**Research Proposal**

MASTER THESIS MARKETING MANAGEMENT

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Judging a book by its cover: a study into the effect of the type of book cover on book choice

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**1. Business Problem: Background / Probleemachtergrond**

When people are browsing through a bookstore, or looking at books online, the book cover plays an essential part in the customer’s search process. They will pick out books they feel drawn by, either because they recognize the book (title) or because the book cover induces some type of curiosity. The book cover is an important mechanism for authors who want as many people as possible to buy and read their book. The cover can function as a signal: an informative title, a drawing related to the story of the book, or bright colours that make the book stand out amongst other books. Authors will try to draw as much attention as possible to their book. This can be done by e.g. inducing curiosity. Lowenstein (1994) defines curiosity as a “form of cognitively induced deprivation that arises from the perception of a gap in knowledge or understanding” While the study of Daume and Hüttl-Maack (2020) looked at curiosity in ads, they propose three different curiosity-evoking elements that can be applied to books as well. These are information gaps, ambiguity, and novelty. People who frequently browse through (e-)books will quickly notice new books (novelty) amongst the existing books they have seen more frequently. In addition, novelty in books does not only refer to whether the book is a new release or not, but also on whether the type of cover is novel as compared to existing novels. A total different or peculiar composition compared to existing books, could spark more interest. By giving a book an (ambiguous) title that leaves out information about the book’s content (information gaps) people will be more likely to find out more about the contents of it. The cover of the book may play a bigger part for someone searching for a physical book than someone searching for an e-book. Physical books are, when carried around, seen by others whereas e-books often are not. Other people like to display their books at home, and enjoy looking at the covers. Another reason that may play a part in choosing a book can be people’s need for uniqueness. A person’s need for uniqueness is defined by Tian et al. (2001) as “an individual’s pursuit of differentness relative to others that is achieved through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one’s personal and social identity*”.* People with a high need for uniqueness when it comes to book may want to show of limited editions, rare, hard-to-find books or books with elaborate covers. This research will look at the how the type of book cover influences the type of books people choose and to what extent that relationship depends on people’s need for uniqueness and curiosity.

**2. Problem Statement and Research Questions/ Probleemstelling en onderzoeksvragen**

After considering the theoretical background, the following problem statement is derived:

**Problem statement**To what extent does the type of book cover (plain vs. elaborate) influence the type of books people choose (normal vs. e-book) and to what extent does this relationship depend on people’s need for uniqueness and curiosity?

**2.1 Theoretical Research questions**

1. How does the type of book cover influence the type of book people choose?
2. How does curiosity influence the type of book choice?
3. How does need for uniqueness influence the type of book choice?
4. How does curiosity influence the relationship between type of book cover and the type of book people choose?
5. How does need for uniqueness influence the relationship between type of book cover and the type of book people choose?

**2.2 Practical Research questions**

1. To what extent does the type of book cover influence the type of book people choose?
2. To what extent does curiosity influence the type of book choice?
3. To what extent does need for uniqueness influence the type of book choice?
4. To what extent does curiosity influence the relationship between type of book cover and the type of book people choose?
5. To what extent does need for uniqueness influence the relationship between type of book cover and the type of book people choose?

**3. Theoretical background/ Theoretisch kader**

***3.1. Conceptual Model/schematical overview***

Need for uniqueness

Book choice (physical vs. e-book)

Cover (Plain vs. Elaborate)

Curiosity

***3.2. Hypotheses / Conceptual background***

***(Hypotheses if applicable,***

To define the variables, we will first look at what they stand for, and how they will be interpreted in the research:

* *Cover*: the cover type of the book, being either a plain cover, or an elaborate book cover
* *Type of book*: book type, divided into being either a physical book or an e-book
* *Need for uniqueness:* an individual’s pursuit of differentness relative to others that is achieved through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one’s personal and social identity.
* *Curiosity*: how ambiguous, novel, and information

After defining the variables, we can derive the following hypotheses:

**H1:** *People are more likely to choose physical books over e-books when the book cover is elaborate compared to plain.*

**H2:** *People who have a high need for uniqueness are more likely to choose physical books over e-books when the book cover is elaborate compared to plain*

**H3**: *Highly curious people are more likely to choose physical books over e-books when the book cover is elaborate compared to plain.*

**4. Research Design/Onderzoeksmethode**

My study will be conducted by an experimental research. The study will have a 2x2 between-subjects design to test the hypotheses developed in chapter 3. Participants will be given a questionnaire in which they are randomly allocated to one of the four

**References/Referenties**

Daume, J., & Hüttl-Maack, V. (2020). Curiosity-inducing advertising: how positive emotions and expectations drive the effect of curiosity on consumer evaluations of products. *International Journal of Advertising, 39*(2), 307–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1633163

Tian, K. T., Bearden, W. O., & Hunter, G. L. (2001). Consumers’ need for uniqueness: scale development and validation. Journal of Consumer Research, 28(1), 50–66.