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Brand Advertising in an Access–Ownership World: How Marketing Channels Impact Message Persuasiveness

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Recent research has sought to identify drivers of preference for access-based consumption over ownership. Although much of this research highlights ideological reasons consumers may prefer access options, other empirical work suggests that functional reasons may be stronger drivers. We examine whether functional appeals will always result in more favorable attitudes toward access offerings or if and when ideological appeals will be equally or more persuasive. Building on the satisficing, maximizing, and brand personality literatures, we propose that people are more likely to satisfice in an access marketing channel, becoming more persuaded by appeals that fit with—or meet—minimum expectations given the brand’s personality. In contrast, people are more likely to maximize in an ownership marketing channel, becoming more persuaded by appeals that do not fit with—or exceed—minimum expectations given the brand’s personality. The results of two experiments with competent, exciting, and sincere brands largely support these hypotheses.

Keywords: *access, advertising, brand attitude, brand personality, marketing channel, maximizing, mode of consumption, ownership, persuasion, possession, satisficing, sharing economy, United States*

In light of the growing popularity of peer-to-peer sharing and other access-based consumption phenomena (Ferrell et al., 2017), firms are increasingly looking to expand beyond traditional ownership marketing channels by gaining *entrée* into emerging access marketing channels. In contrast to ownership-based consumption, *access-based consumption* does not involve the outright purchase of a product; rather, it is defined as a market-mediated transaction in which consumers acquire the short-term right to use or “access” goods (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Zipcar, Netflix, and Pandora Radio serve as pioneering examples of firms that have pursued the access marketing channel exclusively, providing consumers with the opportunity to purchase access to

cars, movies, and music without owning those products outright.

Firms that have traditionally sold ownership (but not access) rights to their wares are showing increased interest in the access marketing channel as evidenced by the rapid growth of the sharing economy (also known as the *gig economy*). For instance, since Daimler launched the first manufacturer-driven car-sharing program, car2go, in 2009, other automobile manufacturers, such as BMW (DriveNow), Ford (Ford2Go), Volkswagen (Quicar), and General Motors (attempted acquisition of Lyft), have followed suit (Baumeister et al., 2015). In fact, industry observers project that the car-sharing market will grow to US\$6.4 billion in retail sales by 2024 (Lorenz, 2016). More broadly speaking, a recent United States (U.S.) population survey of five key access sectors—travel, car sharing, finance, staffing, and music and video streaming—suggested the potential for an increase from nearly US\$15 billion in global revenues

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in 2015 to US\$335 billion by 2025 (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2015).

Thus, an important challenge now facing many ownership-based firms is how to promote themselves in this new access marketing channel (Ferrell et al., 2017). An apparent assumption by many practitioners and academics is that consumers who prefer access over ownership are strongly driven by ideological concerns such as environmentalism and waste reduction (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Belk, 2007; Black & Cherrier, 2010; Gollnhofer et al., 2016; Lawson, 2011; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011; Sacks, 2011). For instance, one of the key ways Zipcar, the largest car-sharing company in the world, has positioned itself is as a green and sustainable alternative to owning a car (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Further, researchers have highlighted several ideological reasons why consumers may prefer access over ownership, including the desire for community (Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011) and the disdain for unused utility as in a possession sitting idle (Black & Cherrier, 2010).¹

However, refuting this assumption, evidence has accumulated that functional concerns, such as cost savings and flexibility, may be stronger drivers of preference (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2015, 2016; Habibi et al., 2016; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Philip et al., 2015; Rudmin, 2016). For instance, purchasing access rights to use a product, such as paying a monthly car-sharing fee, is often more cost-effective than acquiring ownership rights to the product itself, such as buying a car (Lamberton & Rose, 2012).² Further, access-based consumption may lead consumers to value instrumental (i.e., functional) utility over social (i.e., ideological) utility because they identify less with, for instance, a shared car than a car they own (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012).³ Given such findings, an important question for marketers is if and how marketing communications should differ across access and ownership marketing channels in terms of the emphasis placed on functional and ideological concerns.

In the present research, we argue that the answer to this question will depend, in part, on the decision-making strategies consumers use in each channel as well as the personality of the brand. Building on research showing that people use different decision-making strategies depending on their familiarity with the decision domain (Schwartz et al., 2011) and whether they are making an experiential or material purchase (Carter & Gilovich, 2010), we propose that consumers are more likely to use a satisficing strategy when evaluating branded offerings in an access marketing channel, whereas they are more likely to use a maximizing strategy when evaluating branded offerings in an ownership marketing channel (Schwartz

et al., 2002; Simon, 1955). Thus, the types of messages that will resonate in access versus ownership channels will depend, respectively, on whether those messages meet minimum standards of acceptability or surpass those standards by exceeding expectations.

Further, we propose that these minimum standards may hinge on the personality of the brand (Aaker, 1997). For instance, whereas an ideological appeal might meet consumers' minimum expectations for an exciting brand, it might not meet minimum expectations for a competent brand. Likewise, whereas a functional appeal might not exceed consumers' expectations for a competent brand, it might exceed expectations for an exciting brand.

Therefore, we hypothesize that the types of messages (i.e., functional or ideological) that will resonate with consumers will depend on the marketing channel (i.e., access versus ownership) and the personality of the brand. Specifically, we hypothesize that people will become more persuaded by messages that fit with—or meet—minimum expectations given the brand's personality in an access marketing channel, whereas they will become more persuaded by messages that do not fit with—or exceed—minimum expectations given the brand's personality in an ownership marketing channel.

In the sections that follow, we first review the emerging literature on access-based consumption. Because our interest is in consumer behavior, we focus on the consumptive phenomena of accessing versus owning products rather than on the roles of service providers (e.g., Uber drivers) or technological platforms (e.g., Uber's digital app) in facilitating the sharing economy. Accordingly, our review demonstrates the need to examine the types of messages that are most persuasive in access versus ownership channels.

Next, we draw upon the satisficing, maximizing, and brand personality literatures to postulate conditions under which people may become more or less persuaded by functional and ideological appeals. We then present the results of two studies, providing support for the predicted moderating roles of marketing channel and brand personality in message persuasiveness. Finally, we discuss the contributions and limitations of this present research and highlight promising directions for future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Access-Based Consumption

Ownership remains a keystone structural element of modern societies today (Watkins et al., 2016). Historically *ownership* is defined largely from a legal perspective as private property rights and serves as the primary basis for determining how resources are consumed and used (Alchian & Demsetz, 1973). Ownership-based

¹ Also see Belk (2007) and Philip et al. (2015).

² Also see Rudmin (2016).

³ Also see Eckhardt and Bardhi (2016).

consumption is also commonly regarded as an economic lever; for instance, Cohen (2004) observes that in the post-World War II era, a wide range of U.S. economic interests endorsed the ideas of mass consumption, mass production, and trade among individuals as a means of successfully transitioning to a prosperous peacetime era.

In a review of the literatures on possession and access, Y. Chen (2009) notes that the psychological value of possessions, or “things we call ours” (Belk, 1988, p. 139), is multifold and derives from the accumulation of, and attachment to, objects. For instance, possessed objects may be used as a form of autonomy seeking (Kleine et al., 1995) and, as part of the extended self, signal aspects of oneself to others such as group membership (Belk, 1988). From these perspectives, ownership-based consumption is foundational to both society and our very identities and serves as a cornerstone of macroeconomic growth.

Access-based consumption, in contrast, is also market-mediated but no transfer of ownership takes place (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Rather, it is the right to use or access goods that is consumed as opposed to the goods themselves (Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Rudmin, 2016). Further, whereas the utility generated by accessing goods is temporary, consumers accumulate long-term utility through ownership (Benavent & Evrard, 2002; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Therefore, although some argue that access-based consumption has the potential to provide many of the same benefits as ownership such as exclusive use of a home while on a family vacation (Belk, 2007; Cohen, 2004), these differences raise important conceptual questions regarding the distinctions between mode of possession and the possessed object itself (Y. Chen, 2009; Habibi et al., 2016).

A body of work has recently emerged aimed at identifying the drivers of preference for access over ownership.⁴ As discussed, much of this work has focused on the ideological reasons consumers may gravitate toward access-based consumption. Herein, ideological reasons are broadly construed to include issues related to *political consumerism*—those “ideological interests” that promote access as “a more environmentally sustainable or antimarket consumption alternative” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p. 885)—and the sharing (versus exchange) characteristics of the Habibi et al. (2016) framework for classifying access-based offerings.

Environmental and sustainability concerns have been cited by many as a key motivational driver of access-based consumption (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Gollnhofer et al., 2016; Lawson, 2011; Williams & Paddock, 2003). Likewise, the perceived utility “waste” of owned products sitting idle is another reason consumers

may prefer to access rather than own (Belk, 2007; Bolton & Alba, 2012; Philip et al., 2015).

Baker and Baker (2016) recently presented qualitative evidence that shared resources can foster a positive sense of collective identity—a finding that is consistent with the notion that consumers may use access-based consumption as a way to commune with like-minded others who have, for example, shared environmental goals or a desire to support local business (Belk, 2007; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011; Philip et al., 2015).⁵ And, access offerings may provide anti-industry consumers with a means to buck a consumerist culture of continual acquisition (Black & Cherrier, 2010; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011).

Yet, despite the plethora of ideological reasons why consumers may prefer access over ownership, there is increasing evidence that functional reasons may be stronger drivers of preference. Functional reasons are broadly construed herein to include issues related to transaction utility, flexibility / mobility utility, and perceived product scarcity risk (Lamberton & Rose, 2012), as well as the exchange (versus sharing) characteristics of the Habibi et al. (2016) framework.

Principle among these functional drivers is the monetary incentive to access versus own (Baumeister et al., 2015; Belk, 2007; Rudmin, 2016; Sacks, 2011). In fact, cost savings is cited by several researchers as the primary impetus for access-based consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Philip et al., 2015). The flexibility and convenience often associated with access offerings are also desirable to many consumers. For example, car-sharing programs provide access to a wide variety of cars (Lawson, 2011; Philip et al., 2015; Trocchia & Beatty, 2003) in many locations (Lamberton & Rose, 2012) without the responsibilities of maintenance and storage (Berry & Maricle, 1973; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Rudmin, 2016). Further, the temporary nature of access-based consumption affords consumers the opportunity to try products prior to purchase (Locander & Hermann, 1979; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011; Philip et al., 2015).

Although few researchers have empirically examined the relative importance of functional and ideological reasons for access-based consumption, their collective findings suggest that people are more motivated by functional than ideological concerns (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Philip et al., 2015).⁶ For instance, Lamberton and Rose (2012) find that whereas functional drivers such as transaction utility, flexibility / mobility utility, and perceived product scarcity risk are significant predictors of one’s likelihood to choose an access offering, ideological drivers such as anti-industry utility and social utility are not. Further, Baumeister

⁴For reviews, see Habibi et al. (2016) and Philip et al. (2015).

⁵Also see Eckhardt and Bardhi (2016).

⁶Also see Habibi et al. (2016).

and Wangenheim (2014) find that whereas functional and monetary perceptions are generally the most important determinants of consumers' choice between access and ownership channels, experiential and symbolic perceptions are secondary. These findings reinforce Philip et al.'s (2015) claim that ideological reasons do not appear to be a primary driver of access-based consumption but, rather, "an added bonus" (p. 1324).

Yet, it remains unclear whether functional reasons will always be stronger predictors of consumers' attitudes toward access offerings, or if and when ideological reasons may be equally or more persuasive. In the next sections, we explore how the mode of consumption (i.e., access versus ownership) and brand itself may impact, respectively, the types of decision-making strategies people use and the messages (i.e., functional versus ideological) they find most persuasive.

Satisficing versus Maximizing

There are reasons to believe that people will evaluate offerings differently when considering them for access-based consumption as compared with ownership-based consumption. First, people are more likely to adopt a satisficing (versus a maximizing) strategy when making decisions under conditions of information uncertainty (Schwartz et al., 2011). Whereas *satisficing* reflects the tendency to settle for "good enough" options by searching and ultimately settling for a solution that is satisfactory (Simon, 1955), *maximizing* reflects the tendency to choose the "best" possible option after carefully comparing one's alternatives (Schwartz et al., 2002).⁷

A satisficing strategy is more likely to be adopted when people lack information or experience that hinders their ability to calculate and analyze risk and, therefore, make optimal decisions (Ben-Haim, 2012a, 2012b; Schwartz et al., 2011; Simon, 1955).⁸ Such information uncertainty may stem from indeterminism, the uncertainties of an evolving world, or untestable assumptions (Ben-Haim, 2012b) and has been shown to lead to satisficing in situations as disparate as selecting stocks for one's equity portfolio (Ben-Haim & Jeske, 2003) and the foraging behaviors of diverse species (Carmel & Ben-Haim, 2005). Because access marketing channels are newer and likely less familiar to most consumers, this research provides some initial evidence that people may be more likely to satisfice when evaluating their options in an emerging access channel but maximize when evaluating their options in a more established ownership channel.

Additional support for this proposition comes from research comparing experiential and material purchases. In particular, Carter and Gilovich (2010) found that whereas people are more likely to use a satisficing

strategy when making experiential purchases, they are more likely to use a maximizing strategy when making material purchases. This finding was robust controlling for the cost of various experiential and material purchases and corroborates theorizing regarding the association between the ability to make comparisons and the adoption of a maximizing strategy (Iyengar et al., 2006; Ma & Roese, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2002; Simon, 1955). Specifically, Carter and Gilovich (2010) argued that because comparisons are facilitated by the tangible nature of material objects, people are better able to choose the "best" option when making material (versus experiential) purchases. For example, it is easier to compare various watch options with "alignable" features and benefits than it is to compare various vacation options that may have quite different (and often intangible) features and benefits.

In further support of the notion that people are more likely to satisfice when evaluating their experiential options, Gilovich et al. (2015) and Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) found that people tend to be more satisfied with experiential than material purchases. This is notable as satisficers tend to be happier with their choices, whereas maximizers often experience dissatisfaction and regret (Iyengar et al., 2006; Ma & Roese, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2002). To the extent that access-based consumption is comparable to an experiential purchase and ownership-based consumption is comparable to a material purchase (Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Rudmin, 2016), these findings serve as additional evidence that people may be more likely to satisfice (maximize) when evaluating their options in an access (ownership) marketing channel.

In summary, because people are both less likely to be familiar with access-based consumption (Schwartz et al., 2011) and less able to make comparisons given the experiential nature of access offerings (Carter & Gilovich, 2010), we propose that people will be more likely to satisfice in an access marketing channel, gravitating toward those options that meet minimum standards of acceptability. In contrast, because people are both more likely to be familiar with ownership-based consumption and better able to make comparisons given the material nature of ownership offerings, we propose that people will be more likely to maximize in an ownership marketing channel, gravitating toward those options that exceed minimum standards. Next, we turn to the literature on preference construction to better understand how minimum standards of acceptability are established.

Establishing Minimum Standards of Acceptability

Once a person has adopted a satisficing or maximizing strategy, how do they decide what is good enough or optimal, respectively? In other words, on what do people anchor to establish minimum standards of acceptability? Although the satisficing literature provides some insight into factors that influence the raising and

⁷Also see Carter and Gilovich (2010) and Ma and Roese (2014).

⁸Also see Knight (1921).

lowering of standards (Levav et al., 2012; Mogilner et al., 2013; Schwartz, 2000, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2002; Simon, 1955), little direct guidance is provided as to how minimum standards or expectations such as aspiration levels (Simon, 1955), cutoffs (Huber & Klein, 1991), or thresholds of acceptability (Schwartz et al., 2002) are set. Fortunately, research regarding how people construct their preferences sheds important light on this issue.

Building on Simon's (1955) theory of bounded rationality, Bettman et al. (1998) propose that people do not always have firmly established standards or preferences and so often construct their preferences at the time of choice given the options before them. The compromise effect represents a classic example of preference construction that is constrained to the attributes of the choice set. As initially demonstrated by Simonson (1989), compromise options (i.e., those that perform moderately well across all presented attributes) are often preferred to extreme options (i.e., those that perform comparatively better on some attributes but worse on others). One explanation for this effect is that when people are uncertain which attributes are most important, they weight the presented attributes equally and choose the option that does not perform poorly on any given attribute—that is, the compromise option (Sheng et al., 2005).

As previously discussed, we argue that the same conditions of information uncertainty are present in an emerging access marketing channel with which consumers are relatively unfamiliar. Hence, in the face of uncertainty as to how to evaluate one's options in an access channel, people may anchor on the information presented to establish minimum standards of acceptability. Evidence in support of this proposition comes from Huber and Klein (1991), who show that attribute cutoffs, or the "minimum acceptable levels that an alternative must possess to be considered further," are determined by aspects of the choice environment (p. 346). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that people may anchor on some aspect of the choice context—in this case, the brand (Sinn et al., 2007)—when constructing the minimum standards they use to evaluate their options.

In this present research, we propose that consumers' perceptions of a brand's personality may serve as an anchor point by which minimum standards or expectations are established. In the next section, we draw upon the brand personality literature to form hypotheses regarding the types of appeals that will meet or exceed consumers' minimum expectations for different brands.

Brand Personality

Research has shown that people often relate to brands in ways that are similar to how they relate to other people (Fournier, 1998, 2009; Kervyn et al., 2012). Of particular interest in this present research is the well-established tendency to associate personality traits with brands

(Aaker, 1997; Kervyn et al., 2012). In her pioneering work on the topic, Aaker (1997) defined *brand personality* as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" and identified five dimensions along which perceptions of brand personality differ (p. 347).⁹ Three of these dimensions are focal in the present research: competence, excitement, and sincerity.

These dimensions warrant particular consideration as they account for the majority of variance in brand personality perceptions (Aaker, 1997) and, consequently, have received much attention in the literature (Aaker et al., 2004; Kim & Sung, 2013; Sundar & Noseworthy, 2016; Swaminathan et al., 2009).¹⁰ Because marketing communications are a key way that firms signal brand personality (Aaker et al., 2012), we note that they may also be instrumental in shaping the expectations, or minimum standards, against which branded offerings (Aaker et al., 2012; Batra et al., 2010) and actions (Aaker et al., 2004; Kim & Sung, 2013) are judged.

Aaker's work (1997) identifies specific traits that are associated with competent, exciting, and sincere brands—traits that we argue may serve to inform the minimum expectations consumers have of those brands. Competent brands, such as *The Wall Street Journal* (Aaker, 1997) and BMW (Branaghan & Hildebrand, 2011), are associated with reliability, intelligence, and success. Given these associations, consumers may have minimum expectations that a competent brand will be able to satisfactorily address their functional concerns, such as cost and performance, whereas a demonstrated ability to address their ideological concerns, such as sustainability and environmentalism, would exceed those expectations.

In contrast, exciting brands, such as Virgin (Aaker et al., 2004) and Mountain Dew (Aaker et al., 2004; Branaghan & Hildebrand, 2011), are considered daring, spirited, and imaginative. Given these associations, consumers may, at a minimum, expect an exciting brand to be able to satisfactorily address their ideological concerns, whereas a demonstrated ability to address their functional concerns would exceed those expectations.

Sincere brands, such as Hallmark (Aaker et al., 2004) and Ford (Aaker et al., 2004; Branaghan & Hildebrand, 2011), are perceived to be honest, wholesome, and down-to-earth. Given these associations, consumers may expect sincere brands to be able to satisfactorily address whichever type of concern is highlighted: functional or ideological. As such, functional and ideological appeals may be equally persuasive for sincere brands.

Therefore, based on our theorizing regarding the decision-making strategies people are likely to use and the minimum standards by which brands are likely to be judged, we propose that when evaluating one's options in an access marketing channel, a satisficing strategy will be

⁹Also see Plummer (2000).

¹⁰Also see Aaker et al. (2010) and Aaker et al. (2012).

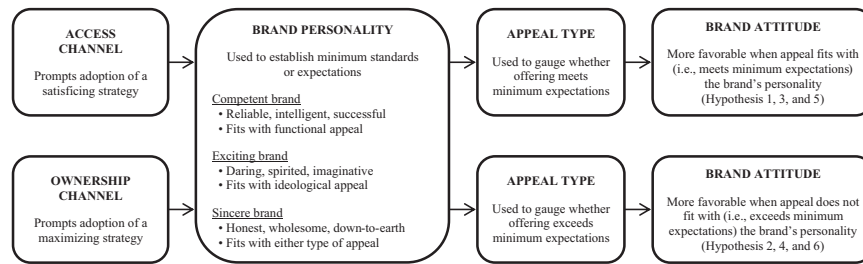


FIGURE 1 Theoretical model.

adopted, leading people to become more persuaded by messages that fit with—or meet—minimum expectations given the personality of the brand. Specifically, whereas a functional appeal fits one's expectations of a competent brand, an ideological appeal fits one's expectations of an exciting brand. Figure 1 presents the theoretical model.

In contrast, when evaluating one's options in an ownership marketing channel, a maximizing strategy will be adopted, leading people to become more persuaded by messages that do not fit with—or exceed—minimum expectations given the personality of the brand. Specifically, whereas an ideological appeal exceeds one's expectations of a competent brand, a functional appeal exceeds one's expectations of an exciting brand. Specifically, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: When promoting a competent brand in an access marketing channel, functional appeals will be more persuasive than ideological appeals.

Hypothesis 2: When promoting a competent brand in an ownership marketing channel, ideological appeals will be more persuasive than functional appeals.

Hypothesis 3: When promoting an exciting brand in an access marketing channel, ideological appeals will be more persuasive than functional appeals.

Hypothesis 4: When promoting an exciting brand in an ownership marketing channel, functional appeals will be more persuasive than ideological appeals.

Hypothesis 5: When promoting a sincere brand in an access marketing channel, functional and ideological appeals will be equally persuasive.

Hypothesis 6: When promoting a sincere brand in an ownership marketing channel, functional and ideological appeals will be equally persuasive.

EXPERIMENT 1

The objective of Experiment 1 was to test the moderating role of brand personality in the persuasiveness of functional and ideological appeals in an access marketing channel. We predicted that because access (versus ownership) is an emerging mode of consumption with which people are likely less familiar and experienced, participants would be more likely to satisfice when evaluating their options in an access channel and thus become more persuaded by appeals that fit with—or meet—minimum expectations given the personality of the brand.

Specifically, we hypothesized that functional (versus ideological) appeals would be more persuasive for a competent brand (Hypothesis 1), that the reverse would be true for an exciting brand (Hypothesis 3), and that both types of appeals would be equally persuasive for a sincere brand (Hypothesis 5). To test these hypotheses, a 3 (brand personality: competent, exciting, sincere) × 2 (appeal type: functional versus ideological) between-subjects design was used.

Method

An independent sample of 297 licensed U.S. drivers from an online panel (see Appendix A for demographic information) received US\$1 in exchange for their participation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions and told that we were interested in their thoughts and feelings about a new car-sharing program, GoCar™, that would be launched nationwide in the coming weeks.¹¹

Car sharing was chosen as the access-based consumption context (a) because we anticipated that most participants would be aware of it, (b) for its managerial relevance to the access–ownership distinction (e.g., General Motors' recent attempt to acquire Lyft), and (c) for its correspondence to other empirical research on access-based consumption (e.g., Baumeister et al., 2015; Habibi et al., 2016; Lamberton & Rose, 2012). GoCar, a car-sharing program that operates exclusively in Ireland, was chosen as the target brand because we anticipated

¹¹ A brief description of car-sharing programs was also provided to ensure that participants were acquainted with the concept.

that awareness would be negligible among U.S. consumers, thereby providing a blank canvas upon which we could project our brand personality manipulations.

After reading the cover story for the study, participants were asked to review a concept board for GoCar that contained the brand personality manipulation.¹² Specifically, competent, exciting, and sincere brand personality dimensions were manipulated, respectively, through five key elements of the concept boards: (a) content (i.e., adjectives used to describe the brand: “intelligent, reliable” versus “exciting, modern” versus “genuine, down-to-earth”) and activities for which the car-sharing service could be used (i.e., “traveling to a meeting” versus “road-tripping with friends” versus “volunteering in the community”); (b) tone (i.e., “Meet your new personal assistant. Greetings, I’m GoCar” versus “Meet your new bestie. Hey, I’m GoCar!” versus “Meet your new friend. Hello, I’m GoCar”); (c) visuals (i.e., running errands and traveling for business versus dancing with friends and cliff jumping versus picnicking with family and community gardening); (d) accent color (i.e., blue versus bright red versus soft green and brown); and (e) font (i.e., *Mongolian Baiti* versus *Jester* versus *Comic Sans*).¹³

Participants were then presented with one of two advertisements for GoCar that varied as to whether they contained primarily functional or ideological appeals.¹⁴ In particular, the functional ad featured the subhead “Because sharing just makes sense” and cited affordability, flexibility, and convenience as reasons to join the car-sharing program. The ideological ad featured the subhead “Because sharing is caring” and cited waste reduction, helping the environment, and joining a community of like-minded people as reasons to join the car-sharing program.

After reviewing the ad, participants evaluated the GoCar car-sharing program using a three-item measure (1 = *dislike, unfavorable, negative*; 7 = *like, favorable, positive*) with $\alpha = .96$. They then rated the brand with respect to 11 randomly presented traits commonly used to assess brand personality perceptions using a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*to a great extent*). Competent traits (i.e., reliable, intelligent, successful) yielded $\alpha = .83$. Exciting traits (i.e., exciting, unique, young, trendy) yielded $\alpha = .78$. Sincere traits (i.e., sincere, wholesome, sentimental, family-oriented) yielded $\alpha = .80$.¹⁵

To gauge their familiarity with car-sharing programs, participants were asked to indicate their agreement with three statements (“I am familiar with car-sharing programs,” “I have experience with car-sharing programs,” “I don’t know much about how car-sharing programs work” [reverse-coded]) using a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). It yielded $\alpha = .79$. To further assess familiarity with the access option used in this study, participants reported whether they currently owned a car and whether they had used a car-sharing program in the past with 0 corresponding to *yes* and 1 corresponding to *no*.

Finally, demographic information was collected. Participants were also given an instructional manipulation check to gauge their attentiveness to the study (adapted from Oppenheimer et al., 2009).

Results

Exclusion Criteria

Twelve participants were excluded because they failed to answer the instructional manipulation check correctly. Thus, 285 participants remained in the final sample.

Manipulation Checks

Marketing channel familiarity. To determine whether participants were relatively unfamiliar with the access marketing channel used in this study, participants’ reported familiarity and experience with car-sharing programs was examined. As expected, a comparison to the midpoint of the scale revealed that participants were relatively unfamiliar with car sharing ($M = 3.33$ versus 4.00; $t_{(284)} = -6.84$, $p < .001$). As an additional check, the reported incidence of car ownership and past car sharing were compared and the results of a Pearson chi-square analysis indicated that a directionally greater proportion of participants currently owned a car than had used a car-sharing program in the past (89% versus 7%; $\chi^2_{(1, N=285)} = 1.97$, $p = .16$). Thus, as predicted, participants were relatively unfamiliar with access-based consumption through car-sharing programs.

Brand personality. To determine whether the brand personality manipulation was successful, the perceived personality traits of the brand were examined using a 3 (brand personality) \times 2 (appeal type) \times 3 (perceived traits: competence, excitement, sincerity) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with perceived traits as a within-subject factor. The results revealed a within-subject effect of perceived traits ($F_{(2, 279)} = 151.37$, $p < .001$) such that excitement was perceived more strongly than competence ($M = 5.42$ versus 5.13; $F_{(1, 284)} = 23.61$, $p < .001$) or sincerity ($M = 5.42$ versus 4.38; $F_{(1, 284)} =$

¹²See Appendix B. Brand personality manipulation adapted from Aaker et al. (2004). Also see Aaker (1999), Kim and Sung (2013), Sundar and Noseworthy (2016), and Swaminathan et al. (2009).

¹³Content: see Aaker (1997); Accent color: see Labrecque and Milne (2012).

¹⁴See Appendix B. Functional and ideological appeals adapted from Lamberton and Rose’s (2012) augmented utility model for commercial sharing. Also see Habibi et al. (2016).

¹⁵Aaker et al. (2004); also see Sundar and Noseworthy (2016).

196.37, $p < .001$), and competence was perceived more strongly than sincerity ($M = 5.13$ versus 4.38; $F_{(1, 284)} = 143.39$, $p < .001$).

As expected, the results also yielded a brand personality \times perceived traits interaction ($F_{(4, 279)} = 19.34$, $p < .001$). To interpret this interaction, each brand personality condition was examined in turn. First, the competent brand was perceived to be more competent than the exciting brand ($M = 5.36$ versus 4.90; $t_{(279)} = 2.50$, $p = .01$), but only directionally more competent than the sincere brand ($M = 5.36$ versus 5.11; $t_{(279)} = 1.38$, $p = .17$). Further, the competent brand was perceived to be more competent than sincere ($M = 5.36$ versus 4.15; $F_{(1, 97)} = 130.49$, $p < .001$), but equally competent and exciting ($M = 5.36$ versus 5.42; $F_{(1, 97)} < 1$). Thus, the success of the competent brand personality manipulation was considered questionable.

Next, the exciting brand was perceived to be marginally more exciting than the sincere brand ($M = 5.56$ versus 5.28; $t_{(279)} = -1.69$, $p = .09$) and as exciting as the competent brand ($M = 5.56$ versus 5.42; $t_{(279)} < 1$). However, the exciting brand was also perceived to be more exciting than competent ($M = 5.56$ versus 4.90; $F_{(1, 90)} = 40.76$, $p < .001$) or sincere ($M = 5.56$ versus 4.09; $F_{(1, 90)} = 125.50$, $p < .001$). Thus, the exciting brand personality manipulation was considered successful.

Lastly, the sincere brand was perceived to be less sincere than competent ($M = 4.88$ versus 5.11; $F_{(1, 95)} = 6.44$, $p = .01$) or exciting ($M = 4.88$ versus 5.28; $F_{(1, 95)} = 12.60$, $p = .001$). However, the sincere brand was also perceived to be more sincere than either the competent brand ($M = 4.88$ versus 4.15; $t_{(279)} = -3.99$, $p < .001$) or the exciting brand ($M = 4.88$ versus 4.09; $t_{(279)} = 4.21$, $p < .001$). Thus, the sincere brand personality manipulation was considered successful. No other effects were significant ($F_s < 1.2$, $ps > .30$).

Brand Attitude

To test the hypothesized moderating role of brand personality in the persuasiveness of functional and ideological appeals in an access marketing channel, we submitted the brand attitude index to a 3×2 between-subjects ANOVA. This analysis yielded only a directional brand personality \times appeal type interaction ($F_{(2, 279)} = 2.06$, $p = .13$; Figure 2); all other effects were not significant ($F_s < 1.3$, $ps > .25$). However, because specific contrasts were predicted, follow-up planned contrasts for Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 (i.e., those with predictions regarding the access marketing channel) were conducted in turn.

We first predicted that, when promoting a competent brand in an access channel, functional (versus ideological) appeals would be more persuasive. Indeed, participants evaluated the competent brand marginally more favorably

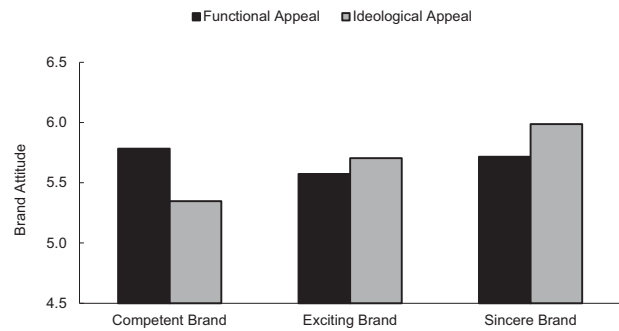


FIGURE 2 Brand attitude as a function of brand personality and appeal type (Experiment 1).

when presented with a functional appeal than an ideological appeal ($M = 5.78$ versus 5.35; $t_{(279)} = -1.68$, $p = .09$). Further, the ideological appeal was less persuasive for the competent brand than it was for the sincere brand ($M = 5.35$ versus 5.99; $t_{(279)} = -2.45$, $p < .05$) or the exciting brand (although only directionally so in the latter case: $M = 5.35$ versus 5.70; $t_{(279)} = -1.35$, $p = .18$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Next, turning our attention to the exciting brand, we predicted that in an access channel ideological (versus functional) appeals would be more persuasive. Although the results followed the predicted pattern, ideological appeals were not significantly more persuasive than functional appeals ($M = 5.70$ versus 5.57; $t_{(279)} < 1$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Turning at last to the sincere brand, we predicted that functional and ideological appeals would be equally persuasive in an access channel. As expected, functional and ideological appeals resulted in equally favorable evaluations of the sincere brand ($M = 5.72$ versus 5.99; $t_{(279)} = 1.03$, $p = .30$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was supported. No other contrasts were significant ($ts < 1.10$, $ps > .25$).

Discussion of Experiment 1

The results of Experiment 1 provide preliminary support for two of our three access-based consumption hypotheses. Specifically, we found that functional (versus ideological) appeals were marginally more persuasive for a competent brand (Hypothesis 1), whereas functional and ideological appeals were equally persuasive for a sincere brand (Hypothesis 5). This pattern of results, coupled with our marketing channel familiarity findings, is in keeping with the notion that people use a satisficing strategy when making decisions under conditions of information uncertainty—such as in a marketing channel with which they are relatively unfamiliar and inexperienced (i.e., an access channel)—thereby becoming more persuaded by messages that fit with, or meet minimum expectations, given the personality of the brand.

We did not, however, find support for Hypothesis 3 that ideological (versus functional) appeals are more persuasive for an exciting brand. Instead, as with the sincere brand, we found functional and ideological appeals to be equally persuasive.

There is one limitation of the present study that may have impacted the findings: although the use of an unknown brand allows for brand personality manipulations that are unencumbered by existing brand perceptions, the novel nature of the brand may have interfered with those manipulations in unexpected ways. Specifically, it may have both bolstered perceptions of excitement and attenuated perceptions of competence across all brand personality conditions, thereby diluting the effects of the exciting and competent brand personality manipulations. The results for the brand personality manipulation check align with this interpretation.

We address this concern in Experiment 2 by manipulating brand personality for a known brand that is perceived to be moderately competent, exciting, and sincere. We also perform a manipulation check for appeal type to confirm that the functional and ideological appeals convey the intended message. Most importantly, we sought to test the predicted moderating role of mode of consumption by examining the persuasiveness of functional and ideological appeals for various brands across both access and ownership marketing channels.

EXPERIMENT 2

The main objective of Experiment 2 was to test the moderating role of the marketing channel in the persuasiveness of functional and ideological appeals for brands with different personalities. Whereas the access marketing channel condition served as a conceptual replication of Experiment 1 using a known (versus unknown) brand, the ownership marketing channel condition allowed us to test additional hypotheses.

Specifically, we predicted that because ownership (versus access) is an established mode of consumption with which people are likely more familiar and experienced, participants would be more likely to maximize when evaluating their options in an ownership channel and thus become more persuaded by appeals that do not fit with—or exceed—minimum expectations given the personality of the brand. We hypothesized that, whereas functional (versus ideological) appeals would be more persuasive for a competent brand in an access channel (Hypothesis 1), the reverse would be true in an ownership channel (Hypothesis 2).

Likewise, we hypothesized that, whereas ideological (versus functional) appeals would be more persuasive for an exciting brand in an access channel (Hypothesis 3), the

reverse would be true in an ownership channel (Hypothesis 4). Finally, we hypothesized that both types of appeals would be equally persuasive for a sincere brand regardless of the marketing channel (Hypotheses 5 and 6).

To test these hypotheses, a 2 (marketing channel: access versus ownership) \times 3 (brand personality: competent, exciting, sincere) \times 2 (appeal type: functional versus ideological) between-subjects design was used. Before proceeding with the main experiment, we conducted a pretest with an independent sample.

Pretest

The sample was composed of 370 licensed U.S. drivers and used to confirm that people are indeed more likely to satisfice (maximize) in an access (ownership) marketing channel. Adapting the procedure used by Carter and Gilovich (2010) to examine the different decision-making strategies people use when making material and experiential purchases, we first briefly described maximizing and satisficing strategies.

We then presented participants with four consumption scenarios (i.e., buying a car, joining a car-sharing program, buying a bicycle, joining a bike-sharing program), alternating between access and ownership scenarios and counterbalancing the marketing channel that was presented first.¹⁶ Finally, after each scenario was presented, participants reported whether they would be more likely to maximize or satisfice when deciding which product (or sharing program) to choose on a scale from 1 (*more likely to maximize*) to 7 (*more likely to satisfice*).

As predicted, repeated measures ANOVAs revealed that participants were more likely to satisfice in an access channel and maximize in an ownership channel ($M_{\text{car}} = 3.55$ versus 1.94 ; $F_{(1, 369)} = 126.30$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{bike}} = 4.74$ versus 3.07 ; $F_{(1, 368)} = 138.37$, $p < .001$). These results provide support for the different decision-making strategies proposed to underlie access-based versus ownership-based consumption decisions.

Method

An independent sample of 572 licensed U.S. drivers from an online panel (see Appendix A for demographic information) received US\$1 in exchange for their participation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of twelve experimental conditions and given the cover story for the study that contained the marketing channel manipulation.

In particular, participants were told that the Honda Accord Hybrid was being relaunched after a two-year hiatus, during which time manufacturing facilities were relocated and improved. Additionally, participants in the

¹⁶The order of presentation did not significantly affect the results.

ownership-channel condition were told that the new and improved Honda Accord Hybrid would soon be available for purchase, whereas those in the access-channel condition were told the brand would soon be exclusively available through a new car-sharing program, Honda Accord Hybrid CarShare.¹⁷

Honda was chosen as the target brand because it is perceived as being relatively competent, sincere, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, exciting (Branaghan & Hildebrand, 2011).¹⁸ Therefore, we expected perceptions of the brand's personality to be malleable across these dimensions. The Accord Hybrid model was chosen because, as with a car-sharing program, we suspected it could be convincingly promoted using either functional or ideological appeals.

After reading the cover story, participants were asked to review a concept board for either the Honda Accord Hybrid or the Honda Accord Hybrid CarShare program, depending on the marketing channel condition to which they had been assigned. The concept boards were adapted from Experiment 1 and contained the competent, exciting, and sincere brand personality manipulations.¹⁹

Participants were then presented with one of two advertisements for either the ownership or access offering. Again, the ads were adapted from Experiment 1 and varied with regard to whether they contained primarily functional or ideological appeals.²⁰

After reviewing the ad, participants evaluated either the Honda Accord Hybrid or the Honda Accord Hybrid CarShare program using the same three-item measure from Experiment 1 yielding $\alpha = .96$. They then rated the brand with respect to the same competent ($\alpha = .86$), exciting ($\alpha = .82$), and sincere ($\alpha = .80$) brand personality traits assessed in Experiment 1.

Next, participants rated the extent to which eight randomly-presented adjectives described the reasons given in the ad to purchase or share a Honda Accord Hybrid using a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*to a great extent*). Functional reasons (i.e., functional, utilitarian, practical, sensible) yielded $\alpha = .87$. Ideological reasons (i.e., ideological, principled, compassionate, caring) yielded $\alpha = .85$.

Participants' relative familiarity with hybrids and car-sharing programs was gauged using measures adapted from Experiment 1. The three-item hybrid familiarity

index yielded $\alpha = .81$ and the three-item car-sharing familiarity index yielded $\alpha = .78$. Participant car ownership and past car-sharing usage was also reported on a scale with 0 corresponding to *yes* and 1 corresponding to *no*.

Finally, demographic information was collected. Participants were also provided with the opportunity to indicate whether they found any aspect of the study particularly interesting or suspicious.

Results

Exclusion Criteria

Eleven participants were excluded because they indicated in the open-ended suspicion question that they remained unclear about aspects of the car-sharing program described in the study. Thus, 561 participants remained in the final sample.

Manipulation Checks

Marketing channel familiarity. To determine whether participants were more familiar with the ownership marketing channel than the access marketing channel used in this study, participants' relative familiarity with hybrids and car sharing was examined using a 2 (marketing channel) \times 3 (brand personality) \times 2 (appeal type) \times 2 (marketing channel familiarity: hybrid versus car sharing) repeated measures ANOVA, with marketing channel familiarity as a within-subject factor. As expected, the results revealed a within-subject effect of marketing channel familiarity such that participants were more familiar with hybrids than car sharing ($M = 4.51$ versus 3.04; $F_{(1, 549)} = 395.67, p < .001$).

The results also revealed a brand personality \times marketing channel familiarity interaction ($F_{(2, 549)} = 5.24, p < .01$) such that reported familiarity with car sharing was higher in the sincere condition than the exciting condition ($M = 3.18$ versus 2.86; $t_{(549)} = 2.09, p < .05$). No other effects were significant ($F_s < 2.1, p_s > .10$).

As an additional check of participants' relative familiarity with ownership and access channels, the reported incidence of car ownership and past car-sharing usage were compared. As expected, the results of a Pearson chi-square analysis indicated that a greater proportion of participants currently owned a car than had used a car-sharing program in the past (92% versus 6%; $\chi^2_{(1, N=561)} = 4.55, p < .05$). Thus, as predicted, participants were more familiar with ownership-based consumption in general and hybrids in particular than they were with access-based consumption through car-sharing programs.

Brand personality. To determine whether the brand personality manipulation was successful, the perceived personality traits of the brand were examined using a 2 \times 3 \times 2 \times 3 (perceived traits: competence, excitement,

¹⁷Note that a brief description of car-sharing programs was also provided in the access condition to ensure that participants were acquainted with the concept.

¹⁸For a similar approach, see Swaminathan et al. (2009).

¹⁹See Appendix C for concept boards used in the ownership-channel condition; those used in the access-channel condition were similar to Appendix B.

²⁰See Appendix C for appeals used in the ownership-channel condition; those used in the access-channel condition were similar to Appendix B.

sincerity) repeated measures ANOVA, with perceived traits as a within-subject factor. The results revealed three within-subject effects and two between-subject effects; however, because the between-subject effects are collapsed across the three focal dimensions of brand personality (resulting in a measure that indicates being high or low on brand personality traits, in general), they will not be discussed further.

First, the results revealed a within-subject effect of perceived traits ($F_{(2, 548)} = 115.26, p < .001$) such that competence was perceived more strongly than excitement ($M = 5.40$ versus 5.20 ; $F_{(1, 559)} = 18.81, p < .001$) or sincerity ($M = 5.40$ versus 4.74 ; $F_{(1, 559)} = 242.34, p < .001$), and excitement was perceived more strongly than sincerity ($M = 5.20$ versus 4.74 ; $F_{(1, 559)} = 74.22, p < .001$). The results also revealed a marketing channel \times perceived traits interaction ($F_{(2, 548)} = 31.03, p < .001$) as excitement was perceived more strongly in the access channel than the ownership channel ($M = 5.37$ versus 5.03 ; $t_{(548)} = -3.31, p = .001$), whereas competence and sincerity were perceived more strongly in the ownership channel than the access channel ($M_{\text{competence}} = 5.55$ versus 5.25 ; $t_{(548)} = 2.92, p < .01$; $M_{\text{sincerity}} = 4.84$ versus 4.64 ; $t_{(548)} = 1.97, p = .05$).

Finally, and as expected, the results yielded a brand personality \times perceived traits interaction ($F_{(4, 548)} = 32.41, p < .001$). To interpret this interaction, each brand personality condition was examined in turn.

First, the competent brand was perceived to be as competent as the exciting brand ($M = 5.45$ versus 5.33 ; $t_{(548)} < 1$) and the sincere brand ($M = 5.45$ versus 5.44 ; $t_{(548)} < 1$). However, the competent brand was also perceived to be more competent than exciting ($M = 5.45$ versus 4.90 ; $F_{(1, 180)} = 46.99, p < .001$) or sincere ($M = 5.45$ versus 4.51 ; $F_{(1, 180)} = 177.88, p < .001$). Thus, the competent brand personality manipulation was considered successful.

Next, the exciting brand was perceived to be more exciting than competent ($M = 5.50$ versus 5.33 ; $F_{(1, 194)} = 5.92, p < .05$) or sincere ($M = 5.50$ versus 4.50 ; $F_{(1, 194)} = 142.72, p < .001$). The exciting brand was also perceived to be more exciting than either the competent brand ($M = 5.50$ versus 4.90 ; $t_{(548)} = -4.63, p < .001$) or the sincere brand ($M = 5.50$ versus 5.17 ; $t_{(548)} = -2.69, p = .01$). Thus, the exciting brand personality manipulation was considered successful.

Lastly, the sincere brand was perceived to be more competent than sincere ($M = 5.44$ versus 5.23 ; $F_{(1, 183)} = 8.83, p < .01$) or exciting ($M = 5.44$ versus 5.17 ; $F_{(1, 183)} = 8.94, p < .01$). However, the sincere brand was also perceived to be more sincere than either the competent brand ($M = 5.23$ versus 4.51 ; $t_{(548)} = -5.54, p < .001$) or the exciting brand ($M = 5.23$ versus 4.50 ; $t_{(548)} = 5.80, p < .001$). Thus, the sincere brand personality manipulation was considered successful. No other effects were significant ($F_s < 2.7, p_s > .10$).

Appeal type. To determine whether the appeal type manipulation was successful, the perceived reasons given in the advertisement to purchase or share a Honda Accord Hybrid were examined using a $2 \times 3 \times 2 \times 2$ (perceived reasons: functional versus ideological) repeated measures ANOVA, with perceived reasons as a within-subject factor. The results revealed a within-subject effect of perceived reasons such that functional reasons were perceived more strongly than ideological reasons across the advertisements ($M = 5.58$ versus 5.06 ; $F_{(1, 548)} = 94.98, p < .001$).

The results also revealed the expected appeal type \times perceived reasons interaction ($F_{(1, 548)} = 5.24, p < .01$). As anticipated, functional reasons were perceived more strongly in the functional appeal than the ideological appeal ($M = 5.74$ versus 5.42 ; $t_{(548)} = -3.22, p = .001$). Ideological reasons were perceived more strongly in the ideological appeal than the functional appeal ($M = 5.35$ versus 4.78 ; $t_{(548)} = 5.25, p < .001$).

Finally, the results yielded a marketing channel \times appeal type \times perceived reasons interaction ($F_{(1, 548)} = 8.13, p = .01$) such that the ideological reasons given in the ideological appeal were perceived more strongly in the ownership channel than the access channel ($M = 5.55$ versus 5.13 ; $t_{(548)} = 2.74, p = .01$). No other effects were significant ($F_s < 2.7, p_s > .05$).

Brand Attitude

To test the hypothesized moderating roles of marketing channel and brand personality in message persuasiveness, we submitted the brand attitude index to a $2 \times 3 \times 2$ between-subjects ANOVA. This analysis yielded a main effect of marketing channel ($F_{(1, 549)} = 10.52, p = .001$) such that the brand was evaluated more favorably in the ownership-channel condition than the access-channel condition ($M = 5.92$ versus 5.56). The results also revealed a main effect of appeal type ($F_{(1, 549)} = 3.75, p = .05$) such that participants presented with a functional appeal evaluated the brand more favorably than those presented with an ideological appeal ($M = 5.85$ versus 5.64).

Finally, and more central to the hypotheses advanced in our research, the results yielded the predicted marketing channel \times brand personality \times appeal type interaction ($F_{(2, 549)} = 4.21, p < .05$; Figure 3); no other effects were significant ($F_s < 1$). To examine the nature of this interaction, follow-up planned contrasts for each hypothesis were conducted in turn.

We first predicted that when promoting a competent brand in an access channel, functional (versus ideological) appeals would be more persuasive. Indeed, participants in the access condition evaluated the competent brand more favorably when presented with a functional appeal than an ideological appeal ($M = 5.87$ versus 5.31 ; $t_{(549)} = -1.95, p = .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

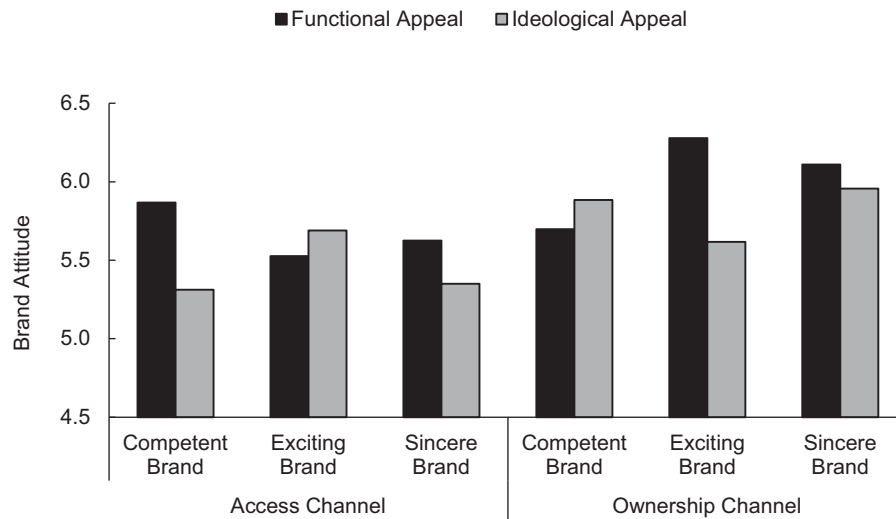


FIGURE 3 Brand attitude as a function of marketing channel, brand personality, and appeal type (Experiment 2).

We also predicted that when promoting a competent brand in an ownership channel, ideological (versus functional) appeals would be more persuasive. Although the results followed the predicted pattern, ideological appeals were not significantly more persuasive than functional appeals ($M = 5.88$ versus 5.70 ; $t_{(549)} < 1$). However, the ideological / ownership appeal was more persuasive than the ideological / access appeal for the competent brand ($M = 5.88$ versus 5.31 ; $t_{(549)} = 2.08$, $p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Next, turning our attention to the exciting brand, we predicted that in an access channel, ideological (versus functional) appeals would be more persuasive. Although, as in Experiment 1, the results followed the predicted pattern, ideological appeals were not significantly more persuasive than functional appeals ($M = 5.69$ versus 5.53 ; $t_{(549)} < 1$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

We also predicted that when promoting an exciting brand in an ownership channel, functional (versus ideological) appeals would be more persuasive. Indeed, participants in the ownership condition evaluated the exciting brand more favorably when presented with a functional appeal than an ideological appeal ($M = 6.28$ versus 5.62 ; $t_{(549)} = -2.52$, $p = .01$). Further, the functional / ownership appeal was more persuasive than the functional / access appeal for the exciting brand ($M = 6.28$ versus 5.53 ; $t_{(549)} = 2.82$, $p = .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Turning our attention at last to the sincere brand, we predicted that functional and ideological appeals would be equally persuasive in both access and ownership channels. As expected, the functional / access and ideological / access appeals resulted in equally favorable evaluations of the sincere brand ($M = 5.63$ versus 5.35 ; $t_{(549)} < 1$). Likewise, the functional / ownership and ideological / ownership appeals were equally persuasive ($M = 6.11$ versus 5.96 ; $t_{(549)} < 1$). Thus, Hypotheses 5 and 6 were supported.

Finally, it is noteworthy that, aside from those contrasts predicted by our hypotheses, only three additional contrasts approached significance. First, mirroring the main effect of marketing channel, the sincere brand was evaluated more favorably in the ownership (versus access) channel condition regardless of appeal type ($M_{\text{functional}} = 6.11$ versus 5.63 ; $t_{(549)} = 1.81$, $p = .07$; $M_{\text{ideological}} = 5.96$ versus 5.35 ; $t_{(549)} = 2.14$, $p < .05$). Additionally, consistent with the pattern of results predicted by Hypotheses 2 and 4, the functional / ownership appeal was more persuasive for the exciting brand than the competent brand ($M = 6.28$ versus 5.70 ; $t_{(549)} = -2.17$, $p < .05$). No other contrasts were significant ($ts < 1.6$, $ps > .10$).

Discussion of Experiment 2

The results of Experiment 2 offer convergent support for two of our three access-based consumption hypotheses. They also provide preliminary support for all three ownership-based consumption hypotheses, thereby providing evidence of the predicted moderating role of marketing channel in the types of messages that are persuasive for different brands. In particular, whereas functional appeals were more persuasive for a competent brand in an access marketing channel (Hypothesis 1), ideological appeals were more persuasive in an ownership marketing channel (Hypothesis 2).

The access-channel results for the competent brand provide a strong replication of the pattern observed in Experiment 1, increasing confidence in our satisficing theorizing. In contrast, the ownership-channel results provide initial evidence in keeping with the notion that people use a maximizing strategy when making decisions under conditions of information certainty—such as in a marketing channel with which they are relatively familiar and experienced—thereby becoming more persuaded

by messages that do not fit with, or exceed minimum expectations, given the personality of the brand.

Hypothesis support for the exciting brand was mixed. As predicted, functional (versus ideological) appeals were more persuasive for an exciting brand in an ownership channel (Hypothesis 4): this, again, is consistent with a maximizing strategy of showing preference for offerings that go above and beyond one's expectations of the brand. However, we did not find support for the hypothesis that ideological (versus functional) appeals are more persuasive for an exciting brand in an access channel (Hypothesis 3). Instead, replicating our results from Experiment 1, we found that both types of appeals were equally persuasive.

The channel \times appeal type \times perceived reasons interaction for the appeal type manipulation check may shed light on why we did not find support for Hypothesis 3. Specifically, we found that the ideological reasons given in the ideological appeal were perceived more strongly in the ownership channel than the access channel, perhaps indicating selective perception by participants according to their satisficing (access channel) and maximizing (ownership channel) strategies. That is, participants may have been more sensitive to ideological appeals in the ownership condition when using a maximizing strategy and less sensitive to ideological appeals in the access channel when using a satisficing strategy. If so, the ideological appeal may not have confirmed participants' minimum expectations of the exciting brand in an access channel as strongly as anticipated.

Lastly, we found that, as expected, functional and ideological appeals were equally persuasive for a sincere brand regardless of the marketing channel (Hypotheses 5 and 6). Whereas the access-channel results replicated the results observed for the sincere brand in Experiment 1, the ownership-channel results provided initial evidence in keeping with the notion that, because sincere brands are perceived to be honest and trustworthy, either type of appeal is convincing regardless of whether a satisficing or maximizing strategy is used to evaluate one's options. Thus, the sincere brands used in our studies appear to enjoy the best of both access and ownership worlds as functional and ideological appeals are equally convincing in both channels. This gives sincere brands a buffer against fluctuations in message persuasiveness that result from the different decision-making strategies used across marketing channels.

It is also noteworthy that, across marketing-channel and brand-personality conditions, participants presented with a functional appeal evaluated the brand more favorably than those presented with an ideological appeal. This finding is in keeping with research that has shown that functional reasons for access-based consumption, such as cost savings and flexibility, are often stronger predictors of preference than ideological reasons such as

environmental and waste concerns (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012).²¹

However, the present research suggests that this main effect is driven, in part, by competent brands. In contrast, ideological appeals were found to be equally persuasive for exciting and sincere brands in an access channel. Further, our results suggest that there are conditions under which ideological appeals may be more persuasive. Specifically, when promoting a competent brand in an ownership channel, ideological reasons seem to provide an additional persuasive boost when participants are using a maximizing strategy to evaluate their options.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The results of two experiments largely support our hypotheses regarding the interactive effects of marketing channel and brand personality on the types of advertising appeals that are most persuasive. Specifically, whereas prior research has shown that consumers tend to be more strongly driven by functional concerns such as cost savings and flexibility when electing to access rather than own products (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012), we find that this depends on the personality of the brand (Experiments 1 and 2). That is, whereas functional appeals are more persuasive when promoting access-based consumption for a competent brand, ideological appeals that address the environmental and waste reduction benefits of access are equally persuasive when promoting exciting and sincere brands.

Further, we show that the relative persuasiveness of functional and ideological appeals also depends on the marketing channel (Experiment 2). In particular, whereas functional (versus ideological) appeals lead to more favorable evaluations of a competent brand in an access channel, the reverse is true in an ownership channel. By contrast, whereas functional and ideological appeals are equally persuasive for an exciting brand in an access channel, functional (versus ideological) appeals are more persuasive for an exciting brand in an ownership channel.

We believe that these divergent persuasion outcomes for competent and exciting brands can be attributed to the different decision-making strategies people use given their familiarity with the marketing channel (Ben-Haim, 2012a, 2012b; Schwartz et al., 2011; Simon, 1955) and their ability to make comparisons (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Iyengar et al., 2006; Ma & Roese, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2002; Simon, 1955). Specifically, we propose that because people are less familiar with access-based consumption and less able to make comparisons due to the experiential nature of the offerings, they will be more

²¹ Also see Habibi et al. (2016).

likely to use a satisficing strategy in an access marketing channel and, consequently, become more persuaded by appeals that fit with—or meet—minimum expectations given the personality of the brand.

In contrast, we propose that because people are more familiar with ownership-based consumption and better able to make comparisons due to the material nature of the offerings, they will be more likely to use a maximizing strategy in an ownership marketing channel and, consequently, become more persuaded by appeals that do not fit with—or exceed—minimum expectations given the personality of the brand. Indeed, the pretest results from Experiment 2 support the proposition that people are more likely to satisfice (maximize) when evaluating their options in an access (ownership) channel. These findings suggest that marketers should consider both the marketing channel and consumers' minimum expectations of the brand when designing marketing communications as the messages that have worked well in one channel may not resonate with consumers in the other.

Lastly, as mentioned in the discussion of Experiment 2, the sincere brands used in our studies appear to enjoy the best of both access and ownership worlds with functional and ideological appeals resulting in equally favorable evaluations regardless of the marketing channel. In fact, of the three brand personalities manipulated in our studies, sincere brands enjoyed either the highest or close to the highest brand attitude score across nearly all appeal types and marketing channel conditions.

We had originally hypothesized that, because sincere brands are perceived to be honest and trustworthy, both types of appeals would be equally credible. It may also be that perceptions of honesty and trustworthiness lead to other desirable inferences that, when coupled with the for-profit status of the brands used in our studies, advantageously placed sincere brands in the “golden quadrant” of being perceived as both warm and competent (Aaker et al., 2010; Aaker et al., 2012).

Specifically, a certain level of competence may have been assumed of all brands in our studies based on their for-profit status (Aaker et al., 2010). However, because trustworthiness is thought to signal warmth as well as competence (Aaker et al., 2012), our sincerity manipulation may have provided a “warmth boost” for the sincere (versus competent and exciting) brands, helping to explain the particularly favorable pattern of results reported for sincere brands in this present research.

One unsupported hypothesis was our prediction that ideological (versus functional) appeals would be more persuasive for an exciting brand in an access marketing channel (Hypothesis 3). Instead, we found convergent evidence across both experiments that functional and ideological appeals are equally persuasive. Further research is needed to determine whether this pattern of results is an artifact of our procedures or, alternately, is robust across

different operationalizations of access-based consumption and the excitement dimension of brand personality.

One possibility not previously discussed is that the combined unpredictability of the marketing channel due to low knowledge and experience (Schwartz et al., 2011; Simon, 1955) and the brand due to the daring and spirited aspects of the brand's personality (Aaker, 1997) may have made it difficult for participants to establish firm expectations or minimum standards by which the various appeals were judged. Again, further investigation is needed.

Theoretical Contributions and Insights

This research extends the extant understanding of the drivers behind access-based consumption. In particular, although several researchers have provided theoretical (Belk, 2007, 2014; Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2016; Habibi et al., 2016; Molesworth et al., 2016; Rudmin, 2016) and qualitative (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Y. Chen, 2009; Gollnhofer et al., 2016; Philip et al., 2015) insights into why consumers are likely to prefer access over ownership, fewer have causally examined drivers of preference (Ferrell et al., 2017).²² The present research addresses this gap by experimentally testing the relative persuasiveness of functional and ideological appeals for access offerings.

Further, the limited research that has empirically examined the reasons consumers choose access over ownership suggests that people are more motivated by functional than ideological concerns (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012).²³ That is, they are more driven by the cost savings and flexibility associated with access than they are the ideological benefits of, for instance, reducing waste and helping the environment. Although we find some evidence that consumers are generally more persuaded by functional than ideological appeals (i.e., the main effect of appeal type on brand attitude reported in Experiment 2), we also find that the relative persuasiveness of the appeal types depends on the personality of the brand.

Specifically, whereas functional appeals are more persuasive for competent brands in an access channel, ideological appeals are equally persuasive for exciting and sincere brands in an access channel. Thus, it is not the case that functional appeals are always more persuasive when promoting access offerings; in fact, the results reported in this research show that this is only true for certain types of brands.

The present research also expands current knowledge regarding if and how consumers' decision processes differ across modes of consumption. By experimentally juxtaposing access marketing channels and ownership marketing channels, we indeed find evidence that consumers

²² Also see Baumeister et al. (2015) and Lamberton and Rose (2012).

²³ Also see Habibi et al. (2016).

use different decision-making strategies depending on the channel within which they are evaluating offerings.

First, participants reported that they were more likely to satisfice (maximize) when making purchase decisions in an access (ownership) channel. Further corroboration of divergent decision-making strategies is found in the results reported for marketing channel familiarity and usage, showing that people are less familiar and experienced with access-based consumption than ownership-based consumption. This pattern of results aligns with research that has shown that people are more likely to satisfice—selecting options that are “good enough” as opposed to optimal—under conditions that limit their knowledge and the ability to make comparisons (Simon, 1955).²⁴

Thus, it may be that when evaluating one's options in an access marketing channel, people simply want enough—enough evidence, that is, to be satisfied that the offering will meet their minimum expectations. In contrast, when evaluating offerings in an ownership marketing channel, people may instead want more—showing preference for offerings that exceed their minimum expectations based, in this case, on the personality of the brand.

Issues such as the permanence and financial risk of the purchase may also be determining factors in the different decision strategies adopted in access versus ownership channels. This is an area for future research.

Finally, our results provide insight into the factors that influence how people's minimum expectations are formed. There is surprisingly little research on how satisficing individuals decide what will be minimally acceptable or satisfactory. Simon (1955) notes that one's minimum standard at any given time will hinge on previous experience with the decision context, such that as one experiences success or failure identifying options that meet a given standard, that standard will be raised or lowered accordingly.²⁵ Other research has shown that as the number of options in a choice set increases, so too do people's standards for what is acceptable (Levav et al., 2012; Schwartz, 2000, 2004).

However, little insight is provided as to how minimum standards of acceptability are initially established to mitigate the nonprobabilistic risk that uncertainty presents (Knight, 1921). The present research sheds light on this issue by showing that brand personality serves as an anchor point by which minimum expectations of any particular offering may be set.

Caveats and Directions for Future Research

Although we find that sincere brands can be successfully promoted across marketing channels using either

functional or ideological appeals, there is evidence to suggest this will not always be the case. According to the Brands as Intentional Agents Framework (Kervyn et al., 2012), brands vary on the extent that they are perceived as warm and competent—that is, the extent that they are perceived to have good intentions and the ability to deliver on those good intentions. As previously discussed, brands considered to be high on both dimensions enjoy a privileged status, eliciting admiration and increased purchase intent (Aaker et al., 2012). In contrast, firms that are seen as warm but not competent engender pity (Kervyn et al., 2012) and suffer from a decreased willingness to purchase (Aaker et al., 2012).

The latter is true for nonprofit brands: although they are seen as warm and, by extension, sincere (Aaker, 1997; Judd et al., 2005), purchase intent suffers because they are not also seen as competent (Aaker et al., 2010). Thus, it is likely that a sincere brand with nonprofit status would have more success promoting access offerings using ideological (versus functional) appeals.

It would also be of theoretical and practical interest to examine whether our model has explanatory power when consumers are evaluating multiple options simultaneously. In our studies, participants were presented with only one brand: thus, the question remains as to whether our findings would hold if participants were given the opportunity to choose between brands, as is more reflective of the marketplace.

How are minimum standards established in such a case? Might consumers anchor on the marketing channel itself? Our findings suggests that access channels are considered relatively more exciting, whereas ownership channels are considered relatively more competent. Therefore, when given the opportunity to choose between brands with different personalities rather than evaluating brands sequentially, might this anchoring effect lead consumers to exhibit a preference for exciting (versus competent) brands in an access marketing channel and competent (versus exciting) brands in an ownership marketing channel, holding the types of appeals constant? If so, this would have implications for how marketers should position their offerings in different marketing channels.

Another outstanding question is whether individual differences in marketing channel experience might moderate our findings. For instance, might consumers with extensive past experience with car sharing adopt a maximizing strategy instead of a satisficing strategy, thereby becoming more persuaded by messages that do not fit with—or exceed—minimum expectations given the personality of the brand? Research on the determinants of adopting one decision-making strategy or the other suggests this may be the case.

Specifically, the more experience and familiarity people have with the decision context, the more likely they

²⁴Also see Carter and Gilovich (2010) and Schwartz et al. (2011).

²⁵Also see Mogilner et al. (2013) and Schwartz et al. (2002).

are to adopt a maximizing strategy (Schwartz et al., 2011; Simon, 1955). Likewise, minimum standards or expectations may rise as people gain experience in the decision context and their expectations become better calibrated over time (Simon, 1955). This, too, is a theoretically and managerially relevant direction for future research.

Finally, it is worthwhile to consider the downstream consequences of satisficing and maximizing in access and ownership channels, respectively—particularly as the effects of one marketing channel can carry over to the other (Q. Chen et al., 2004). Research has shown that people who satisfice are happier with their choices, whereas those who maximize are less satisfied and experience more regret (Iyengar et al., 2006; Ma & Roese, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2002). Further, maximizers are more likely to choose a compromise option (Mao, 2016), return and switch their purchases (Ma & Roese, 2014), or delay purchase altogether due to the anticipated regret of making a sub-optimal choice (Sparks et al., 2012). If these findings are indicative of consumers' affective and behavioral responses to access-based versus ownership-based consumption, they provide additional incentive for established ownership firms to extend their offerings to an access marketing channel.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Information for Experiments 1 and 2

Demographic variables	Experiment 1	Experiment 2
Gender		
Male	49%	48%
Female	50%	51%
Other	1%	1%
Age		
18 to 24	14%	15%
25 to 34	43%	45%
35 to 44	26%	23%
45 to 54	10%	9%
55+	7%	8%
Ethnicity		
White	79%	76%
Black or African-American	9%	10%
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	8%	7%
Asian	11%	8%
Other	1%	2%
Marital status		
Married	37%	37%
Widowed	0%	1%
Divorced	6%	7%
Separated	2%	1%
Never married	55%	54%
Education		
Less than high school degree	1%	0%
High school diploma or equivalent	13%	9%
Some college but no degree	26%	26%
Associate degree in college (2-year)	9%	10%
Bachelor degree in college (4-year)	41%	41%
Master degree	9%	11%
Professional or doctoral degree	1%	3%
Employment		
Employed full time for wages	60%	57%
Employed part time for wages	8%	10%
Self-employed	15%	13%
Not employed, but looking for work	5%	6%
Homemaker	6%	5%
Student	4%	6%
Unable to work	1%	1%
Other	1%	2%
Household income		
Under \$50,000	56%	48%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	35%	41%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	7%	8%
\$150,000+	2%	3%
Household size (mean)	2.64	2.66

APPENDIX B

Manipulations for Experiment 1

Competent Personality (Access Channel)


GoCar™ is an intelligent, reliable alternative to car ownership.

Whether traveling to a meeting or running errands around town, GoCar is the car sharing option for you.

Meet your new personal assistant.



Greetings, I'm GoCar.

Own the journey, not the car.

GO CAR

Exciting Personality (Access Channel)


GoCar™ is an exciting, modern alternative to car ownership.

Whether road-tripping with friends or enjoying a night out on the town, GoCar is the car sharing option for you.

Meet your new bestie.



Hey, I'm GoCar!

Own the journey, not the car.

GO CAR

Sincere Personality (Access Channel)


GoCar™ is a genuine, down-to-earth alternative to car ownership.

Whether volunteering in the community or enjoying a day out with the family, GoCar is the car sharing option for you.

Meet your new friend.



Hello, I'm GoCar.

Own the journey, not the car.


GO CAR

Functional Appeal (Access Channel)


Why GoCar?

What is GoCar?
GoCar is a membership-based car sharing program, available 24/7, 365 days a year. Once you join, you can rent a car, truck or van for a little as an hour or as long as a week.


How does it work?



BOOK A CAR
Using the app, online or over the phone



HOP IN
Swipe your GoCard to open the doors, enter your pin



GO
Drive as you would any car, enjoy the freedom

So, why GoCar? Because sharing just makes sense.

Affordable

- Enjoy the benefits of owning a car without worrying about insurance, gas, maintenance, or a monthly car payment
- Owning one less car can save you hundreds of dollars per year



Flexible

- Book a GoCar at a moment's notice and go wherever your heart desires, whether that be on a week-long getaway or just to the grocery
- Use an electric car one day and a transport van the next

Convenient

- Straight-forward, user-friendly booking system
- Convenient rental and return locations in hundreds of cities around the country
- No need to worry about parking or storage

Own the journey, not the car.





Ideological Appeal (Access Channel)


Why GoCar?

What is GoCar?
GoCar is a membership-based car sharing program, available 24/7, 365 days a year. Once you join, you can rent a car, truck or van for a little as an hour or as long as a week.


How does it work?



BOOK A CAR
Using the app, online or over the phone



HOP IN
Swipe your GoCard to open the doors, enter your pin



GO
Drive as you would any car, enjoy the freedom

So, why GoCar? Because sharing is caring.

Reduce Waste

- Most cars sit idle for the majority of the day. GoCar makes use of these underutilized resources by matching unused cars with the people who need them



Help the Environment

- By sharing rather than owning a car, usage of valuable natural resources is greatly reduced
- GoCar boasts the largest selection of electric, hybrid, clean diesel and high-MPG cars in the industry

Join a Community of Like-Minded People

- Take a stance against a consumerist culture of continual acquisition and needless waste
- Join a growing community of people who are approaching transportation in an environmentally-sustainable way

Own the journey, not the car.

APPENDIX C

Manipulations for Experiment 2

Competent Personality (Ownership Channel)


Honda Accord Hybrid is an intelligent, reliable alternative to the conventional car.

Whether traveling to a meeting or running errands around town, the Honda Accord Hybrid is the car option for you.

Meet your new personal assistant.



Greetings, I'm the Honda Accord Hybrid.

Own the journey, own the car.

Exciting Personality (Ownership Channel)


Honda Accord Hybrid is an exciting, modern alternative to the conventional car.

Whether road-tripping with friends or enjoying a night out on the town, the Honda Accord Hybrid is the car option for you.

Meet your new bestie.



Hey, I'm the Honda Accord Hybrid!

Own the journey, own the car.

Sincere Personality (Ownership Channel)


Honda Accord Hybrid is a genuine, down-to-earth alternative to the conventional car.

Whether volunteering in the community or enjoying a day out with the family, the Honda Accord Hybrid is the car option for you.

Meet your new friend.



Hello, I'm the Honda Accord Hybrid.

Own the journey, own the car.

Functional Appeal (Ownership Channel)

**Why buy a
Honda Accord Hybrid?**

What is a hybrid, really?
Hybrid vehicles rely on more than one source of energy. Most use both a traditional internal-combustion engine that is fueled by gas, as well as one or more electric motors that are fueled by a battery pack.

So, why buy a Honda Accord Hybrid?

**Because buying a Honda Accord Hybrid
just makes sense.**

Cost Savings

- At 49/47 mpg city/highway, the Honda Accord Hybrid boasts the best EPA-rated fuel economy in its class
- With the money you save on gas, you will recoup your investment in only 3-4 years


Performance

- At 212 total-system horsepower, it is the most powerful hybrid sedan ever
- With this level of performance, you'll have plenty of get-up-and-go whenever you need (or want) it

Design and Comfort

- State-of-the-art technology and engineering
- Spacious cabin with the most cubic feet of trunk space in its class
- Electric motors translate to a quieter ride

Own the journey, own the car.


Ideological Appeal (Ownership Channel)

**Why buy a
Honda Accord Hybrid?**

What is a hybrid, really?
Hybrid vehicles rely on more than one source of energy. Most use both a traditional internal-combustion engine that is fueled by gas, as well as one or more electric motors that are fueled by a battery pack.

So, why buy a Honda Accord Hybrid?

**Because a buying a Honda Accord Hybrid
is caring.**

Reduce Waste

- At 49/47 mpg city/highway, the Honda Accord Hybrid boasts the best EPA-rated fuel economy in its class
- Using half as much gas reduces fracking and preserves precious natural resources

Help the Environment

- 90% reduction in harmful emissions that pollute the air and contribute to climate change
- Additional reduction in upstream emissions produced by extracting, transporting and converting oil to gas

Join a Community of Like-Minded People

- Take a stance against a culture of needless waste and pollution
- Join a growing community of people who are approaching transportation in an environmentally-sustainable way

Own the journey, own the car.

