

Identity Discounts

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ABSTRACT

It has been well established in the literature that traditional price discounts are brand destroyers as they signal inferior product quality. However, it is still unknown whether price discounts based on the consumer's identity (such as veteran, senior citizen, student, or employee discounts) result in the same negative effects for the brand. A series of experiments – grounded in Self-Object Association and Self-Affirmation Theory – reveal that instead of acting as a brand destroyer, *Identity Discounts* have a positive impact on quality perceptions. Specifically, this research finds a conditional indirect effect of identity discounts on quality perceptions that is mediated by self-object association and is positive when the primed identity is congruent with individuals' desired identity and non-significant when it is not. This research contributes to marketing theory on pricing discounts and has significant implications for managers charged with crafting brand promotions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Price discounts present a dilemma for marketing managers. That is, while they are an effective lever for increasing sales, price discounts elicit negative quality perceptions and damage the brand (Buil, Chernatony, and Martínez 2013; Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991; Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000). However, discounts based upon the consumer's identity, such as veteran discounts, student discounts, or senior citizen discounts, have been ignored within the literature and their effects may vary significantly from the damaging outcomes of traditional discounts. Thus, this research seeks to establish a new construct, *identity discounts* (i.e. price discounts that are given to a particular customer segment, based upon the identity of those customers), which is currently an overlooked stream of inquiry and immense knowledge gap within the marketing literature.

How do identity discounts impact quality perceptions? To what extent does an identity discount allow the consumer a means to enhance the *self*? The contributions that stem from answering the aforementioned research questions are numerous. In what follows, four studies assess the impact of identity discounts on quality perceptions for a variety of products (i.e. a pair of sunglasses, coffee mug, cake, and a mechanical pencil) in both traditional and online retail shopping environments. In contrast to traditional discounts, these

studies show that identity discounts create *self-object associations* and allow the consumer a means to *self-affirm*, which results in increased product quality perceptions.

Study one uses a sample of corporate employees from a Fortune 100 company to assess the direct effects of an employee discount on product quality perceptions. Study two assesses veteran discounts, relying on a sample from a private listerv of former military to examine self-object association as the underlying mediator driving the effects of identity discounts. Study three relies on a sample of senior citizens (ages 55 and older) to replicate the results of study two, analyzing the impact of senior citizen discounts. Finally, study four assesses student discounts using a student sample to understand how identity discounts allow consumers an outlet to self-affirm. The results find conditional indirect effects, showing that self-object association and self-affirmation mediate the relationship between identity discounts and quality perceptions. Thus, the main contention of this research is that identity discounts create an association between the self and identity discounted products, which impact product quality perceptions.

This study represents the first attempt to gather and classify the various types of discounts based upon the consumer's identity (such as student discounts, senior citizen discounts, veteran discounts, and employee discounts), resulting in the establishment of a new construct within the marketing literature.

The findings here are theoretically meaningful as the results run counter to what has been established and generally accepted within the pricing literature. That is, conventional wisdom would posit that discounts harm quality perceptions. Instead, this research relies on the extended-self literature and self-affirmation theory to show that identity discounts can increase quality perceptions. Furthermore, the findings here contribute to the extended-self literature by showing that identity discounts can reinforce the consumer's desired self via self-affirmation, independent of the actual item being purchased. Lastly, the results from each study show that identity congruence moderates the relationship between identity discounts and the self, ruling out other possible competing theories.

The following sections provide the theoretical basis for this research. First, the literature on the negative effects of traditional price discounts is discussed. Next, identity discounts are introduced, and the theoretical underpinnings for this study is provided. Then, the experimental procedure and results for four studies are reviewed. Lastly, this research concludes with a general discussion outlining the theoretical and managerial contributions, with suggestions for areas of future research.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Traditional Discounts vs. Identity Discounts

As price serves as an extrinsic cue consumers rely on to infer product quality (Zeithaml 1988), the previous literature has generally found price discounts to have a negative impact on quality perceptions (Buil, Chernatony, and Martínez 2013; Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991; Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000). In fact, Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000) find that discounts are a “brand-harming activity” (pg. 206) in that discounts have a direct negative influence on brand equity. However, while it has been established that traditional discounts have a negative impact on quality perceptions and the brand, the marketing literature has completely ignored the potential effects of *identity discounts*.

<<<Insert Figure 1 Here>>>

For the purposes of this research identity discounts are defined as: *Price discounts that are given to a particular customer segment, based upon the identity of those customers*. Common examples of identity discounts include: student discounts, military and veteran discounts, senior citizen discounts, first responder discounts, medical provider discounts, employee discounts, and even organ donor discounts (redeemed when the customer provides a driver’s license with the organ donor logo). Identity discounts often require the customer to

present an ID card, such as a driver's license, military ID, or student ID to verify the customer's identity. However, certain identity discounts may not require a formal ID when the customer's identity is readily (and sometimes mistakenly) assumed, such as in the case of senior citizen discounts or when a customer is in uniform. Unlike traditional discounts available to all, these promotions are based on the consumer's identity. Thus, an identity discount relates the product to the *self*.

Products, the Consumer's Identity, and the Extended-Self

The notion that products allow individuals to fulfill, reinforce, and express their desired identity is one of the cornerstones of marketing thought (Belk 1988; McCracken 1986; Solomon 1983). Indeed, we have come to learn that the "extended-self" is integral to each step in the consumption cycle as examples within the literature outlining the interplay between the consumer's identity and each step in the consumption cycle are numerous. For instance, it has been shown that consumers are more likely to purchase products that reflect their own self-image (Aaker 1997; Belk 1988; Gardner and Levy 1955; Sirgy 1982). Brendl et al. (2005) find that the desire to self-enhance can cause consumers to choose products whose brand name starts with letters from their own name. Townsend and Sood (2012) find that consumers choose aesthetically pleasing products with good design because these products affirm the consumer's sense of self and the desire to be attractive.

Once acquired, the ownership of certain products allows individuals to signal their desired identity to themselves and others (Belk 1988; McCracken 1986; Solomon 1983; Trudel, Argo, and Meng 2016). As an example, people often display books, artwork, or items with sentimental value as a way to signal who they are in their homes and offices. The actual usage of products can also convey specific qualities to one's self and others in an attempt to restore or enhance the self (Belk, Mayer and Bahn 1982; Gao, Wheeler, and Shiv 2009; Piacentini and Mailer 2004; Solomon 1983; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). For instance, individuals often wear a particular style of clothing or fashion to express their desired identities. Likewise, driving a Harley Davidson, off-road Jeep, or four-wheel drive pickup truck allows one to convey an identity of being tough and rugged.

Literature on the self can also account for how consumers behave when throwing away, recycling, or selling products at the end of the consumption cycle. Trudel, Argo, and Meng (2016) find that individuals will avoid trashing everyday products if the items are linked to their identity. Their manipulations demonstrate that even subtly linking one's identity to an item via writing one's name or the inclusion of an American Flag on the label is enough to create an identity threat upon discarding. Instead of throwing identity linked products in the trash, their research finds that individuals will opt to recycle such products (including everyday items such as pieces of paper, plastic cups, or soda cans) in order to maintain the self. Previous research on the "endowment effect" demonstrates

that because of the association between the self and an owned product, sellers will enhance the value of the owned object and increase the price in an attempt to self-enhance (Chatterjee, Irmak, and Rose 2013; Thaler 1980). Their work is instrumental to this study as they illustrate the effects of an individual's psychological need to self-enhance which impacts subsequent product evaluations and pricing decisions.

Thus, previous research has established that the selection, acquisition, ownership, usage, sale, and even the means of disposal are different for products that are related to the self (Belk 1988; Chatterjee et al. 2013; Thaler 1980; Townsend and Sood 2012; Trudel et al 2016). However, the extended-self literature has primarily focused on how specific products are related the self and the outcomes thereof. In contrast, this study contends that identity discounts can relate the self to non-identity-specific products, resulting in *self-object associations* in the mind of the consumer.

Identity Discounts Create Self-Object Associations

Self-object association refers to the nonvolitional integration of an object within one's own self-concept (Hatvany, Burkley, and Curtis 2017; Kim and Johnson 2012; Perkins and Forehand 2012). Belk (1988, 1991) advances that objects, possessions, acquaintances, family, and even places are regularly integrated into representations of the self. Since individuals tend to have a positive attitude toward themselves (Brown 1998; Steele 1988), linking objects to

the self can influence subsequent object attitudes, in that self-associated objects are better liked and receive more favorable evaluations (Gawronski, Bodenhausen, and Becker 2007; Kim and Johnson 2012; Koole et al. 1999; Pelham, Mirenberg, and Jones 2002; Perkins and Forehand 2012). Furthermore, Trudel et al. (2016) show that linking an everyday product to a consumer's identity can enhance a product's meaningfulness. Thus, if identity discounts successfully link the consumer's identity to the product via self-object association, the product should be more favorably evaluated and quality perceptions should increase.

H1: Identity discounts have a positive effect on quality perceptions.

H2: Self-object association mediates the relationship between identity discounts and quality perceptions.

Identity Discounts Maintain and Enhance the Self

Self-affirmation is defined as “the recognition and assertion of the existence and value of one's individual self” (Oxford). According to *self-affirmation theory* (Steele 1988), individuals have a fundamental psychological need to maintain a positive overall self-evaluation and to project a positive overall self-concept to others. Self-affirmation theory has two components. First, people are compelled to perceive and express a self-identity that is competent, respectable, and good. Second, when the integrity of a person's self-identity is threatened, they will respond by taking action to self-affirm, in an effort to restore or enhance their identity and sense of self-worth. Acts of self-affirmation tend to be implicit and subtle, occurring outside of consciousness with individuals

generally being unaware that their goal is to enhance a sense of self-worth. (Hetts, Sakuma, and Pelham 1999; Sherman, Nelson, and Steele 2000; Steele 1997).

Research in social psychology has described this self preservation mechanism as a “psychological immune system,” in that individuals not only self-affirm in response to perceived threats, but also proactively self-affirm in order to bolster one’s self-identity to protect and mitigate against future threats (Aronson, Cohen, and Nail, 1999; Gilbert et al 1998; Sherman and Cohen 2002, 2006; Steele 1988). Threats to the self occur “when favorable views about oneself are questioned, contradicted, impugned, mocked, challenged, or otherwise put in jeopardy” (Campbell and Sedikides 1999, 25). This immune system is thought to be necessary in that threats to the self are numerous and constant. As Sherman and Cohen (2006) state:

“People in contemporary society face innumerable failures and self-threats. These include substandard performance on the job or in class, frustrated goals or aspirations, information challenging the validity of long-held beliefs, illness, the defeat of one’s political party in an election or of one’s favorite sports team in a playoff, scientific evidence suggesting that one is engaging in risky health behavior, negative feedback at work or in school, rejection in a romantic relationship, real and perceived social slights, interpersonal and inter-group conflict, the misbehavior of one’s

child, the loss of a loved one, and so on. In the course of a given day, the potential number of events that could threaten people's "moral and adaptive adequacy,"—their sense of themselves as good, virtuous, successful, and able to control important life outcomes (Steele, 1988)—seems limitless and likely to exceed the small number of events that affirm it." (pg. 3)

It is important to note that the self's response to identity threats are not necessarily compartmentalized, and that individuals instead tend to reinforce the integrity of their overall identity via whichever means are most convenient (Steele 1988; Townsend and Sood 2012). In other words, people can psychologically compensate for failures in one aspect of their lives by self-affirming or making salient personal success in other identity domains (Gao, Wheeler, and Shiv 2009; Sherman and Cohen 2006). Reinforcing identity domains unrelated to the threat allows one to restore their self-integrity. Therefore, because individuals are constantly seeking to restore or enhance the self in efforts to perceive and express an identity that is competent, respectable, and good, it stands to reason that a discount rewarding the positive aspects of one's identity can serve as a self-affirmation. Furthermore, the act of giving a higher evaluation of the self-associated object once again allows the consumer to self-affirm, because a favorable evaluation of the product is a favorable evaluation of the self. Thus, this study offers the following hypothesis:

H3: Consumers who self-affirm with identity discounts will have higher perceptions of quality for the product being purchased.

Identity Congruence

Given that identity discounts are fundamentally based upon the consumer's identity, it stands to reason that the congruency between the consumer's desired identity and the identity chosen to receive the discount will have a significant impact on downstream effects. For instance, in her work exploring the age segmentation cue on senior citizen discount usage intentions, Tepper (1994) finds that early stage senior citizens (ages 50-54) will forgo senior citizen discounts to avoid self-devaluation and stigmatization related to age. Furthermore, she finds that senior citizen discounts are damaging to their self-image. However, older senior citizens (ages 65 and older) were more likely to redeem a senior citizen discount because age segmentation cues did not threaten their self-image. She explains that "the dissonance between discount usage behavior and self-perceptions is resolved when elderly consumers redefine the senior citizen status as a new and proud identity" (pg. 517). Thus, while Tepper (1994) finds that identity discounts can *threaten* one's self view when there is a *misalignment* between the identity discount and the consumer's desired identity, one of the primary contributions of this study is that the inverse is also true. That is, identity discounts can *enhance* one's self view when *congruency* exists between the identity discount and the consumer's desired identity.

H4: Identity congruence moderates the effect of identity discounts, such that higher (lower) levels of identity congruence result in stronger (weaker) quality perceptions for identity discounted products.

To summarize, it has been established that traditional discounts lead to negative quality perceptions, which is harmful for the brand. Furthermore, while decades of marketing research have enhanced our understanding of the effects of traditional discounts, a thorough review of the literature reveals that identity discounts present a gap within our knowledge structure. Thus, filling that gap is the impetus for this work. For instance, the only research within the marketing literature on any type of identity discount is Tepper's (1994) qualitative investigation exploring age segmentation cues on senior citizen discount usage intentions. The present study is the first to define and conceptualize the many identity discounts that are commonplace in most purchase environments.

In addition, a review of the literature reveals that the majority of research on self-affirmation explores the relationship between the consumer's need to enhance the self and how specific products can fulfill this need. In contrast, this study proposes that *identity discounts allow individuals to self-enhance, irrespective of the actual product being purchased*. This assertion is made because self-affirmation theory would suggest that identity discounts can allow consumers to self-enhance as a part of their "psychological immune system." Moreover, self-affirmation theory would also suggest that when an identity discount is congruent with a consumer's desired identity, they will further self-enhance by adding value to the now self-associated object (the product to receive the identity discount). Therefore, the literature would argue that, based upon self-affirmation theory and the fundamental psychological need to maintain

the self, consumers will attach a higher value to products receiving an identity discount that is congruent with their desired identity. If this argument is valid, identity congruent discounts should increase quality perceptions.

CHAPTER THREE

STUDY 1: DIRECT EFFECTS OF EMPLOYEE DISCOUNTS

The main objective of this study is to show evidence for the effects of identity discounts. H1 states that identity discounts should have a positive influence on product quality perceptions and H4 states that this influence is dependent upon the level of congruence between the consumer's desired identity and the identity to receive the discount.

<<<Insert Figure 2 Here>>>

Participants and Design

Sixty corporate employees from a large Fortune 100 company (which will be referred to as "Retail World" for reasons of anonymity) were recruited to participate in study one. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (traditional discount vs. employee discount) in a single factor between-subjects design.

Procedure

After evaluating their current mood, participants were told to imagine that they needed a pair of sunglasses and that they had decided to shop at an online retailer known for carrying expensive luxury and designer goods. Participants assigned to the traditional discount condition were given the following scenario:

"While exploring the luxury retailer's website you click to browse a

separate page that lists products that have been discounted. While searching through several items, you find a pair of sunglasses that are 25% off. These sunglasses are a slightly different style than the pair you previously owned. However, they do fit the description of the type of sunglasses you would consider buying.

You look again at the price of the sunglasses that come with a 25% discount and think about whether you should add them to your online cart.”

Participants in the employee discount condition were given the same scenario with the same discount percentage, only the discount was now an employee discount.

“While exploring the luxury retailer’s website you click to browse a separate page that lists products that have been discounted for Retail World employees. While searching through several items, you find a pair of sunglasses that are 25% off. These sunglasses are a slightly different style than the pair you previously owned. However, they do fit the description of the type of sunglasses you would consider buying.

You look again at the price of the sunglasses that come with a 25% discount for Retail World employees and think about whether you should add them to your online cart.”

Measures

Following the online shopping scenario, participants were asked to evaluate the quality of the sunglasses as well as measures of identity congruence and other control variables. *Product Quality Perception.* Product quality perceptions were measured on a single-item 7-point scale (1= Very Poor; 7= Very Good) adopted from Buil et al (2013). *Identity Congruence.* Since this study evaluates the impact of an employee discount, identity congruence was measured by assessing the participants' level of *organizational identity* with Retail World. Organizational identity is the desire of an individual to maintain an emotionally satisfying self-defining relationship with an organization, or the extent to which a person's desired self-definition centers upon their membership in a particular organization (Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain 2014; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Riketta 2005). Organizational identity was measured with 6 items on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree) adopted from Mael and Ashforth (1992). The items in the scale included: "When someone criticizes Retail World it feels like a personal insult," "I am very interested in what others think about Retail World," "When I talk about Retail World, I usually say we rather than I," "Retail World's successes are my successes," "When someone praises Retail World, it feels like a personal compliment," "If a story in the media criticized Retail World, I would feel embarrassed." *Control Variables.* As a control, mood was measured on a 7-point scale anchored by sad- happy, bad mood–good mood, irritable-pleased, depressed- cheerful. In addition, participants also

indicated their age, gender, and tenure (how long they had worked at Retail World).

Results

Twelve participants did not provide information on the items related to organizational identity, leaving a total sample size of forty-eight ($N = 48$). The results indicate scale reliability for the measures of organizational identity (Cronbach's Alpha = .77) and mood (Cronbach's Alpha = .94). Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 1) and bias-corrected CIs based on 5,000 bootstrap samples were used to test the hypotheses. Mood and tenure were not significant in the model ($p > .10$), thus mood and tenure are not discussed further. The analysis confirms H1 and H4, revealing a conditional positive effect of employee discounts on quality perceptions, contingent upon the level of organizational identity with Company X ($bm = .57$, $SE = .32$, $t = 1.7913$, $p = .08$, $LLCI = -.0731$, $ULCI = 1.2286$).

<<<Insert Table 1 Here>>>

<<<Insert Figure 3 Here>>>

Discussion

Study one sampled corporate employees from a large Fortune 100 company and assessed the impact of employee discounts on product quality

perceptions. The results offer support for H1 and H4. Employee discounts had a positive impact on quality perceptions, but only when identity congruence was high. Receiving an employee discount increased the perceived quality of the sunglasses for participants whose desired identity was congruent with being an employee at Retail World. One disadvantage of this study was the limited sample size. Furthermore, although they were instructed that their individual responses would remain anonymous and confidential, several employees withdrew prior to completing the experiment as they were likely hesitant to indicate their level of organizational identity with Retail World. This resulted in a final sample of forty-eight ($N = 48$). Thus, the marginally significant effect of employee discounts ($p = .08$) is likely a result of the small sample size. Additionally, the effect of an employee discount may be mild in terms of its ability to convey or reinforce a more desirable (or undesirable) identity. Thus, the following studies should replicate the findings of study one, evaluating other common forms of identity discounts.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY 2: SELF-OBJECT ASSOCIATION MEDIATES THE EFFECTS OF VETERAN DISCOUNTS

The objective of this study is to replicate the findings of study one, and to determine if the increase in quality perceptions is the result of self-object association (H3). That is, the presence of an identity discount leads to *self-object association*, which increases quality perceptions. The literature has consistently shown that when consumers associate an object with themselves, they tend to have higher evaluations of the object as it is subconsciously interlinked with the evaluations of the self (Chatterjee et al. 2013; Gawronski, Bodenhausen, and Becker 2007; Kim and Johnson 2012; Perkins and Forehand 2012). Thus, study two accounts for self-object association as the mediating variable for an increase in quality perceptions in the presence identity discounts. While study one sampled corporate employees to assess the impact of an employee discount, this study utilizes former military members to assess the impact of a veteran discount.

<<<Insert Figure 4 Here>>>

Participants and Design

Sixty-two participants were recruited from a private listserv of former enlisted military veterans to participate in study two. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (traditional discount vs. veteran discount) in a single factor between-subjects design.

Procedure

After evaluating their current mood, participants were told to imagine they were shopping at a local store and would be asked to evaluate one or more products for sale. Following previous literature, the product chosen for this study was a coffee mug (Chatterjee et al. 2013). For the traditional discount condition, participants were given the following scenario:

“Imagine that you are out shopping at a local store, looking to pick up a few things for home. While browsing, you come across a coffee mug displayed on the shelf. The display indicates that the mug comes with a discount of 25% and is now \$3.00. While you didn’t specifically go to the store looking for a new coffee mug, you had once thought about replacing some of your older mugs. You decide that if you liked it enough, you could use a new coffee mug so long as it’s a good value. The mug isn’t perfect, but it could fit with the type of mug you would consider buying. You look again at the display that shows it comes with a discount and consider buying the mug.”

The participants in the identity discount condition were given the same shopping scenario, only instead of a traditional discount, the coffee mug came with a veteran discount:

“Imagine that you are out shopping at a local store, looking to pick up a few things for home. While browsing, you come across a coffee mug displayed on the shelf. The display indicates that the mug comes with a

veteran discount of 25% and is now \$3.00. While you didn't specifically go to the store looking for a new coffee mug, you had once thought about replacing some of your older mugs. You decide that if you liked it enough, you could use a new coffee mug so long as it's a good value. The mug isn't perfect, but it could fit with the type of mug you would consider buying. You look again at the display that shows it comes with a veteran discount and consider buying the mug."

Following the shopping scenario, participants were asked to evaluate the coffee mug on willingness-to-pay (as a proxy for self-object association) and product quality perceptions. Prior literature posits that evaluations of the self and self-object associations tend to be implicit, occurring at the non-conscious level (Gawronski, Bodenhausen, and Becker 2007). Therefore, willingness-to-pay was used as a proxy for self-object association. Being that most individuals have positive evaluations of the self, these positive evaluations are often transferred to objects that are associated with the self as a means of self-enhancement (Brown 1998; Steele 1988). Thus, as a fundamental measurement of perceived value, willingness-to-pay serves as an appropriate proxy for self-object association. Ceteris paribus, individuals who associate an object with the self should have a higher valuation of the object, indicating a higher willingness-to pay.

Measures

Identity Congruence. Identity congruence was measured by asking “When you think of your identity (your sense of who you are), how important is it that you are a military veteran?” on a 5-point scale (1= Not at all important; 5= Extremely important). *Willingness-to-Pay.* To measure willingness-to-pay, participants were asked to indicate their willingness to pay using a dropdown scale in 25-cent-increments from \$0 to \$9.00 (Kyung, Thomas, and Krishna 2017). *Product Quality Perception.* Product quality perception was measured on a single-item 7-point scale (1= Very Poor; 7= Very Good) adopted from Buil et al (2013). *Control Variables.* As a control, mood was measured on a 7-point scale anchored by sad- happy, bad mood–good mood, irritable-pleased, depressed- cheerful (Cronbach’s Alpha = .950). In addition, participants also indicated their age and gender.

Results

One participant failed to provide complete information following the shopping scenario, which resulted in a final sample size of sixty-one ($N=61$). None of the control variables (mood, gender, or age) significantly influence the results (all $p > .10$) and are not discussed. Hypotheses were tested using the Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 7) and bias-corrected CIs based on 5,000 bootstrap samples. The analysis reveals a positive conditional indirect effect of identity discounts on quality, that is fully mediated by self-object association.

<<<Insert Figure 5 Here>>>

Identity Discount -> Self-Object Association. The results show that receiving a veteran discount leads to higher self-object association, only at higher levels of identity congruence ($ab = -9.31$, $t = -1.43$, $p = .15$; $amb = 4.65$, $t = 2.60$, $p = .01$). To assess the interaction of identity congruence, a Johnson-Neyman spotlight analysis was performed at 1 SD +/- the mean. The spotlight analysis indicates that higher (lower) levels of identity congruence leads to a stronger (weaker) presence of self-object association (see tables 2-4 below).

<<<Insert Table 2 Here>>>

<<<Insert Table 3 Here>>>

Self-Object Association -> Quality Perceptions. As H3 suggests, the results show that self-object association leads to higher perceived quality ($bc = .03$, $t = 2.05$, $p = .04$). Furthermore, the impact of a veteran discount on quality perceptions is fully mediated by self-object association, such that when the conditional effect of self-object association is included within the model, the direct effect of a veteran discount on quality becomes insignificant ($ac = .35$, $t = 1.36$, $p = .17$).

<<<Insert Table 4 Here>>>

Discussion

For veterans whose prior military experience is an important part of their desired identity, the presence of a veteran discount resulted in a positive association between the product and themselves, which increased quality perceptions for the coffee mug. Furthermore, the results illustrate that the impact of a veteran discount on self-object association is only significant when identity congruence is high. In other words, self object association is present only for veterans whose military experience remains an important part of their desired identity (identity congruence). This self-object association between the veteran and the product results in higher quality perceptions because the product is now part of the veteran's self. Importantly, this increase in perceived quality results in additional customer value that is tangential to the attributes of the product itself. While a traditional discount diminishes perceived quality, when identity congruence is high an identity discount can increase the perceived quality.

CHAPTER FIVE

STUDY 3: REPLICATING SELF-OBJECT ASSOCIATION WITH SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNTS

It is important to replicate the findings of studies one and two by testing the hypotheses across other common types of identity discounts. Thus, study three assesses the impact of senior citizen discounts and also lowers the discount percentage. The first two studies relied on a discount percentage of 25%. However, 15% will be used in study three, as theory would suggest that the effect of an identity discount should persist even at lower discount percentages. Furthermore, as senior citizen discounts are the focal construct, this study will rely on the participants age as a more objective measure of identity congruence. In her research on senior citizen discount redemption rates, Tepper (1994) finds that early stage senior citizens (ages 50-54) will forgo senior citizen discounts to avoid self-devaluation and stigmatization related to age, which damages their self-image. However, she finds that older senior citizens (ages 65 and above) were more likely to redeem a senior citizen discount as age segmentation cues did not threaten their self-image. This is because elderly seniors often redefine their senior citizen status as a new and proud identity. Thus, since this study assesses senior citizen discounts, age should serve as an appropriate measure for identity congruence. In addition, the previous study asked participants how much they would be willing to pay as a proxy for self-object association. As an added measure of robustness, study three will use reservation price (willing to

sell price) as a measure for self-object association.

Participants and Design

This study is a 2 condition (Traditional Discount vs. Senior Citizen Discount) between-subjects design. One hundred and thirty-nine senior citizens ages 55 and older were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and compensated \$0.80 to participate in this study.

Procedure

After evaluating their current mood, participants were asked to imagine the following shopping scenario: “Imagine that you are out shopping at a local bakery. Upon entering the bakery, you see a variety of freshly baked pastries, cakes, cupcakes, cookies, and other sweets for sale. You're not hungry at the moment, but you decide that you would like to purchase something to take home. You spend a few minutes looking around the store.” The traditional discount condition then read:

“While browsing the bakery, you notice a glass display that contains a variety of different cakes. You see a sign on the display that says the cakes come with a 15% discount. One of the cakes for sale is a flavor you normally buy. You look back at the display that says the cakes come with a 15% discount and consider buying a cake.”

The participants in the identity discount condition were given the same scenario,

only the discount was now a senior citizen discount:

“While browsing the bakery, you notice a glass display that contains a variety of different cakes. You see a sign on the display that says the cakes come with a 15% Senior Citizen discount. One of the cakes for sale is a flavor you normally buy. You look back at the display that says the cakes come with a 15% Senior Citizen discount and consider buying a cake.”

Following the shopping scenario, participants evaluated the quality of the cake. They were then told to imagine that they had purchased the cake from the bakery. Each participant was then asked to indicate their reservation price, or the lowest amount they would be willing to take if someone else wanted to purchase the cake back from them. Once again, self-object associations tend to occur at the non-conscious level and cannot be directly measured (Gawronski et al. 2007). Therefore, this study remains consistent with the endowment literature using the participant’s reservation price as a proxy for self-object association (Chatterjee et al. 2013).

Measures

Self-Object Association. As proxy for self-object association, participants were asked to indicate the lowest amount they would be willing to sell the cake to someone else for, on a dropdown scale with prices ranging from \$1.00 to \$60.00, in one-dollar increments. *Identity Congruence.* Participant age served as a measure of identity congruence. *Product Quality Perception.* Product quality

perception was measured on a single-item 7-point scale (1= Very Poor; 7= Very Good) adopted from Buil, Chernatony, and Martínez (2013). *Control Variables.* As a control, mood was measured on a 7-point scale anchored by sad- happy, bad mood–good mood, irritable-pleased, depressed- cheerful (Cronbach's Alpha = .950). In addition, participants also indicated their gender.

Results

One outlier was deleted in the identity discount condition who's stated reservation price was more than six standard deviations higher than the mean ($N=138$). To replicate the findings in study X, analyses used the Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 7) and bias-corrected CIs based on 5,000 bootstrap samples to test the hypotheses. The analysis reveals a positive conditional indirect effect of senior citizen discounts on quality perceptions, that is fully mediated by self-object association.

<<<Insert Figure 6 Here>>>

Senior Citizen Discount -> Self-Object Association. The results show that receiving a senior citizen discount has a significant negative impact on self-object associations ($ab = -30.19$, $t = -2.67$, $p = .00$). However, this negative effect is reversed as senior citizen consumers grow older. That is, an increase in age (identity congruence) reverses the negative effects of receiving a senior citizen discount, such that senior citizen discounts led to a significant positive impact on self-object associations for older senior citizens ($amb = .46$, $t = 2.65$, $p = .00$). To

assess the interaction of identity congruence, a Johnson-Neyman spotlight analysis was performed at 1 SD +/- the mean. The spotlight analysis indicates that older (younger) seniors develop positive (negative) self-object associations in the presence of senior citizen discounts (see tables 5-7 below).

<<<Insert Table 5 Here>>>

<<<Insert Table 6 Here>>>

Self-Object Association -> Product Quality. Once again, as H3 suggests the results show that self-object association leads to higher perceptions of product quality ($bc = .03$, $t = 2.05$, $p = .04$). Furthermore, the impact of a senior citizen discount on quality perceptions is fully mediated by self-object association, such that when the conditional effect of self-object association is included within the model, the direct effect of senior citizen discounts on quality becomes non-significant ($ac = .20$, $t = 1.22$, $p = .22$).

<<<Insert Table 7 Here>>>

Discussion

Study three finds a conditional indirect effect of senior citizen discounts on quality perceptions. For later stage (early stage) seniors who embrace (reject) the status of being a senior citizen, receiving a senior citizen discount increased

(decreased) self-object association with the product and yielded higher (lower) quality evaluations. This is interesting because for older participants, a senior citizen discount resulted in higher reservation prices due to the positive association between the *self* and the product (cake). However, the opposite was true for younger (early stage senior citizens). Younger participants receiving a senior citizen discount indicated significantly lower reservation prices due to the undesired association between the *self* and the product with a senior citizen discount. In other words, when younger senior citizens received a senior citizen discount, they assigned a lower value and were more eager to sell the product in an attempt to reject the classification of being a senior citizen.

Study three indicates that offering senior citizen discounts can be a double-edged sword. These discounts can enhance perceived value or decrease it, depending on the age or psychological life stage of the consumer. This study assessed the impact of a senior citizen discount on consumers ages 55 and older and finds that senior citizen discounts harm perceived quality for those less than 60 years of age, but increased perceived quality for later stage senior citizens ages 70 and older.

CHAPTER SIX

STUDY 4: SELF-AFFIRMATION MEDIATES THE EFFECT OF STUDENT DISCOUNTS

The previous studies assessed self-object association as the mechanism driving the positive impact of identity discounts on perceived quality. However, the literature on self-affirmation theory suggests that individuals will more positively evaluate objects associated with the *self*, due to the subconscious psychological need to self-affirm (Steele 1988). That is, when consumers evaluate a product that is implicitly linked to their own identity, they will give the product favorable evaluations because by doing so they are giving themselves a favorable evaluation. Thus, the purpose of study four is two-fold. First, the previous three studies have examined employee, veteran, and senior citizen discounts. Study four replicates the positive effects of identity discounts, using a student sample to assess the impact of a student discount. Second, the primary contribution of study four is to assess the influence of self-affirmation as an additional mechanism behind the effects of identity discounts. Recall from the literature review that self-affirmation is an implicit mechanism, and consumers are generally unaware of the need to self-affirm or the outcomes thereof. Hence, self-affirmation cannot be directly measured and a measurement-of-mediation is not possible. Therefore, this study relies on process by moderation (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005) to test for self-affirmation as an additional mediator driving the relationship between identity discounts and product quality

perceptions.

Study four includes a self-affirmation prime condition. If self-affirmation mediates the effect of identity discounts on product evaluations (i.e. consumers perceive products associated with the *self* to be of higher quality due to an attempt to self-affirming their own identities), quality perceptions should decrease for those who have been primed because their identities will now be more resilient and they should have less of a need to self-affirm.

<<<Insert Figure 7 Here>>>

Participants and Design

Study four is a 2 condition (Prime Self-affirmation vs. Control) between-subjects design. Fifty-seven undergraduate students from the University of Tennessee were recruited and offered course credits to participate in this study ($N=57$).

Procedure

After evaluating their current mood, participants were randomly assigned to the self-affirmation or control condition. In the treatment condition to prime self-affirmation, participants were instructed to “Take a moment and think of at least two achievements that reveal how competent and talented you are (e.g., winning an award, or getting promoted at work). Please describe in detail how each accomplishment reflects your success as a person.” Whereas participants assigned to the control condition were given the following instructions: “In as

much detail as possible, please list everything that you ate or drank in the past 48 hours.” These treatments were drawn from the self-affirmation literature (Chatterjee, Irmak, Rose 2013; McQueen and Klein 2006). Following the treatment vs control, participants were all given the same shopping scenario. Participants were told to imagine they were shopping online to purchase a 5 pack of mechanical number 2 pencils they needed for one of their classes in the upcoming semester. Because the goal of this study is to assess the impact of self-affirmation in the presence of identity discounts, participants in this study all received the following identity discount:

“While browsing the online website, you notice a tab that takes you to a page that displays a variety of different school supplies that have been discounted for University of Tennessee students. On the page you see a 5 pack of mechanical pencils that have been discounted at 30% and are now \$3.49.

You click on the pencils and read the description and see that they do meet the minimum requirements for the pencils you will need for the class. You look back at the 30% discounted price of \$3.49 for University of Tennessee students and consider buying the pack.”

Participants then evaluated the quality of the mechanical pencils and provided basic demographic information. Finally, participants completed questions capturing their identity congruence with being a college student.

Measures

Product Quality Perception. Product quality perception was measured on a single-item 7-point scale (1= Very Poor; 7= Very Good) adopted from Buil et al (2013). *Identity Congruence.* Identity congruence was measured by assessing participants level of organizational identity with being a college student at their university. Organizational identity is the desire of an individual to maintain an emotionally satisfying self-defining relationship with an organization, or the extent to which a person's desired self-definition centers upon their membership in a particular organization (Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain 2014; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Riketta 2005). Organizational Identity was measured on a 6-item 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree) adopted from Mael and Ashforth (1992). The items in the scale included: "When someone criticizes the University of Tennessee it feels like a personal insult," "I am very interested in what others think about the University of Tennessee," "When I talk about the University of Tennessee, I usually say *we* rather than *I*," "UT's success are my successes," "When someone praises the University of Tennessee, it feels like a personal compliment," "If a story in the media criticized the University of Tennessee, I would feel embarrassed." *Control Variables.* As a control, mood was measured on a 7-point scale anchored by sad- happy, bad mood–good mood, irritable-pleased, depressed- cheerful. In addition, participants also indicated their age, gender, and class standing, number of years as a college student, total semesters as a college student, and total semesters as a college student at the University of Tennessee.

Results

The results indicate scale reliability for the measure of organizational identity (Cronbach's Alpha = .86). Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 1) and bias-corrected CIs based on 5,000 bootstrap samples was used to evaluate self-affirmation as a mediator via process by moderation. Other than gender, none of the control variables were significant in the model ($p > .10$), and are not discussed further. The analysis confirms H3 and H4, revealing that in the presence of an identity discount there is a conditional negative effect of priming self-affirmation on subsequent quality perceptions, for participants whose desired identity is highly congruent with that of being a college student ($bm = -.50$, $SE = .17$, $t = -2.91$, $p = .00$, $LLCI = -.8487$, $ULCI = -.1560$). Following the guidelines of Spencer, Zanna, and Fong (2005), study four demonstrates the role of self-affirmation in increasing product quality perceptions via process by moderation. For those whose student status was an important part of their identity, priming self-affirmation resulted in lower quality evaluations. In other words, these participant's psychological immune system had been positively boosted, taking away the need to self-affirm via giving a favorable product evaluation to a product associated with the self.

<<<Insert Table 8 Here>>>

<<<Insert Table 9 Here>>>

Discussion

Study four confirms H3 and H4, finding that identity discounts provide a way for consumers to self-affirm. For those whose identities were highly congruent with being a student, the self-affirmation prime resulted in lower quality perceptions. In other words, when the participants' identity had been boosted via the self-affirmation prime, the need to self-affirm via identity discounts was subdued. Studies two and three found the presence of self-object association for products paired with an identity discount. This study demonstrates that consumers lend higher product evaluations in the presence of an identity discount as a way to self-affirm their own identities. Furthermore, the results illustrate that the effect of self-affirmation is only significant when identity congruence is high. That is, self-affirmation was present only for participants whose student status is an important part of their desired identity (identity congruence). Self-affirmation results in higher quality perceptions because the product is now part of the *self*, and by favorably rating the product, consumers are favorably rating themselves.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research investigated the role of self-object association and self-affirmation in the presence of identity discounts. Study one used a sample of corporate employees from a Fortune 100 company to assess the direct effects of an employee discount on product quality perceptions. The results show that the presence of an employee discount increased the perceived quality of the product for employees who highly identified with the organization.

Study two sought to determine if self-object association mediates the relationship between identity discounts and perceived product quality. Relying on a sample from a private listerv of former military service members, study two found a positive conditional indirect effect of veteran discounts on quality, that is fully mediated by self-object association. For veterans whose prior service was an important part of their identity (identity congruence), a veteran discount created self-object association, which increased the perceived quality of the product.

The purpose of study three was to assess another common type of identity discounts- senior citizen discounts. Study three replicated the results of study two, finding a positive conditional indirect effect of senior citizen discounts on quality perceptions, that is fully mediated by self-object association. Senior

citizen discounts created positive self-object associations and higher perceived product quality for those who highly identified with being a senior (later stage senior citizens). However, senior citizen discounts also led to negative self-object associations and lower perceived product quality for those who did not identify as being a senior citizen (earlier stage senior citizens).

Study four assessed yet another common type of identity discount (student discounts). The purpose of study four was to determine if identity discounts provide consumers with a means to self-affirm. The results found that students in the control condition held higher product quality perceptions than students in the self-affirmation prime condition. Thus, study four demonstrated that when a student discount is present, students with high identity congruence will rate products as having higher quality as a means to self-affirm.

Altogether, the four studies show that identity discounts can create an association between the self and products, which impact product quality perceptions. This is the first inquiry and classification of these types of marketing promotions, and this research has demonstrated the effects of and explored the underlying mechanisms. In the next sections, the theoretical implications from these findings are discussed as well as implications for managers.

Theoretical Implications

This study is important because it represents the first attempt to gather and label the various types of price discounts commonly found in purchase

environments, such as student discounts, senior citizen discounts, veteran discounts, and employee discounts. Each of these discounts have one principal commonality: they are given based entirely on the consumer's identity. Thus, this study establishes a new construct and much needed stream of research- *identity discounts*.

The findings of this research are theoretically meaningful as the results run counter to what has been established and generally accepted within the pricing literature. That is, conventional wisdom posits that discounts harm quality perceptions. Instead, this research relies on the *extended-self* literature and *self-affirmation theory* to show that identity discounts can increase quality perceptions. In doing so, this study also holds implications for the extended-self literature. While Belk (1988) and others have demonstrated how products and material possessions play a role in shaping the self, research on the extended-self has primarily focused on the role of material possessions in identity formation (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Thus, the findings here contribute to the extended-self literature by showing that identity discounts can reinforce the consumer's desired self, independent of the actual item being purchased.

Four studies assessed the impact of an identity discount on quality perceptions for a variety of products (i.e. a pair of sunglasses, coffee mug, cake, and a mechanical pencil) in both a traditional and online retail environment. In each of these studies, the presence of an identity discount fostered self-object

associations with products that were otherwise unlikely to be linked to the self. Therefore, the findings here suggest that identity discounts can create self-object associations for otherwise nonidentity-specific products.

This study also has implications for the *endowment effect* literature. For instance, Chatterjee et al. (2013) show that for sellers, ownership of an object creates self-object association, which leads to higher valuations for self-associated objects, but “assumed that there is no self-object connection for buyers” (pg. 472) suggesting the need for further research. This study assesses valuations from the buyer’s perspective, showing that purchasing a product with an identity discount can result in outcomes comparable to the endowment effect. That is, while the endowment literature demonstrates how *selling* a self-associated object creates a *threat* to the self, this research demonstrates how *buying* an identity discounted product can *enhance* the self.

Lastly, it is important to note that the moderating role of identity congruence rules out other possible competing theories for explaining the effects of identity discounts. For instance, if increases in quality perceptions could be explained by attribution theory or idiosyncratic fit, then identity congruence would not moderate the effect, and there would not be an increase (decrease) in self-object association for those with high (low) levels of identity congruence. Furthermore, study four establishes the presence of self-affirmation as an additional mediator impacting the quality perceptions of identity discounted

products. Thus, by demonstrating the effects of self-object association and self-affirmation, this research shows that identity discount effects are due to the link between the self and the product, rather than the result of merely disguising a discount as attribution theory would suggest.

Managerial Implications

So, what is a manager to do if she needs to increase her sales volume, but understands that discounts have negative downstream consequences? The findings here suggest that she could provide her customers with identity discounts. While traditional discounts tarnish quality perceptions and are brand destroyers, identity discounts can increase quality perceptions and help build the brand by linking products to the consumer's identity. From a cost perspective, it is the same discount either way- a twenty percent identity discount is still a twenty percent discount. The difference is that identity discounts will still move the needle in terms of sales volume, but can increase instead of decrease customer value. Thus, while traditional discounts are a cost, identity discounts can be viewed as an investment.

Another important implication for managers is the moderating effect of identity congruence on the outcomes of identity discounts. The downstream effects of the identity discount depend entirely on the consumer's desired identity. For instance, while older age seniors respond favorably to senior citizen discounts, earlier age seniors respond unfavorably, and the presence of a senior

citizen discount creates a negative unwanted association with the product. Being that seniors below the age of 60 respond negatively to senior citizen discounts, it would likely benefit managers to consider setting a higher age for senior citizen discount redemption. The results from this research suggest that other types of identity discounts such as veteran discounts or student discounts might be less prone to negative downstream consequences.

Limitations and Directions for Future research

While this is the first and only research that examines the effects of identity discounts, there are limitations and several areas that future research should address. First, this study assessed how identity discounts impact quality perceptions. Future research should explore how identity discounts might vary from the other outcomes of traditional discounts. For instance, although identity discounts can increase perceived quality, does the effect translate at the register by way of increased sales? What is the impact of an identity discount on purchase intentions? How might identity discounts impact response rates for direct marketing efforts? Word-of-mouth?

If identity discounts create self-object associations and allow consumers a means to self-affirm, it is likely that there are other payoffs for investing in identity discounts and the long-term implications may be even more fruitful for areas of future research. For instance, what is the impact of identity discounts on brand equity and customer-company identification (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003)? How

might identity discounts differ from traditional discounts in terms of their impact on the consumer's reference price and price sensitivity? More importantly, future research should explore the effect identity discounts may have on marketing strategies geared towards shaping the customer's lifetime value (Rust, Lemon, and Zeithaml 2004).

Second, this study only assessed the impact of an identity discount given to customers who qualified for the discount. Future research should evaluate how the presence of a senior citizen, student, or veteran discount can effect out-group consumers. Social comparison may lead out-group consumers to feel disadvantaged. Thus, there may be a dark side and the potential for identity discounts to have negative consequences. For instance, could there be an oversaturation of identity discounts that hurt the brand, similar to what has been found with green-washing, pink-washing, and cause-fatigue?

Third, as identity discounts highlight the consumer's identity (to themselves *and* others), future research should explore other shopping contexts that might moderate the effects found here. For instance, this study assessed both online and in-store purchases. It would be instrumental to uncover how social identity theory and the effects of receiving an identity discount in the presence of others might alter the results.

Lastly, this research did not investigate the timing or placement of an identity discount. It would be valuable to know if identity discounts should be implemented on the shelf via displays, at the checkout before ring-up, or after ring-up. Furthermore, what happens in the presence of multiple identity discounts? That is, what is the effect on the consumer when the firm offers discounts to a variety of identities, diluting the consumer's sense of distinguishment? What are the boundary conditions for identity discounts? How do more extreme and less common identity discounts such as organ donor discounts impact the consumer? It would be valuable to know in what contexts an identity discount might impact behavior. For instance, it would be interesting to understand how the effect of an identity discount could also extend to a sales environment or negotiations.

Conclusion

This study introduces identity discounts to the marketing literature. Identity discounts are an overlooked phenomenon, and evaluating the effects of these promotions provides significant theoretical and managerial implications. The results of this research exemplify the fundamental human tendency to enhance the self. However, despite this initial inquiry there is still a lot to learn about the effect identity discounts have on the consumer and how this impacts the firm. Thus, future research in this area could provide substantial benefits to academics and practitioners alike.

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APPENDIX

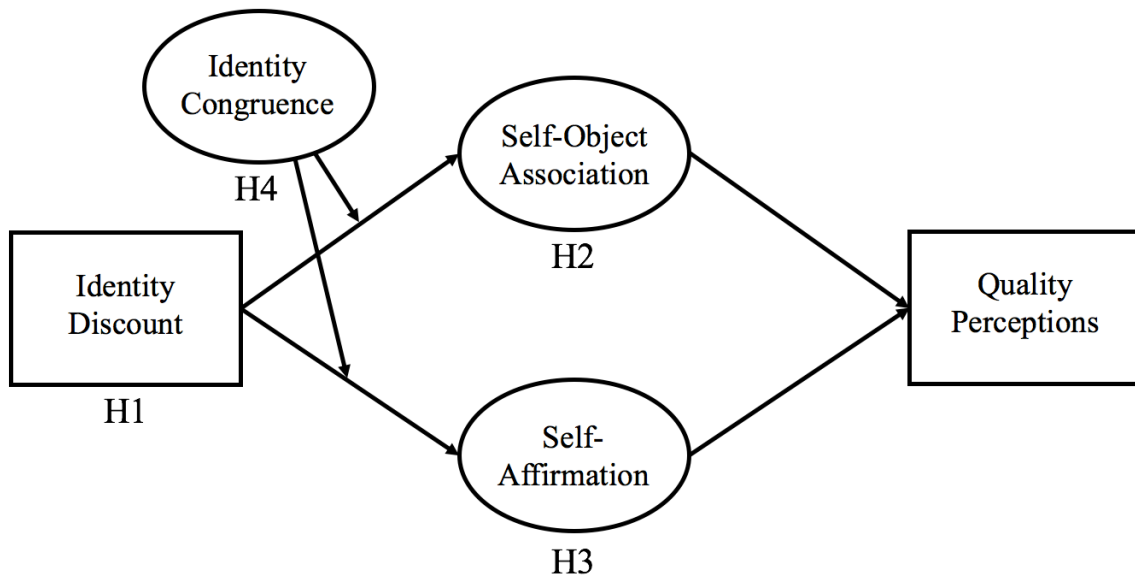


Figure 1: Identity Discounts Conceptual Model

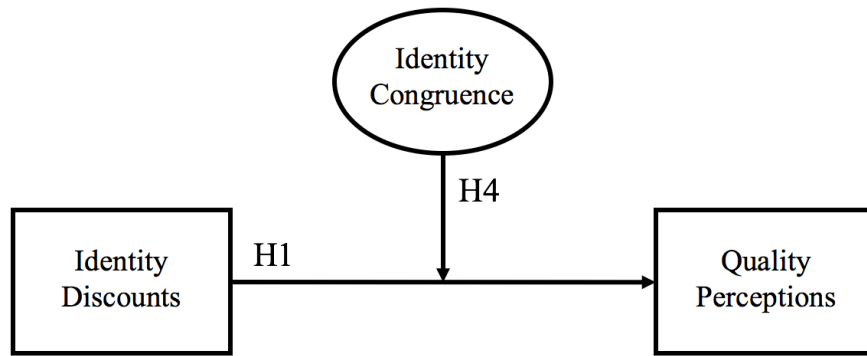


Figure 2: Study 1 Conceptual Model

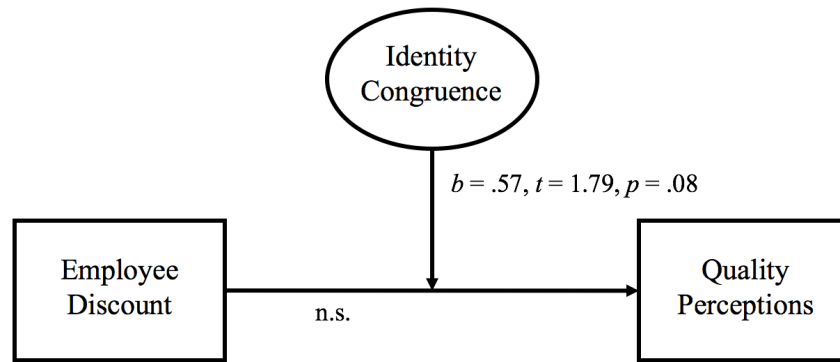


Figure 3: Conditional Effect of Employee Discounts

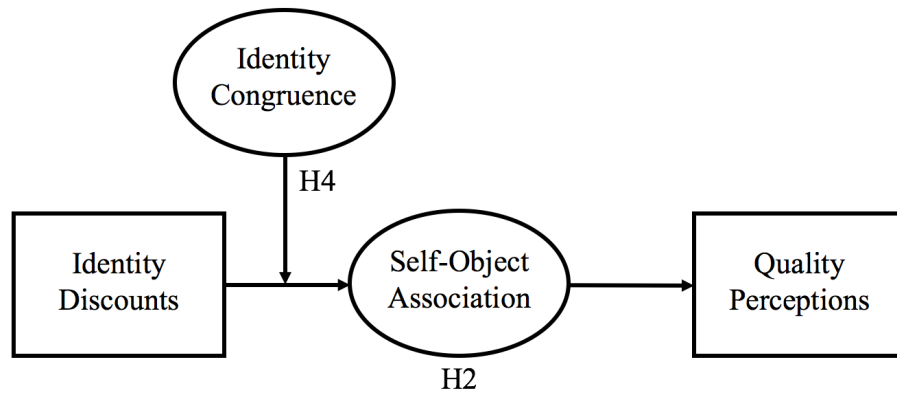


Figure 4: Study 2 Conceptual Model

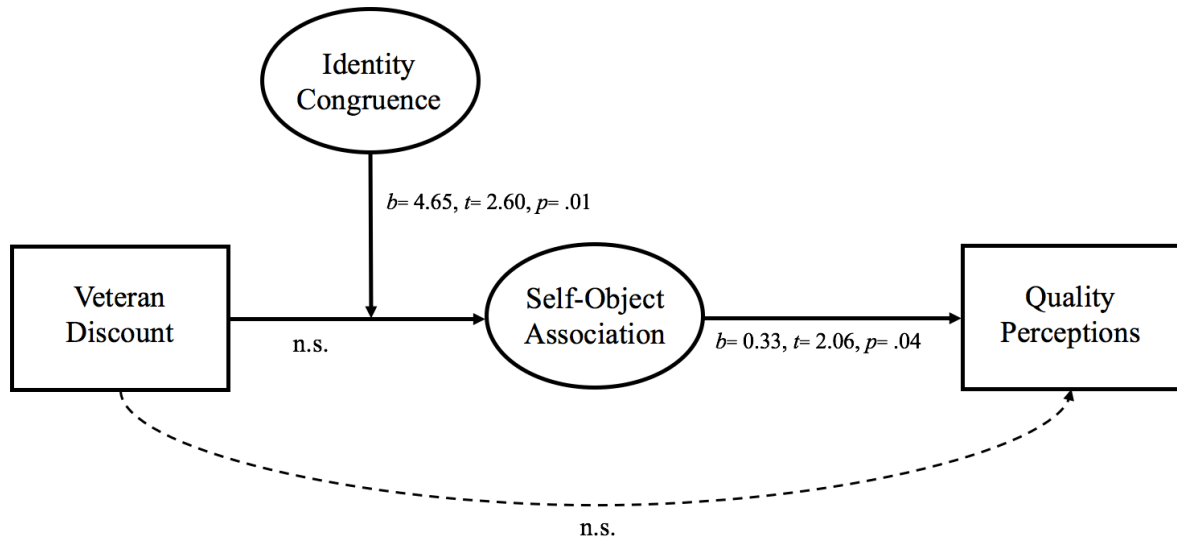


Figure 5: Conditional Indirect Effects of Veteran Discounts

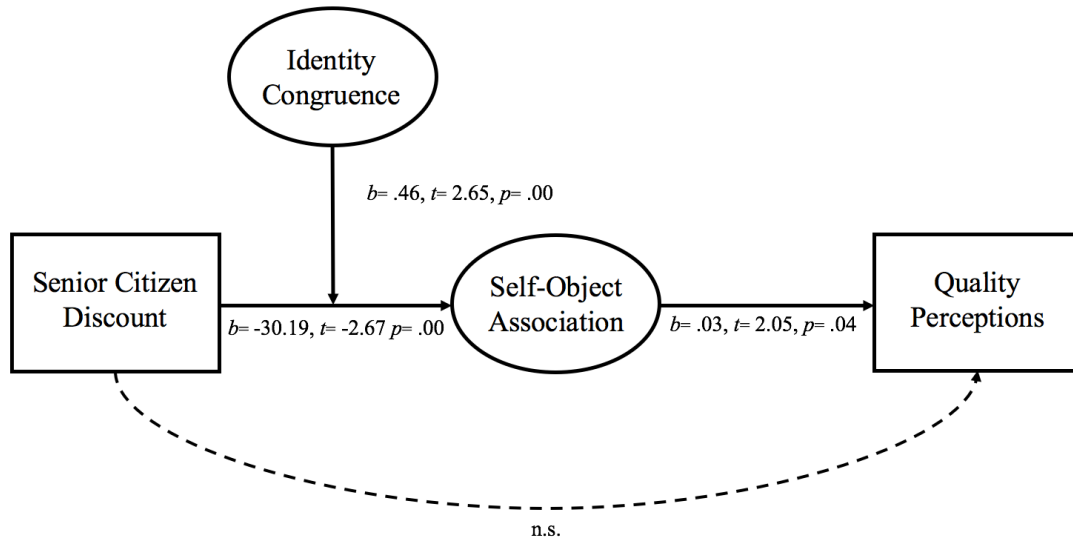


Figure 6: Conditional Indirect Effects of Senior Citizen Discounts

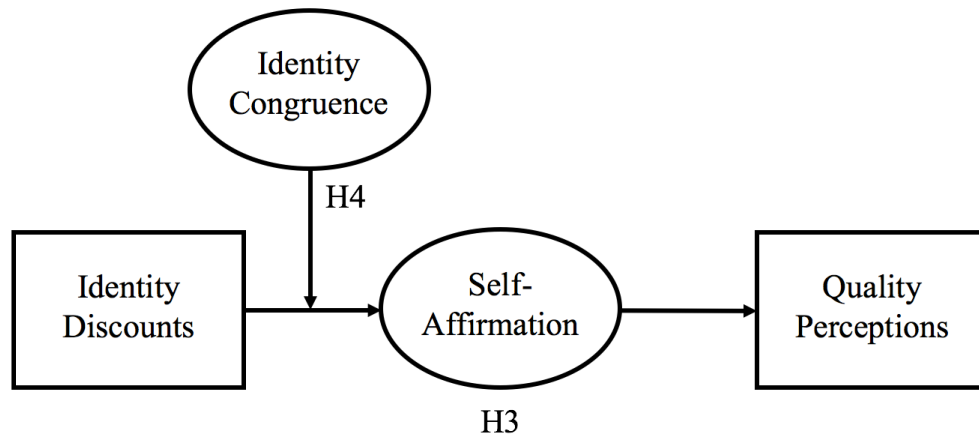


Figure 7: Study 4 Conceptual Model

Table 1: Study 1 Results

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.1100	1.0661	4.7934	.0000	2.9586	7.2615
Employee Discount	-2.7929	1.6677	-1.6747	.1014	-6.1585	0.5727
Organizational ID	-0.6729	0.1848	-3.6406	.0007	-1.0459	-0.2999
Emp Dis X Org ID	0.5777	0.3225	1.7913	.0804	-0.0731	1.2286
Age	0.0557	0.0209	2.6658	.0109	0.0135	0.0979
Gender	0.7060	0.2953	2.3911	.0214	0.1101	1.3018
R2 = .2947, MSE = .7693, F = 3.5105, p = .0097						

Table 2: Effect of Veteran Discounts on Self-Object Association

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	26.0215	10.8722	2.3934	.0199	4.2583	47.7848
Veteran's Discount	-9.3183	6.4933	-1.4351	.1566	-22.3161	3.6795
Identity Congruence	-6.0942	2.8926	-2.1068	.0395	-11.8845	-0.3040
Veteran's Dis X ID Con	4.6513	1.7828	2.6090	.0115	1.0826	8.2200

Overall Model: R² = .26, MSE = 52.24, F = 6.81, p = .000

Table 3: Conditional Effects of Veteran Discounts

Identity Congruence	Effect	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
1.0000	-4.6670	4.8148	-.9639	.3364	-14.3050	4.9710
1.2000	-3.7367	4.4888	-.8325	.4086	-12.7221	5.2486
1.4000	-2.8065	4.1678	-.6734	.5034	-11.1492	5.5363
1.6000	-1.8762	3.8530	-.4869	.6281	-9.5889	5.8365
1.8000	-0.9459	3.5462	-.2667	.7906	-8.0444	6.1525
2.0000	-0.0157	3.2495	-.0048	.9962	-6.5202	6.4889
2.2000	0.9146	2.9660	.3084	.7589	-5.0226	6.8518
2.3853 (-1 SD)	1.7766	2.7188	.6535	.5160	-3.6656	7.2188
2.4000	1.8449	2.6999	.6833	.4971	-3.5597	7.2494
2.6000	2.7751	2.4569	1.1295	.2633	-2.1429	7.6932
2.8000	3.7054	2.2444	1.6510	.1042	-0.7873	8.1981
2.9217	4.2716	2.1339	2.0017	.0500	0.0000	8.5432
3.0000	4.6357	2.0718	2.2374	.0291	0.4884	8.7829
3.2000	5.5659	1.9499	2.8545	.0060	1.6628	9.4691
3.4000	6.4962	1.8883	3.4401	.0011	2.7162	10.2762
3.4516 (M)	6.7363	1.8831	3.5772	.0007	2.9667	10.5058
3.6000	7.4265	1.8931	3.9228	.0002	3.6369	11.2160
3.8000	8.3567	1.9637	4.2555	.0001	4.4258	12.2876
4.0000	9.2870	2.0935	4.4360	.0000	5.0963	13.4777
4.2000	10.2172	2.2724	4.4963	.0000	5.6685	14.7660
4.4000	11.1475	2.4898	4.4773	.0000	6.1637	16.1313
4.5179 (+1 SD)	11.6959	2.6322	4.4435	.0000	6.4270	16.9648
4.6000	12.0778	2.7365	4.4136	.0000	6.6001	17.5555
4.8000	13.0080	3.0053	4.3283	.0000	6.9922	19.0239
5.0000	13.9383	3.2909	4.2354	.0000	7.3508	20.5258

Table 4: Effect of Veteran Discounts on Quality Perceptions

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.2981	0.3970	8.3068	.0000	2.5036	4.0926
Veteran's Discount	0.3591	0.2625	1.3681	.1765	-0.1661	0.8843
Self-Object Association	0.0332	0.0161	2.0583	.0440	0.0009	0.0654

Overall Model: R2 = .14, MSE = .89, F = 4.92, p = .01

Table 5: Effect of Senior Citizen Discounts on Self-Object Association

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	77.7556	18.0243	4.3139	.0000	42.1018	113.4095
Senior Citizen Discount	-30.1990	11.3060	-2.6710	.0085	-52.5635	-7.8345
Age	-.9999	0.2767	-3.6134	.0004	-1.5473	-0.4525
Senior Citizen Discount X Age	.4651	0.1753	2.6526	.0090	0.1183	0.8120
Gender	-2.2861	0.9700	-2.3567	.0199	-4.2048	-0.3673

Overall Model: R2 = .1406, MSE = 25.6888, F = 4.3206, p = .0011

Table 6: Conditional Effects of Senior Citizen Discounts

Age	Effect	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
55.0000	-4.6178	1.8459	-2.5016	.0136	-8.2692	-0.9664
56.0500	-4.1294	1.6857	-2.4497	.0156	-7.4639	-0.7950
57.1000	-3.6411	1.5309	-2.3784	.0188	-6.6692	-0.6129
58.1500	-3.1527	1.3832	-2.2792	.0243	-5.8888	-0.4165
59.2000	-2.6643	1.2453	-2.1394	.0342	-5.1277	-0.2009
59.3318 (-1 SD)	-2.6030	1.2289	-2.1182	.0360	-5.0339	-0.1722
60.0809	-2.2546	1.1398	-1.9781	.0500	-4.5092	0.0000
60.2500	-2.1760	1.1208	-1.9414	.0543	-4.3930	0.0411
61.3000	-1.6876	1.0146	-1.6633	.0986	-3.6945	0.3194
62.3500	-1.1992	0.9329	-1.2854	.2009	-3.0446	0.6462
63.4000	-0.7108	0.8827	-0.8053	.4221	-2.4568	1.0352
64.2862 (M)	-0.3003	0.8688	-0.3457	.7301	-2.0189	1.4183
64.4500	-0.2225	0.8693	-0.2559	.7984	-1.9420	1.4970
65.5000	0.2659	0.8944	0.2973	.7667	-1.5034	2.0351
66.5500	0.7543	0.9550	0.7898	.4311	-1.1349	2.6434
67.6000	1.2426	1.0450	1.1891	.2365	-0.8245	3.3098
68.6500	1.7310	1.1575	1.4955	.1372	-0.5586	4.0206
69.2334 (+1 SD)	2.0024	1.2275	1.6313	.1052	-0.4257	4.4304
69.7000	2.2194	1.2866	1.7250	.0869	-0.3256	4.7643
70.7500	2.7077	1.4278	1.8964	.0601	-0.1166	5.5320
71.3795	3.0005	1.5169	1.9781	.0500	0.0000	6.0011
71.8000	3.1961	1.5779	2.0256	.0448	0.0749	6.3173
72.8500	3.6845	1.7345	2.1242	.0355	0.2534	7.1155
73.9000	4.1728	1.8961	2.2007	.0295	0.4221	7.9236
74.9500	4.6612	2.0615	2.2611	.0254	0.5834	8.7391
76.0000	5.1496	2.2298	2.3094	.0225	0.7388	9.5604

Table 7: Effect of Senior Citizen Discounts on Quality Perceptions

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.4432	0.5773	4.2321	.0000	1.3013	3.5850
Senior Citizen Discount	0.2060	0.1675	1.2294	.2211	-0.1254	0.5374
Self-Object Association	0.0323	0.0157	2.0539	.0419	0.0012	0.0634
Gender	0.2496	0.1815	1.3753	.1714	-0.1094	0.6085
Mood	0.1942	0.0664	2.9260	.0040	0.0629	0.3254

Overall Model: R² = .1099, MSE = .9561, F = 4.1068, p = .0036

Table 8: Study 4 Results

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	<i>p</i>- value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.4698	0.2612	3.9761	.0002	1.2233	3.7162
Self-Affirmation Prime	3.0575	0.9902	3.3964	.0013	1.2511	4.8639
Identity Congruence	0.1712	0.1061	1.6131	.1128	-0.0418	0.3842
Self-Affirmation Prime x Identity Congruence	-0.5023	0.1726	-2.9103	.0053	-0.8487	-0.1560
Gender	0.3522	0.2011	1.7511	.0858	-0.0514	0.7557

R² = .24, MSE = .54, F = 4.20, p = .0050

Table 9: Conditional Effects on Quality for Prime vs. Control Condition

Self-Affirmation	Effect	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Control (0)	0.1712	0.1061	1.6131	.1128	-0.0418	0.3842
Prime (1)	-0.3311	0.1368	-2.4204	.0190	-0.6056	-0.0566

VITA

Heath Evan McCullough is from Tuscumbia, Alabama and is the son of Herbert Edwin McCullough JR. He has one sibling, Chance Lee McCullough. He is married to Monica McCullough and they have four children: Cadence, Lincoln, Farrah, and Violet. He attended Colbert Heights High School in Tuscumbia, AL. He then served five years and was a Scout Sniper in the United States Marine Corps. He then received a Bachelors in degree in Economics from the University of North Alabama and a Masters degree in Marketing Analytics from the University of Alabama. Following the attainment of that degree he decided to pursue his PhD at the University of Tennessee, in the Marketing starting in 2014. Heath graduated with a Doctorate of Philosophy in Marketing in 2018.