NEOMA Business School

Ph.D VIVA ANNOUNCEMENT

Byungkuk Noh

will defend publicly his Ph.D dissertation to get the Ph.D degree

25th March, at NEOMA Business School, Paris Campus, 9 Rue d'Athènes, Paris, Room 301, at 14:00

“THREE ESSAYS ON HOMO CONSUMERICUS”

Ph.D Committee:

Jury Chairman: Tamym ABDESSMED, PhD
Professor, ICN Business School, France

Supervisors: Adilson BORGES, PhD
Professor, NEOMA Business School, France

Examiners: Pierrick GOMEZ, PhD
Professor, NEOMA Business School, France

Walter NIQUE, PhD
Professor, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
“THREE ESSAYS ON HOMO CONSUMERICUS”

Abstract

This dissertation consists of three independent essays related to consumer behavior issues based on evolutionary psychology. The first essay investigates how a no-warranty policy can signal higher quality within the framework of the handicap principle. The second essay examines why donors discriminate receivers and sometimes donate more to a person who needs less help based on the three major principles of human altruism: kin selection, reciprocity, and the handicap principle. The last essay focuses on a more traditional topic in evolutionary psychology: the gender differences in gift-giving by assessing the role of value (intrinsic vs. extrinsic) and expensiveness of gifts in a romantic situation.

The first essay titled “The Paradox of Warranty” investigates the possibility of the application of the handicap principle into warranty studies. Signaling theory predicts that the duration of warranty correlates positively to the perception of product quality. A longer warranty would lead to a higher perception of product quality which in turn would foster a more positive consumer evaluation. However, the handicap principle predicts that no warranty could improve evaluation when consumers believe that this absence is due to the seller’s confidence in their product quality. Through two experiments, the essay shows that a lack warranty for a product can improve its evaluation and consumer purchase intentions to the levels which are equivalent to longer warranties.

The focus of the second essay titled “Donation, The Selfish Altruism” is a contribution to donation studies by validating three major principles in human altruism based on evolutionary psychology: kin selection, reciprocity and handicap principle. Existing research in evolutionary psychology suggests that donors discriminate recipients based on benefits which they may receive in return. Three experiments on the perceptions of university students were conducted to estimate whether certain factors may be correlated to generosity in donation. The findings suggested that donors are willing to donate a greater amount when the recipient is inherently related to the donor
so that the donor can anticipate being helped in return, and when the donor can cultivate reputation through donation.

The third essay, “What Women Want” tests whether animal nuptial gifts can be applicable to human romantic relationships by estimating how women evaluate a gift based on its value (intrinsic vs. extrinsic) and expensiveness. Women are regarded as primary gift-givers due to their concern for showing love (Cheal, 1986). However, men are more likely to take an active role in giving gifts in a romantic situation (Saad, 2003). Since sex and mating are female choices, men have tactically utilized gifts to seduce women by highlighting their financial resources. Therefore, the expensiveness of gifts is positively related to a female’s attitude towards male gift-givers. However, if that is the case, why then do women prefer gold rings to more expensive durable goods such as refrigerators? Recently, research findings from evolutionary biology suggest that animal nuptial gifts need to be expensive and simultaneously lack intrinsic value. We define a product with extrinsic value as one which we can display our status when others recognize that we have it. Whereas a product with intrinsic value is defined as one which makes us pleased and satisfied regardless of others’ recognition of our possession. Within the evolutionary psychology framework, the third essay analyzes how women appreciate a gift based on its price and value. The results show that women positively respond to an expensive gift with extrinsic value, but not for an expensive gift with intrinsic value. Furthermore, the essay reports that men implicitly know what women want, thus behave accordingly in romantic situations.