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A BRIEF STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

In my research, I seek to foster a coexistence of theoretical and methodological rigor with the managerial relevance that ultimately motivates the science of marketing.

Over the last several decades, as marketing has emerged as an increasingly distinct discipline, a commendable move toward tighter and conceptually better developed research is evident. This trend has clearly been necessary. Its implementation has helped make research in our discipline more cumulative in nature, allowing greater conceptual progress from one study to another. Unfortunately, the internal validity of much research appears, to an increasing extent, to have come at the expense of external validity and applicability to the marketplace. In my research, I aim for the greatest degree of external validity possible while maintaining a rigorous theoretical framework. For example, my dissertation addressed the managerially relevant question of the positioning implications of a retail store's pricing environment (constant, everyday low price [EDLP] versus the fluctuating high-low patterns found in other stores). In reality, according to findings by Information Resources International (IRI), few stores use the pure EDLP format that I conceptualize in my research since, in practice, almost all grocery retail stores seem to feature some kind of promotion. In my experiment, the strictly "no sale" environment is experienced as one condition. While at first glance this approach may seem to jeopardize the applicability of my research to the actual market place, the experiment was in fact designed this way to accommodate both (1) the theoretical demand for a "pure read" on the effects of a conceptual pricing variable and (2) the satisfaction of the needs of retailers wishing to consider the potential impact of repositioning themselves to some extent between the "high-low" and EDLP polarities of the price-stability continuum. I strongly believe that hypotheses well grounded in theory can be motivated either by everyday experience or issues raised by practitioners. Recently, for example, I was struck by the oddity of a mailing I received offering a gold watch as a premium when joining a prepaid legal plan. Intuitively, I felt rather repelled by the way the watch seemed to cheapen the apparent image of the legal plan. I then translated this intuitive concern into more theoretical terms, hypothesizing that an incongruity between a principal product and a premium would likely lower a consumer's evaluation of the offer.

As the academic marketing discipline has increasingly matured, I believe that we face a growing responsibility to incorporate cross-cultural issues into our research and explore the extent to which findings hold across countries. In my

own field of pricing, for example, most research has been done on North American and European subjects. Yet, there are both theoretical and practical reasons why we might expect differences between countries. My particular interests in global consumer price behavior include:

- *The perceived price-quality relationship.* Differences between consumers in the U.S. and other countries have been anecdotally reported in the popular business press. For example, discount stores have experienced great difficulties in Britain, where price appears to be heavily equated with quality. Similar problems have been faced in Japan, although restrictive zoning laws share the blame. In contrast, it appears that, in less developed countries, perceived price-quality relationships may be less as consumers have not developed as much confidence in an established retail and brand-name manufacturing system. Yet, we today discuss perceived price-quality relationships mostly in terms of the standards of North American consumers.
- *Differences in consumer response to the framing of offers.* This variable is likely to be related to cultural orientations toward cognitive style. The differential velocities of money in different economies, i.e., the frequency with which consumers are paid and subsequently pay their expenses, may also influence the standard against which a sum of money is compared.
- *Promotional price-elasticities and consumer vulnerability to promotion "signaling."* These issues are likely to be highly culturally specific, given both income effects and cultural norms with respect to cognitive styles.

Another research interest of mine is consumer word-of mouth (WOM) communication. Firms such as Proctor & Gamble have faced ineradicable and periodically resurfacing rumors for decades if not centuries. With the growth of the Internet, however, we have begun to notice a major increase in unsubstantiated information spread among consumers.

My research in the area of consumer rumor dissemination with Michael Kamins and Valerie Folkes (*Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 6(2)), while grounded in solid behavioral theory, likewise addresses an issue of great practical interest to marketing managers. In ongoing research, we address the efficacy of using two-sided advertising to "inoculate" the consumer against anticipated negative WOM communications.