

The Effect of Need for Uniqueness on Word Of Mouth

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This research examines a psychosocial cost associated with positive word of mouth (WOM): positive WOM can decrease the uniqueness of one's possessions, which hurts high-uniqueness individuals (pilot study). As a result, high- (vs. low-) uniqueness individuals are less willing to generate positive WOM for publicly consumed products that they own. However, high uniqueness does not decrease willingness to generate WOM for privately consumed products (study 1). Study 2 demonstrates that for publicly consumed products, WOM that includes positive recommendations is perceived to be more persuasive than WOM that only contains product details. Consequently, the effect of uniqueness is more pronounced for WOM recommendations, compared to WOM that provides details (study 3). Study 4 confirms that high- (vs. low-) uniqueness consumers are less willing to recommend a public product to others, but are as willing to discuss product details. Study 5 content-analyzes real-world WOM and finds evidence that supports these results.

Keywords: word of mouth, need for uniqueness, recommendations, social influence, new products

Prior research has recognized exchange as the central phenomenon in the study of marketing (Bagozzi 1975) and that a significant proportion of marketing communications involves face-to-face interaction (Hulbert and Capon 1972). Word of mouth (WOM) communication is central to the exchange process as consumers often rely upon others for assistance with purchases, especially for products high in financial or psychic risk (Gershoff and Johar 2006). Several studies have empirically demonstrated WOM to be more persuasive than traditional media channels (Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Herr, Kardes, and Kim 1991). Indeed, Dichter (1966, 166) argues that “advertising cannot replace interpersonal influence.”

Our research focuses on the fundamental drivers underlying WOM. Most prior research studies the benefits of WOM (e.g., Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998) rather than the costs (see Frenzen and Nakamoto 1993 for an exception). We explore a psychosocial cost associated with a consumer’s decision to provide positive WOM about products. While providing WOM may be attractive for several reasons, we demonstrate that consumers who promote a product through WOM may also decrease the uniqueness of their possessions. Thus, positive WOM may hurt consumers who have high need for uniqueness. Additionally, we expect this social cost of decreased uniqueness to vary across contexts. We propose that the detrimental effect of WOM (in terms of its potential to decrease the uniqueness of products) is perceived to be greater for publicly (vs. privately) consumed products (Bourne 1957), greater when the product is owned (vs. not intended to be owned), and greater when the WOM includes positive reviews and purchase recommendations, compared to when the WOM only contains product details.

This research strives to make three important contributions. First, it responds to Bagozzi’s (1975, 39) call for research on “specific social and psychological processes that create and resolve marketing exchanges.” More recently, Godes et al. (2005, 419/423) invite

researchers to “investigate the fundamental motives behind the individual’s proclivity for communication as a function of the individual’s characteristics” and to answer the question: “Who should the firm target to facilitate the spread of information?” Thus, our findings help firms target appropriate consumers to increase WOM.

Second, we respond to a call for research regarding the types of products that people will talk about with others. Brown and Reingen (1987, 361) state that “an enhanced understanding of the social influence processes in consumer behavior may simply be obtained by examining which products or services consumers are more likely to talk about.” We study the effects of need for uniqueness on WOM for different product categories to address this issue.

Third, we explore the effect of individual and contextual differences on consumers’ willingness to engage in different *types* of WOM. Specifically, we consider how consumers’ need for uniqueness, the product category, and product ownership influence their willingness to provide positive WOM (and purchase recommendations) versus only providing product details. We therefore provide a clearer picture on WOM consequences, as the former type of WOM may be more persuasive in increasing purchase intentions than the latter (Keiningham et al 2008). Our propositions are fleshed out in the following theoretical development.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Factors Affecting WOM

The decision of whether to transmit information to others lies within the individual (Dichter 1966). According to exchange theory, perceived costs and benefits drive an individual’s

decision to engage in WOM (Frenzen and Nakamoto 1993; Gatignon and Robertson 1986).

Next, we discuss these benefits and costs of WOM.

Benefits of WOM. Prior research identifies consumers who are more likely to engage in WOM, namely market mavens. Feick and Price (1987) introduce market mavens as individuals who are knowledgeable about a variety of products, and share this information with other consumers. Market mavens are motivated by a greater sense of obligation to talk, a desire to help others, and a feeling of pleasure from telling others about products. Consumers may also provide WOM to justify decisions (generate approval) and to achieve social status (Gatignon and Robertson 1986). Other findings confirm that consumers may transmit information because they find it intrinsically satisfying or because they have a helpful personality (Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998). In summary, consumers engage in WOM because of social or psychological benefits. In addition to these benefits, however, there may also be costs of engaging in WOM.

Costs of WOM. The few costs of WOM that have been identified in the literature include incurred social obligations, time commitments, and risk of communicating inappropriate advice (Gatignon and Robertson 1986). Frenzen and Nakamoto (1993) also show that consumers consider the opportunity costs of WOM when telling another person about a sale. For instance, consumers are less likely to talk about the sale with others if the supply of sale items is limited than if the supply is unlimited. Thus, prior research identifies the role of situational factors (such as type of sale) on the perceived costs of WOM. In the current research, our goal is to demonstrate that an individual difference, the need for uniqueness, also affects perceived costs of generating WOM. We propose that there is a social cost of WOM for consumers who have a high need for uniqueness. In particular, providing other consumers with positive evaluations

about a product increases the likelihood of those consumers adopting the product, thereby decreasing the uniqueness of that product. Next, we explore this cost in greater detail.

Need for Uniqueness: The Social Cost of Positive WOM

Need for uniqueness is identified as an individual-level trait (Lynn and Harris 1997; Snyder and Fromkin 1977; Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001). One consequence of high need for uniqueness is the desire to possess unique products (Simonson and Nowlis 2000), as these products provide differentiation from other people. For example, high-uniqueness consumers are likely to prefer distinct product designs (Bloch 1995) with attributes that “define the person as different from members of his or her reference group” (Snyder and Fromkin 1980, 107). High-uniqueness consumers are more drawn to scarce products than low-uniqueness consumers, exerting more effort to own innovative products (Lynn 1992; Snyder 1992) and being more likely to choose options that aren’t chosen by others (Worchel, Lee, and Adewole 1975).

High-uniqueness individuals may also decrease consumption of a product if it becomes commonplace, via a snob or a reverse-bandwagon effect (Granovetter and Soong 1986). Thus, high-uniqueness individuals may be unwilling to promote a product for fear that others will buy it and decrease its exclusivity. Products that make a person unique attract other people (Fisher and Price 1992), and high-uniqueness people may feel a threat to their identity if others become similar to them (Berger and Heath 2007; Tian et al. 2001). Consequently, we expect that high-uniqueness consumers will be reluctant to promote a product for fear of it becoming common.

We expect this effect of need for uniqueness on WOM to vary across product categories, as increased adoption may hurt a consumer’s unique image more for certain product categories. Furthermore, we do not expect need for uniqueness to affect WOM for products that consumers

don't plan to buy. Importantly, the persuasiveness of WOM may also vary as a function of its content, with informative WOM (only containing product details) being less persuasive than WOM that includes positive recommendations. We next discuss these moderators in detail.

Moderators of the Effect of Need for Uniqueness: Product Category, Ownership, and WOM Type

Consumers often buy products and brands for what they mean, rather than solely for what they do (Belk 1988; Berger and Heath 2007). The extent to which meanings of brands are affected by reference groups depends on two forms of conspicuousness: publicly versus privately consumed products, and discretionary versus necessary products (Bourne 1957). We focus on discretionary products because peer influence is particularly relevant for purchase of these products, regardless of them being publicly or privately consumed (Childers and Rao 1992).

We expect that the effect of need for uniqueness will vary across public versus private discretionary products. Products consumed in public are seen by others and are important for identity communication (Childers and Rao 1992). Indeed, Ratner and Kahn (2002) confirm that consumers seek greater variety for publicly (vs. privately) consumed products. Because high-uniqueness consumers value unique products (Snyder and Fromkin 1980), factors that increase adoption of a conspicuous product will decrease these consumers' valuation of that product (Amaldoss and Jain 2005). Consistent with prior research, we expect that the effect of need for uniqueness will depend on whether WOM is for a public or a private discretionary product. Specifically, because consumption of public (vs. private) products is more conspicuous, the willingness to provide positive WOM for public products may be lowered to a greater extent by need for uniqueness. As private products are less visible to others, we propose that the effect of uniqueness on WOM for these products will be less pronounced.

In addition, as a facet of social influence, positive WOM may be more persuasive for public (vs. private) products, leading to greater likelihood of adoption by others (e.g., Bearden and Etzel 1982). This would increase the costs of positive WOM by high-uniqueness consumers for public versus private products. Thus, we expect the product category to moderate the effect of need for uniqueness on willingness to engage in positive WOM. Specifically, high-uniqueness consumers will be less likely to provide positive WOM for public (vs. private) products because of the greater social cost (in terms of decreased uniqueness) associated with the former. However, low-uniqueness consumers will promote both public and private products. Thus:

H1: Higher need for uniqueness will decrease willingness to provide positive word of mouth (WOM) to a greater extent for public (vs. private) discretionary products owned by consumers.

We expect the effect of need for uniqueness on WOM to exist only when the consumer *owns* the public discretionary product, and not when the consumer does not own the product, and has no intention of purchasing it. In the latter case, where WOM is informational, there is no cost to the consumer in terms of decreased uniqueness of owned products. Consequently:

H2: In the domain of public products, high need for uniqueness will decrease an individual's willingness to provide positive WOM for owned products but not for products that the individual doesn't plan to buy.

The persuasiveness of WOM, in terms of convincing others to buy the product, may also depend on WOM content. Specifically, WOM that includes positive product reviews and purchase recommendations is more likely to lead to product purchase than is WOM that only

contains product details. Both types of WOM, however, allow the consumer to earn social capital (Feick and Price 1987). While prior research on positive WOM has often considered an instance of WOM (or willingness to generate WOM) as the unit of analysis, such an approach ignores the nuances between evaluative versus informational differences which are clearly important in social influence (e.g., Park and Lessig 1977). Indeed, recent debate about WOM content has focused on this distinction (Keiningham et al. 2008). As WOM that includes positive evaluations may be more persuasive than WOM that only contains product details, for high-uniqueness consumers, the former is potentially more costly than the latter. Thus, these consumers may be less willing to provide positive evaluations than product details. Formally:

H3: In the domain of owned public products, high need for uniqueness will decrease willingness to provide WOM that includes positive evaluations but will not decrease willingness to provide WOM that only contains product details.

We test these hypotheses in four studies and explore the process in two more studies. A pilot study reveals that the expected cost of providing positive WOM for publicly consumed products is greater for high- (vs. low-) uniqueness individuals. Specifically, high- (vs. low-) uniqueness individuals are less likely to purchase a public product that is adopted by others. Study 1 finds that among people who own a product, uniqueness decreases willingness to provide positive WOM more for public (vs. private) products (hypothesis 1).

Study 2 shows that people perceive WOM recommendations to be more persuasive than WOM that only contains product details, especially for public products. Consequently, the effects of uniqueness on willingness to provide WOM in study 3 are significant for WOM recommendations, but not for WOM about product details (hypothesis 3). In study 3, the effect

of uniqueness on willingness to provide WOM recommendations is also attenuated for people who don't plan to buy the product (hypothesis 2). In a between-subjects setting, study 4 shows that high- (vs. low-) uniqueness decreases willingness to provide WOM recommendations but doesn't affect WOM about product details (hypothesis 3). Study 5 content-analyzes reported WOM and finds support for hypothesis 3 in real-world data. We present these studies next.

Pilot Study: Uniqueness Affects Liking of Products Adopted by Others

Participants, Method, and Design. We asked 120 undergraduates to complete a survey for \$2, or for refreshments (compensation differences didn't affect responses). Four participants did not finish; thus, all results are for 116 students. In the survey, participants read about a new product and read a scenario. The product was manipulated between subjects. Half the people read about a publicly consumed product (laptop: appendix A, panel A) while the rest read about a privately consumed product (mattress: appendix A, panel B). All participants then read that they had been thinking of buying the product. In order to frame it as a discretionary purchase, participants read that while the product was not absolutely necessary, it would be nice to have.

Participants also read that while talking to a friend they find out that the friend had recently bought the product. Following this scenario, participants reported their purchase likelihood (1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely). Participants then completed the CNFU - avoidance of similarity scale (Tian et al. 2001; appendix B). A median split characterized participants as high- or low-uniqueness; a continuous uniqueness measure in this study as well as in studies 3 and 4 revealed similar results, and is omitted for the sake of brevity. Thus, the study used a 2 (product: public, private) x 2 (uniqueness: high, low) between-subjects design.

Manipulation checks confirmed that the public (vs. private) product was rated as more likely to be seen publicly (how likely are your friends to see you using it? 1 = not at all, 7 = very likely; $M_{\text{public}} = 5.77$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 3.45$; $F(1, 118) = 59.82, p < .0001$). Importantly, there were no differences in perceptions of the product being discretionary (is this a luxury? 1 = no, 7 = yes; $M_{\text{public}} = 5.98$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 6.27$, $F(1, 118) = 1.94$, NS), innovative (1 = not at all, 7 = very innovative; $M_{\text{public}} = 5.10$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 5.38$, $F(1, 118) = 1.76$, NS), or desirable (1 = not at all, 7 = very desirable, $M_{\text{public}} = 4.82$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 4.48$, $F(1, 118) = 1.75$, NS).

Results. We conduct an ANOVA with the participants' purchase likelihood as the dependent measure and the product (private, public) and the participant's uniqueness (high, low) as predictors. A significant product x uniqueness interaction reveals that product type moderates the effect of uniqueness on purchase likelihood, $F(1, 112) = 4.94, p < .05$ (figure 1). When a public product is adopted by a friend, high-uniqueness individuals are less likely to buy the product than low-uniqueness individuals ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.38$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 5.30$), $F(1, 112) = 5.66, p < .05$. In contrast, uniqueness doesn't affect purchase likelihood for the private product ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 5.38$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 5.07$), $F(1, 112) = .61$, NS. Pre-planned contrasts reveal that, following adoption by a friend, high-uniqueness participants who see a public (vs. private) product are less likely to buy, $F(1, 112) = 6.55, p = .01$. For low-uniqueness people, however, purchase likelihood doesn't vary by product, $F(1, 112) = .34$, NS.

< Insert Figure 1 about here >

Discussion. The pilot study shows that adoption by a friend decreases the likelihood of high-uniqueness individuals buying a public product. While consistent with prior research,

another explanation for our results could be that high-uniqueness people simply want to adopt *first*. Such an inclination would be more consistent with the tendency of market mavenism.

However, controlling for mavenism doesn't change our results in this and subsequent studies, as addressed in the section outlining further research.

In summary, we expect that high-uniqueness people have a disincentive to provide positive WOM that may induce others to buy the product and, in turn, decrease the liking of the product for the WOM agent. We test this expectation in study 1, next.

STUDY 1: EFFECT OF MANIPULATED UNIQUENESS ON POSITIVE WOM

Participants, Method, and Design

We paid 84 non-student consumers \$4 to complete a survey. Seven people did not follow elaboration instructions; thus, all analyses are for 77 people (57% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 32$ years). Prior to the WOM scenario, we manipulated participants' uniqueness to be high or low, between subjects, via an elaboration exercise. Participants in the high-uniqueness condition were asked to elaborate on the importance of individuality (being different from others), while those in the low-uniqueness condition were asked to elaborate on the importance of conformity (being similar to others). On the next page, all participants read a description of a fictitious brand of sandals (appendix A, panel C). A usage-listing task manipulated the use to be public or private, between subjects. Participants in the public-use condition listed situations in which they would wear these sandals when other people could see them, while those in the private-use condition listed usage situations where no one could see the sandals. Thus, the study used a 2 (uniqueness: high, low) x 2 (use: public, private) between-subjects design. All participants read that they owned the

sandals, and rated their willingness to generate positive WOM (will you tell your friends and acquaintances positive things about the sandals? 1 = no, 9 = yes).

Manipulation Checks

Uniqueness (high, low) manipulation. To check that the individuality versus conformity elaboration task affects uniqueness, we paid 69 non-student consumers \$4 to complete a study. Six participants did not finish; all analyses are for 63 people (54% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 29$ years). About half of the participants completed the high-uniqueness task (individuality) while the rest completed the low-uniqueness task (conformity). All participants then completed the uniqueness scale (Tian et al. 2001). As expected, the elaboration task significantly affects uniqueness ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.07$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 3.24$, $F(1, 61) = 9.93$, $p < .005$).

Use (public, private) manipulation. To check that use-listings varied product perceptions, we paid 104 non-student participants \$4 to complete the survey. Four participants did not complete the task; all analyses are for 100 people (55% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 25$ years). Half of the participants listed situations in which they would wear the sandals in public, while the rest listed private usage situations. All participants then reported the likelihood of (a) other people seeing them using the sandals, and (b) using the sandals in places other than the home (1 = not at all likely, 9 = very likely; $r = .84$, $p < .0001$; averaged to form a public use measure). As expected, the use-listing task significantly affects perceptions of public use ($M_{\text{listed public use}} = 7.04$ vs. $M_{\text{listed private use}} = 5.71$), $F(1, 98) = 9.62$, $p < .005$.

Product characteristics. People in the main study reported product perceptions on scales anchored by 1-9. Use-listing doesn't affect desirability ($M_{\text{public-use}} = 5.50$ vs. $M_{\text{private-use}} = 5.55$; F

(1, 74) = .01, NS), rating of products as discretionary ($M_{\text{public-use}} = 5.79$ vs. $M_{\text{private-use}} = 6.23$; $F(1, 74) = 1.34$, NS), or necessities ($M_{\text{public-use}} = 3.15$ vs. $M_{\text{private-use}} = 3.01$; $F(1, 74) = .08$, NS).

Results and Discussion

We conduct an ANOVA with willingness to provide positive WOM as the dependent measure and uniqueness (high, low) and use (private, public) as predictors. Consistent with hypothesis 1, we find a significant uniqueness x use interaction, $F(1, 73) = 4.44$, $p < .05$ (see figure 2). In the public-use condition, high- (vs. low-) uniqueness participants are less likely to engage in positive WOM ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 5.69$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 7.00$), $F(1, 73) = 4.97$, $p < .05$. However, uniqueness doesn't affect WOM for private use ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 7.24$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 6.85$), $F(1, 73) = .50$, NS. Among high-uniqueness participants, those in the public- (vs. private-) use condition are less likely to provide WOM, $F(1, 73) = 7.45$, $p < .01$. In contrast, (public vs. private) use doesn't affect low-uniqueness participants, $F(1, 73) = .06$, NS.

< Insert Figure 2 about here >

We find that high (vs. low) uniqueness decreases willingness to provide positive WOM for the publicly used product. Study 1 uses a single-item measure of likelihood to provide positive WOM. However, WOM can have many dimensions. For instance, WOM can be informative by providing product details, or it can be evaluative by providing positive recommendations (e.g., Keiningham et al. 2008). Thus, in subsequent studies we differentiate between WOM that only provides details versus WOM that provides positive recommendations.

In study 2, we explicitly test the assumption that WOM that includes positive recommendations is perceived to be more persuasive, and thus more likely to affect product adoption, than WOM that only contains product details. Furthermore, we investigate whether this effect of type of WOM (recommendation vs. details) varies by product category. Prior research has shown that social influence is stronger for public versus private products (e.g. Bearden and Etzel 1982). Thus, WOM recommendations may be perceived as more persuasive for public versus private products. Consequently, WOM recommendations about private products may not be perceived to be costly (in terms of decreased uniqueness) for high-uniqueness consumers. We use the public and private products pre-tested in the pilot study for this investigation.

STUDY 2: WOM PERSUASIVENESS: RECOMMENDATIONS VERSUS PRODUCT DETAILS

Participants, Method, and Design

We paid 125 undergraduates \$2 to complete the study. Five participants did not complete the survey; thus, all analyses are for 120 students. Participants read a scenario describing an interaction between two friends/co-workers, A and B. In the scenario, participants read that A recently bought a product. This product, whose description was included in the scenario, was manipulated between subjects. Half the participants read about a public product (laptop; appendix A, panel A), while the rest read about a private product (mattress; appendix A, panel B). Both new products were described with novel and innovative features. All participants read that one day B finds out about A's purchase and asks A about it.

We also manipulated the type of WOM, between subjects. Half the participants (those in the recommend condition) read that A tells B many good things about the product, finally recommending that B buy it. The remaining participants (those in the details condition) read that

A tells B many details about the product, along with information such as where A bought it. All participants then reported B's likelihood of buying the product (1 = not at all, 7 = very likely), which was used as a measure of the perceived persuasiveness of the WOM.

Thus, the study used a 2 (product: private, public) x 2 (type of WOM: recommend, details) between-subjects design. Manipulation checks revealed that while both products were perceived to be equally innovative, the former was rated significantly more likely to be consumed in public, and to be observed by friends, than the latter (as reported in the pilot study). All participants also completed measures of product characteristics and uniqueness (avoidance of similarity dimension; Tian et al. 2001). Participants' traits did not affect the perceived likelihood of B buying the product. In other words, participants did not project their own uniqueness tendencies onto the WOM target (i.e., person B in the scenario). Consequently, controlling for uniqueness doesn't change the results, and is omitted from the analyses.

Results and Discussion

We conduct an ANOVA with WOM persuasiveness (B's purchase likelihood) as the dependent measure and the product (public, private) and type of WOM (recommendation, details) as predictors. The product x type of WOM interaction is significant, $F(1, 116) = 4.37, p < .05$ (figure 3). Specifically, the WOM is judged more persuasive when A recommends the public (vs. private) product ($M_{\text{public}} = 5.73$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 5.10$), $F(1, 116) = 4.04, p < .05$. In contrast, product category doesn't affect WOM persuasiveness when A only provides details ($M_{\text{public}} = 4.73$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 5.03$), $F(1, 116) = .90, \text{NS}$. Pre-planned contrasts also reveal that, for the public product, recommendations are more persuasive than details, $F(1, 116) = 10.05, p < .005$. However, the type of WOM (recommendation, details) doesn't affect B's purchase for the

private product $F(1, 116) = .04$, NS. The main effect of type of WOM is also significant ($M_{\text{recommendation}} = 5.42$ vs. $M_{\text{details}} = 4.88$; $F(1, 116) = 5.71, p < .05$).

< Insert Figure 3 about here >

Results from study 2, together with the pilot study, suggest that WOM is perceived to be costly for high-uniqueness consumers (in terms of decreased uniqueness of products) when (a) the WOM includes positive recommendations (vs. only details), and (b) the WOM relates to public (vs. private) products. This perception, in turn, drives their WOM behavior. Specifically, high-uniqueness individuals have a disincentive to provide positive recommendations for public products because such recommendations are perceived to persuade others to buy the product (study 2), which decreases the attractiveness of the product for the high-uniqueness consumer (pilot study). In study 3, we use a multiple-item WOM measure and further study the two types of WOM (details vs. recommendations) in a within-subjects design.

STUDY 3: EFFECT OF MEASURED UNIQUENESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS VS. DETAILS

Participants, Method, and Design

We asked 176 undergraduates to complete the survey in return for \$2 or as part of a research requirement (responses did not differ across the two groups). Six students did not complete the survey; thus, all analyses are for 170 people. Participants read a description of a new product, manipulated between subjects to be either the Apple iPhone (public) or Apple TV (private). The description listed several positive features, a few negative features, and a picture,

stating that the product is now available (see appendix A, panels D & E). We also manipulated product ownership between subjects. Half the participants read that they had bought the product, while the rest read that although they were intrigued, they didn't intend to buy the product. Thus, the study used a 2 (product: public, private) x 2 (ownership: yes, no) between-subjects design.

All participants completed a series of items measuring their willingness to provide WOM (Harrison-Walker 2001; Moldovan, Goldenberg, and Chattopadhyay 2006). We analyzed the responses separately across two sets of items. The first set of items measured participants' willingness to *discuss details* (I will talk to many people about the product; I will provide as many details as I can about the product; 1 = disagree, 7 = agree; $r = .49$, $p < .0001$). The second set of items measured participants' willingness to *recommend* (I have good things to say about the product; I will recommend that others buy the product; 1 = disagree, 7 = agree; how likely are you to tell friends and acquaintances positive things about the product? 1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely; $\alpha = .84$). Note that the last item in this scale is the same as that used in study 1. Participants also completed the uniqueness scale (Tian et al. 2001). We conducted a median split on this score to classify participants as high or low in need for uniqueness.

Manipulation Checks

The public (vs. private) product was judged as more likely to be used and seen publicly (average of: if you owned this product, how likely would you be to use it in places other than your home; how likely would it be that your friends would see you using it? 1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely; $r = .60$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{public}} = 6.64$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 4.14$), $F(1, 168) = 218.65$, $p < .0001$. There were no differences in perceptions of the products being discretionary (average of: Is this a product that would be nice to have but not essential? Is this product a luxury? 1 = no, 7 =

yes; $r = .37, p < .001$; $M_{\text{public}} = 6.02$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 5.90$, $F(1, 168) = .57$, NS), innovative (average of: how innovative is this product; 1 = not at all, 7 = very innovative; Does this product offer features not currently available in the marketplace? 1 = no, 7 = yes; $r = .45, p < .001$; $M_{\text{public}} = 4.95$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 4.83$, $F(1, 168) = .27$, NS), desirable ($M_{\text{public}} = 4.13$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 3.78$, $F(1, 168) = 1.39$, NS), or available ($M_{\text{public}} = 4.90$ vs. $M_{\text{private}} = 4.43$, $F(1, 168) = 2.12$, NS).

Results

Willingness to recommend. We conduct an ANOVA with willingness to recommend as the dependent measure and uniqueness (high, low), product (public, private) and ownership (yes, no) as predictors. The uniqueness x product x ownership interaction is significant, $F(1, 162) = 5.23, p < .05$. Consistent with hypothesis 1, uniqueness decreases recommendations for owned public products. Specifically, among participants who own the public product (figure 4, panel A), those with high (vs. low) need for uniqueness are less willing to recommend ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.30$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 5.18$), $F(1, 162) = 5.11, p < .05$. Uniqueness doesn't affect willingness to recommend for people who own the private product ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 5.00$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 4.97$; $F(1, 162) = .01$, NS), nor does it affect recommendations from those who don't plan to buy the product (figure 4, panel B; p 's $> .25$). Supporting hypothesis 2, the ownership x uniqueness interaction is significant for the public product, $F(1, 80) = 5.44, p < .05$.

< Insert Figure 4 about here >

Willingness to discuss details. We conduct an ANOVA with willingness to discuss details as the dependent measure and uniqueness (high, low), product (public, private) and ownership (yes, no) as predictors. In contrast to the effects of uniqueness on recommendations, participants'

willingness to discuss product details is not significantly affected by uniqueness (p 's $> .15$; figure 4, panels C and D). Focused contrasts reveal that uniqueness has no significant effect on willingness to discuss product details among participants who own the public product (figure 4, panel C; $M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.45$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 4.87$), $F(1, 162) = .85$, NS. A main effect of ownership indicates that participants who own the product are more likely to discuss details ($M_{\text{not owned}} = 3.78$ versus $M_{\text{owned}} = 4.52$), $F(1, 162) = 13.09$, $p < .0005$. The higher-order interactions are not significant (p 's $> .15$).

MANOVA. We also conduct a MANOVA with type of WOM (recommendations, details) as a within-subjects factor and uniqueness, product type, and ownership as between-subjects factors. Within subjects, a main effect of WOM type indicates that participants are more willing to recommend than to discuss details ($M_{\text{recommend}} = 4.53$ vs. $M_{\text{discuss details}} = 4.17$) $F(1, 162) = 27.33$, $p < .0001$. This main effect is qualified by a significant type of WOM x uniqueness interaction, $F(1, 162) = 5.18$, $p < .05$. Uniqueness directionally decreases recommendations ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.59$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 4.80$) but directionally increases willingness to discuss details ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.29$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 4.04$). Consequently, the willingness to recommend versus discuss details is greater for low- (vs. high-) uniqueness individuals.

A marginal type of WOM x product interaction ($F(1, 162) = 2.84$, $p < .10$) reveals that people are directionally less willing to recommend public (vs. private) products ($M_{\text{public product}} = 4.55$ vs. $M_{\text{private product}} = 4.84$) but product type does not affect discussing of details ($M_{\text{public product}} = 4.19$ vs. $M_{\text{private product}} = 4.14$). Thus, the difference in recommending versus discussing details is marginally greater for private (vs. public) products.

Finally, a type of WOM x ownership interaction ($F(1, 162) = 5.35$, $p < .05$) reveals that the effect of ownership is smaller for recommending ($M_{\text{owned}} = 4.86$ vs. $M_{\text{not owned}} = 4.52$) than

for discussing details ($M_{\text{owned}} = 4.57$ vs. $M_{\text{not owned}} = 3.76$). Thus, people who don't intend to buy the product are more willing to recommend than discuss details, relative to people who own the product. The remaining higher-order interactions fail to achieve significance in this analysis.

Discussion

We find that among people who own a public product, high- (vs. low-) uniqueness consumers are less willing to *recommend* the product. We expect that this result would replicate for consumers who intend to buy the product in the near future. However, uniqueness doesn't affect recommendation of private products, or of products that people don't intend to buy. In contrast to the effect of uniqueness on recommendations, participants' willingness to *discuss details* is not significantly affected by uniqueness. Thus, participants may gain social capital by discussing product details with others without increasing product adoption.

We note that the items relating to recommendations versus discussing details, answered by each participant in study 3, were not counterbalanced. Thus, the effect of uniqueness on these two types of WOM may have been attenuated by carryover effects from responses about details to those for recommendations. This design issue was a consequence of a post-hoc analysis for the two types of WOM that was spurred by reviewer suggestions. To address this issue, in study 4 we manipulate the type of WOM (details vs. recommendation) in a between-subjects design.

STUDY 4: UNIQUENESS AFFECTS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC PRODUCTS

Participants, Method, and Design

We asked 118 undergraduates to complete a survey in return for refreshments or \$2 (responses did not differ by compensation). All participants read a scenario in which, after having searched a lot, they had recently purchased a pair of sneakers. Participants read that the sneakers feel good and that they anticipate wearing the sneakers often. They wear the sneakers to class, and on the way a friend notices and asks about the sneakers. We manipulated type of information between subjects. Half the participants reported how likely they were to recommend that the friend buy the sneakers (1 = not at all, 7 = very likely). The remaining people reported how likely they were to tell the friend lots of details about the sneakers (1 = not at all, 7 = very likely). Thus, the study used a 2 (type of WOM: recommend, details) between-subjects design. All participants completed the uniqueness scale on a subsequent page (avoidance of similarity dimension; Tian et al. 2001); a median split characterized them as high- or low- uniqueness.

Results and Discussion

We conduct an ANOVA with willingness to provide WOM as the dependent measure and type of WOM (recommend, details) and uniqueness (high, low) as predictors. A significant uniqueness x type of WOM interaction supports hypothesis 3, $F(1, 114) = 8.10, p = .005$ (see figure 5). High- (vs. low-) uniqueness participants are less willing to recommend ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.22$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 5.57$), $F(1, 114) = 11.09, p = .001$. However, uniqueness doesn't affect willingness to discuss details ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 5.70$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 5.49$), $F(1, 114) = .35$, NS. Pre-planned contrasts reveal that high-uniqueness participants are less willing to recommend versus provide details, $F(1, 114) = 16.56, p < .0001$. However, low-uniqueness participants are as willing to recommend as they are to provide details, $F(1, 114) = .22$, NS.

A main effect of type of WOM reveals that participants are more willing to provide details ($M_{\text{discuss details}} = 5.58$ vs. $M_{\text{recommend buy}} = 4.80$), $F(1, 114) = 6.54, p = .01$. Finally, a main effect of uniqueness indicates that high-uniqueness people are less likely to provide WOM ($M_{\text{high-uniqueness}} = 4.91$ vs. $M_{\text{low-uniqueness}} = 5.52$), $F(1, 114) = 4.21, p < .05$.

< Insert Figure 5 about here >

Thus, higher levels of uniqueness decrease willingness to recommend but don't affect willingness to discuss product details. As high-uniqueness participants do not want the product to be widely adopted, they are less likely to recommend that others buy the product, compared to low-uniqueness participants. In contrast, uniqueness doesn't inhibit willingness to discuss details, which is relatively less likely to lead to increased product adoption. Next, we use real-world WOM reports to explore the effect of uniqueness on actual WOM.

STUDY 5: EFFECT OF UNIQUENESS ON LIKELIHOOD OF FAVORABLE WOM

Data Description

These data were provided by BzzAgent, a WOM agency with a large pool of volunteers (agents) who participate in WOM campaigns. BzzAgents receive no compensation other than free product samples and price-off coupons (the free sample ensures ownership for our study). In discussions, BzzAgent executives identified a specific candy bar as a discretionary product that was often consumed publicly. To confirm that the candy bar was a publicly consumed discretionary product, we paid 88 people \$3 to rate that product. Participants rated their likelihood of consuming it in places other than their home to be significantly higher than the scale mid-point (1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely, mid-point = 4 vs. $M = 4.98$), $F(1, 87) =$

29.27, $p < .0001$). People rated the likelihood of their friends seeing them eat the bar to be significantly higher than the scale mid-point (1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely, mid-point = 4 vs. $M = 4.59$), $F(1, 87) = 11.29$, $p < .005$). People also rated the candy bar to be a discretionary product, agreeing with the statement that the candy bar would be nice to have, but that it was not essential (1 = disagree, 7 = agree, mid-point = 4 vs. $M = 5.28$), $F(1, 87) = 62.57$, $p < .0001$.

BzzAgents document WOM activity via an online report (describing what they said, and to whom) and a campaign-end survey. Agents complete as many online reports as they like. We analyzed the WOM reports containing actual WOM content. We excluded six agents, each filing more than 17 reports (more than three standard deviations above the mean). Three raters, who were blind to the hypotheses, scored each WOM report in terms of its favorability (how positively the agent talked about the product with others; 1 = not at all positive, 7 = very positive; $\alpha = .62$). If no details or evaluations were provided to others, the field was left blank.

As an example, the following report was judged to include favorable WOM: "My friend said she was exhausted and needed a pick me up so I opened my drawer and pulled out a [candy bar]. She asked what it was and I told her the most delicious thing you will ever taste. She took a bite and said, oh my God, you are right. What all is in this thing. I told her what was in it and she couldn't believe it tasted that good. She asked where she could get some and I told her they are all over." Conversely, the following report was judged to have no WOM evaluations from the agent to the target: "[A friend] came into my office to discuss [work]. He noticed that my candy dish was filled with [the candy bars] and asked about it. I told him that it is for a bzz campaign and that I would like his opinion of the candy bar. With his first bite, he told me that he believed that the crunchiness made it a real treat. He said that he is not a chocolate person but enjoyed the combination. He took another bar from the dish to eat later."

We conservatively coded a report as favorable WOM if it received a score of 4 or higher from at least one of the raters. Even so, in our data, only 13% of the agents provided favorable WOM more than once. Given so few multiple positive reports, for our analysis we looked at the likelihood that an agent would talk favorably about the product at least once (yes, no). We note that, because not all agents completed online reports, there may have been instances where agents talked favorably about the product but did not report it via the online report system.

BzzAgent allowed us to measure agents' uniqueness traits via scale items anchored by 1 and 5. As the CNFU scale was deemed to be too long, the 8-item DUCP scale (which correlates highly with CNFU; see appendix B) was used to measure uniqueness ($\alpha = .90$). We conducted a median split on agents' uniqueness to classify them as low- or high-uniqueness. We used this two-level variable as a between-subjects factor. Using the continuous measure revealed directionally consistent results that failed to achieve significance (as reported later).

Results and Discussion

Our analysis includes 549 agents for whom we had uniqueness scores and demographics information. We analyze the effect of (high, low) uniqueness on the likelihood of an agent providing favorable WOM (yes, no) in a logistic regression, controlling for their age. Consistent with hypothesis 3, high- (vs. low-) uniqueness agents are less likely to provide favorable WOM ($X_{\text{high uniqueness}} = 33\%$ vs. $X_{\text{low uniqueness}} = 41\%$; Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4.87, p < .05$). Younger agents are also less likely to generate favorable WOM, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4.50, p < .05$. A continuous measure of uniqueness reveals directionally consistent results that fail to achieve significance (Wald $\chi^2(1) = 1.43, p = .23$). This may be a consequence of having used a different scale to measure

uniqueness (DUCP vs. CNFU; see discussion in appendix B) and/or the fact that the dependent measure was dichotomous.

Interestingly, uniqueness did not affect agents' likelihood of reporting a conversation per se (i.e., completing an online WOM activity report, $X_{\text{high uniqueness}} = 70\%$ vs. $X_{\text{low uniqueness}} = 73\%$; Wald $\chi^2(1) = .37$, NS). However, we also find a significant effect of uniqueness on likelihood of generating favorable WOM if we restrict the analysis to those 395 agents who did complete the online report, with high-uniqueness agents being less likely to generate favorable WOM ($X_{\text{high uniqueness}} = 47\%$ vs. $X_{\text{low uniqueness}} = 57\%$; Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4.41$, $p < .05$).

These analyses of actual WOM reports reveal that high- (vs. low-) uniqueness individuals are less likely to generate favorable WOM. However, uniqueness did not affect the likelihood of individuals reporting (generating) WOM per se. This is consistent with study 4 results, which showed that high- (vs. low-) uniqueness individuals were less willing to recommend that others buy a product, but were equally willing to provide product details.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We respond to calls for research by Bagozzi (1975) and Godes et al. (2005, 419/423) "to investigate the fundamental motives behind the individual's proclivity for communication" and to identify "who should the firm target to facilitate the spread of information?" Second, we answer a call for research by Brown and Reingen (1987) regarding the types of products that people will talk about with others, by demonstrating the effect of uniqueness on WOM for public vs. private products. Third, we investigate the effect of uniqueness on the content of WOM that varies in terms of positive recommendations versus product details (Keiningham et al. 2008).

Summary of Results

Our research investigates the effect of need for uniqueness on WOM. As others' adoption of publicly consumed products decreases high-uniqueness consumers' purchase likelihood (pilot study), high- (vs. low-) uniqueness individuals are less willing to provide positive WOM for publicly consumed products that they own. However, uniqueness does not decrease willingness to provide WOM for privately consumed products (study 1). Study 2 shows that for public products, recommendations are perceived to be more persuasive than product details. Consequently, study 3 reveals that for owned public products, the effect of uniqueness is stronger for WOM that includes positive recommendations, compared to WOM that only contains product details. Study 4 confirms that high- (vs. low-) uniqueness consumers are less willing to recommend a product to others, but are as willing to discuss product details. Study 5 analyzes real-world WOM content, corroborating these results.

Marketing Implications

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) find that the influence of WOM on brand switching is seven times greater than newspapers and magazines, four times more than personal selling, and twice that of radio ads. WOM has grown in importance since then because of increasing product complexity, greater availability of information, and lower trust of traditional media (Godes et al. 2005). Consequently, firms are relying more on WOM and are recruiting consumers as volunteer WOM agents (Court, Gordon, and Perrey 2005; Kaikati and Kaikati 2004). These agents are often unpaid, ostensibly engaging in WOM for the psychosocial benefits (e.g., Wells 2004).

Given the difficulty in monitoring WOM agent performance (number of people talked with, quality of the message), it is important for firms to understand factors that encourage or deter WOM. For instance, studies 1 & 3 suggest that agents' need for uniqueness may be an important factor to consider when launching publicly consumed products, as high uniqueness may attenuate the extent to which agents provide positive WOM for such products. Furthermore, studies 3-5 highlight the effect of uniqueness on willingness to provide different types of WOM (recommendations versus product details).

We find that high-uniqueness consumers are more likely to recommend privately (vs. publicly) consumed products, and products they don't intend to own (vs. those they own or plan to buy). These behaviors are observed just after the product launch, which was the situation used in all the scenarios. High-uniqueness consumers may also be effective WOM agents prior to the launch of a product, because recommendations in such situations will not immediately translate into greater adoption by others. In contrast, low-uniqueness consumers are less likely to vary recommendations across products or ownership intentions. Further research could investigate the effect of uniqueness on WOM for products that have been available in the market for a while.

Limitations and Directions for Further Research

We focus on consumers' willingness to provide positive WOM, rather than on the effectiveness of such WOM. Specifically, it is possible that certain individual characteristics may make some consumers more effective promoters (i.e., they may convince people more easily, or may convince a greater number of people) than others. Additionally, these differences in effectiveness may vary with product characteristics. For instance, research by Goldenberg et al. (2006) suggests that social opinion leaders may be more persuasive for adoption of radical innovations, while product experts may be more persuasive for adoption of incremental

innovations. Such individual differences in effectiveness, and consumers' reaction to positive WOM from sources of varying characteristics, remain fruitful avenues for future research.

The pilot study and study 2 explored the perception of the costs of WOM from the perspective of the WOM agent. We find that adoption of publicly consumed products decreases the desirability of these products for high-uniqueness individuals (pilot study). Furthermore, recommendations are perceived to be more persuasive for public than for private products (study 2). This perception, in turn, affects the perceived cost of recommendations. An interesting avenue of further research would be to explore whether recommendations are actually more effective for publicly versus privately consumed products. In a similar vein, it would be useful to explore the relative effectiveness of recommendations versus product details.

While our focus was on willingness to generate positive WOM (recommendations) versus neutral WOM (details), further research could also study the incidence of negative WOM (complaints and criticisms) being driven by individual characteristics. In the present research, study 3 participants also reported willingness to provide negative WOM. Because responses on that item, after reverse scaling, were similar to their willingness to provide positive WOM, we omitted them from the discussion. While negative WOM is most often driven by product or service failures (e.g., Walker 1995), high-uniqueness consumers could potentially talk down a product after purchasing it so that others don't buy the same product. This behavior could be investigated in greater detail in follow-up studies.

In study 3, uniqueness did not affect willingness to recommend products that were not owned. In that context, we had explicitly told participants that they did not intend to buy the product. It is likely that uniqueness may decrease willingness to recommend products that an individual doesn't own, but intends to buy in the future. This aspect could also be studied further.

In all of the studies, we also measure and control for market mavenism (Feick and Price 1987). In general, individuals scoring high on market mavenism are more likely to talk about the product, and this willingness to provide WOM does not vary by type of WOM (details vs. recommendations). Such individuals may also want to adopt a product first so as to provide others information about it (this potential explanation for the pilot study results is addressed by controlling for mavenism). As controlling for mavenism does not change the reported results in any meaningful way, these analyses are omitted for the sake of brevity. The relationship between mavenism and the other uniqueness constructs is reported in appendix B.

Finally, in the present set of studies we focus on WOM to friends, classmates, and acquaintances. A rich literature that examines communication across different social ties (e.g., Frenzen and Nakamoto 1993) suggests that greater social capital is earned when information is provided across strong ties (i.e., close others). However, if individuals judge their uniqueness relative to close (versus distant) others, the social cost of positive WOM may be higher when talking to strong (versus weak) ties. It would be useful to study this tradeoff and the flow of WOM across different social ties as another direction to extend the present work.

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FIGURE 1

Others' adoption of public products decreases purchase likelihood
of high-uniqueness consumers – pilot study

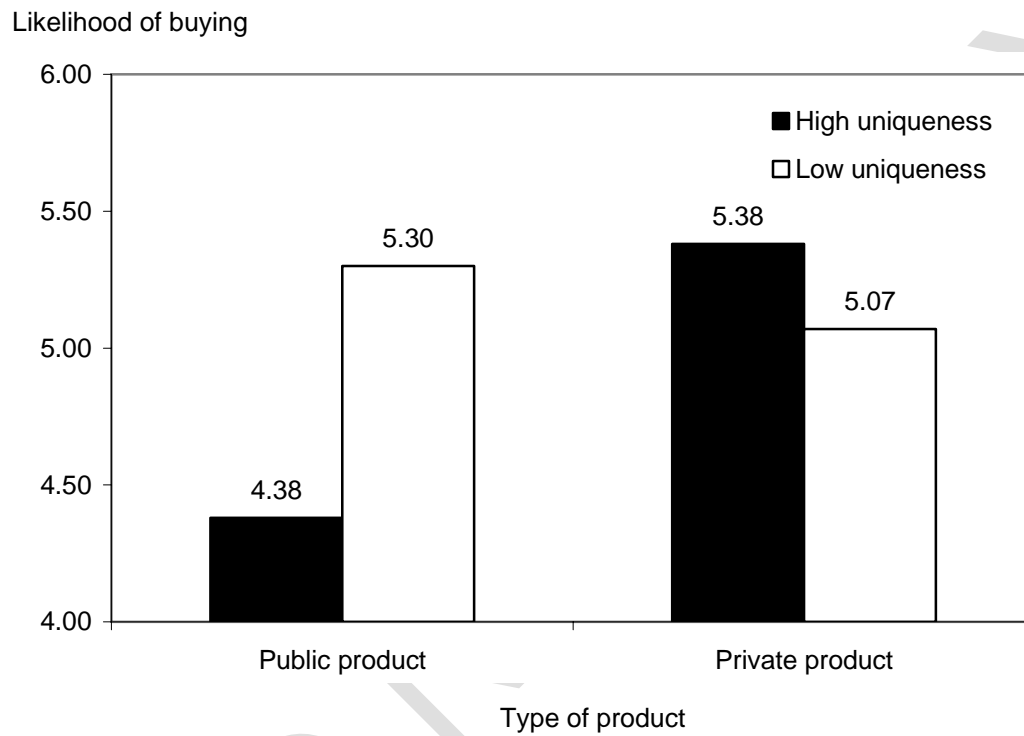
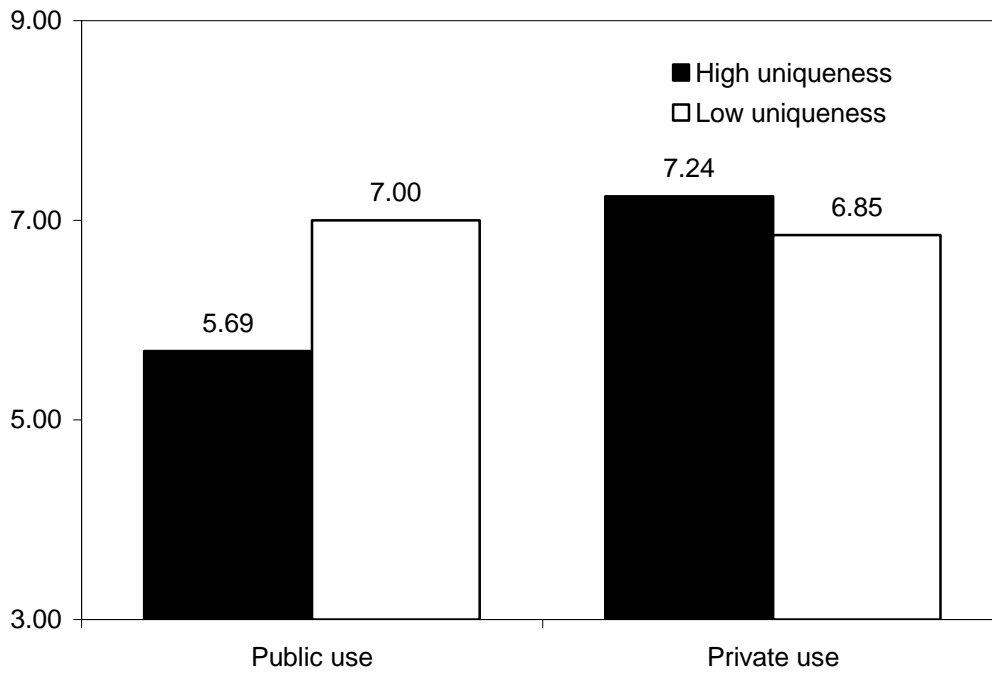


FIGURE 2

High need for uniqueness decreases willingness to provide positive WOM for product primed for public use – study 1

Willingness to generate positive WOM



DOI

FIGURE 3

Buy recommendations are perceived to be more persuasive than product details

for publicly consumed products – study 2

Persuasiveness
 (likelihood that WOM
 target buys product)

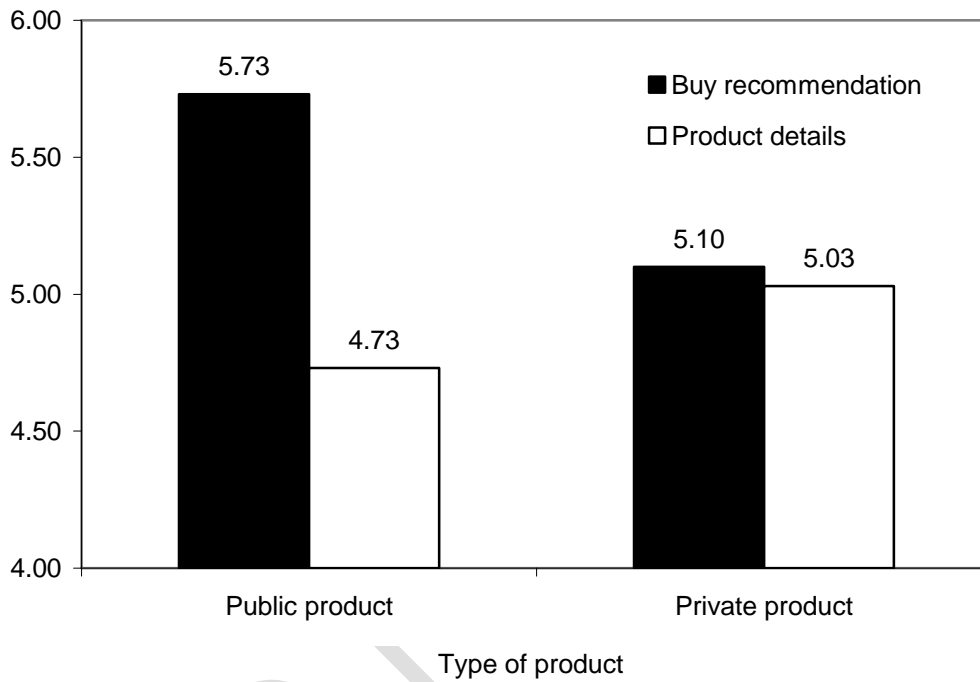


FIGURE 4

High need for uniqueness decreases willingness to provide recommendations

for owned public product – study 3

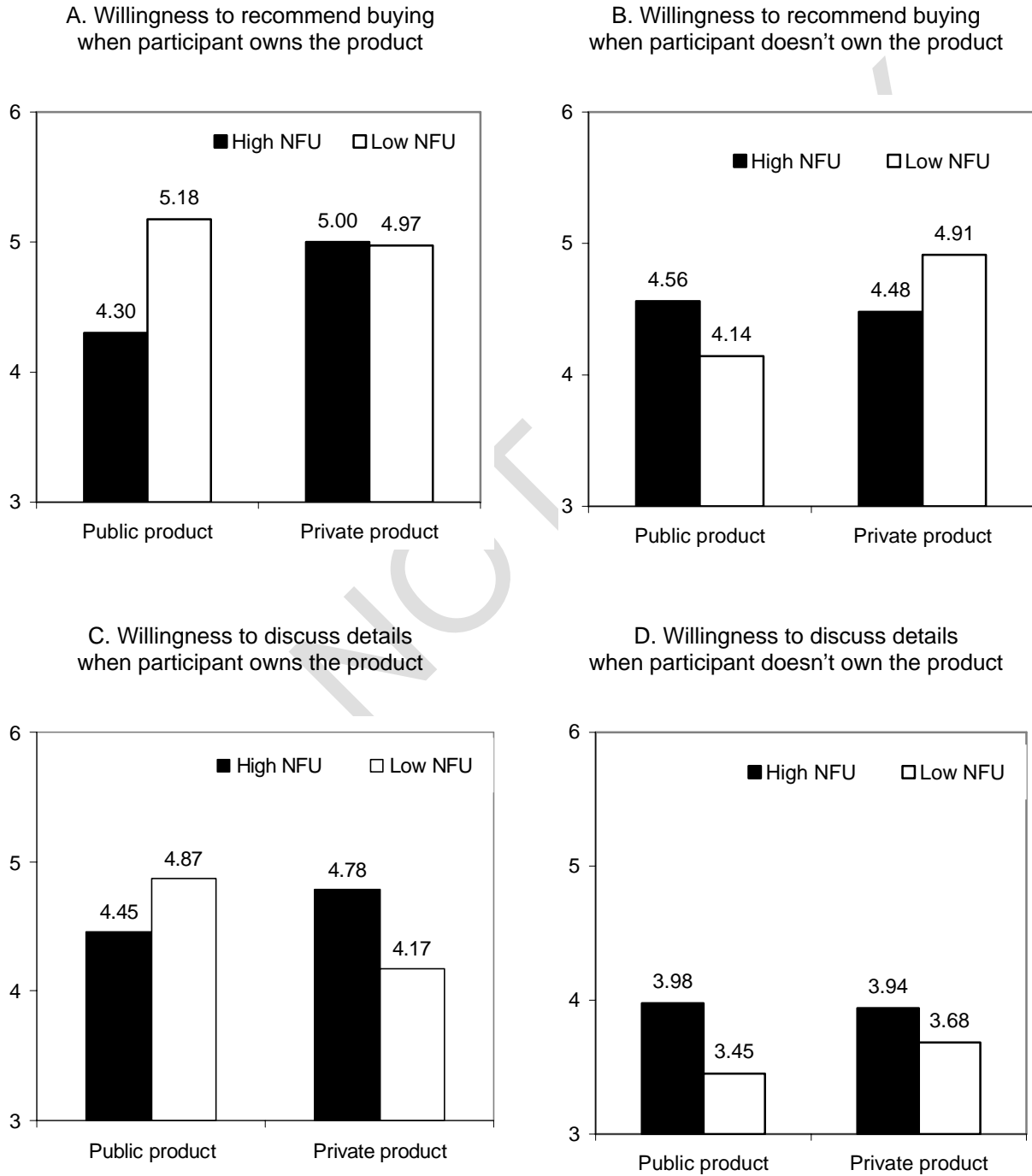
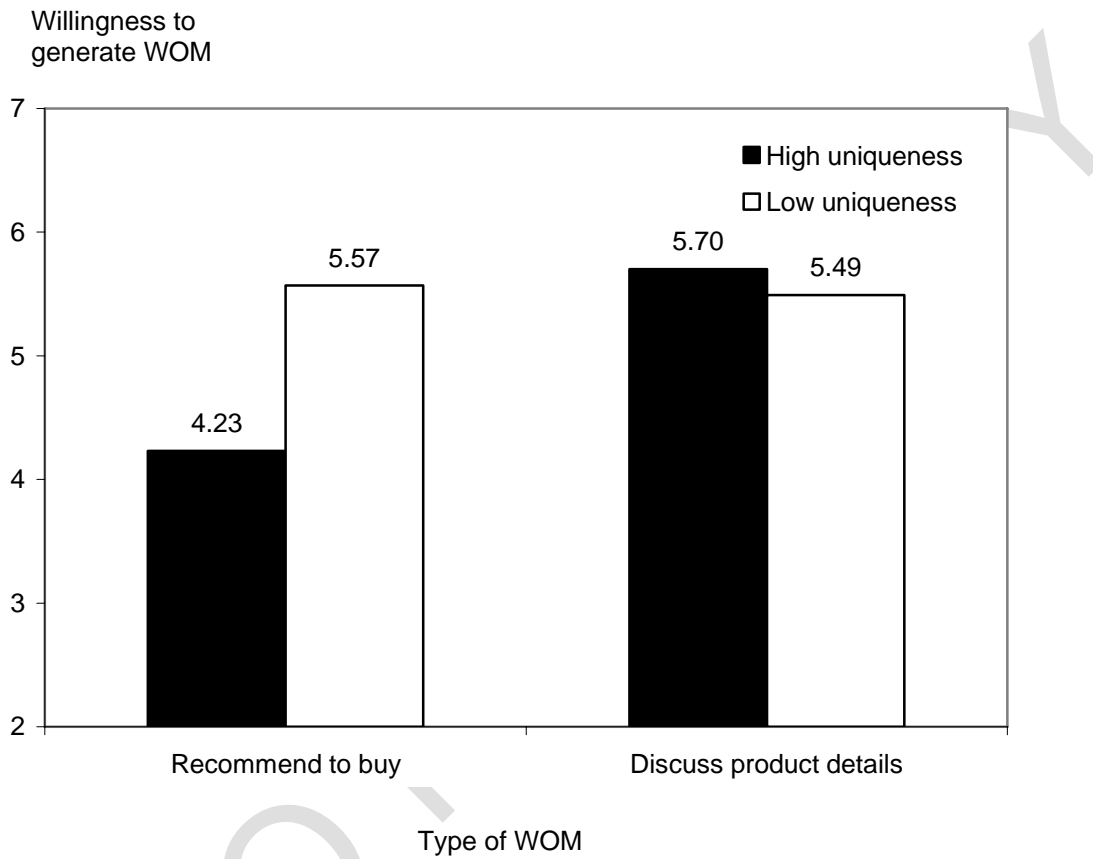


FIGURE 5

High need for uniqueness decreases willingness to provide WOM recommendations

but doesn't affect willingness to discuss product details – study 4



APPENDIX A: PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS

A. NoteBook PC (Public product) - Pilot study and study 2

The new NB PC is a revolutionary ultra-mobile personal computer that includes all the functionality of any typical PC or laptop device, launched in the US market this month for \$549. It measures 8.9 x 6.5 x 1.4 inches, and it weighs 32 ounces (2 pounds), far lighter than any other products on the market. The NB PC features a 9-inch wide screen with 1024 x 768-pixel resolution. A defining feature of the NB PC is its use of an 8 GB solid-state flash memory instead of a hard drive, and corresponding 10-second ultra-fast start-up time. With a dependable solid-state disk, the NB PC has unparalleled shock-protection and reliability.

B. NightBed Mattress (Private product) – Pilot study and study 2

The new NB Mattress is a revolutionary ultra-light mattress that surpasses the performance of typical mattresses, launched in the US market this month for \$549. A queen-size mattress weighs only 5 pounds, making it far lighter than other products on the market and very easy to transport following purchase or when moving to a new house or apartment. One defining feature of the NB Mattress is its use of an internal computer with flash memory instead of traditional coils. This allows it to adjust to the weight and pressure points of each person who lies on it. With a dependable computer, the NB mattress provides unparalleled comfort and reliability.

C. Sandals (Manipulated as public/private) – Study 1



Score Sandals are a new, unisex sandal product on the market. They are waterproof and lightweight, weighing only a few ounces. Their ergonomic shape molds to your foot, and the massaging bumps on the inside make them extremely comfortable. They are also odor-resistant and the soles are slip resistant and non-marking. These sandals are available in all half and whole sizes from 4 to 13, in footwear stores.



D. Apple iPhone (Public product) – Study 3

The new Apple ® iPhone is a revolutionary handheld device that includes the functions of a mobile phone, a multimedia player, a 2 megapixel camera, and internet services such as e-mail, text messaging, and web browsing. It is 11.6 millimeters thick and has 4GB of storage space. The Apple ® iPhone has built-in wireless internet (WiFi) capability, as well as Bluetooth capability (which can be used with a wireless earpiece – sold separately). Further, the Apple ® iPhone can play iTunes audio or video files, and has a battery life of 5 hours for talk time, video, or web browsing, and 16 hours in music mode. It comes with headphones that incorporate a microphone for hands-free use.

The Apple ® iPhone features a unique 3.5-inch 480 x 320 touch-screen display, which allows you to control the device using only a touch screen (without an actual keypad). Phone calls can be made simply by touching a name or number in the address book, favorites list, or call log with your finger. It also features Visual Voicemail, an industry first, which allows you to go to any of your messages without listening to the prior messages. The Apple ® iPhone is protected by multiple layers of intellectual property, and Apple ® has filed several patents to protect its technology.

While early reviews for this new product have generally been positive, some critics have noted possible limitations of the Apple ® iPhone. For example, the touch-screen display may be fragile and susceptible to scratching, and may be too small to accurately press with your fingers. Another concern voiced by critics is that although the iPhone is thin, it may be too large and heavy to carry around comfortably in your pocket. Also, 4 GB of storage space may not be enough for video and music files. A final concern is that a talk-time battery life of five hours may not be sufficient.

Overall, the Apple ® iPhone seems to be an attractive product with many positive features and a few limitations.



E. Apple TV (Private product) – Study 3

The new Apple ® TV is a revolutionary device that allows you to watch movies, TV shows, and photos downloaded from your computer on your TV. The Apple ® TV itself is a small square device measuring 7.7 inches per side and just 1.1 inches high, far smaller than a standard DVD player. It connects to your TV easily, and connects to your computer either with an Ethernet cable or wirelessly if you have wireless capability. Further, Apple ® TV features an Intel processor and a 40 GB hard drive for storing content locally, and delivers up to 720p high-definition resolution. It comes with an Apple ® Remote, a power cord, and a quick start guide.

Best of all, any changes made to your iTunes library are automatically reflected on Apple ® TV. Its built-in, super fast 802.11 wireless capability syncs your iTunes library from up to 5 Macs or PCs in the house. The 40 GB hard drive is capable of storing up to 50 hours of movies and TV shows, 9,000 songs, or 25,000 pictures, which are available for viewing on your television even if you turn off your computer. It also can stream video from a computer live to your TV without taking up space on Apple ® TV's hard drive. Apple ® TV is protected by multiple layers of intellectual property, and Apple ® has filed several patents to protect its technology.

While early reviews for this new product have generally been positive, some critics have noted possible limitations of the Apple ® TV. For example, the remote has limited functionality, and does not control audio volume on Apple ® TV. Another concern voiced by critics is that it does not support surround sound (stereo sound only). Also, 40 GB of storage space may not be enough for video and music files, and there is a lack of expansion options in case the hard drive fills up. A final concern is that you can't "purchase from the couch," meaning that you must go to your computer to download any new files into iTunes.

Overall, the Apple ® TV seems to be an attractive product with many positive features and a few limitations.

APPENDIX B: SCALE COMPARISONS

After completing the WOM measures, the 170 participants in study 3 completed three uniqueness scales: Consumer Need for Uniqueness (CNFU: Tian et al. 2001), General Need for Uniqueness (GNFU: Snyder and Fromkin 1977), and the Desire for Unique Consumer Products (DUCP: Lynn and Harris 1997). We also measured participants' market mavenism (Feick and Price 1987). The full items are available on request from the authors. We averaged participants' responses on all items in a scale (after appropriate reverse-scaling) to arrive at a score on each scale and calculated pair-wise correlations between scales (see table). We analyzed each scale using a confirmatory factor analysis approach with covariance structural equation models (SEM).

The results reveal that the GNFU measure correlates somewhat more strongly with CNFU ($r = .26, p < .001$) than with DUCP ($r = .16, p < .05$). This suggests that CNFU may be a broader measure of consumers' need for uniqueness, better predicting their behavior, while the DUCP may be restricted to the *purchase* of unique products. As Tian et al. (2001) state, the CNFU corresponds with consumers' responses to product designs, fashion cycles, and variety-seeking behavior. The CNFU scale is also more reliable ($\alpha = .95$) than the DUCP scale ($\alpha = .85$).

We therefore use the CNFU scale to measure consumers' need for uniqueness for the purpose of the present research. We also note that the overlap between CNFU and DUCP is significant, shown by a strong positive correlation ($r = .68, p < .001$). Study 3 uses the full CNFU scale, the pilot study & study 4 use the CNFU-AS (avoidance of similarity) subscale as suggested by reviewers, and study 5 uses the DUCP scale (Bzz agent executives deemed the CNFU scale to be too long). To ensure comparability across studies, we conduct a median split on the specific uniqueness scale used and classify participants as high- or low-uniqueness.

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

TABLE: SCALE CORRELATIONS AND RELIABILITY

Scale name	CNFU	CNFU subscales			MM	DUCP	GNFU
		CCC	AS	UCC			
CNFU: Consumer's need for uniqueness (31 items; Tian et al. 2001)	1						
CCC: Creative choice counter-conformity subscale (11 items)	.85 ^a .001	1					
AS: Avoidance of similarity subscale (9 items)	.80 .001	.55 .001	1				
UCC: Unpopular choice counter-conformity subscale (11 items)	.77 .001	.44 .001	.46 .001	1			
MM : Market Mavenism (6 items; Feick & Price 1987)	.42 .001	.45 .001	.35 .001	.19 .01	1		
DUCP : Desire for unique consumer products (8 items; Lynn and Harris 1997)	.68 .001	.67 .001	.54 .001	.42 .001	.54 .001	1	
GNFU : General need for uniqueness (31 items; Snyder & Fromkin 1997) ^b	.26 .001	.17 .03	-	.39 .001	-	.16 .04	1
OL : Opinion leadership in consumer electronics (7 items; King & Summers 1970)	.26 .001	.24 .002	.19 .01	.20 .01	.41 .001	.29 .001	.15 .06
Reliability (Cronbach α)	.95	.94	.94	.91	.91	.85	.83

SEM model fit statistics

	CNFU	CCC	AS	UCC	MM	DUCP	GNFU
χ^2	544.6	24.5	35.6	46.2			
<i>df</i>	404	32	20	34	8	14	374
RMSEA ($\leq .05$: good; $\leq .08$: acceptable)	.05	.00	.07	.05	.02	.03	.05
PCLOSE (test; H_0 : RMSEA $\leq .05$)	.78	.99	.19	.55	.67	.64	.80
GFI	.84	.97	.96	.96	.98	.98	.83
AGFI	.80	.95	.90	.91	.96	.94	.79
CFI	.96	1.00	.99	.99	1.00	1.00	.88
NFI	.87	.98	.97	.96	.99	.97	.67

^a The upper number in each cell is the correlation between the row and column scales. The lower number is the statistical significance of the correlation (*p*-level). A (-) indicates that the correlation was not significant (*p* > .10).

^b Because the survey was administered in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech tragedy, item #18 of the GNFU scale (If I must die, let it be an unusual death rather than an ordinary death in bed) was dropped lest it upset the participants.

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