MEASURING PERCEIVED SOCIAL RISK OF PRIVATE LABEL GROCERY BRANDS BY ADDRESSING THE VISIBILITY CONCERN

A Thesis by

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Bachelor of Arts, Wichita State University, 2018

Submitted to the Department of Communication
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

May 2021

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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ABSTRACT

With over 115,857 traditional grocery stores and a $700 billion market, grocery shopping represents one of the most common shopping ventures for American consumers (Zeballos, 2020). Despite having several brands to choose from, grocery shopping is seen as a mundane chore which in turn is characterized by low involvement (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018). As such, this study sought to examine one possible influencer of the American grocery shopper's product choices. More specifically the study sought to address whether social settings of various levels of group intimacy (household use, party with friends, and work-sponsored party) influenced American consumers' perception of the social risk of buying grocery PLBs. This study made use of ketchup and soda as product stimuli. This was due to the label visibility, or publicness, of the products in a typical serving situation. It was found that NBs have purchase preference and are perceived to be of higher quality, while their PLB counterparts were viewed neutrally. The NBs were also found to have slightly higher self-congruence, albeit slightly above neutral. Regarding social risk, social scenarios were not found to be an influence of the perceived social risk of NBs. For PLBs, household and friend scenarios were rated similarly with no significant difference. However, the work scenario was found to influence perceived social risk. This study implies that American consumers don't view PLBs negatively, rather they're viewed as unpreferred or not the standard.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism is a major component of American life. As consumers, Americans are bombarded by a plethora of options on any given shopping venture. One such venture is encountered with a greater frequency than most others, the routine grocery shopping trip. The average American grocery shopper frequents the grocery store at least once a week (Grant & Dorfman, 2019). The frequency of this shopping venture is further illustrated by the existence of America's 115,857 traditional grocery stores (Zeballos, 2020). In 2019, grocery expenditures accounted for approximately 4.9% of the average American's discretionary income (Morrison, 2020). In turn, this is creating a market that is worth nearly $700 billion (Zeballos, 2020).

The grocery industry, as illustrated throughout this study, is a unique market. Understanding why consumers purchase the things they do has been the end goal of innumerable marketing studies. Marketing, just as consumer behavior, is not a one-size-fits-all approach. When considering grocery products, it's uncommon for marketing research to assume beyond the functional use of each grocery product. This paper goes beyond the functional consideration of groceries and seeks to highlight the potential social baggage a product has and how various social settings may influence the perceived social risk of utilizing said products. Understanding this may help with marketing geared towards decreasing grocery consumer perceptions of social risk when purchasing private label brands and further understanding of the "me-too" approach discussed later in this paper.

While choice exists, the brand options are generally limited to two or three choices within any given product category. Typically, this would be the choice between buying a private label

brand (PLB) against a national brand (NB) product. To further compound the lack of choice, the U.S. market share for grocery PLBs is around 13% (Arslan, 2013). This puts the U.S. grocery market at odds with other western grocery markets. Examples being Spain and the U.K. having PLB market shares of 41%. Even more prevalent is Switzerland's PLBs holding 45% of the share (Dimitrieska, 2017). Interestingly, the U.S. market is more akin to emerging markets such as Turkey which holds a 13% share (Arslan, 2013). As PLBs became more apparent in the American marketplace, researchers have extensively studied the evolving consumer perception of these grocery products.

During a normal grocery shopping trip, the American consumer is exposed to more than 40,000 distinct products (Ruhlman, 2017) and a plethora of different brands. Despite having many brand options, grocery shoppers aren't known for exhibiting high levels of involvement when it comes to choosing between grocery brands. The frequency of which this shopping occurs, and the repetitious nature of the brand choices may lend to the belief that grocery shopping trips are simply a routine behavior. Nordvall (2014) goes as far as describing it as scripted behavior. Consumers often find the grocery shopping trip to be an annoyance, albeit necessary, much like washing dishes. Thus, it's not abnormal for a grocery shopper to want to spend as little time as possible completing the task. This sentiment is further illustrated by studies that focus on how the perception of time pressures negatively affects the time spent on making grocery purchase decisions (Aylott, 1998; Herrington, 1995).

The mundaneness of grocery shopping further limits consumers' desire to make choices. Consumers may view the task to be a chore (Cockburn-Wootten et al. 2018). It's not uncommon for a shopper to disregard brand options outside of what they've used successfully in the past. However, the level of information processing changes based on the product in question (Knox &

Walker, 1992). Wine and pre-cooked meats, for example, tend to show higher levels of involvement for grocery shoppers. While grocery items with limited processing, such as rice or oats, are characterized as having low involvement (Prendergast & Marr, 1997).

When price and/or quality are the guiding beacons, a routine grocery shopping trip is easily reduced to a choice between a NB and PLB (Dimitrieska, 2017). This of course would sing to the tune that there is a correlation between price and quality in the consumer's mind. However, simple price-value ratios are not the only influence of grocery purchasing decisions. Previous studies such as Wheatly (1981), Wilkes & Valencia (1985), and Ghose & Lowengart (2001) focus on the correlations between quality, packaging, and/or value. Other studies, such as Shankar & Krishnamurthi (1996), focus on price sensitivity and advertising sensitivity. Then there is risk-based research such as Arslan (2013), DelVecchio (2001), and Loebnitz (2020) which focus on consumer perceptions of various types of possible loss or harm.

Perceived risk is a multi-faceted influencer of purchasing decisions, interestingly the risk assessment varies greatly between different markets. Referencing back to the market share conundrum, culture appears to affect PLB risk assessment. Some western market shoppers appear to put a heavier emphasis on functional, time, and financial risks to some extent (Beneke 2013, Rubio et al. 2015). While sharing concerns with their counterparts, non-western market shoppers may also consider social and physical risks (Gangwani et al., 2020; Lupton et al.. 2010; and Jaidev, 2017).

More interestingly, most western-based studies which explore the social risk of grocery purchases didn't find social risk being a major consideration for PLB grocery purchases (Beneke, 2013). It should be noted that these studies are heavily focused on premium PLBs. Again, more recent literature surrounding standard grocery PLBs and social risk is scant. Zielke and

Dobbelstein (2007) and Semeijn et al., (2004) did find that shoppers might be more prone to avoid a PLB in a public setting depending on the product category. Other studies also emphasize that publicness or visibility is a factor of considering social risk (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; DelVecchio, 2001). In other words, when consumers have little ability to distinguish between brands when the product has been removed from the package and is served the perceived social risk should be smaller. Packages or labels provide visual cues from which some consumers may make value judgments on the product. This of course would not be a judgment of the product itself (Bearden, 1982; DelVecchio, 2001; Semeijn et al.; 2004; Wheatly, 1981). American grocery-based social risk studies appear to have peaked in the 1980s and 1990s while dwindling in the early 2000s. Today's grocery standard PLB social risk studies appear to be primarily based on non-western markets. This illustrates the uniqueness of the current study, while earlier studies have focused on the social risk of generics and PLBs, the author has found no attempts by scholars to address the visibility concern to a modern American consumer.

Modern research studying the impact of socially risky occasions on consumer perceptions of grocery PLBs isn't well established, particularly for the western market. The studies that do exist focus predominantly on premium PLBs (Loebnitz, 2019; 2020; Beneke, 2012). These studies typically find that consumers perceive little to no social risk when considering premium PLBs. Despite a few western market studies more broadly examining PLBs, there are no known studies based on the modern American consumer's perception of the social risk of purchasing grocery standard PLBs for occasions of varying perceived social risk.

The degree of intimacy of a social setting may have an impact on the perceived social risk of activities related to the setting. Social distance or degree of intimacy can be viewed as the degree of comfort between a group of people (Boxer, 1993). Family, for example, has high

intimacy and low social distance, and thus less social risk should be perceived at a social event like a celebration dinner in comparison to a group of work colleagues or business partners who would have low intimacy. When purchasing grocery products for a social setting, the level of intimacy may influence the perceived social risk of PLBs in comparison to NBs. In other words, one's household would be highly intimate and due to the familiarity of the individuals involved a consumer may be less inclined to perceive social risks.

Intimacy is a word whose meaning changes depending on context. The current study approaches intimacy with Reis and Shaver's intimacy model (1988). Intimacy is utilized in the sense of willingness or desire to self-disclose. In other words, intimacy is the degree to which an individual is willing to share their personal and private thoughts (Shelton et al., 2010). Thus, those who are more intimate would be perceived closer in social distance (e.g., friends) and those who are less intimate would be further removed in social distance (e.g., acquaintances).

The intimacy of a group setting is related to the perception of social risk within that group setting. Primary groups are characterized by having personal and/or intimate contact or association (Lee, 1964) and should thus be seen as the most intimate and perceived to be of lower risk. Primary groups typically include family members and close friends. Whereas secondary groups share lower intimacy and can be viewed as impersonal or even formal (McGinty, 2007). Secondary groups typically include individuals, such as coworkers or bosses, who are in an individual's social group for task-related purposes.

The current study sought to examine American consumers' perception of the social risk of buying grocery PLBs for social settings of various levels of group intimacy (household use, party with friends, and company-sponsored party). This study made use of highly visible products (ketchup sodas) to address the visibility concern of previous studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining PLBs and Generics

National brands, or NBs, are easily recognized as the brands you can find in nearly any grocery store. NBs are often easy to spot, see frequent advertising, and are carried by many supermarkets which compete with each other. Whereas PLBs are a bit harder to define as there are generally multiple entries in the same product category, but they're typically bound to a single chain of supermarkets. Notable exceptions being grocery stores which are referred to as a family chain (e.g. Kroger, Dillon's, Fry's, and Smith's). While in times past, the choice was typically between one or two NBs and a PLB, multiple PLBs within a single product category has become a trending phenomenon within the grocery realm. This often results from attempts to offer different value propositions in a tiered-like manner (Rubio et al., 2019). This study uses Bontemps et al. (2008) classification of PLBs. This would be a three-tier system of premium, standard, and low.

Premium private label brands, or high-tiered PLBs, are a new phenomenon that is juxtaposed to the original intention of PLBs. Instead of being priced lower, premium PLBs are often priced at a similar level or even higher cost than their NB counterparts. These premium brands typically tout high-quality ingredients or levy their origin from the country the product is associated with (e.g. pasta sauce from Italy or Canadian maple syrup) (Dunne, 1999). It's not uncommon to see these brands offer unique flavors that NBs don't. Examples of these premium PLBs would be Target's Archer Farms or Kroger's Private Selections.

Low-tiered PLBs are those that favor a price-forward approach. Ultimately, the price is a focal point of the product positioning rather than being an equal product at a lower price (Kumar,

2007). While low-tiered PLBs were very similar to generics, they now hold prominence at discounters such as Big Lots and Aldi's. Examples of low-tiered PLBs would be Specially Selected, Simply Nature, and liveGfree which are all Aldi's exclusive brands.

Americans are most familiar with the standard tier of PLBs. The standard-tier PLB would be the store brand such as Wal-Mart's Great Value, Target's Market Pantry, or Kroger's affectionately named Kroger Brand. Researchers often refer to the standard tier as 'me-too' products, as these products are introduced simply to compete directly with NBs (Hassan & Monier, 2006). On average, the standard tier of PLB is 20% cheaper than its NB equivalent. PLBs aren't typically limited to a single type of item category. Instead, the brand is typically a family of seemingly unrelated products. For example, the Great Value brand carries cookies, peanut butter, salad dressing, cheese, and ice cream instead of being focused on a single category such as snack food. This tier of PLB typically has exclusive imagery, traces of the store's personality, and are situated adjacently to the competitors (Herstein & Tifferet 2007). It's not uncommon to hear these products casually, albeit mistakenly, referred to as Wal-Mart's generic brand or Target's generic brand when in fact these PLBs are not technically generic brands.

While this study does not consider generics, it is important to realize there is a difference between generic and the terms PLB or 'store brand.' Many older studies, of the 1980s and 1990s, don't make this distinction. Generic products are fundamentally different from PLBs. Herstein and Tifferet (2007) applied five qualifiers to identify a generic food product: no promotion, the shelf location is poor and non-advantageous, bulky and undetailed packing and label, made from a price first approach, and they lack exclusive imagery. Simply put, generic products lack any sort of branding, are generally in a plain package which only utilizes words to describe the product and are often sold at a value price far below that of both NBs and PLBs (Wheatly, 1981).

It would be difficult for a shopper to figure out who manufactured a generic product. This is due in part to the limited information given to track the product's origin. This is because generic products are made with a manufacturing first approach. In other words, an approach where production is done at the lowest possible price. As such it typically lacks identifiers, be they textual or image-based. Because of this approach, retailers don't exert the same level of control as they would for a PLB (Herstein & Tifferet, 2007).

The American consumer's misuse of the term 'generic' is understandable when we look at the history of mass-produced generic grocery products. Mass-produced generic products, henceforth generic products, can be traced back to 1976 France (Herstein & Tifferet 2007). At the time France was still recovering from the 1970's recession which resulted from the 1973 oil shock (Darby, 1982). This economic climate created a desire for cheaper products. This in turn facilitated the production and sales of food products at the lowest possible cost. In other words, this was the advent of the mass-produced unbranded food product. These products saw stellar growth in regard to their sales. It was enough for an American supermarket to take notice. In 1977, Chicago's Jewel supermarket started to offer 44 unbranded generic products (Herstein & Tifferet, 2007). Within a couple of years, most of the western world carried generic products within their grocery markets. The growth continued to the early 1980s, where the generics held 11% of the market. However, the generic products started to die out in the mid-1980s and never saw a real rebound despite a brief resurgence in the mid-90s (Wheatly 1981, Herstein & Tifferet, 2007).

The Non-NB Shopper

One study focused on characterizing shoppers who frequent PLBs and generics finds those shoppers to be between 26 to 55 years old, living in a household with a large family,

educated, and have a slightly above average income (Herstein & Tifferet, 2007). Interestingly, another study shows that the 26-35 age range appears to be more concerned about PLB-related social risk than other age groups (Beneke, 2013). While the age range and family size remain consistent, several studies argue that lower-income individuals are more likely to purchase PLBs (Akbay & Eugene 2005; Wilkes & Valencia, 1985). A more recent study refuted the correlation between income and value appraisal of PLBs (Gil-Cordero et al., 2020).

As age increases, so does the inclination to purchase generics and PLBs also increases (Prendergast & Marr, 1997). Older shoppers may put a heavy emphasis on price when considering purchasing decisions. The likelihood of these shoppers buying generic food increases as the consumer involvement with the product decreases (Herstein & Tifferet, 2007).

Research also found a correlation between shopping frequency and the purchasing of PLBs. The frequency of purchasing PLB food products increased as the shopping frequency increased (Baltas, 2007; Kara et al., 2009). This may be due, in part, to store loyalty which is built through the various shopping trips (Rubio et al., 2015; Sudhir & Talukdar, 2004).

Gender-based studies are also contradictory. In one study, males are more likely to buy PLBs than females (Sethuraman & Cole, 1999). In turn, other studies didn't support a relationship between gender and purchase inclination (Shukla et al. 2013; Baltas & Argouslidis, 2007).

Perceived Risk

Risk is best defined as the potential that some sort of loss may occur in response to a given action. Whereas perceived risk has been best defined as consumer's wariness to make a purchase for fear of potential consequences (Dowling & Staelin, 1994). When applying perceived risks to grocery shopping, five perceived risks are prevalent in the existing literature.

Functional Risk

Functional risk is directly related to the performance of the item in question (Beneke, 2012; Mieres et al., 2006). When evaluating functional risk consumers might ask themselves "Does this product work as it is supposed to," "Is the product reliable and consistent," and/or "Can this product work in the way I intend to use it?" In other words, the customer is directly assessing the performance of the product in question (Mieres et al., 2006).

When related to grocery shopping, PLBs and generics are perceived to have a higher functional risk than NBs do. It should be noted that the acceptability of PLBs is ever-growing, which in turn impacts perceived functional risk (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). This perception of functional risk comes from the perception that the PLB's performance is less established or more uncertain than that of the NB's (Mieres et al., 2006). As stated earlier, products that have higher levels of involvement are met with more performance skepticism while those of lower involvement (Semeijn et al., 2004). Zielke and Dobbelstein (2007) found that perceived functional risk is higher when trying an unfamiliar PLB.

Physical Risk

Physical risk is directly related to the potential physical harm a product may cause the consumer. For grocery purchases, this would be the belief that the product in question could lead to illness (Arslan, 2013). Interestingly enough, the perception of physical risk is heightened when purchasing products in which others might consume (Tumiwa et al., 2014).

Studies show that developing markets such as Turkey and China place a larger concern on physical risk of grocery purchases (Arslan, 2013; Wu et al. 2011; Tumiwa et al. 2014). This could be due to less regulation, as Beneke's (2013) study found that consumers in a more

developed market perceive little to no physical risk due to the existence of consumer protection laws and trading regulations.

Time Risk

Time risk is best defined as the perceived loss of time by the consumer on a product purchase. This can be broken into two distinct sections: acquiring the product and product failure. Time risk associated with acquiring the product is how much time it will take to get the item and how much time could be lost in decision making. Consumer perception of time risk in association to decision making might be related to the desire for convenience (Beneke, 2012). Time risk is associated with product failure is the perception that time will be wasted in order to get the item refunded or replaced (Roselius, 1971).

Financial Risk

Financial risk revolves around the monetary loss of purchasing a product (Arslan, 2013). Most grocery items have a limited financial risk as the prices are generally low in comparison to other purchased goods. This, however, does not eliminate concerns about the money spent on products. In other words, a bad deal is a bad deal no matter how cheap it is. Financial risk can arise from making an unfamiliar purchase. If the product proves to be inadequate, the purchase could leave the consumer feeling as if they did not get a good value (Rubio et al., 2015).

Price-quality ratios are at the forefront of PLB's financial risk assessment. Price-quality ratios assume that a dollar value is associated with the quality of the item. Thus, in theory, a consumer may view an item that costs more should be of superior quality, while one that costs less would be inferior (Carpenter et al., 1994; Liechenstein et al., 1993). These studies show that some consumers may adhere to the adage of “you get what you pay for.” Many studies have explored this proposition and found that consumer perception of quality can be manipulated by

the cost of products (Rebolo, 2020; Rao & Monroe, 1989; Pauwels, 2014). Interestingly, Rao (1989) found this correlation is more significant with PLBs than NBs. In fact, Dick et al. (1996) found that consumers who have a predisposition towards NBs are more affected by extrinsic cues such as price.

Social Risk

Social risk is the perception of potential damage to social standing or the belief that one may potentially be negatively evaluated for a product they purchase or utilize. Shopping for social situations compounds social risk. Consumers who show preference towards PLBs when shopping for themselves may instead purchase NBs for socially risky occasions (Loebnitz, 2019). This might be due in part to the consideration that NBs are considered to be the socially accepted standard (Kakkos et al., 2015).

In social settings, many consumers associate the products they provide as being symbolic of their social standing. Studies have found that the more public a social setting is, the more social risk influences the usage of a PLB (Semeijn et al., 2003). Further compounding this perception, food products that lack a visual identifier can be served without the are likely to be perceived as having more acceptability. The inverse is true as well (Wyma, 2014). Products that are incorporated into prepared dishes, such as canned tomatoes, are perceived to be significantly less risky due to their lack of visibility (Semeijn et al., 2003).

Non-western market research tends to support the premise that social risk is a consideration of consumers when purchasing PLBs, such as Arslan's (2013) Turkish-based study and Ghose & Lowengart's (2001) Israeli-based study. However, findings in western markets are less conclusive. Western-based studies such as Kakkos et al.'s (2015) and Baltas' (1997) support that social risk is a factor when considering the purchasing of PLBs. Whereas other studies

(Beneke 2013) concluded that grocery PLBs are unaffected by social risk when compared to items such as jewelry and clothing. Excluding Loebnitz's two recent studies (2019; 2020), western-based studies haven't given much consideration for how the varying social settings impact the degree of perceived social risk.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

While other perceived risks exist, the aim of this study is to understand consumer perceptions of social risk, related to grocery products, in different social settings. This study looked at the visibility concern of previous studies. These studies state that the limited visibility of grocery products minimizes any concerns of social risks (Semeijn et al. 2003; Bearden and Etzel, 1982; DelVecchio, 2001). While literature concerning developed market consumers and premium PLBs is quite popular right now, those focused on standard PLBs appear to be dwindling and limited to Leobnitz (2019; 2020) and Beneke (2012). That said, with the earlier literature gaps mentioned above in mind, the following research hypotheses were designed to address perceived social risk's relationship with PLBs, NBs, and social settings

H1a. Consumers will indicate purchase preference to NB condiments regardless of usage situation.

H1b. Consumers will indicate purchase preference to NB sodas regardless of usage situation.

H1 is a split hypothesis divided by product category. The independent variable is the brand type (PLB vs NB) and the dependent variable is usage preference. This hypothesis is meant to illustrate that consumers have an inherent disposition to view NBs as the standard choice for any given usage situation.

H2a. Consumers will rate NB and PLB condiments to be of similar quality regardless of usage situation.

H2b. Consumers will rate NB and PLB sodas to be of similar quality regardless of usage situation.

As with H1, the H2 hypotheses are split based on product category. These hypotheses measured the perceived quality of the products as the dependent variable. The independent variable will again be the product type (NB vs PLB). This may seem counter-intuitive as the current study is investigating social risk of utilizing a product that might be perceived to be of similar quality. The goal of this hypothesis is to illustrate the disconnect between perceived quality and the perceived loss of social image for supplying the cheaper product. This argument was made with consideration to Semeijn et al.'s (2003) findings that PLBs are starting to become their own brands, rather than just a cheaper alternative. As these brands establish longevity, the gap between quality concerns should decrease which alludes to the importance of more modern research on grocery brand quality perception.

H3. Consumers are more likely to positively associate themselves with NB than PLB products.

H3 is a measure of consumer self-perception. This hypothesis will utilize the product type (NB or PLB) as the independent variable. It is expected that consumers will have more positive feelings about their usage of NB products. In other words, consumers will indicate that they think more highly or positively of themselves when they utilize a NB over PLB. Other studies, which focused on the symbolic nature of brands supported congruent hypotheses (Semeijn et al., 2003; DelVecchio, 2001; Paasovaara, 2012).

H4a. The perceived riskiness of PLB condiments will increase as the social situation intimacy decreases, while the perceived riskiness of NB condiments will remain constant (or unchanged) as the social situation intimacy decreases.

H4b. The perceived riskiness of PLB sodas will increase as the social situation intimacy decreases, while the perceived riskiness of NB sodas will remain constant (or unchanged) as the social situation intimacy decreases

H4a and H4b are split hypotheses that both measure the perception of risk as a dependent variable. The independent variable is the social situation. The degrees of intimacy were manipulated to measure the perceived increase in riskiness. Other studies have found that the perceived social risk of PLBs is low, however; these studies do mark visibility or publicness as a concern (Bearden, 1982; DelVecchio, 2001; Semeijn et al., 2004; Wheatly, 1981). For that reason, this study chose to use two different product categories which are traditionally highly visible and served straight from the container. As such, H4a utilizes condiments as a product category while H4b utilizes sodas are a product category.

This study made use of two self-administered online surveys. The first survey was a pretest utilized to check for stimuli viability. The first stimuli tested was participant familiarity with grocery products. The second test focused on addressing the hypotheses while utilizing the stimuli picked from the pretest.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Pretest

Participants

78 undergraduate students from a midwestern U.S. university were recruited for the first survey. The students earned course credits towards their COMM 111 course for their participation. Participants were asked to rate their familiarity with 10 grocery brands which were evenly divided into 2 groups: ketchup and soda. Both groups consisted of 2 national brands and 3 PLBs from national supermarket chains. A second stimuli, vignettes depicting various social scenarios, was tested for their narrative believability.

Study Design & Procedures

The goal of the pretest was to check the suitability of the chosen PLBs, NBs, and social settings for testing perceived social risk. It is suggested that consumers view brands as symbols, even grocery brands, which represent the purchaser's social status (Semeijn et al., 2003; DelVecchio, 2001; Paasovaara 2012). Thus, PLBs from certain stores might be viewed as more incongruent than others to consumer's self-perception. Further, brands that might be unfamiliar could impact the perceived risk. Thus, two product categories were measured for brand familiarity. The first was ketchup with brands such as Heinz, Hunts, Wal-mart's Great Value Ketchup, Target's Market Pantry Ketchup, and Kroger brand. Ketchup was picked due to the visibility of the product's label in traditional serving setups, American's familiarity with the product, low product involvement, and the commonality of this product being a routine item provided at social events.

The second product tested was soda. For the purpose of this study, it will be 'plain' soda such as Coke, Pepsi, Wal-Mart's Sam's Cola, Kroger's Big K Cola, and Aldi's Summit Soda. Soda was picked for the same reasons as ketchup, but soda brands add an extra layer as we tend to refer to them using proprietary eponym. In other words, it would not be uncommon for someone to ask for a Coke when referring to a soda, but it would be unusual to ask someone to pass the Heinz Ketchup. This idea is the specific rationale behind utilizing 'plain' soda.

Literature suggests that NBs are more socially acceptable than PLBs when consumption occurs in social settings involving guests (Baltas, 1997; Bearden and Etzel, 1982; DelVecchio, 2001; Loebnitz 2019; 2020; Semeijn et al., 2003; Kakkos et al., 2015). Referencing back to the intimacy section of the literature review, perceptions of social risk increase the greater the social distance is between individuals in any given setting. Thus, the three social scenarios of household, close friends, and coworkers with boss. Close friends meet the criteria of primary and coworkers with boss meet the criteria of secondary (Lee, 1964; McGinty, 2007). The basic premise of these social scenarios was adopted then heavily modified from some of the scenarios proposed in Roe and Bruwer's (2017) study on product involvement and consumption settings. The participants were presented 6 different 3-4 sentence long vignettes which did 4 things: mention the event/scenario, mention the people involved, mention the current situation, and a call to action to procure a grocery item. The 6 vignettes were evenly divided into 3 different groups: household, friends, and work.

Main Experiment

Participants

The main test had an age qualification that all participants must be between the ages of 18-55 to center the age range around that Beneke mentioned in 2013. Ages 26-35 are most likely to have social risk to emerge as a perceived threat when shopping for groceries while this concern decreases as individuals age (Beneke, 2013). Only American brands were manipulated, meaning all participants must live in America. Participants were recruited through Amazon's mTurk. MTurk's screening criteria was implemented with a HIT Approval Rate of 99% or greater, a minimum of 5,000 completed hits, and location of the U.S. Participation was voluntary and compensated with $1.00 pending completion and approval.

Of 263 attempted responses, 20 removed for not finishing the survey, 24 for not meeting the qualifications, 1 for a spam-like response to age, 4 for incredibly short response times, and 19 straight-liner responses. For the purposes of this study, straight-lining is defined as a sequence of 4 repeated non-neutral answers across multiple contradicting statements. Thus, 195 responses were retained.

The average age was 38. Males (n = 107) accounted for 54.87% of participants, while females (n = 88) accounted for 45.13%. The average household size was 2.73 people. In terms of marital status, widowed accounted for .51% (n = 1), divorced 6.67% (n = 13), married 43.08% (n = 84), and single 49.74% (n = 97). Yearly household income was reported in brackets with 7.69% (n = 15) at $20,000 or below, 21.03% (n = 41) between $20,001 to $40,000, 28.72% (n = 56) between $40,001 and $60,000, 17.44% (n = 34) between $60,001 and $80,000, 13.33% (n = 26) between $ 80,001 and $100,000, and 13.33% (n = 26) for $100,000 and above. Race demographics were reported as Spanish, Latino or Hispanic 5.64% (n = 11), White 77.95% (n =

152), Black or African American 5.13% (n = 10), American Indian or Alaska Native .51% (n = 1), Asian 11.28% (n = 22), and .51% other (n = 1). 66.67% (n = 130) reported to have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Study Design & Procedures

Participants were presented a Qualtrics survey with five distinct sections (see Appendix A). The first section of the survey was dedicated to addressing H1 by measuring the purchase intention of the product they were presented with no scenario introduced. This manipulation was created utilizing product images (see Figure 1). Purchase intention was measured with Lu et al's (2014) scale with a single item from Netemeyer's (2004) scale. Brand familiarity was remeasured with Kent & Allen's (1994) and Stead et al.'s (2009) brand familiarity scales to assess if brand unfamiliarity could skew results.

The second section addressed H2 by measuring quality with Bao et al.'s (2011) perception of quality 5-point bipolar scale while continuing to display an image of the same product from section 1. Though not directly related to the H2 hypotheses, Sung & Choi's (2012) brand attitude scale was employed for an additional look at each brand.

The third section, dedicated to H3, measured participant brand-self congruence. This was measured with three items from Khaldi's (2015) 7-point Likert actual self and ideal self scales.

After completing the initial three sections of the survey, each participant was assigned a random condition based on the product they were randomly assigned. The survey was broken into 12 distinct conditions (see Table 1). The randomization of the conditions was created by using Qualtric's randomization with an even distribution function to prevent some conditions

from being presented at a higher frequency than others. Questions were designed in a way so that the product they were assigned to would be salient. It should be noted that participants weren't presented a scenario until the fourth section of the test.

The fourth section, dedicated to H4, introduces the scenario to which the participants were assigned. They were presented with the four-sentence vignettes which were written in a way that addressed their specific product type. The 7-point Likert scale items were adapted from risk-based items from Stead et al.'s (2009) brand opinion scale and Arslan's (2013) social risk scale. Though not directly related to the hypothesis, participants were again presented Lu et al.'s purchase intention scale with the phrase "In this scenario," added to the beginning of each scale item.

The fifth section of the main test was dedicated to gathering demographic data. While this data wasn't utilized to find a correlation, it did illustrate who the average participant claimed to be.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Pretest

Utilizing Stead et al.'s (2009) and Kent & Allen's (1994) product familiarity scale, the mean familiarity score was calculated for each product utilizing SPSS's compute variable function. The mean was chosen to represent the average consumer's familiarity with the products to ensure the appropriate products were chosen. These scales were set on a 5-point bipolar with 1 being very familiar and 5 being very unfamiliar. Only complete responses for these scales were considered and incomplete responses were excluded from the calculations. For each product type, the most familiar NB and PLB were selected to use as the research stimuli for the main experiment. These products were Coke (n = 72, m = 1.14, sd = .391) and Big K (n = 73, m = 3.30, sd = 1.51) for the soda type. While Heinz (n = 68, m = 1.36, sd = .468) and Great Value (n = 72, m = 2.33, sd = 1.11) were utilized for the ketchup product type. All other products were discarded and not used in the main experiment. Interestingly, participants were more familiar with the PLB Great Value brand of ketchup than they were with the Hunts NB.

Utilizing Ryu's (2019) Narrative Transportation scale, the believability of each vignette was tested was calculated for each vignette utilizing SPSS's compute variable function. This scale was set on a 7-point Likert with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much. Only complete responses for these scales were considered and incomplete responses were excluded from the calculations. The household scenario rated very similarly with Household Scenario 1 (n = 73 m = 5.73, sd = 1.72), which illustrated forgetting to pick up an item during the previous shopping trip,

and Household Scenario 2 (n = 74, m = 5.68, sd = 1.59) which illustrated a routine shopping trip. Household Scenario 1 was chosen as the stimuli.

The friends and work scenarios were not very different statistically. Friend Scenario 1 (n = 74, m = 5.54, sd = 1.47), was described as being invited to a get together of familiar friends and Friend Scenario 2 (n = 74, m = 5.57, sd = 1.49), was described as hosting the get together. Work Scenario 1 (n = 75, m = 5.10, sd = 1.76), described as attending a work hosted lunch and Work Scenario 2 (n = 74, m = 4.78, sd = 1.76), described as boss invitation to a get together. Friend scenario 2 and work scenario 1 were chosen as stimuli.

Main Experiment

H1a stated that consumers will indicate purchase preference to NB condiments regardless of usage situation. A one-sample t-test was run to test H1, utilizing Long-Chaun Lu et al's (2014) 5-point purchase intention scale with one scale item from Netemeyer et al. (2004), worded positively to negatively with lower values reflecting higher intention. Each product had its reliability tested independently due to condition design, for Heinz a = .9 and Great Value a = .916. Heinz (n = 51, m = 1.86, sd = .969) was shown to be more favorable. While Great Value (n = 44, m = 2.91, sd = 1.10), was shown to be less favorable with a mean difference of 1.05, CI 95% t(43) = 6.314, $p < .001$. The results support a statistically significant purchase preference towards Heinz. Thus, H1a is supported.

H1b stated that Consumers will indicate purchase preference to NB sodas regardless of usage situation. H1b was testing in the same manner as H1a. Coke, a = .945 (n =50, m = 2.3, sd = 1.23.) was shown to be more favorable. While Big K (n = 49, m = 3.10, sd = 1.24), was shown

to be less favorable with a mean difference of .798, 95% CI t(48) = 4.501, $p < .001$. The results show a statistically significant purchase preference towards Coke. Thus, H1b is supported.

While not directly related to the H1 hypotheses, brand familiarity was also tested via a one sample t-test utilizing Kent & Allen's (1994) and Stead et al.'s (2009) 5-point bipolar brand familiarity scales, worded positively to negatively with lower values reflecting more familiarity. For ketchup, Heinz $a = .865$ (n = 51, m = 1.25, sd = .471) was more familiar than Great Value brand $a = .886$ (n = 44, m = 2.40, sd = .985) with a mean difference of 1.15, 95% CI t(43) = 7.768, p < .001. Soda products were scored similarly, Coke $a = .862$ (n=50, m = 1.23, sd = .474) being more familiar than Big K $a = .950$ (n = 49, m = 3.53, sd = 1.42) with a mean difference of 2.23, 95% CI t(48) = 11.33, p < .001. Both differences were statistically significant.

H2a stated that consumers will rate NB and PLB condiments to be of similar quality regardless of usage situation. A one-sample t-test was run to test H2a, utilizing Bao et al.'s (2011) 5-point bipolar scale for the perception of quality, worded negatively to positively with higher values reflecting higher perceived quality. Each product had its reliability tested independently due to condition design, for Heinz $a = .893$ and Great Value $a = .875$. The perception of quality for Heinz (n = 50, M = 4.38, sd = .802) was higher than Great Value (n = 45, M = 3.02, sd = .817) with a mean difference of -1.35, CI 95% t(44) = -11.11, $p < .001$. The results show a statistically significant difference in perception of quality, with Heinz being perceived higher. Thus, H2a failed to be supported.

H2b stated that consumers will rate NB and PLB sodas to be of similar quality regardless of usage situation. H2b was tested in the same manner as H2a.The perception of quality for Coke $a = .901$ (n = 50, M = 4.05, sd = .867) was higher than Big K $a = .899$ (n = 48, M = 2.75, sd = .898) with a mean difference of -1.30, CI 95% t(47)=-10.027, $p < .001$. The results show a

statistically significant difference in perception of quality, with Coke being perceived higher. Thus, H2b failed to be supported.

While not directly related to the H2 hypotheses, brand attitude was also tested via a one sample t-test utilizing Sung & Choi's (2012) 5-point bipolar brand attitude scale, worded negatively to positively with higher values reflecting more positive attitude. For ketchup, Heinz a = .977 (n = 49, m = 4.48, sd = .959) was viewed slightly more positively than Great Value brand a = .955 (n = 44, m = 3.27, sd = .940) with a mean difference of 1.21, 95% CI t(43) = -8.518, p < .001. Soda products were viewed similarly, Coke a = .981 (n=49, m = 3.90, sd = 1.29) being more positive than Big K a = .974 (n = 49, m = 2.93, sd = 1.10) with a mean difference of -.969, 95% CI t(48) = -6.22, p < .001. Both differences were statistically significant.

H3 stated that consumers are more likely to positively associate themselves with NB than PLB products.H3 was tested by one sample t-tests utilizing Khaldi's (2011) brand-self congruence 7-point Likert scale, worded negatively to positively with higher values reflecting higher congruence. Heinz a = .922 (n = 51, m = 4.415, sd = 1.27) was slightly more self-congruent than Great Value a = .951 (n = 44, m = 3.77, sd = 1.41) with a mean difference of -.649, 95% CI t(43) = -3.048, p = .004. Coke a = .949, (n = 48, m = 4.14, sd = 1.65) was also slightly above its PLB counterpart, Big K a = .964, (n = 49, m = 3.35, sd = 1.62), 95% CI t(48) = -3.432, p = .001, with a mean difference of -.792. The results show a statistically significant difference in favor of the NBs. Thus, H3 is supported, albeit weakly, as the means fall in the no opinion to slightly favorable range.

H4a stated that the perceived riskiness of PLB condiments will increase as the social situation intimacy decreases, while the perceived riskiness of NB condiments will remain

constant (or unchanged) as the social situation intimacy decreases. H4a was a split hypothesis, thus two one-sample t-tests were run. On a 7-point Likert scale, three risk-based items were adapted from 3 risk-based items from Stead et al.'s (2009) brand opinion scale, and three items were modified from Arslan's (2013) social risk scale, worded negatively to positively. It should be noted that Great Value Scenario 1, or household scenario, had the highest rate of 'straight lining' which is reflected in the low participant count. This may have had an impact on reliability, which is reflected in the alpha score of a = .596. Great Value Scenario 1(n = 12, m = 4.06, sd = 3.09) was utilized as the test value. Great Value Scenario 2, friends, (n = 18, m = 3.92, sd = .982) 95% CI t(17) = -.6, p = .556 had a mean difference of -.139. Great value scenario 3, work, (n = 15, m = 3.09, sd = 1.30) 95% CI t(14)= -.287, p = .012, had a mean difference of -.967. This shows there were minimal and statistically insignificant differences between scenario 1 and 2. However, scenario 3 showed a statistically significant increase in risk perception. Thus, the first half of H4a is only partially supported.

The second half of H4a was tested in the same fashion, but with the Heinz ketchup. Heinz scenario 1, or the household scenario, a = .741 (n= 17, m = 5.41, sd = .983) was utilized as the test value for the NB half of the hypothesis. Heinz scenario 2, or the friends scenario, a = .764 (n = 17, m = 5.41, sd = .886) 95% CI t(16) = .319, p = .754 had a mean difference of .069. Heinz scenario 3, or the work condition, a = .783 (n = 17, m = 5.71, sd = .904) 95% CI t(16) = 1.34, p = .199 had a mean difference of .294. The mean difference and lack of significance illustrates that there was there was minimal difference between the Heinz conditions, thus supporting the second half of H4a.

H4b stated that The perceived riskiness of PLB sodas will increase as the social situation intimacy decreases, while the perceived riskiness of NB sodas will remain constant (or

unchanged) as the social situation intimacy decreases. H4b was tested in the same manner as H4a. Big K scenario 1, household, a = .876 (n = 16, m = 3.73, sd = 1.31)was utilized as the test value. Big K scenario 2, friends, a = .825 (n = 16, m = 3.96, sd = .905) 95% CI t(15) = .783 p = .446 had a mean difference of .177. Big K scenario 3, work, a = .803 (n = 16, m = 3.08, sd = 1.30) 95% CI t(15) = -1.98 p = .066 had a mean difference of -.646. Big K, though not statistically significant, was perceived as less risky for friends than for households. However, due to the positive mean difference of scenario 2 and the negative of scenario 3. Scenarios 2 and 3 were tested with 2 as the test value with 95% CI t(15) = -2.53 p = .023. had a mean difference of -.823. Thus, there was a statistically significant difference between scenarios 2 and 3, but not scenario 1. Thus, the first half of H4b is partially supported.

Following the trend of the aforementioned, Coke scenario 1, household, *a* = .798 (n = 17, m = 4.96, sd = 1.14) was utilized as the test value. Coke scenario 2, friends, *a* = .769 (n = 16, m = 5.11, sd = 1.05) 95% CI t(15) = .584 p = .568 had a mean difference of .154. Coke scenario 3, work, *a* = .887 (n = 17, m = 5.12, sd = 1.4) 95% CI t(16) = .463, p = .649 had a mean difference of .157. The Coke scenarios did not show a statistically significant change in risk perception. Thus, the second half of H4b is supported.

While not directly related to hypothesis 4, purchase preference was remeasured across the scenarios with the scale from hypothesis 1, sans the Netemeyer item. A scenario cue, “in this scenario,” was introduced to the items. This was done to assess if a scenario introduction would impact purchase preference. For Ketchup items, Heinz scenario 1, household, *a* = .841 (n = 17, m = 1.71, sd =. 777) was utilized as the test value. Heinz scenario 2, friends, *a* = .911 (n = 17, m = 1.645, sd = .806) 95% CI t(16) = -.301, p. = 767 had a mean difference of -.588. Heinz scenario 3, work, (n = 17, m =1.71, sd = .675) 95% CI t(16) <.001, p>.99 with a mean difference

less than .001. These results are a clear indicator that there is no statistically significant difference in purchase preference between the scenarios.

Great Value scenario 1, household, *a* = .905 (n = 12, m = 2.46, sd = 1.06) was again utilized as the test value. Great Value scenario 2, friends, *a* = .858 (n = 18, m = 3.04, sd = 1.01) 95% CI t(17) = 2.47, p = .024 had a mean difference of .583. Great Value scenario 3, work, *a* = .795 (n = 15, m = 3.67, sd = .934) 95% CI t(14) = 5.01, p<.001 had a mean difference of 1.21. The results show there is a significant decrease in purchase preference between the household and friends condition and an even greater significance for the work condition.

Coke scenario 1, household, *a* = .909 (n = 17, m = 2.56, sd = 1.35) was the test value. Coke scenario 2, friends, *a* = .933 (n = 16, m = 1.92, sd = 1.10) 95% CI t(15) = -2.31, p = .035 had a mean difference of -.637. Coke scenario 3, work, *a* = .971 (n = 17, m = 1.90, sd = 1.18) 95% CI t(16) = -2.32, p = .034 with a mean difference of -.662. This shows that there is a statistically significant difference for Coke purchase preference between the scenarios. Interestingly, it was the household condition that had the lowest purchase preference.

Big K scenario 1, household, *a* = .905 (n = 17, m = 3.25, sd = 1.03) was utilized as the test value. Big K scenario 2, friends, *a* = .833 (n = 16, m = 3.19, sd = .873) 95% CI t(15) = -.286, p=.779 had a mean difference of -.063. Big K scenario 3, work, (n = 16, m = 3.77, sd = 1.36) 95% CI t(15) = 1.522, p = .149 had a mean difference of .516. This shows that there was no statistically significant difference for Big K's purchase preference between the conditions.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

In regard to social risk, publicness and visibility of grocery items is something that has been mentioned in numerous studies since the 1980s. Studies such as DelVecchio (2001), Bearden and Etzel (1982), and Semeijn et al. (2003) state that the lack of visibility inhibits the perception of social risk. As such, the purpose of this study was to address the visibility concern by utilizing a standard or 'me-too' PLB which is served from a labeled container while in a social context.

The U.S. market share of PLBs is significantly lower than other western countries. This study only further supports this with the findings supporting H1a and H1b. Participants indicated a higher purchase preference towards the NBs of Coke and Heinz against their counterparts of Big K and Great Value. However, the purchase preference for PLBs wasn't viewed unfavorably, rather they were viewed neutrally. This illustrates that consumers display a willingness to consider purchasing PLBs rather than completely disregarding them as a viable product. It was only when the work scenario was presented that a slightly unfavorable preference was shown to the PLBs. These results indicate that the intended purpose, or the final goal, of the grocery products, has some degree of influence over the preference for which brand a consumer decides to pick. Despite this, grocery PLB purchases increased significantly with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. 88% of lower-income American households (below $35,000) and 74% of higher-income American households ($100,000+) reporting PLB purchases (Fottrell, 2021).

NBs still sit as the proverbial cream of the crop, in regard to perceived quality. As illustrated by the results not supporting H2a and H2b, Coke and Heinz were perceived to be of higher quality than the PLBs. Big K soda was viewed to be of somewhat low quality. This could be due in part to the lower familiarity of Big K or the fact that Coke has a significant hold on the market. Although Semeijn et al.'s 2013 Belgian-based study found that store brands or PLBs were starting to develop their own identities and becoming competitive brands in their own rights, this study shows that American consumers believe the brands still have some distance to go. However, one should not discount that consumers' neutral view on PLBs is an improvement to the negative view of generics during the mid-1980s. This goal of having somewhat contradicting hypotheses (between H1 and H2) was to illustrate a consumer disconnect between quality and purchase preference. The failure to support the H2 hypotheses indicates that the fight to be a 'me-too' product isn't over yet. As such, PLBs should continue to emphasize their quality or equal footing with NBs.

Despite H3 being supported with the findings illustrating more self-congruence for NBs than PLBs, the difference was relatively small, and all products fell on the neutral to slight agreement range. Again, grocery products are typically viewed as low involvement items with some exceptions such as wine. Studies such as Sheeraz et al. (2018) found product/brand involvement to be an important factor of self-congruence. As such, consumers might be unlikely to find strong self-congruence with grocery items without the influence of an external factor such as public relations crisis or an association with an entity that the consumer supports.

Coinciding with Kakkos et al. (2015), this study found NBs to be accepted and favored regardless of the social setting. There was no significant change in perceived social risk for the

NBs despite the scenario they were presented in. However, H4a and H4b couldn't be fully supported by the findings. In regard to PLBs, there was no significant difference between the household and friends scenario. This might be due in part to the limited repercussions an individual could face for serving familiar guests PLB products. However, the findings show that PLBs were viewed negatively for the work scenarios. This might be due in part to perceived repercussions that could impact an individual's ability to earn to promote, maintain workplace harmony, and etc. Upon reviewing the data, the researcher noticed that the household and the friend scenario illustrated the participant taking initiative and getting the product unprompted. Whereas the work scenario was presented as a request to procure the grocery item by another individual. This could influence perceived social risk.

The current study illustrates that consumers maintain a neutral view of PLBs. This highlights the success of the 'me-too' product approach, but also shows that PLBs have yet to position themselves as equals to their NB counterparts. As such, it may behoove PLBs to look beyond just emphasizing quality, cost, or function to take the next step. The findings highlight the need for PLBs to work on strategies emphasizing the social acceptability of their products while promoting the quality of their products. Thus, these brands should look into ways to normalize their products being used both inside and outside of social context.

CHAPTER 7

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

As with any study, limitations are ever-present. The easiest to identify is the sample utilized. First, the sample may not have been representative. One such example is the education of the average participant was reported to be significantly higher than the national average. Second, despite utilizing 195 responses, the responses per condition were relatively low and may not be representative.

The experimental design was a significant limitation. The original planning and consideration of the experiment began pre-pandemic. This plan was an in-person experiment in which stronger and more salient manipulations could be made. While the vignettes were viewed as believable within the pretest, a narrative wasn't the preferred stimuli for an experiment measuring social behavior. As such, the products tested were also limited. The inclusion of higher involvement grocery products, such as meats or wine may have yielded different results. Another consideration is that participants were never asked to assess the risk of each scenario, thus there may be some variation based on workplace and home comfort.

There were several factors beyond the scope of this study that may have contributed to the results. Such examples would be the early mentioned initiative versus demand task. Another being the impact of familiarity on perceived social risk. Another limitation is that the study didn't seek to find correlations amongst any of the hypotheses. Future studies should seek to explore the relationship between perceived quality, social risk, and familiarity. Finally, future studies could explore the perception between varying levels of PLBs.

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Table 1

Condition Design

	Soda		**Ketchup**	
	Coke	**Big K**	**Heinz**	**Great Value**
Scenario 1				
Scenario 2				
Scenario 3				

Figure 1. The images below were utilized as the product stimuli.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Brand familiarity: (items 1-3) Kent & Allen's (1994) & (items 4 and 5) Stead et al. (2009)

Before today, what is your experience with **(brand)**?

Familiar	○	○	○	○	○	Unfamiliar
Inexperienced	○	○	○	○	○	Experienced
Knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○	Not knowledgeable
Easy to find	○	○	○	○	○	Difficult to find
Well known	○	○	○	○	○	Unknown

Purchase Preference: (items 1-4) Lu et al. (2014) & (item 5) Netemeyer et al. (2004)

The next time you go grocery shopping...

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I would consider buying this product	○	○	○	○	○
I have no intention to buy this product	○	○	○	○	○
It is possible that I would buy this product	○	○	○	○	○
If I am in need, I would buy this **(product type)**	○	○	○	○	○
The next time I buy **(product type)**, I intend to buy this **(brand) (product type)**	○	○	○		

Brand quality (items 1-4): Bao et al.'s (2011)
Brand attitude (items 5-8): Sung & Choi's (2012)

What are your thoughts on **(brand)**?

Low Quality	○	○	○	○	○	High Quality
Unreliable	○	○	○	○	○	Very Reliable
Superior Product	○	○	○	○	○	Inferior Product
Very Bad Quality	○	○	○	○	○	Very Good Quality
Dislike	○	○	○	○	○	Like
Negative	○	○	○	○	○	Positive
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Unfavorable	○	○	○	○	○	Favorable

Brand self-congruence: Khaldi (2015)

What are your thoughts on **(brand)**?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
People similar to me use **(brand) (product type)**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Using **(brand) (product type)** is similar to how I see myself	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The kind of person who typically uses **(brand) (product type)** is much like me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Using **(brand) (product type)** makes me feel highly of myself							
Using **(brand) (product type)** reflects the kind of person I prefer to be							
Using **(brand) (product type)** would help me to express a more positive image of myself							

Scenario 1

Brand Opinion: (items 1-3) Stead et al. (2009)
Social Risk: (items 4-6) Arslan (2013)

Please imagine you are in the following scenario:

You have just gotten off work.
You remember that when you went to grab a soda from the fridge last night that you were all out.
You decide to do a quick run to the store on the way home to pick up **(product type).**
You decide you're going to buy the brand you always do for your house.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In this scenario, If I buy **(brand) (product type),** I like to be sure that I receive positive criticism from the people whose opinions I value							
In this scenario, people's opinions on me are negatively affected when I buy **(brand) (product type)**							
In this scenario, I think buying **(brand) (product type)** gives me prestige							
In this scenario, I would not want to be seen bringing **(brand) (product type)**							

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The people in attendance of this scenario may view me unfavorably me for bringing **(brand) (product type)**							
In this scenario, the people in attendance would approve of my bringing **(brand) (product type)**							

Scenario 2

Brand Opinion: (items 1-3) Stead et al. (2009)
Social Risk: (items 4-6) Arslan (2013)

Please imagine you are in the following scenario:

You're hosting a get together with your closest friends.
You know everyone who is going to be there.
Before the get together starts, you realize you forgot to buy the **(product type)** for the event.
You decide to quickly run to the store and pick some up.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In this scenario, If I							

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
buy **(brand) (product type),** I like to be sure that I receive positive criticism from the people whose opinions I value							
In this scenario, people's opinions on me are negatively affected when I buy **(brand) (product type)**							
In this scenario, I think buying **(brand) (product type)** gives me prestige							
In this scenario, I would not want to be seen bringing **(brand) (product type)**							
The people in attendance of this							

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
scenario may view me unfavorably me for bringing **(brand) (product type)**							
In this scenario, the people in attendance would approve of my bringing **(brand) (product type)**							

Scenario 3

Brand Opinion: (items 1-3) Stead et al. (2009)
Social Risk: (items 4-6) Arslan (2013)

Please imagine you are in the following scenario:

This afternoon is the annual work party.
Everyone from the company will be there, including your boss, the company owner, and people from other departments you don't know well.
Before you head to the party, the party organizer calls you.
The organizer asks if you would be willing to buy some **(product type)** on your way to the party.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In this scenario, If I buy **(brand) (product**							

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
type), I like to be sure that I receive positive criticism from the people whose opinions I value							
In this scenario, people's opinions on me are negatively affected when I buy **(brand) (product type)**							
In this scenario, I think buying **(brand) (product type)** gives me prestige							
In this scenario, I would not want to be seen bringing **(brand) (product type)**							
The people in attendance of this scenario may view me							

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
unfavorably me for bringing **(brand) (product type)**							
In this scenario, the people in attendance would approve of my bringing **(brand) (product type)**							

Purchase preference: Lu et al. (2014)

With the previous scenario in mind...

	Very Likely	Likely	Neither Likely or Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
In this scenario, The probability that I would bring this **(brand) (product type)** is					
In this scenario, I have no intention to bring this product					
In this scenario, It is possible that I would bring this product					
In this scenario, If I am in need, I would bring this **(brand) (product type)**					

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

What is your age?

Please specify your age range

What is your age? (please put your answer in the box below)

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Haven't completed high school
- High school graduate or GED
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree in college (2-year)
- Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Profession degree (JD, MD)

How many people live in your household?

- I live alone
- I live with 1 other person
- I live with 2 other people
- I live with 3 other people
- I live with 4 other people

- I live with 5 other people
- I live with 6 other people
- I live with 7 or more other people

What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Separated

Information about income is very important for us to understand. Would you please give your best guess?
Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income (previous year) before taxes.

- $20,000 or less
- $20,001-$40,000
- $40,001-$60,000
- $60,001-$80,000
- $80,001-$100,000
- $100,001 or more

Are you Spanish, Hispanic or Latino?

- Yes
- No

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself

- White
- Black of African American

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other

Are you a U.S. citizen?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say