

In the eye of oneself and others: Novel perspectives on how striving for positive perceptions affects consumer behavior

Kristin Diehl
University of Southern California

Cite as:

Diehl Kristin (2020), In the eye of oneself and others: Novel perspectives on how striving for positive perceptions affects consumer behavior. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 48th, (63221)

Paper from the 49th Annual EMAC Conference, Budapest, May 26-29, 2020.



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Abstract

People want to hold a positive view of themselves, and want for others to do the same. Papers in this session explore how holding positive self-perceptions and maintaining positive perceptions in others drive both self-directed and other-directed behaviors. In “How (and when) self-perceptions increase saving” Garbinsky, Mead, and Gregg examine how the need to hold positive self-views affect one’s own saving behavior. They find that holding an overly positive view of one’s ability to save actually undermines saving behavior, but that recalling instances of spending (vs saving) can correct such views and can heighten savings. The remaining three papers examine how people’s desire for others to hold positive views of them drives their decisions to self-disclose. In “Disclosure of successes and failures as social utility,” Prinsloo, Scopelliti, Loewenstein, and Vosgerau find that the decision by a conversation partner to disclose either a personal success or failure leads the recipient of that message to respond in kind. Such disclosures carry social utility, which recipients take into account and try to maximize when deciding whether to disclose successes and failures in an effort to avoid social status imbalance. The remaining two papers focus in particular on self-disclosure in social media, a context that emphasizes certain aspects of self-disclosures (repetition) and also enables novel forms (visuals) of self-disclosure. In “When Facebook doesn’t forget: The effect of cumulative purchase signals on impressions.” Valsesia and Diehl examine how the repeated nature of self-disclosure on social-media affects others’ perceptions. Social media uniquely allows disclosures to remain visible over time and allows disclosure of both material but also of experiential purchases. They find that one-time disclosures do not necessarily alter others’ perceptions, but repeatedly disclosing material (vs. experiential) purchases lowers others’ perceptions because such disclosures seem inauthentic. Social media also allows people to disclose information by showing (i.e. posting pictures), not just by talking about it. In “How consumers use brands in pictures to self-present on social media,” Verlegh and Vonkman examine how consumers disclose their association with brands both visually and verbally. They find that when trying to create positive perceptions in others, people use visuals that associate them with higher-status brands, but that doing so appears braggy to others and thus actually backfires when it comes to creating positive views in others. This session documents the diverse behavioral consequences that creating and maintaining positive views in oneself and others may have. As such these findings contribute to our understanding of how self- and other-perceptions drive behavior.