

School of Psychology

Debriefing Form

**Research Question**: Brand perception in the Ultimatum Game: Objectification or Personalization?

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Thank you for participating in the current study. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

The current study is part of an undergraduate dissertation project conducted by a final year Honours Psychology student at the University of Glasgow.

The aim of this experiment is to investigate the behavioural patterns elicited by human-brand interaction in the Ultimatum Game. To my knowledge, no other study in the past has compared interaction between brands or people in an economic setting. Therefore, this study is aimed at filling a conceptual gap in the literature regarding brand perception.

The assumption that inanimate objects such as brands can be perceived as human-like sets of features have gained increasing attention in marketing and consumer psychology. This is understood as a human's tendency to anthropomorphize consumable items. ( Yongjun & Jooyoung, 2010). As suggested by Becheur et al. (2017), brands are no longer simple abstractions but can be assimilated to humans with their ability to attract and influence behaviour. In other words, brands are believed to express a distinct personality which allow humans to relate, commit and trust them.  Thus, the present study investigates whether human beings interact with brrands in a simulated socio-economic interaction in the form of the Ultimatum Game.

Firstly proposed by Guth, Schmittberger and Schwarze, the ultimatum game involves two players (the responder and the proposer)  who have to split a certain amount of money between themselves. Specifically, the Proposer is attributed a certain amount of money and must decide the amount to give to the other agent, the Responder. Aware of the total offer and the amount suggested by the Proposer, the Responder will decide to either accept or reject the offer. Accepting the offer leads to a split of the sum accordingly to the Proposer suggestion. On the other hand, rejecting it will leave both the agents with nothing.

According to standard game theory, the player's sole aim is to maximise payoffs.

However, there is a robust body of literature suggesting that the ultimatum game defies those classic predictions. In fact, players tend to behave irrationally and reject offers that are not perceived as fair.

Moreover, individuals playing the ultimatum game show different behavioural patterns interacting with a computer ( a “pure” object devoid of any emotive value) or a human being. This is translated in a lower rate of offer rejections. Given these premises, from a decision making point of view, we postulate that very fair and unfair offers (we are gonna define them *extreme offers*) may contain very little decision uncertainty. In this context, decision uncertainty is modulated as difficulty of the task as a function of the fairness of the offer. In these situations people have little doubt about the decision they should implement, thus employing less time to make a decision. But as the fairness of the offer become more blurred (30/70 or 40/60 split) decision uncertainty should become higher and should be maximal somewhere in the proximity of the fairest offer (eg. 40/60 split).

Thus, we postulate the following hypothesis:

1. Overall, mean reaction times will vary as a function of decision uncertainty. More specifically, extremely fair and extremely unfair offers will predict shorter reaction times.

Secondly, we are concerned with indirect ratings of trustworthiness towards brands and humans. This will be our proxy measure to determine whether individuals show differential processing of brands as opposed to humans. Specifically, we expect brands to be regarded similarly to humans in a social decision making context. This would imply an analogous emotive component attributed to the subjects decisions in the ultimatum game in relation to brands interaction. Thus, we postulate our second hypothesis:

2. We predict that equal ratings of trustworthiness will result in similar rejections to offers coming from human beings and than brands and lower rejection rates to offers from the computer.

Gaining a better understanding of the patterns of interaction betwewn humns and brands may provide evidence

If you wish any further information about the study and/or a summary of the anonymised group results, please feel free to contact 2133292f@student.gla.ac.uk

**Background Literature**

Glassenberg, A. N., Feinberg, D. R., Jones, B. C., Little, A. C., & DeBruine, L. M. (2010). Sex-dimorphic face shape preference in heterosexual and homosexual men and women. *Archives of sexual behavior*, *39*(6), 1289-1296.

Johnston, V. S., Hagel, R., Franklin, M., Fink, B., & Grammer, K. (2001). Male facial attractiveness: Evidence for hormone-mediated adaptive design. *Evolution and human behavior*, *22*(4), 251-267.

Valenzano, D. R., Mennucci, A., Tartarelli, G., & Cellerino, A. (2006). Shape analysis of female facial attractiveness.*Vision research*, *46*(8), 1282-1291.