize the benefit. Essentially, the value of an alternative multiplied by the probability equals the EV.

Since EV determinations hinge on probability estimates, good EV estimates require solid probability estimates. The analytic standard for determining probabilities is the Bayes' Theorem. Bayesian analysis is a

statistical method of calculating probabilities based on an original hypothesis and updating the probability as data accumulate (Anderson, 1998). The method can be extended to include multiple outcomes with multiple probabilities.

Theoretically, an analytic decision-maker would plug a Bayesian probability estimate into the EV formula for each option and compare the options to determine which had the highest EV. If costs were equal, the selection with the highest EV would be the obvious choice.

To determine the EV in situations where either benefits or costs occur over time, the estimate must additionally account for the impact of deferring costs or benefits, a determination known as the Present Discounted Value (PDV). Like EV, the PDV involves value and probability calculations. However, PDV calculations address long term values, not just the one-time value of the EV. In practice, PDV is usually applied only to investment decisions, but it has theoretical implications for SRCB too, since most SRCB decisions trade immediate sacrifices for long term improvements.

In the early stages of decision theory, prevailing research emphasized how to determine fair prices for various gambles. The gamble exercise usually followed a lottery format, with explicit dollar values for winning, and numeric probabilities to indicate the odds. Gambles, economists believed, *represented a metaphor for operating in an uncertain world, not only for* monetary gambles, but

for life gambles too. The head scratching began when theorists discovered that, contrary to their expectations, certain gambles revealed a consistent disparity between objective (EV) and lay assessments of fair prices. When determining fair prices, people assigned high prices to gambles based on the EV, but were unwilling to pay their own price for the same gamble.

This disparity pushed analysts to look beyond the EV formula. The theory that followed, *expected utility* (EU) loosened the rigid numerical concept of value and allowed for subjective assessments of value. This shifted the direction of inquiry away from *value* toward *utility*. Utility is the satisfaction or efficacy derived from a choice. The EU theory acknowledged that the subjective and objective worth of a gamble need not be the same, and that value assessments are, in fact, subjective. However, although EU relaxed the assumption of objective *value*, *probability* measures remained objective.

Although some sources credit Bernoulli with first introducing EU in 1738 (Hamouda,1996; Kagel, 1995; Lopes, 1994)m, and others name von Neumann and Morgenstern (Mansfield, 1997; Thaler, 1980), all agree that the von Neumann-Morgenstern theorem (1944) played a pivotal role advancing the EU theory. The von Neumann-Morgenstern theory accomplished two things in particular: It introduced a model of cardinal utility. It defined EU through a series of axioms for rational decision-making.

By building on axioms, the theory enabled economists to summarize preferences *as if* they were derived from utility maximization. Thus, the von Neumann-Morgenstern theorem approached decision making strictly in terms of the outcome of the decision, inferring the decision process from the logical assumptions of the axioms.

Although the theory functioned well for economic applications, it had two apparent limitations. First, it only addressed atemporal problems. Second, it failed to account for the messy, but consistent, "paradox" of subjectivity.

In 1954 Savage entered the fray. By imbuing the EU framework with a dose of subjective probability, Savage's Subjective Expected Utility theory (SEU) further extended the utility model by regarding both value and probability as subjective constructs. This widened the scope of how much subjectivity influenced decision making, allowing for subjective probabilities along with EU's subjective values. In other words, SEU recognized that value and probability assignments were different among individuals according to their own personal assessments. Still circumventing a description of the actual decision making process, SEU solidified the convention of equating behavior with preference, otherwise known as "revealed preferences."

As the theory explains, a consumer would first examine each brand and assign value to the respective attributes. In addition, she would estimate how

likely it was that she would enjoy the value of each attribute. Was she taking a risk that she would not obtain one of the anticipated benefits? The result of these calculations would be the consumer's SEU for each product. From the SEU, she would be able to assign a price equal to what each option would be worth to her. Outsiders would know her SEU by what she selected, viewing her selection as evidence of her preference. In terms of SRCB, SEU views consumer selections as expressions of consumers' real preferences, dismissing data from polls as irrelevant.

Although the revealed preference concept of utility theories (the collective term for EU and SEU) facilitates modeling, it does so at certain expense. By defining preference strictly according to actions, utility theories define preference as a behavioral rather than a psychological construct. This definition undermines both the psychological and colloquial understanding of the term. As utility theories define them, preferences are indistinguishable from actions. The preference-as-action approach separates preferences from affective concepts such as liking and wanting inherent in the standard definition.

Utility theories still have a significant impact on the economic understanding of human decision making. The main strength of utility theories is their facility in explaining and predicting market behavior. For modeling the decision-making aspects of market behavior, utility theories lend themselves to measurement and mathematical calculations important in economics. What

utility theories cannot do, however, is explain why consumers might tell pollsters that they prefer recycled products and yet hesitate to carry those preferences into their purchasing decisions.

A Second Look at Probability

In spite of their merits, utility theories left many with nagging doubts. Maurice Allais was one of the doubters. In 1952, Allais introduced a problem that is now called the Allais paradox. As Lopes (1994) explained, when the stakes are high, people will not trade a sure shot at a great prize for a good chance at an even better one; but when the stakes are lowered, they will swap a sure thing for a good gamble. By demonstrating that even economists shared these preferences, Allais forced economists to redraw the linear function of decision-making.

The friction caused by the Allais paradox foreshadowed the dynamic that followed. The Allais challenge compelled economists to consider gambles in a way that integrated personal inclinations, not only for values and probabilities, but for the process. In addition, the level of risk influenced how decision-makers regarded a gamble.

Later, utility theories faced another affront in the Ellsburg paradox (1961). The paradox was this: SEU theory explained decision-making as a process of

combining subjectively determined value and probability estimates for each option and then comparing the options. If SEU were a valid description of the decision process, then by the time someone made a decision, that person would necessarily know the subjective probability associated with each alternative since subjective probability assessments preceded decision-making. However, Ellsburg suggested that in actual gambles, people distinguished between risk, which involved known probabilities, and ambiguity, where probabilities were not known. If people's decisions favored risk over ambiguity, then objective and subjective assessments were not functionally equivalent, as the SEU model predicts.

Becker and Brownson (1964) tested the Ellsburg premise. They offered participants the chance to win $1 each time a red ball was randomly selected from different urns that were filled with both red and black balls in various ratios. Some urns were covered so that participants could not determine the ratio while others were not. When selecting between a covered and uncovered urn, subjects tended to avoid ambiguous urns at rates higher than probability estimates would recommend. Even though some subjects reported that they knew objectively the game could not be biased against them, they still tended to prefer the less ambiguous urn. Subjects were willing to pay to 10 % to 20% of the EV to avoid the ambiguous one. This introduced decision-making aspects unrelated to the value, or even risk, but a tendency to avoid ambiguity (Kagel, 1995).

So if a consumer had tried one of the brands before, he may lean toward buying the product. He would already be familiar with the product and could feel more confident that his value and probability estimates were correct, even if it meant spending a little more.

At this juncture, I have reached the philosophical point where decision-making became a disputed stretch of sidewalk in an interdisciplinary turf war. Although utility maximization-based value estimates are obviously important to decision-making, analysts questioned if SEU were psychologically valid. When SEU was tested empirically, the evidence suggested that it was not.

Economists would often acknowledge the weakness of SEU as a model for individual decision-making, but offered these arguments for retaining it (Etzioni 1985): 1) unrealistic assumptions do not matter as long as a theory predicts. 2) The mechanics of preference are outside of the disciplinary jurisdiction of Economics, and therefore should be accepted as "given" in terms of economic inquiry. 3) Preferences are irrational and not the subject of positive study.

Cynics often attack economists' loyalty to utility theories (Etzioni 1985), claiming that Economists can only maintain the utility maximization illusion by adding several, often implausible, assumptions to their analyses. Add to that

their somewhat acerbic barb that Economists do not expect the benefits of developing better tools to exceed the costs.

Empirically – Based Theories

While no one denied that analytic approaches addressed a segment of the decision-making process, students of decision-making argued that decision-makers had other methods at their disposal. When utility theories were tested for validity, empirical researchers often looked askance at their analytic forebearers.

Nevertheless, utility theory served decision-making research well by providing a standard for comparisons between empirical results and those predicted in analytic models. The rift between theory and results provided a framework against which to test alternative theories and ushered in a wave of empirical research. As empirical evidence accumulated, the study of consumer decision making slipped out of the invisible hand of market forces and into the forceps of the psychology laboratory.

Probability

Although probability estimates are a necessary component of analytic decision-making, evidence shows that people have limited facility with the analytic tools involved, both individually and on average. Not only do decision-

makers struggle with direct numeric assessments, but they also ignore important sampling considerations such as sample size and randomization (Nisbett & Ross ,1980).

Making probability estimates according to the analytic ideal would require several things: applying Bayesian assessments, attention to accuracy (base rate information, sample size, randomization), and logical reasoning. As Tversky and Kahneman (1974) demonstrated through a series of experiments, people tended to fall short in consistent ways when they were asked to make probability-based estimates or selections. Rather than performing analyses, people ignored base rate information and sample size and applied misconceptions of chance, validity and regression. Even with strong analytic evidence available on which to base their decisions, people opted for mental short cuts.

Other probability considerations such as group size and randomization (important considerations in statistical analyses) also failed to hold the participants' attention. A Nisbett and Ross (1980) study compared how much weight participants gave statistical averages relative to personal testimonials. Subjects in the study received two sources of information, mean course evaluations from a large group of previous students, and individual course evaluations accompanied by brief statements from 2-3 previous students for the same courses. The statements from the small group had a stronger impact on subjects' course selections than the means did. The presence or absence of

information regarding randomization was manipulated in additional experiments. Information about randomization had no impact on the subjects' responses. Nisbett and Ross had two main points: 1) Vivid concrete interviews often carry more weight in judgement assessments than statistics from large samples. 2) That awareness of randomization had no apparent effect on assessments.

Even when a person is trying to make predictions about her own tastes, human ability is rather limited. In Kahneman & Snell's (1992) study, participants attempted to estimate how well they would like and want stimuli (music and either ice cream or yogurt) after 7 days. Each day for the duration of the study, participants listened to the same music, ate the same food and tracked their preferences. The results showed that although people were often able to predict the direction that their preferences would move, either liking and wanting more or less of the same music or food after the first try, they could not accurately predict how strong the adjustment would be.

Perhaps the most persuasive evidence that utility theories do not describe human behavior comes from an unexpected angle, by examining how poorly even expert clinical assessments compare to linear models. Dawes, Faust and Meehl (1989) compared clinical judgement to actuarial (formula-based) methods on numerous judgement and prediction tasks including such high stakes outcomes as how long a person would survive with Hodgkin's disease or

diagnosing patients as either neurotic or psychotic. In every case, actuarial judgements outperformed clinical ones.

Discounting, Intertemporal Choice

The same disparity between analytic predictions and empirical evidence appears when intertemporal choices concerning the PDV are examined. Discounting is an economic concept for the process of adjusting current values to offset the lost investment opportunity, or *opportunity cost*. To remain attractive, a selection to defer gratification must offer an equivalent or greater premium than the opportunity cost.

In an empirical study, Lowenstein and Thaler (1989) examined if people actually discounted. Subjects were asked to imagine two different scenarios, one with a lottery win and one with a parking fine, each scenario with a different payoff or debt schedule. Lowenstein and Thaler were able to isolate three effects: 1) The discount rate was steep in the beginning and fell over time. 2) Subjects demanded higher returns to wait for small sums of money than to wait for large. 3) Discount rates were greater for gains than losses.

In survey examining discounting choices (Loewenstein & Sicherman, 1989), participants were asked to imagine a single job offer with three different possible income schedules, one increasing, one constant and one decreasing.

In direct contradiction to the recommendations of economic analysis, 75% of subjects selected the option for increasing payments. After giving their initial responses, survey participants were presented with the economic arguments in favor of the declining wage option and psychological arguments in favor of increasing profiles. Even after hearing the arguments, 69% of participants still prefered the increasing profile. The results indicated that subjectively determined discount rates did not reflect discounting based on opportunity costs.

Through empirical research showing that people do not ground their probability estimates in statistical reasoning, cannot predict their own tastes, and do not discount in a uniform fashion, researchers asserted that the utility models could, at best, only account for a segment of the decision-making process.

If analyses of attributes and probabilities are only part of what determines choices, then improving information on socially responsible attributes, as is often recommended, would have a limited impact on consumer behavior. It would not be insignificant, but it would not necessarily be enough to close the gap either.

It was time for decision research to venture outside the analytic box.

Satisficing

Simon (1955) was one of the first theorists to offer an alternative model of the decision process that not only questioned aspects of utility theories, but described an all-together different process. Simon assumed that people possessed limited cognitive resources. Rather than analyze and make rational choices about the *best* outcome, people economized effort through a bounded rationality Simon named *satisficing*. According to Simon's satisficing model, decision-makers need not compare all possible alternatives but could instead search only until they found an alternative that satisfied the decision requirements. If the requirements were difficult to meet, decision-makers might lower them (aspiration level) and if they were easy to meet, they might raise them.

Heuristics

Another way that decision makers simplified decision tasks was by using heuristics. In the formerly mentioned research, Tversky and Kahneman (1974) demonstrated that people tended to overlook logical/analytic information about the data (inputs), favoring theories instead. These mental short cuts, called biases and heuristics, simplified judgement and decision-making. From a series of choice experiments on probability estimates and probability-based evaluations, Kahneman and Tversky identified several common heuristics including:

representativeness (decision makers use typicality as a basis for determining *how probable something is*), availability (how easy something is to recall or imagine influences how plausible or frequent a decision maker estimates that something is), adjustment & anchoring (when relevant or comparable information is available as a starting point. The way that people adopt relevant information as a reference point distorts their estimates). In each case, the results revealed that there were tendencies for people to favor heuristics over analytic assessments.

Prospect Theory

In a separate study, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) developed Prospect Theory. The researchers asked respondents to consider hypothetical gambles and select the gamble they preferred. By using monetary gambles and numerical probabilities, Kahneman and Tversky were able to isolate payoff/probability choices. Faced with two gambles to win money, each with equal EV, participants tended to select a certain option (100%) over a probable one for a higher value. However, if the choice problem involved loosing money, participants preferred the risky option with the higher EV. Participants also tended to evaluate options in terms of losses or gains from a reference point. When responding to a choice query that was structured to include an initial allocation ($1000 + EV$500 or $2000 – EV$500), participants preferences reflected risk seeking tendencies for gambles involving losses and risk avoidance

tendencies for gambles with gains. These combined results amounted to a s-shaped curve around the status quo.

Screening

Researchers have examined how screening occurs and what the relationship is between screening and choice. Screening is a process of examining individual options and electing to either retain the option for further consideration or reject the option. The screening function focuses on eliminating unacceptable options rather than looking for positive attributes. Acceptability is determined by whether options meet desired criteria, the criteria being those things that decision-makers either really want or really want to avoid. Any trait that does not meet the criteria is considered a violation. Beach and Strom (1989), Potter and Beach (1994) have researched the role that screening plays in the decision process.

Beach and Strom (1989) examined the relative importance of either positive or negative attributes in subjects' selections of choice sets. Experimenters asked participants to role-play a job search. Participants received information necessary for the role, such as the job seeker's qualifications and desired job criteria. They were then asked to evaluate a set of available jobs to determine which were acceptable possibilities. Each job was presented individually, one attribute at a time on index cards. After examining an attribute,

subjects could decide if they wanted to receive additional information about the job, or to reject the job based on the information they already had. Experimenters recorded: 1) the decisions to reject or retain a job option, 2) the number and content (violations or non-violations) of cards examined. Beach and Strom found that the variance for number of violations participants examined before rejection was significant whereas the number of non-violations examined was non-significant. This suggested that violations, rather than positive attributes, determined which choices were retained and which were eliminated. Furthermore, options were rejected at a tolerence level of about four voilations.

In 1994, Potter and Beach performed experiments based on a similar *experimental structure, but with additional variations. In Potter and Beach's* study, subjects were asked to assume that they had a friend moving to town who would need to find housing and would have only one day to examine the preferred options. Subjects were, therefore, asked to determine a list of possible candidates for the hypothetical friend. Experimenters presented each participant with 12 randomly ordered booklets. Each page of the booklets addressed one of eight individual attributes deemed important to the friend's housing requirements. However, attribute information fell into one of three categories: violations, non-violations and missing information. Instead of defining if the room was either "noisy" or "quiet," the page named, but did not define, the attribute, by placing a question mark after the attribute name, to represent missing information. For example, the page containing information on noise read "quiet?". From this,

Potter and Beach examined how participants regarded missing information. The authors determined that the combined number of violations plus missing information, correlated with the proportion of participants rejecting those rooms.

Additionally, Potter and Beach varied the experiment to examine rejection behavior relative to the amount of information provided. In a second experiment, researchers gave the participants the same instructions to search for a room for a friend. However, in the second experiment, participants received eight booklets, each booklet containing information on between four to ten of the desired attributes. In this experiment, the authors found that the proportion of subjects rejecting rooms increased with both the number of violations and increased as the number of attributes in booklets decreased. That is, a greater proportion of participants rejected options with a composition of six attributes/two violations, than rejected options with eight attributes/two violations.

Together, these findings indicate that decision-makers regard screening and choice as separate functions.

Mixed Approaches

With the increasing number of plausible theories, the focus shifted outward, and the question became not "How do we select an option?" but "How do we select a process?" Although these processes are often called *strategies*,

the term choice *tactics* better expresses the immediacy and scope. By 1988, Payne, Bettman, and Johnson had identified eight decision tactics:

1. Weighted Additive (WADD) – Essentially EV. Process and consider all information including values and probabilities.
2. Random (RAN) – Select choices at random
3. Equal weight (EQW) – Consider all alternatives and all attributes but disregard probability.
4. Elimination by Aspects (EBA) – Determine the most important attribute and set a cut off value for that attribute. Eliminate any choice below the cut off.
5. Majority of Confirming Decisions (MCD) – Compare two alternatives on all attributes. Select the one with the majority of winning attributes.
6. Satisficing (SAT) – Consider alternatives sequentially. Based on required values for each attribute, reject any that fail to meet the requirements. Choose the first that satisfies all requirements.
7. Lexicographic rule (LEX) – Determine the most important attribute. Compare all alternatives on that attribute. Select the top one for that attribute. If there are ties, consider the second most important attribute and so on until a winner emerges.
8. Lexicographic semi-order (LEXSEMI) – Lexicographic rule but with one alteration, if the differences between alternatives are minute on an attribute, treat them as a tie.

And two mixed tactics:

9. Elimination by Aspects + weighted additive (EBA+WADD) – Reduce the set through EBA until three or fewer alternatives remain, then compare using WADD.
10. *EBA+MCD* – Eliminate to reduce problem size then use MCD strategy

In examining these tactics, Payne et al. (1988) argued that selecting a tactic was a function of "calculated rationality." In other words, people weighed the value of accuracy against the effort required to execute the tactic based on how complex a task is and how much time was available. Payne et al. simulated various situations and constraints using the number of discrete components such as reading information, comparing between alternatives, adding, eliminating etc., to approximate the effort of completing each tactic.

The analysts then compared the results of the simulation to human performance. The similarity between the two implied that strategy selection was a rational process of weighing the cost of effort associated with how complex each task was, and the constraint of time pressure into a decision about which tactic to apply.

Structuring

Above and beyond the time pressure/accuracy determinants in the study by Payne et al., problem structure can have a significant impact on how one organizes data and selects tactics. Coupey (1994) manipulated displays to make it easy or difficult for subjects to process the information. Coupey tracked subjects' editing operations through audio and videotaped protocols, computer-based process-tracing data, and participants' notes. Subjects did restructure, and the restructuring often influenced the type of heuristic they employed.

Even in constructing studies on the relationship between tactics and problem structure, it is noteworthy that researchers adhered to an underlying search for rationality. They argued that if the tactic itself was not logical, surely the process of selecting a tactic was. But rational assessments were not the whole story. In addition to the aforementioned approaches that coupled decision processes with disciplined tradeoffs between accuracy and effort, evidence suggests that decision-makers, including SR consumers, also use less structured approaches to decision tasks.

This would mean that a consumer may or may not be analyzing and processing the relative value of the socially responsible attributes in a disciplined manner. She may be using analytic approaches or may be employing other attribute-based strategies. Researchers have identified a number of methods

that people use to evaluate selections based on attributes. On the other hand, there are also less disciplined approaches.

Intuition

Except for randomized selections, the tactics Payne et al. identified are all attribute-based tactics. In contrast, intuition is a holistic, attitude-based process. Individual attributes do not have assignments of value, weight, or probability.

To examine the relative merits of intuitive and analytic cognition, Hammond, Hamm, Grassia and Pearson (1987) broke from the convention of comparing people to perfectly executed models. Hammond et al.compared within subjects by asking trained engineers to perform three different tasks (determining aesthetic, safety and capacity values for stretches of highway), using three different data presentations (film, graphical displays, and names of variables from which they could devise mathematical formulas), for a total of nine different conditions for each subject. As highway engineers, all subjects had expertise with a set procedure for determining carrying capacity, but lacked training on how to determine safety or aesthetics. The results showed that intuitive and non-analytic tactics often produced more accurate results than the analytic ones. Owing to mistakes with calculations, analytic methods were executed inconsistently for extreme results of accuracy and inaccuracy, while the intuitive

and quasi-rational (rational, but not analytic) approaches produced more uniform results and elicited higher averages for accuracy.

While intuitive decision-makers consider the options holistically rather than according to each option's attributes, some decision-makers are not so conscientious about their choices. Sometimes decision-makers do not consider multiple alternatives in any fashion, even when they are available. In some cases, decision-makers decide not to consider other options, and just decide to "go for it."

Impulse

When decision-makers shun careful consideration of alternatives or consequences, they are using an impulsive decision tactic. Impulse is different from intuition since intuition can still be thoughtful. Impulsive decision making minimizes processing.

Puri (1996) categorized participants as either hedonists or prudents according to their results on a consumer impulsiveness scale. Puri showed that both hedonists and prudents could be influenced by appeals (either to consider costs for hedonists, or by giving justifications to prudents.) This study on impulsiveness demonstrated two important things about how people use decision tactics. First, the results validated impulse as a decision tactic by showing

correspondence between impulsiveness measures and the corresponding choices. Second, Puri revealed that decision-makers use tactics in a fungible manner. Preferences for particular decision tactics (in this case impulsiveness) were flexible enough that appeals caused subjects to change tactics even when the task structure remained the same. It is as if people were operating with a tactical tool kit from which they could draw one or many tactics to complete a given decision task.

Focal Applications

Because all of these tactics still operate on choice, it leaves them in a position very close to the final call. These focal aspects are the functions that are typically associated with decision making, the conscious yes's and no's, dollars and cents of how consumers evaluate a choice set. They are ground zero in decision process. In terms of SRCB, any consumer decisions that attempt to quantify the value of attributes such as environmentally sound packaging or sweatshop free clothing tap into the focal aspects

In addition, the focal concerns include not only EV-style considerations of value and probability, but also other choice tactics and the analytic aspects of selecting which tactic to use. Since selecting choices or screening to determine a choice set often involves making selections about which attributes to consider, the way that consumers apply the focal approaches can have either a positive or

negative impact on SRCB. Because purchasing decisions generally develop out of wants or needs for particular products or services, social responsibility falls no higher than second place on the list of desired attributes for any purchase. Any approach that causes consumers to shorten and minimize the effort they expend risks eliminating social responsibility from the set of attributes under consideration.

When it comes down to examining each brand and sizing them up, consumers are drawing on the focal aspects. (See Figure 1)

Proximal Aspects

Before and while a consumer turns his attention to picking and choosing, he is processing information in less attentive, less direct ways. Some of the things that influence which tactics decision-makers employ are characteristics of the task, characteristics of the data, and characteristics of the person when they are making the decision. These aspects color how consumers will evaluate choices and which tactics they will select.

Perceptual Frames

Evidence suggests that characteristics of the decision task can elicit different behavioral choices. Four previously cited examples have alluded to this.

As the Hammond et al. study demonstrated, the different data presentations -- film, graphical, numeric -- each elicited different decision processes. Tversky and Kahneman showed that gains and losses were evaluated differently. The results of the impulse study showed that appeals could alter responses. Finally, Coupy demonstrated that decision making was a constructive process, and that the format, either a simultaneous or sequential, strongly influenced the type of heuristic subjects used.

There is also evidence that people base their evaluations partly on comparisons. Simonson (1992) discussed several examples of how comparision sets can be influential. The number and attractiveness of other products in the choice set can exert an influence. Adding an unattractive option to a choice set can cause people to view the original choice more favorabley than they would have without the unattractive second choice. For example, Williams-Sonoma, a retail and catalog company, originally carried only one bread-making machine. When they added a second slightly larger and considerably more expensive machine, therefore a less attractive value, an interesting thing happened. Although the larger machine did not sell well, sales of the smaller bread maker almost doubled. There is further support demonstrating the significance of comparisons from an experiment in which participants evaluated pictures of pens, with a high quality Cross pen as one of the choices. There were two conditions, one with the Cross pen alone and a second condition where the photograph of the Cross pen appeared alongside a lower quality pen.

Researchers informed respondents that, of those who completed the questionnaire, a random selection of 10% of participants would receive a $6 token of appreciation. Participants then indicated if, on the chance that they were selected, they would prefer money or one of the featured pens. Subjects in the single-pen treatment condition were more likely than subjects who evaluated both pens to want the money, suggesting that the comparison condition caused participants to value the pen more highly than they would have without a comparison. This demonstrates that the composition of a comparison set can change decision makers' perception of how attractive or valuable an option is, even when the presentation of a particular object does not otherwise change.

Simonson (1992) also emphasized that focus of attention influences consumer choice behavior. In a dessert choice experiment, participants were asked to choose either fruit salad or frozen yogurt. However, the questions were phrased to bring attention to specific choices. By asking subjects direct questions about one or the other dessert, researchers focused attention on either option. Of subjects whose question specified frozen yogurt, 52% selected it. For fruit salad, the selection rate was 75%.

With regard to SRCB, this would imply that features of the perceptual frame, choice set, and focus of attention would all influence consumer choices. These aspects are the indirect information that a consumer is processing before

and while she is deciding – the relative choice set, placement on the shelf, descriptions, packaging, colors, the aroma of fresh bread wafting through the air.

Characteristics of the person

While a decision maker is filtering outside information about the environment and the product choices, he is combining this information with internal information about himself. Even with the same preferences and retail illusions, choices vary between people and vary for the same person at different times. Certain personal characteristics will influence choice behavior without determining choices directly.

Traits

Personal traits can have an impact on the process. Some people just like to analyze, some to intuit, and some to behave impulsively. Two individuals could value an outcome equally, and could assign equal probabilities to a given alternative, but only one would choose to approach the task in a way that would integrate probability assessments into the decision. In this way, it is as much a preference for a type of process as a choice problem.

Mantel and Kardes (1999) demonstrated that individual traits, in this case the need for cognition,and task characteristics, interacted to produce different

decision strategies – attribute-based (analytic) and attitude-based (intuitive). The authors examined the interaction between three things: 1) Framing effects, through direction of comparison, 2) Value for accuracy, through financial incentives, 3) Traits, by categorizing participants according to their need for cognition rating. The results showed that the three variables interacted and had a significant impact on whether subjects selected attribute or attitude-based tactics.

Affect

While traits are fairly steady for each person but vary between individuals, affect varies within each individual. *Affect* is often defined by what it is not, as 'not analytic.' Indeed, the terms *affect* and *emotion* are very difficult to define and one term often serves as the definition for the other. The debate about how to define affect usually hinges on three factors: 1) Whether the definition should be limited to only conscious emotions or should include those outside of consciousness as well, 2) Whether a definition for emotion can be operationalized if the emotion is experienced but not expressed, 3) Whether a reaction to a sensory stimulus constitutes an emotion. (Lazarus, 1984; Zajonc, 1984) In this case, it is not necessary to assign a narrow definition. Thus, "affect" refers to a broad range of feelings, moods and sensations, including but not limited to, happiness, sadness, fear, anger, regret etc. Much as the task

environment influences which tactic one will use, emotions also impact the way people approach a decision task.

Three things make it difficult to examine the affective components of decision-making. First, a social bias in favor of analytic approaches may cause people to underutilize or understate emotional influences when researchers try to study them directly. Emotions have often been stigmatized as impediments to good decision-making. Second, since emotional reactions register internally, information about emotional reactions is often limited to what individuals can and will express. Third, the analytic tasks of describing, explaining and accounting for their feelings may orient people in the direction of analytic processes.

In an interesting and unusual study, McDonald (1998) probed the hidden motives behind consumer decisions through in-depth interviewing on hypnotized and unhypnotized subjects. Out of an initial pool of 522 people, a total of 204 participants with high hypnosis susceptibility ratings were selected. In the first phase, half of the participants were randomly assigned to either control or hypnosis treatment conditions. Both groups were interviewed, with the treatment group undergoing hypnosis prior to the interview. The questions were somewhat unstructured and covered how subjects decided when a purchase was necessary, how information was collected, how purchases were made and processes after purchases were made.

In the second phase, participants from before were recontacted and assigned to the other group. (Since 83 agreed to hypnosis in the second phase, 83 from the original hypnosis condition were assigned to the control condition in the second phase.)

Tapes from the interviews were transcribed to create verbatim computer files. The content of the interviews was analyzed and grouped into four factors: rationality, emotionality, objects and cognition. From the analysis, McDonald concluded that those in the hypnotic state expressed more emotional and sensual associations with the decision process than those in the control state, who expressed more rational, cognitive associations.

To the extent that the trends revealed by interviews with the hypnotized subjects reflect some part of normal consumers' unconscious experiences, the results suggested the possibility that emotional reactions to consumer decision making are more influential than self-report studies normally capture. So, to the extent that the hypnotized state served as a proxy for unconscious decision elements, we can infer that emotional undercurrents are present in the decision-making process.

Since the study examined subjects in an altered state of consciousness, it could be argued that the results of the study reflect solely the effects of hypnosis with no bearing on decision-making in a normal state. However, there is

additional evidence that emotional reactions play a key role in the decision process.

Behcara, H. Damasio, Tranel & A.R. Damasio (1997) have done extensive research on decision making by comparing research subjects with prefrontal brain lesions to those with unimpaired brains. Participants with prefrontal brain damage tend not to show difficulties with intelligence tests or memory, but exhibit little emotion. The task in the experiment, a gambling situation, mimicked life and consumer decision making in terms of uncertainty and reward. Participants were given $2000 in essentially fake money. They were instructed to loose as little as possible and win as much as possible by turning over cards. There were four decks with rewards of $100 for decks A and B, and $50 for decks C and D. However, there was a catch. Every now and then a turn would produce penalties in an unpredictable fashion. Since the penalties were high in A and B and low in C and D, playing mostly from A and B would lead to overall losses while drawing from C and D would result in an overall gain. There was no way to calculate or predict the outcomes.

During the game, both groups – those with prefrontal damage and the control group were monitored for skin conductive responses (SCR). In addition, the researchers interrupted the players at specific intervals to ask them what they thought of the game and what strategy they were using.

Thus, the analysts collected three different measures from the gambling exercise: the number of cards, the level of SCR and verbal accounts.

The results were instructive. Before incurring any losses, control participants preferred decks A and B. After receiving a few penalties, they began to show elevated SCRs; at about the 20th turn they clearly did not understand the game; by 50 turns, the controls developed a hunch that A and B were riskier; by the 80th try, seven out of ten controls could explain why to avoid decks A and B. In addition, those remaining who could not explain still made advantageous choices. In stark contrast, the prefrontal patients never developed SCRs and even those who could verbalize which decks were good and which were bad, continued to choose disadvantageously. Although they could understand the risk conceptually, this understanding did not meodify the risky behavior.

Also notably, the control group developed feelings and hunches that A and B were problematic before they could articulate the grounds for that reaction. Prior to any explicit understanding of why to avoid the risky decks, they altered their behavior, selecting from the more advantageous decks. The emotional aspects preceded the rational ones.

A. R. Damaiso's book, Descartes' Error (1994) offers an elaboration on the study above. Damasio hypothesized that people develop a set of what he calls "somatic markers"—the visceral and non-visceral sensations that act as

sign posts directing attention to potential positive and negative outcomes. As Damasio described them, somatic markers are the first lines of defense in decision making. In emergency situations, such as swerving to miss an oncoming car, these mechanisms take over and people react without consciously or deliberately processing the potential outcomes.

The examples from studies of subjects under hypnosis, and the Bechara et al. gambling experiment, suggest that the physical and emotive components figured prominently in the decision-making process.

Store Atmosphere

In some cases, consumers may care more about shopping atmosphere than they do about saving money. The experience of Wild Oats Markets offers at least one example. Wild Oats, a natural foods store chain, attempted to implement a cost saving loyalty program but discontinued the plan because shoppers did not like how much the program resembled conventional marketing tactics (Blank, 1999). Shoppers complained that the program, which gave cardholders frequent flier miles, discounts, and other benefits, did not fit with the store's atmosphere and culture.

Proximal Applications

Collectively, these screening, framing and personal influences, the *proximal aspects*, (See Figure 2) operate like peripheral vision. The proximal aspects of decision making differ from focal aspects in that they are not tactics, and do not by themselves, determine a choice. They act upon the tactics and evaluations without determining explicitly which tactic to use.

Therefore, the proximal aspects of decision-making will also influence SRCB. Someone who claims to want social responsibility and claims to be willing to pay extra when the question is structured as part of a survey, may view the decision task differently in a retail environment. In a retail environment, she may not be focusing on the SR attribute, may be influenced by the relative price or quality of other products in the selection set, or may be swayed by her mood more than her survey responses could anticipate or account for.

The Individual Process

Together, decision making consists of the evaluative focal aspects associated with selection, and the indirect, proximal aspects including absorbing and filtering information from the task environment and aspects of the individual herself.

One way of illustrating and summarizing the relationships is to picture the focal aspects as the center of decision making and the proximal just outside.(See Figure 3) This does not imply a particular relationship between proximal and focal elements of decision making, but leaves open three possibilities:

- The relationship could be sequential, with decision makers first drawing on the proximal processes to construct the problem and select a tactic, then shifting to focal to process the choice.
- Proximal and focal processing could operate in tandem.
- The relationship could be flexible, even a process of shifting focus narrower, broader, then narrower again as the decision-maker negotiates with the information.

Focal and proximal interact the way that perception relates to analysis. Consumer decisions about their preferences for products involve both the indirect influences and the product evaluations. That might mean that, in addition to a consumer's product criteria, there are indirect messages inherent in the buying evaluation. One brand might have a more eye-catching logo than the others, or the type of packaging might draw a consumer's attention.

Social Aspects

While this sort of understanding is helpful for explaining the way that a person might behave on an individual level, it leaves out important information. Economics and Psychology focus on individual behavior, but evidence suggests that there is an even broader scope to consider. Even in an attempt to be comprehensive about the decision process, the individual model offers only a hermit's view of decision-making. People are social, and social details of people's lives affect their decisions. Especially with regard to SRCB, social effects play an important role. Studies on individual reactions to social dilemmas provide a useful framework for understanding how individuals react when their personal interests conflict with their interests as a group member. Examining social dilemmas also shows how cooperation can be enhanced or reduced when personal and group interests collide.

C. D. Batson, J.G. Batson, Todd, Brummett, Shaw and Aldeguer (1995) defined a social dilemma as a situation where each individual in a group must make choices about how to allocate resources and where allocations to the group lead to a higher overall benefit, but allocations to the self lead to greater personal benefit. For group situations, the two classical social dilemmas are either the public goods or the commons dilemma.

With a Public Goods Dilemma, participants must voluntarily contribute to a shared fund in order to realize the shared benefit. Contributions to advocacy groups are an example of a public goods dilemma. Viewer-supported public television is another example. The second type of dilemma, the resource or commons dilemma requires participants to voluntarily refrain from taking excessive amounts of a shared resource. As long as the resource stays above a certain level, it will replenish itself. Most environmental problems resemble resource dilemmas.

Social Dilemmas

Dawes, van de Kragt and Orbell (1988) used a social dilemma simulation to determine which aspects of group interaction were the most influential. Using groups of nine as the unit and measuring cooperation levels, they ran three experiments. In the first experiment, there were two different components of two different conditions. The dilemma was either contingent (individuals would not receive the benefit for the group unless they were one of the contributors) or non-contingent (where even if they were not one of the ones contributing, they would still receive the bonus if group allocations were high enough). Also, half of the groups were given 10 minute discussion periods and half were denied the chance to discuss. The results showed that the discussion treatment was very influential for eliciting cooperation.

In a second experiment, the contingent/non contingent variable was dropped, but two new twists were added. Half of the groups were told that their contributions would go to their own group and half were told that their contributions would go to another group from which they would receive contributions. In addition, for each of the four treatment conditions above, some subjects were switched at the last minute, redirecting their allocations to either their own or the other group, in opposition to what they had anticipated. Thus, there were eight conditions based on discussion/silence, anticipated beneficiary group same/other, and final group for allocations same/other. The results showed that those who started out expecting to allocate to their own group had high cooperation rates, even in the switch condition.

Finally, in a third experiment, experimenters monitored group discussions for promising behavior. They found that many groups made promises about their intended allocations, and that promises were effective ways of eliciting cooperation, but only for universal promising behavior. From these collective results, the authors concluded that group solidarity, not commitments made individually, was the key to eliciting cooperation, and that promises were only effective when there was universal promising.

Social dilemma research has also shown effects for individual characteristics like culture (Parks & Vu, 1994;Yamagishi, 1988b), social values (Cameron, Brown & Chapman,1998; Van Vugt, Meertens & Langue, 1995), and educational background (Frank, Gilivich & Regan, 1993).

Studies have demonstrated effects for task characteristics. The results were different if the task was framed as either a public goods or resource dilemma (Van Dijke & Wilke, 1995). Also, the seriousness of the dilemma influenced cooperation rates (Yamagishi, 1988).

In addition, research revealed effects for the interpersonal context of the dilemma, including manipulations in group size (Brewer & Kramer, 1986), social identity (Kramer & Brewer, 1984), and feeling empathy for another individual in the group (Baston et al., 1995).

Since SRCB is a reaction to a perceived social dilemma, the way that participants behaved in social dilemma simulations has implications for SRCB. Similar aspects of authentic social dilemmas, such as trust, framing, seriousness of the dilemma, and interpersonal context, are likely to affect SRCB.

Therefore, to really understand a specific consumer, we must understand her social circumstances. What do her friends buy? Will other people be affected by her choice?

Limitations

Several of the studies cited in this research review involved either surveys or experiments, and may not represent actual buying situations. Since surveys used predetermined formats and choice sets, and examined individuals one at a time, surveys only measured the focal aspects. Experimental methods are also vulnerable to criticism. In an effort to isolate variables, controlled experiments may lack validity, and may capture effects that would not register in authentic decision contexts.

Model

This three-part model of decision making as a function of focal, proximal and social aspects, is designed to illustrate the complexity of SRCB and define the components rather than to identify a hierarchical or linear relationship between functions, as models usually do. No single discipline or single level of analysis adequately captures the process. The three aspects interact and consumer decisions, particularly SRCD, are a product of all three.

Implications for Promotional Strategies

The strategies that producers use to promote their products can impact consumer behavior in a number of ways. First, by presenting material in a format that corresponds with a particular decision strategy, producers may induce that strategy. For example, by offering only imagery accompanied by short, vague messages, as is often the case with billboard advertising, advertisers are acting on the proximal or social decision aspects. They are attempting to bring attention to a product and favorably predispose consumers toward that product before consumers even begin shopping. Likewise, quantitative details regarding the benefits of particular product attributes would activate an analytic process. Second, since individual traits, including need for cognition, impulsiveness, and sociability affect which tactics people prefer, how effective an approach will be depends partly on the audience. Third, it is possible that strategies that appeal to all aspects of the decision process will have a broader influence than strategies centered on a single aspect.

Application to SRCB

As a product attribute, social responsibility has distinctive features. Individual SR consumer choices rarely produce strong enough effects for individual decision makers to notice them -- to receive reinforcement for their SRCB through recognizable progress toward a particular goal. In the practical

sense, benefits of SR attributes are intangible, particularly if SR behavior is avoiding, as it is with boycott efforts. Selling intangible attributes is nothing new; glamour, status and well being are examples of intangible attributes frequently featured in advertisements.

In addition, the tangible benefits from SRC decisions usually accrue to beneficiaries outside the SR consumer's social sphere. Often, the beneficiaries of a SR act are too distant for SR consumers to ever come into contact with them, as is certainly true of actions intended to benefit future generations or to help disadvantaged communities in distant locations.

Also, since SR benefits are intangible, SR consumers learn to assess SR benefits through a theoretical understanding of SR consequences rather than experiential reinforcement. Although SRCB can develop into habitual behavior, motivation for SRCB is at least initially based on a reasoned understanding that collective social responsibility will bring about positive consequences. Reasoning, judgment, and predicting future consequences are functions associated with the focal portion of decision-making.

Thus, it was hypothesized that advertisements for SR producers would emphasize focal aspects. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that an emphasis on focal strategies would take place at the expense of other decision strategies. To highlight SR producers' strategies, promotions from SR companies were

compared to those from companies without a stated social agenda. This was done by evaluating and comparing promotional materials within the framework of the three-part decision model.

Method

Choice of materials

The method of analysis was comparison. SR companies were selected, and for each SR company another company with similar products or services was selected, forming product pairs consisting of one SR and one comparison company. Whenever possible, companies with similar market characteristics were selected for comparison. The goal was to select pairs with similar products and market characteristics but which differed in their manifested commitment to social or environmental responsibility. Making comparisons between similar products with similar market traits would limit the possible bias inherent in comparing inequivalent samples.

Socially Responsible Criteria

Social responsibility was qualitatively determined by examining companies' stated commitment to SR goals. Those companies that were deemed SR, publicly and prominently professed their dedication to social or environmental responsibility on their company web sites. Because companies

sometimes use shallow social responsibility claims as a marketing tactic, companies were only selected for the SR group if their mission statements, company profiles, or core values expressed an active and explicit interest in insuring that the company's business practices had a positive impact.

The subtlest distinction between SR and comparison companies' goals appeared in the contrast between The Body Shop and Bath & Body Works. Upon request, Bath & Body Works will provide a company background document in which the company expresses "concern for the environment" dedication to "preserving the earth and all of its natural beauty" and asserts that the company "has never tested ingredients or products on animals." However, this message is not readily available. It is not posted on the Web site for either Bath & Body Works or the parent company, Intimate Brands. The message is also not printed in the Bath and Body Works Catalog. The catalog makes suggestive but careful claims about social responsibility with phrases like "nature-inspired" and "contains natural enzymes." In contrast, The Body Shop uses its company Web page to proclaim that one of the company's purposes is: "To dedicate our business to the pursuit of social and environmental change." The Body Shop packs its Web page with information on the company's social and environmental practices and details about the company's advocacy efforts against animal testing. The Body Shop catalog uses icons to bring attention to its opposition to animal testing and the company's dedication to working with communities in need. The similarities in product type, distribution practices, and brand image, in

contrast to the dissimilarities in the social and environmental commitment, rendered the two an effective comparison set.

Product category criteria

Companies were selected for analysis only if they marketed directly to consumers and offered products or services that were accessible to a broad consumer base. For food and household products, only brands that were available through large chain stores such as Rite Aid, Safeway, and Walgreen's were included.

Comparison Set

For the comparison set, companies that provided products or services similar to the respective SR company, preferably with similar sales or market share, were selected. Finding companies with similar market traits was not always possible. Working Assets, for example, competes with long distance carriers such as Sprint, AT&T and MCI, that are much larger than Working Assets. In spite of the size disparity between MCI and Working Assets, MCI was selected. Although Sprint and AT & T are smaller than MCI, these companies' presence on the Domini Social Index (DSI) suggested that these companies had met certain social responsibility criteria and would not provide adequate contrasts to Working Assets.

In selecting companies to compare to SR brands, candidates were eliminated if they appeared on the DSI. The DSI is the Socially Responsible Investors' industry standard of 400 companies. The index is composed of 250 companies listed on the Standard and Poor's 500 Index, 100 additional large companies selected to maintain industry diversity, and approximately 50 additional companies with particularly strong social characteristics (Domini Social Investments, 1999). To determine social responsibility, the DSI applies exclusionary and qualitative social screens. The DSI does not include companies that derive income from selling weaponry, gambling, alcohol, tobacco or nuclear power. Additionally, companies on the DSI are assessed according to companies' record for diversity, employee relations, the environment and product considerations.

Thus, any company that appeared on the DSI had already been screened on the basis of Social Responsibility and would possibly have company philosophies that were too similar to the SR set to offer comparisons. However, since the DSI includes only public U.S. companies, favors large companies, and selects companies according to industry representation, the DSI should not be considered a comprehensive list of socially responsible companies. In the analysis, the DSI was used as additional check to insure that the two in each pair had different corporate missions.

Inclusion in the comparison set does not imply that a company has a poor social track record. Selections were intended to create comparisons between SR companies and mainstream producers rather than responsible and irresponsible companies. Those in the comparison group (CG) were chosen according to four criteria: 1) CG companies expressed none or a less explicit interest in the social and environmental impact of their practices than the SR selection. 2) They were not listed on the DSI. 3) They produced products similar to the SR counterpart. 4) Whenever possible, CG companies shared market similarities with SR producers. Therefore, selection for comparison indicated only that neither the strength of their mission statement nor their status on the DSI gave strong evidence of their commitment to social responsibility.

Data Collection

From an initial list of 10 pairs, (20 companies) each company was contacted and asked to provide print promotional materials. Mission statements were requested from companies whose mission or values did not appear on the company's Web site. Of the 20 companies contacted, 15 sent samples. Companies were only included in the final analysis if both the SR and comparison company provided samples. If only one company in a pair sent materials, that product category was eliminated from the analysis. The remaining brand pairs were Gardenburger/Morningstar Farms; The Body Shop/Bath &

Body; Tom's of Maine/Mentadent; Odwalla/Tropicana; Working Assets/MCI Worldcom; Whole Foods Inc./Savemart Supermarkets.

Because companies have different marketing strategies, the materials received also varied. As a result, several types of promotional materials were examined, including magazine and newspaper advertisements, informational brochures, letters or flyers designed to respond to prospective new customer inquiries, and product catalogs. The one content limitation imposed was that materials had to be designed for customers, rather than retailers, resellers or other businesses. Since most companies sent several samples, the samples included in the analysis were chosen with the intent to create the most direct comparisons possible. Similarities were determined by, a) Format (print ad, brochure, company flyer), b) Purpose (store opening announcement, informational brochure, response to customer information request), c) Content.

Neither The Body Shop nor Bath & Body Works do outside advertising. Therefore, selected pages of the companies' catalogs were compared – specifically, the cover, verso and one additional page featuring products and prices. For The Body Shop the page facing the verso was included while the back of the second page was included to represent Bath & Body Works. These pages were selected based on similarity of purpose, placement, and content between the two catalogs.

PROCEDURE

A list was developed to identify the existence of promotional strategies aimed at the focal, proximal and social aspects of the decision process. Specific tactics were identified as sub-categories of focal, proximal or social aspects. Components that targeted the focal aspects will be called *focal strategies*, those aimed at the proximal, *proximal strategies,* and promotional efforts designed to appeal to social aspects will be referred to as *social strategies*.

Number and type of claim tactics in each sample, including claims regarding price, value, function, social responsibility and value-based judgements such as "good for you" or "doing the right thing" formed the basis for determining if components could be counted as focal strategies. Therefore, the criteria for determining if materials used focal strategies were text-based. Claims were categorized according to whether they could be considered specific and verifiable or merely suggestive. Attribute claims such as "organic" or "10% discount" that were specific and verifiable counted as substantive claims. Claims that used vague or unverifiable language to describe attributes were counted as associative claims. "Good value," "high quality," and "animal-friendly" are examples of associative claims. Common buying criteria and social responsibility criteria were identified and listed.

Proximal strategies were identified as strategies to induce emotion, comparisons, or strategies that focused the audience's attention on particular messages. Attempts to focus attention were assessed according to the position of claims or comments in text, the relative size of images and by how visuals directed attention to emotion, social responsibility imagery, or social factors. Thus, focus of attention was examined in conjunction with the messages highlighted.

Since actual social interaction was not examined in this study, representations of social interaction were identified to approximate implied or anticipated social behavior. Materials were determined to use social strategies if the text contained references to social interaction, references to members of one's immediate social circle, photographs or drawings with more than one person in them, text and visuals related to group membership, social identification (references to "kind of person" or celebrity endorsements), empathy appeals, and either text or visual content with image-oriented appeals (beauty, status, outside appreciation). Samples were examined according to content, position and prominence of social appeals.

Details

Specific *items* associated with focal, proximal, or social strategies were identified and from the individual items, *categories* were constructed to account

for these tactics. (See Tables 6-10) For instance, an item such as a specific price claim would be noted individually, then categorized under "substantive attribute claims." The categories were:

1. Substantive attribute claims
2. Associative attribute claims
3. Associative social responsibility claims
4. Emotional appeals in text
5. Use of comparison
6. Social appeals in text
7. Position of attribute claims
8. Position of social claims
9. Emotional appeals in visuals
10. Social appeals in visuals
11. Relative size - photographs of people
12. Relative size - product photographs
13. Relative size - drawings
14. Relative size - company logo

In addition, certain specific types of imagery were identified. They were:

1. Vegetation
2. Earth or sun images
3. Drawings
4. Photographs of people
5. Miscellaneous other photographs.

Second, each sample was individually evaluated and the presence or absence of individual items was recorded. Examples of items would be humorous text, price information, and photographs of people.

Third, items in each category were totaled on a company by company basis. For example, if a sample had two items in a particular category, the items were totaled to create a company score of 2 for that category. This was done for each category.

Fourth, each individual company's per category total was compared to the category total from the company's SR or CG counterpart. Thus, there were three possible outcomes of each comparison; the two samples in a pair could be equal, the total for the SR sample could be greater, or the total for the CG sample could be greater.

Finally, outcomes from the category comparisons were evaluated collectively. In this case, pairs were examined to determine the number of times that SR companies had higher scores than CG companies in a particular category. Measures for SR vs. CG were based on the relative tendencies across the six comparisons. (See Tables 11-16)

RESULTS

Comparison

Comparison was a fairly common tactic (10 samples included comparison items). SR companies had only slightly higher totals than CG companies for comparisons based on features unrelated to social responsibility (3 equal, 2 SR more, 1 CG more), but SR companies often used SR attribute to differentiate themselves. When comparisons included SR attributes, the SR samples prevailed. (2 equal, 4 SR more).

Social

The number of social items, including references to family, friends, significant others, community and social events, was greater in SR texts (4 SR more, 2 CG more), but social items were much more prominently placed in CG texts (3 CG more, 2 SR more, 1 equal). Visuals showing more than one person

or that appealed to social identity were not frequently found in the samples. (2 samples).

Uncategorized visuals

Several samples in the CG included photos featuring things other than people or the company's products, such as picture of a car for a contest or a computer mouse to emphasize online access. Uncategorized visuals like these were not recorded for any of the SR samples. (4 CG)

Claims

Even without considering the SR attributes, SR samples included more substantive claim tactics than the CG. (4 SR more, 2 equal). If tactics involving SR claims were included, then each of the SR samples had a higher total in the "specific claims" category than the CG did. (6 SR more) Both SR and CG samples included claims placed high in the text (3 CG more, 2 SR more, 1 equal), but SR samples more frequently included SR claims high in the text (5 SR more, 1 CG more).

Emotion

Although both SR and CG samples featured text-based emotional tactics about equally (2 SR more, 2 CG more, 2 equal), there were slight differences in the way that emotional appeals were used. Greater numbers of SR samples included humor or irony than samples from the CG, while more CG samples contained happiness or self-actualizing tactics. Also more SR samples than CG samples contained mild fear tactics, such as warnings. However, in the visuals, the distinctions became more pronounced. All counts of humorous pictures or cartoons came from SR samples (4 samples), whereas CG samples filled equivalent spaces with a variety of visuals (those to appeal to the senses, smiling faces, self-actualizing or athletic portrayals.)

Literal vs. Figurative

Taken together, perhaps the sharpest contrast is the way SR and CG companies use literal vs. figurative information. SR producers relied on attribute-based claims. These claims were often substantive and gave information about SR attributes. But imagery in SR samples was figurative, often containing drawings instead of photographs and humor instead of implicit social or emotional messages.

In contrast, the CG used photographs, especially photographs featuring a person or people, rather than drawings. In the text, CG's emphasized family, friends or community by placing these references near the top.

It is as if the SR producers were saying, "All of the reasons you should buy this product are in the text. The pictures are just here for your entertainment." And it is as if CG companies were saying, "Trust your eyes. We know that you are busy with the people in your life, but if you are interested, here are a few details." CG companies gave shallow text with photographic imagery.

Because SR samples emphasize claims, SR companies consequently use focal strategies more than CG companies do. SR companies' texts make numerous substantive and associative claims providing consumers with *reasons* to buy their products and services. They create comparisons. To convince consumers to buy their products, SR companies focus attention on attributes, and SR attributes are often those that they highlight.

CG companies used focal strategies too, but overall, CG strategies varied more than SR strategies. In addition to the tactics of featuring claims, emotional appeals and comparisons, CG companies used images to bring attention to the social aspects.

DISCUSSION

Implications

These data supported the hypothesis that SR producers emphasized focal strategies more than other producers did, often at the expense of other strategies.

To the extent that strategies which address all three decision making aspects broaden a product's appeal, SR producers may benefit by placing greater emphasis on social and emotional strategies, even if it requires de-emphasizing the SR attribute(s).

Consumer demand for products that claim botanical or natural properties is high, and many mainstream producers have capitalized on a natural image even though their claims are shallow. A good example can be found in the huge success that Clairol's Herbal Essence shampoo has enjoyed. The Herbal Essence brand uses the slogan "Have a totally organic experience." However, the company Web site contains vague phrases like "created with carefully selected blends of organic herbs and botanicals," "cares about the earth's resources," "uses ingredients derived from pure renewable resources," that do not specify which other ingredients the product contains or what portion of the product's organic ingredients contribute to the total. The result is a natural image, not a natural product. Furthermore, not only did information on the Web

site include no mission statement and suggest almost no commitment to social responsibility, the Web site contained almost no information about the product. Other than vague references to unknown amounts of organic ingredients, the company does not make many claims about the product. Instead, Clairol's Web site offers an abundant assortment of beauty tips.

The lack of substance behind Clairol's image has not discouraged consumers. *Brandweek* reported that Clairol's shampoo business grew 60% in 1998 largely because of burgeoning sales for its very successful SR imposter, Herbal Essence. (Bittar, 1999)

While it is impossible to isolate the effect of advertisements on sales, the contrast between sales growth for Herbal Essence and The Body Shop, whose sales dropped 2% in 1998 (The Body Shop Annual Report and Accounts, 1999), suggests that concrete data about socially responsible attributes is not always at the top of a socially responsible consumer's list. Thus, it is possible that SR producers could benefit from promotional strategies that emphasized social and emotional aspects of buying decisions, as Clairol has done.

Limitations

Because the sample was small, it is possible that the results of this analysis did not represent relative differences for larger populations of SR and

other producers. Also, because this study did not measure buying behavior and examined only promotional strategies, the results did not indicate that focal strategies were any less effective than other strategies. Finally, if consumers, who are receptive to SR buying respond to focal strategies more than they do to proximal or social strategies, niche marketing with focal strategies may be the most cost-effective method.

CONCLUSION

A persistent gap exists between self-professed attitudes and socially responsible buying behavior that can not easily be understood from an economic perspective, or exclusively according to the analytic models of choice associated with economic theory. This study provides an interdisciplinary framework for examining the disparity through a model that integrates focal, proximal and social aspects of consumer decision making. By examining socially responsible and other businesses' promotional strategies, we find evidence that the strategies are fundamentally different. These differences in promotional strategy may partially account for why consumers are not making the connection.

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Table 1

Criteria - Section 1

CRITERIA		
CLAIMS		
Substatntitve Claims -Claims are specific and verifiable.		
	price	Quantitative information about price.
	vaule	Quantitative information about savings or discounts
	convenience	Specific or quantitative information about product availability or distribution.
	efficacy	Detailed information about how, or how well a product preforms a function.
	quantitative	Quantitative data.
	ingredients	Specific details about ingredients.
	process	Specific details about production or distribution.
	store env	Verifiable claims about a store environment such as selection.
	service	Specific claims about service - hours, money back guarantee etc.
	SR	Verifiable claims about social responsibility - organic, quanitave claims regarding charitible contributions etc.
Associative claims - Not specific claims, use of key words, unverifiable claims.		
	quality	Claims stated or suggested that a product was good quality.
	flavor	Claims stated or suggested that the flavor was pleasing.
	freshness	Claims stated or suggested that a product was fresh.
	function/effective	Claims stated or suggested that a product effective at performing a function.
	health	Claims stated or suggested that a product was healthy.
	price	Claims stated or suggested that prices were attractive without providing quantitative information.
	value	Claims stated or suggested that products were a good value without providing quantitative information about the savings.
	store environ	Claims stated or suggested that the purchasing environment was pleasant
	convenience	Claims stated or suggested that products or services were easy to acquire.

Table 2

Criteria -- Section 2

	Associative claims - Social Responsibility.		
		morality	Claims made references to moral behavior including health morality. Keywords included "should," "good for" and "right thing."
		good env	Claims stated or suggested that the product, service or attributes were good for the environment.
		good soc	Claims stated or suggested that the product, service or attribute would benefit society
		natural/wholeness	Key words such as natural or wholeness were included in the text.
		animal - friendly	Claims stated or suggested that the product, or attributes did not harm animals, without claiming that products were not tested on animals.
		company cares	Key words implied that the company cared about the impact of it's business practices.

Table 3

Criteria - Section 3

EMOTION	Textual information designed to appeal to the emotions or senses.		
	Positive emotional appeals.		
		humor	The text included humorous or ironic messages.
		hapiness	The text stated or suggested that the product or service would make a consumer happy.
		self act	The text made references to success or athleticism.
		senses	The text included vivid descriptions to appeal to the senses.
	Negative emotional appeals		
		fear/warning	The text included warnings or fear appeals.
		guilt	The text included referenced designed to elicit guilt.
		sadness	The text made references to sadness.
		senses	The text included vivid aversive descriptions.
COMPARISONS -Text only			
		to prod	The text included direct or implied comparisons to other products.
		to attrib	The text included direct or implied comparisons to other attributes.
		to bus	The text included direct or implied comparisons to other businesses.
		uniqueness	The text highlighted the uniqueness of a product or service.
		b4 aft	The text made before and after comparisons, losses or gains.
		SR makes diff	The comparison stated or suggested that the socially responsible features accounted for the differences.
SOCIAL -Text.			
		Fam, fr, SO	The text made references to family, friends or others in a person's immediate social circle.
		community	The text make references to a select community, used the word community, or offered the reader an opportunity to join a community (of other consumers for example).
		image(beauty)	The text stated or suggested that the product or service would provide the purchasor with a positve image.
		soc identif/celeb	The text made references to the what kind of person the reader was, or could become. Also, celebritiy endorsements were included.
		empathy	The text made empathy appeals.
POSITION -Referred to the placement of claims or appeals in the text.			
		headline	The claim or appeal appeared in the headline.
		1st forth	The claim or appeal appeared in the first forth of the text.
		present	The claim or appeal was present in the text.

Table 4

Criteria - Section 4

visual			
EMOTION	Visual information designed to appeal to the emotions or senses.		
	Positive emotional appeals.		
		smiling	The visuals contained images of people smiling.
		hum pics/cartoon	The visuals contained humorous pictures or cartoon images.
		self-act/athlete	The visuals contained images that were suggestive of success or athleticism.
		senses	The visuals contained vivid images that would appeal to the senses
	Negative emotional appeals		
		There were no negative emotional appeals	
		in the images from these samples.	
SOCIAL -Images			
		more than 1	The visuals included an image containing two or more people.
		soc identif	The visuals included an image of a celebrity or famous person.
		empathy	The visuals included an image that was designed to elicit empathy.

Table 5

Criteria - Section 5

RELATIVE SIZE - Referred to the size of an image in relation to the sample.			
		L	The image was large in relation to the sample.
		M	The image was at least medium sized in relation to the sample.
		S	The image was at least small in relation to the sample.
		Prod photo -rel sz	The relative size of the product photograph to the rest of the sample.
		People photo	The relative size of photographs of people to the rest of the sample.
		Drawing	The relative size of the drawing to the rest of the sample.
		Logo	The relative size of the company logo to the rest of the sample.
BASIC QUESTIONS - Presence or absence of certain images or types of imagery.			
		vegetation	The visuals included images of flowers, forestry, fruit or other plant life associated with nature.
		drawing	The visuals included drawings.
		photo person	The visuals included photographs of a person or people.
		photo prod	The visuals included an image of the product.
		planet/	The visuals included an image of a planet or sun.
		photo other	The visuals included photographs not categorized above.

Table 6

Analysis - 1

		Gardenburger	Morningstar Farms	Body Shop	Bath & Body	Tom's of Maine toothpaste	Mentadent toothbrush	Odwalla	Tropicana	Working Assets	MCI	Whole Foods	Savemart
Focal	Price			X	X					X	X		
	vaule			X	X					X	X		X
	convenience												
sp prod													
	efficacy					X	X						
	quantitative	X		X	X			X	X				
	ingredients	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X	
	process			X				X	X	X		X	
	store env												X
	service			X	X					X	X	X	X
	SR					X		X		X		X	
W/O SR		2	1	6	5	2	1	3	3	4	3	3	3
COUNT		2	1	6	5	3	1	4	3	5	3	4	3
non sp prod													
	quality			X		X		X	X		X	X	X
	flavor	X	X					X	X			X	X
	freshness				X								
	function/ effective			X	X	X	X			X	X		
	health	X	X		X	X		X	X			X	
	price									X	X	X	X
	value										X	X	X
	store environ											X	X
	convenience	X	X			X				X	X		X
count		3	3	2	3	4	1	3	3	3	5	6	6
SR -non-specific													
should	morality	X	X							X			
	good env			X		X		X		X			
	good soc							X		X			
	natural/ wholeness	X			X	X		X				X	
	animal - friendly			X									
	company cares					X		X					
Count		2	1	2	1	3	0	4	0	3	0	1	0
SR collapsed		X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	
Assoc claims		4	4	3	4	5	1	4	3	4	5	7	6
Total attribute claims-all		7	5	10	9	10	2	11	6	11	8	11	9

Table 7

Analysis - 2

		Gardenburger	Morningstar Farms	Body Shop	Bath & Body	Tom's of Maine toothpaste	Mentadent toothbrush	Odwalla	Tropicana	Working Assets	MCI	Whole Foods	Savemart
Emotion													
text+	humor	X	X									X	
	hapiness	X	X		X								
	self act						X						
	senses			X	X		X	X				X	X
count		2	2	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	1
text-	fear/warning								X	X		X	
	guilt												
	sadness												
	senses												
count		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
EMOTCOUNT		2	2	1	2	0	2	1	1	1	0	3	1
compar													
	to prod								X			X	
	to attrib	X	X			X			X		X		
	to bus									X		X	
	uniqueness			X			X	X				X	
	b4 aft												
count		1	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	0
	SR makes diff					X		X		X		X	
COMPAR COUNT		1	1	1	0	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	0
soc													
	Fam, fr, SO	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X
	community	X		X	X		X			X			X
	image(beauty)			X									
	soc identif/celeb												
	empathy												
COUNT		2	1	3	2	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	2

Table 8

Analysis - 3

		Gardenburger	Morningstar Farms	Body Shop	Bath & Body	Tom's of Maine toothpaste	Mentadent toothbrush	Odwalla	Tropicana	Working Assets	MCI	Whole Foods	Savemart
Attribute position -non SR													
Sust claim	headline										X		
	1st forth			X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
	present	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	2
Assoc	headline		X			X	X						
	1st forth		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	present	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COUNT		2	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	3	4
SR position													
sub claim	headline											X	
	1st forth											X	
	present					X		X				X	
assoc	headline					X		X		X			
	1st forth				X	X		X		X		X	
	present	X			X	X		X		X		X	
COUNT		1	0	0	2	4	0	4	0	3	0	5	0

Table 9

Analysis - 4

		Gardenburger	Morningstar Farms	Body Shop	Bath & Body	Tom's of Maine toothpaste	Mentadent toothbrush	Odwalla	Tropicana	Working Assets	MCI	Whole Foods
Soc Posti												
social	headline	X	X									
	1st forth	X	X		X		X		X	X		
	present	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
COUNT		3	3	1	2	0	2	1	2	2	1	1

Table 10

Analysis - 5

		Gardenburger	Morningstar Farms	Body Shop	Bath & Body	Tom's of Maine toothpaste	Mentadent toothbrush	Odwalla	Tropicana	Working Assets	MCI	Whole Foods
visual												
emotion +												
	smiling	X	X	X	X		X					
	hum pics/cartoon	X				x		X		X		
	self-act/athlete						X		X			
food/peo	senses		X	X	X				X			X
no neg emotions shown												
COUNT		2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	1
soc												
	more than 1	X					X					
	soc identif											
	empathy											
count		1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Prod photo -rel sz												
	L		X			X						
	M		X	X		X	X					X
	S	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
COUNT		1	3	2	1	3	2	1	1	0	0	2
People photo												
	L			X	X		X		X			
	M			X	X		X		X			
	S		X	X	X		X		X			
COUNT		0	1	3	3	0	3	0	3	0	0	0
Drawing												
	L	X						X		X		
	M	X						X		X		
	S	X				X		X	X	X		
count		3	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	3	0	0

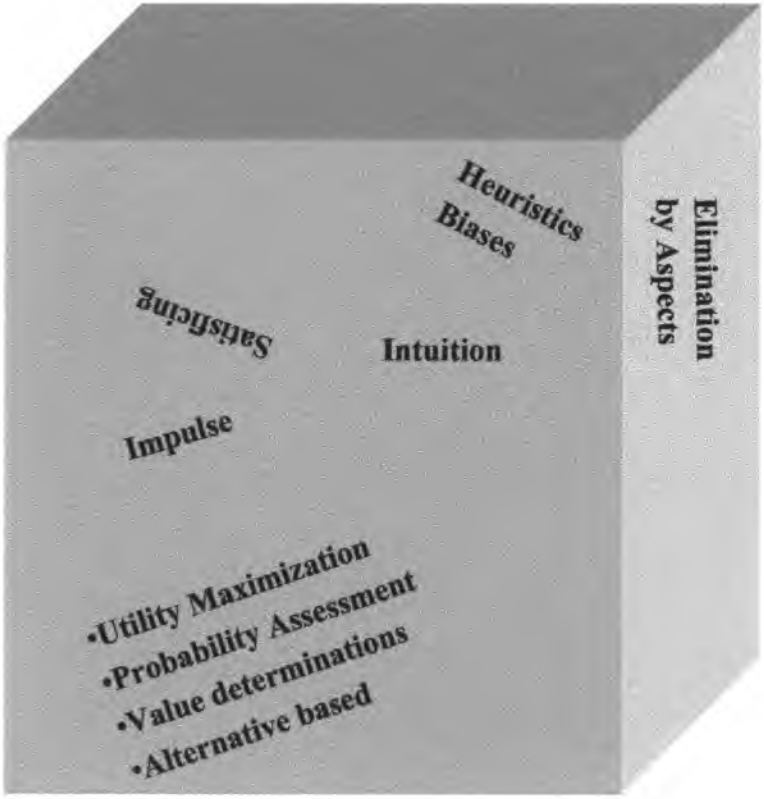
Table 11

Analysis - 6

		Gardenburger	Morningstar Farms	Body Shop	Bath & Body	Tom's of Maine toothpaste	Mentadent toothbrush	Odwalla	Tropicana	Working Assets	MCI	Whole Foods	Savemart
Logo													
	L												
	M					X		X	X			X	X
	S	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COUNT		1	1	1	0	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2
basic ?'s													
	vegetation			X	X	X		X	X	X			
		0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
	drawing	X				X		X	x	X			X
		1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1-	1	0	0	1
	photo person		X	X	X		X		X				
		0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
	photo prod	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
	planet							X		X			
		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
usl extras	photo other		X						X		X		X
		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
SR(veg,planet,etc)rel sz													
	L												
	M				X			X		X			
	S			X	X	X		X	x	X			
COUNT		0	0	1	2	1	0	2	1-	2	0	0	0

Figure 1

Focal Aspects



Proximal Aspects

Figure 2

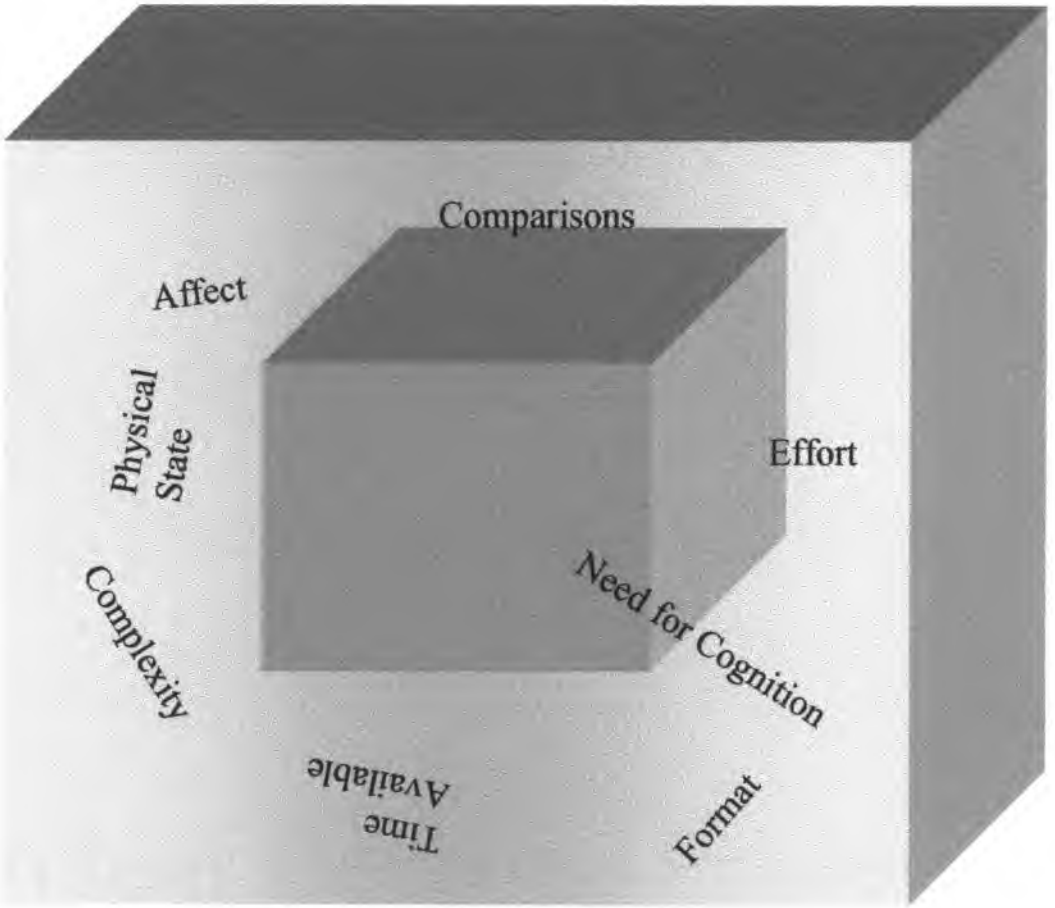
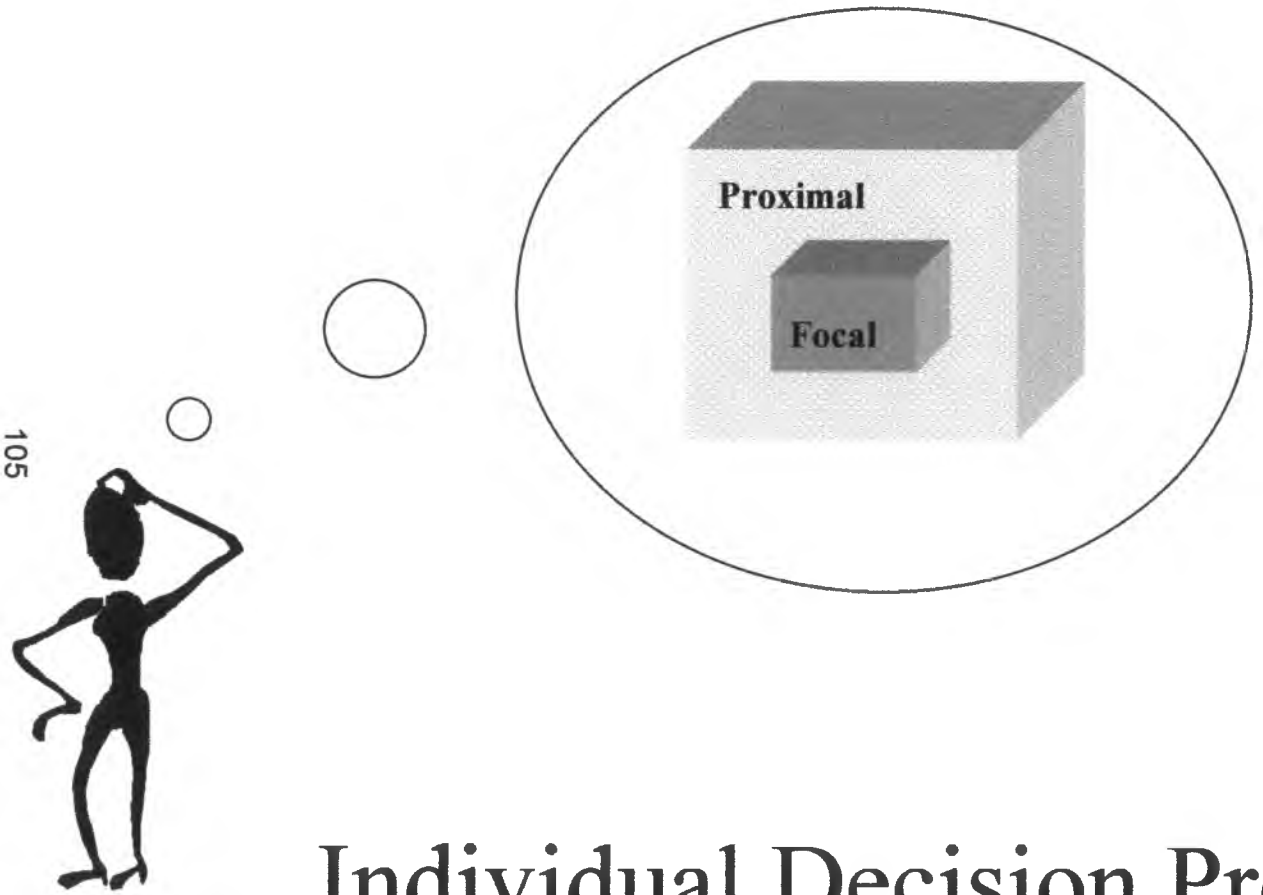


Figure 3



Individual Decision Process