

Gifts, emotions and cognitive processes: An inquiry
of gift receiving from a consumer psychology
perspective

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Summary

Gift exchange is a universal, social, cultural, and economic phenomenon. Over the past 90 years, it has fascinated scholars from different disciplines within the social sciences thanks to its diffusion across societies and centuries. Since Marcel Mauss' foundational paper (1925), scholars have agreed on the social integrative function of gifts, which are tools to build and maintain relationships. Giving gifts generates a virtuous circle of reciprocity, within which gifts are exchanged to attain a balanced reciprocity between the parties. Gifts are also intrinsically associated with identity definition and influence recipients' and givers' self-view. Above all, the gift is a symbolic communication, "a language that employs objects instead of words as its lexical elements" (Caplow, 1984, p. 1320), by which the giver communicates a variety of meanings, such as affection for the recipient, image of the recipient, or intention with regard to the relationship with the recipient.

Because of gift relevance in the market economy and household budget, marketing scholars have devoted considerable attention to gift giving. To identify how a firm can be effective in helping givers select gifts, scholars have analyzed the gift selection process, the drivers of givers' choice, the givers' attitude toward gift shopping or recipients, and givers' expectations of gift exchange. Despite the increasing attention on the gifting phenomenon, the research conducted so far has mostly reflected a giver-centric perspective, and less effort has been devoted to understanding the recipient's experience within the gift exchange. The scarce research on the recipient has mostly focused on the drivers of gift appreciation, the consequences of not-liked gifts, and the impact of successful and not successful gifts on the relationship with the giver. Recently, some studies have examined whether and how the gift exchange makes products given as gifts different from other forms

of consumption experience, opening venues for investigating gift exchange as a unique context for the analysis of goods and services.

The work presented in this dissertation aims to contribute to the knowledge on gift exchange by focusing on the recipient and examining how the gift receiving affects the experience with products. Empirical studies, which are the backbone of this dissertation, have been conducted to shed light on how gift receipt modifies the consumption experience of some products (i.e., personalized and (un)ethical products). In this regard, I use the metaphor of the resonance box to explain how gift receipt modifies the experience with a product. The sound entering a resonance box bounces and echoes off the faces of the box and exits in a mediated and amplified way. The same happens when a product is given as a gift because the recipient experiences emotions and cognition in a mediated and amplified way.

This dissertation starts by offering a review of the relevant literature on gift exchange (*Chapter 1*) and highlighting the theoretical approach that guided the execution of the studies conducted. By providing empirical evidence from four sets of study, this dissertation shows that consumers perceive, elaborate, and evaluate products differently when are received as gifts. Specifically, the findings of two studies qualitatively describe (*Chapter 2*) and quantitatively demonstrate (*Chapter 3*) that gift receiving allows for a mediated and vicarious experience of emotions. Moreover, the experimental designs involving (un)ethical products (*Chapter 4* and *Chapter 5*) show that gift receipts amplify the cognitive and affective consequences of the consumption of such products.

This dissertation contributes to the literature on gift exchange in several ways. First, it deepens the knowledge related to gift recipients, who have been mostly neglected in prior investigations. Second, it contributes to the literature on asymmetrical differences between givers and recipients by employing an integrative approach that directly compares the two experiences and includes a special case of

gifts (i.e., self-gifts). Moreover, the present work contributes to the literature on personalization and (un)ethical consumption. Personalization is the context of investigation of Empirical Part I. The findings of two sets of study show that the feeling of achievement and pride the customizer feels when self-designing a product translates to the end user (i.e., the recipient). In Empirical Part II, the context of the investigation is (un)ethical consumption, which is undertaken by involving extremely ethical and extremely unethical products.

Keywords: gift exchange, gift recipients, personalization, ethical consumption, experimental design

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Table of contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH.....	1
II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	5
III. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	7
<u>CHAPTER 1 - A ROADMAP INTO THE TERRAIN OF GIFT EXCHANGE.....</u>	<u>11</u>
1.1 INTRODUCTION	12
1.2 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF GIFT EXCHANGE	14
1.3 THE GIFT EXCHANGE PROCESS.....	16
1.4 WHAT IS A GIFT?	19
1.5 THE ONE WHO GIVES: THE GIVER.....	23
1.6 GIFT END CONSUMER: THE RECIPIENT	26
1.7 SPECIAL CASES OF GIFTS	29
<i>1.7.1 GIVING SOMETHING TO ONESELF: SELF-GIFTS.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>1.7.2 GIVING SOMETHING TO UNKNOWN OTHERS: CHARITABLE DONATIONS</i>	<i>32</i>
1.8 TRADITIONAL AND EMERGENT APPROACHES TO GIFT EXCHANGE	34
1.9 CONCLUSIONS	43
<u>EMPIRICAL PART I - PERSONALIZATION</u>	<u>45</u>
<u>CHAPTER 2 - DID YOU DESIGN THAT YOURSELF? – AND JUST FOR ME? AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF PERSONALIZED GIFT RECEIVING.....</u>	<u>47</u>
2.1 INTRODUCTION	48
2.2 GIVER- AND RECIPIENT-CONGRUENT GIFTS.....	50
2.3 THE PRESENT RESEARCH	52
<i>2.3.1 THE CONTEXT UNDER INVESTIGATION: THE PERSONALIZATION PROCESS.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>2.3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>2.3.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>2.3.4 CRITICAL INCIDENT SURVEY</i>	<i>56</i>
2.4 ANALYSIS	58
2.5 EMERGENT THEMES FROM PERSONALIZED GIFT RECEIVING.....	61
<i>2.5.1 THEME 1: GIVER-CONGRUENT DIMENSIONS.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>2.5.2 THEME 2: RECIPIENT-CONGRUENT DIMENSIONS</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>2.5.3 THEME 3: EMOTIONAL CONNOTATIONS.....</i>	<i>70</i>
2.6 DISCUSSION	73
<i>2.6.1 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS.....</i>	<i>76</i>
2.7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	76
2.8 CONCLUSIONS	77

<u>CHAPTER 3 - VICARIOUS PRIDE: WHEN GIFT PERSONALIZATION INCREASES RECIPIENTS' APPRECIATION OF THE GIFT</u>	79
3.1 INTRODUCTION	80
3.2 VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH PERSONALIZED GIFTS	80
3.3 STUDY 1A AND STUDY 1B: GIFT APPRECIATION AND VICARIOUS PRIDE	83
3.3.1 STUDY 1A	84
3.3.2 STUDY 1B	86
3.4 STUDY 2: EFFECT OF RELATIONAL INTIMACY	88
3.4.1 SAMPLE, DESIGN AND PROCEDURES	88
3.4.2 RESULTS	89
3.5 STUDY 3: THE ROLE OF RELATIONAL ANXIETY	92
3.5.1 SAMPLE, DESIGN AND PROCEDURES	92
3.5.2 RESULTS	93
3.6 GENERAL DISCUSSION	94
3.7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH	96
3.8 CONCLUSIONS	97
<u>EMPIRICAL PART II - ETHICAL CONSUMPTION</u>	99
<u>CHAPTER 4 - UNPACKING THE (UN)ETHICAL GIFT: PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE AND EMOTIONAL MISALIGNMENT IN UNETHICAL CONSUMPTION</u>	101
4.1 INTRODUCTION	102
4.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	104
4.2.1 INTERPERSONAL VERSUS SELF-GIFTS	104
4.2.2 THE MULTIPLICATIVE EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE	107
4.3 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES	110
4.4 STUDY 1: HOW GIFTS ARE PERCEIVED AS LESS OR MORE ETHICAL	113
4.4.1 SAMPLE, DESIGN AND PROCEDURES	113
4.4.2 RESULTS	114
4.5 STUDY 2: EXAMINING THE MORAL RATIONALIZATION	114
4.5.1 SAMPLE, DESIGN AND PROCEDURES	114
4.5.2 RESULTS	115
4.6 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS	115
4.7 STUDY 3: THE MULTIPLICATIVE EFFECT OF SPATIAL DISTANCE	116
4.7.1 SAMPLE, DESIGN AND PROCEDURES	116
4.7.2 RESULTS	117
4.7.3 DISCUSSION	120
4.8 GENERAL DISCUSSION	121
4.9 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH	125
4.10 CONCLUSIONS	127
<u>CHAPTER 5 - EGO ME ABSOLVO: ASYMMETRICAL APPRECIATION BETWEEN GIVERS AND RECIPIENTS AND INTERPERSONAL GUILT IN CHARITABLE GIFTS</u>	129
5.1 INTRODUCTION	130

5.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	132
5.2.1 <i>GUILT IN GIFT EXCHANGE, CONSUMPTION AND DONATIONS.....</i>	132
5.2.2 <i>GIVING AND RECEIVING GIFTS: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?.....</i>	135
5.3 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES.....	138
5.4 STUDY 1A AND STUDY 1B: CHARITABLE DONATIONS AS GIFTS.....	140
5.4.1 <i>STUDY 1A</i>	140
5.4.2 <i>STUDY 1B</i>	141
5.4.3 <i>DISCUSSION.....</i>	142
5.5 STUDY 2A AND STUDY 2B: ADD A CHARITABLE CAUSE TO A GIFT.....	142
5.5.1 <i>STUDY 2A</i>	143
5.5.2 <i>STUDY 2B</i>	143
5.5.3 <i>DISCUSSION.....</i>	144
5.6 STUDY 3: TESTING THE ‘EGO ME ABSOLVO’.....	144
5.6.1 <i>SAMPLE, DESIGN AND PROCEDURES</i>	144
5.6.2 <i>RESULTS</i>	145
5.6.3 <i>DISCUSSION.....</i>	1446
5.7 GENERAL DISCUSSION	146
5.8 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	148
5.9 CONCLUSIONS	150
<u>CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS</u>	<u>151</u>
6.1 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS	155
6.1.1 <i>CONSUMER BEHAVIOR</i>	155
6.1.2 <i>ETHICAL ISSUES.....</i>	160
6.2 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	165
6.3 FINAL THOUGHTS	168
<u>APPENDIX A.....</u>	<u>174</u>
<u>APPENDIX B.....</u>	<u>180</u>
<u>APPENDIX C</u>	<u>182</u>
C.1 <i>SCALES AND ITEMS</i>	182
C.2 <i>SCENARIOS.....</i>	184
C.3 <i>STIMULI</i>	187
C.4 <i>MEDIATION INDEXES.....</i>	189
<u>APPENDIX D.....</u>	<u>192</u>
D.1 <i>SCALES AND ITEMS.....</i>	192
D.2 <i>SCENARIOS</i>	193
<u>APPENDIX E</u>	<u>196</u>
E.1 <i>SCENARIOS.....</i>	196
<u>REFERENCES.....</u>	<u>198</u>

List of figures

INTRODUCTION

FIGURE I – GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT..... 10

CHAPTER 1

FIGURE 1.1 -SHERRY'S MODEL ADAPTED 17

CHAPTER 2

FIGURE 2.1 - DATA STRUCTURE 60

CHAPTER 3

FIGURE 3.1 - GIFT APPRECIATION MEANS BETWEEN CONDITIONS OF STUDY 2 AND STUDY 3 91

CHAPTER 4

FIGURE 4.1 - RESEARCH MODEL..... 111

FIGURE 4.2 - STUDY 3: MODERATED MEDIATION..... 119

FIGURE 4.3 - STUDY 3: INTERACTION ON MORAL EMOTIONS 120

CHAPTER 5

FIGURE 5.1 - OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES 132

CHAPTER 6

FIGURE 6.1 - CONCLUSIONS: GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION..... 154

List of tables

CHAPTER 1

TABLE 1.1 - SUMMARY OF THE APPROACHES OF THE GIFT EXCHANGE LITERATURE	42
---	----

CHAPTER 2

TABLE 2.1 – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SAMPLE.....	54
---	----

TABLE 2.2 - CRITICAL INCIDENT SAMPLE.....	57
---	----

CHAPTER 3

TABLE 3.1 - MAIN STATISTICS OF ALL STUDIES.....	88
---	----

CHAPTER 4

TABLE 4.1 - SUMMARY OF THE STUDY DESIGN.....	112
--	-----

TABLE 4.2 - MAIN STATISTICS OF ALL STUDIES.....	114
---	-----

CHAPTER 5

TABLE 5.1 - SUMMARY OF THE STUDY DESIGN.....	139
--	-----

TABLE 5.2 - MAIN STATISTICS OF ALL STUDIES.....	140
---	-----

APPENDIX A

TABLE A.1 - THE MAIN THEMES FROM THE REVIEW OF THE GIFT EXCHANGE LITERATURE	174
---	-----

APPENDIX B

TABLE B.1 - SAMPLE OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS.....	180
---	-----

TABLE B.2 - SAMPLE OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT SURVEY.....	180
---	-----

APPENDIX C

TABLE C.1 - SCALES AND ITEMS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDIES OF CHAPTER 3.....	182
--	-----

TABLE C.2 - SCENARIOS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDIES OF CHAPTER 3.....	184
---	-----

TABLE C.3 - MEDIATION INDEXES.....	189
------------------------------------	-----

APPENDIX D

TABLE D.1 - SCALES AND ITEMS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDIES OF CHAPTER 4	192
---	-----

TABLE D.2 - SCENARIOS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDIES OF CHAPTER 4	193
--	-----

APPENDIX E

TABLE E.1 - SCENARIOS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDIES OF CHAPTER 5.....	196
---	-----

Introduction

I. Purpose of the Research

Scholars in a variety of disciplines have devoted considerable attention to the fascinating phenomenon of gift exchange (e.g., Belk, 1976, 1988, 2013; Mauss, 1925; Otnes, Lowrey and Kim, 1993; Ruth, Otnes and Brunel, 1999; Sherry, 1983; Schwartz, 1967; Waldfogel, 1993; Wooten, 2000). In addition to their economic worth, gifts have been found to have an integration function in society, in that they build or cement relationships (Belk, 1979; Schwartz, 1967) and generate a virtuous circle of reciprocity (Mauss, 1925). Gifts have also been associated with identity definition, such as the development of gender identity (Schwartz, 1967) or restoration of threatened identities (Klein, Lowrey and Otnes, 2015). Recently, scholars have argued that gift exchange affects how individuals evaluate products, showing asymmetries between givers and recipients (Baskin, Wakslak, Trope and Novemsky, 2014; Gino and Flynn, 2011) as well as cognitive biases (Lerouge and Warlop, 2006; Steffel and Leboeuf, 2014).

Traditionally, literature on gift exchange has emphasized the role of the giver, (Areni, Kiecker and Palan, 1998; Belk and Coon, 1993; Davies, Whelan, Foley and Walsh, 2010; Ruth et al., 1999), while the gift recipient has remained very much in the background. This is surprising if we consider that recipients not only are co-performers in the gift exchange (Schwartz, 1967) but also have the power to determine the success or failure of the gift, with important consequences from a relational standpoint (Ruth et al., 1999). It is even more surprising given that firms especially tailor their advertising messages to the needs and desires of recipients, who are seen as the real end consumers (Anton, Camarero and Gil, 2014). Research

focusing on the recipient has made great strides in understanding the drivers of gift appreciation, considering specific categories of gifts, such as money, experience, gold, or gift cards (Clarke, 2006, 2007, 2008; Ertimur and Sandikci, 2014; Tuten and Kiecker, 2009; Valentin and Allred, 2012), or features of the gifted product that affect appreciation (Flynn and Adams, 2009; Gino and Flynn, 2011; Paolacci, Straeter and de Hooge, 2015). Moreover a considerable number of studies have investigated how recipients handle disliked gifts (Adams, Flynn and Norton, 2012; Cruz-Cardenas, 2014; Ertimur, Munoz and Hutton, 2015; Shen, Wan and Wyer 2011; Sherry, McGrath and Levy, 1992; Swilley, Coward and Flynn, 2014) and the relational and reciprocity outcomes of gifts (Pieters and Robben, 1998; Roster, 2006; Ruth, Brunel and Otnes, 1999, 2004).

However, despite the unquestionable importance of understanding the relationships between gift characteristics and appreciation, the current theorizing has neglected to emphasize that gifts are a unique context for the analysis of goods and services consumption for reasons other than their relational and reciprocity connotations. Indeed, inherent characteristics of the gifting process make gifts, and consequently their consumption, different from any other form of consumption experience, both when they are gifted and when they are received. From the giver's standpoint, the gift purchase is not meant for personal use, but rather to please someone else, increasing the constraints and the difficulties of the purchase process (Ward and Broniarczyck, 2011; Wooten, 2000). In this regard, several scholars have claimed that being in a gift-giving context activates a specific mindset, which influences the overall gift purchase experience. For instance, Baskin et al. (2014) suggest that the gift context generates psychological distance (i.e., the feeling of being far from an object or an event, which leads to an abstract mental representation of the same; Trope and Liberman 2010) while other scholars show how the mere fact of purchasing something for someone else activates specific cognitive processes,

namely egocentric bias and over-individuation (Epley et al., 2004; Flynn and Adams 2009; Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014; Zhang and Epley, 2012).

If we focus on the recipient's standpoint, the phenomenon is even more intriguing. Indeed, consuming a gift is essentially a no-other-choice option, given that the gift is pre-selected by the giver and thus the recipient has no other options to choose from. Moreover, gifts are forced consumptions, because recipients generally do not want to refuse the gift (Sherry et al., 1992) and do feel the imperative of displaying and publicly using the gift (Sherry, 1983). In addition, receiving a gift is essentially a non-voluntary and passive act: the end consumer (i.e., the recipient) is not the initiator of the process, given that he or she is basically passive while the giver purchases the gift. While passivity and constraints have been proven to significantly affect consumers' choice and experience in general (e.g., Botti et al., 2008; Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993; Hadi and Block, 2014; Weiner, 1986), less is known about how these characteristics affect gift receipt.

This dissertation addresses gift exchange from this latter perspective and aims to expand the current understanding of gift receipt. Specifically, the empirical studies here reported are intended to shed light on how gift receipt modifies the consumption experience. I argue that gift receipt reproduces – albeit in a modified way – the consumption experience consumers have when they personally purchase a product. For instance, evidences have been found regarding the psychological benefit a consumer acquires when he customizes a product – the “I designed it myself” effect (i.e., feeling of achievement and pride derived from self-designing a product; Franke, Schreier and Kaiser, 2010). Another example is that of the self-laundering properties of products associated with charity donations: Zemack-Rugar, Rabino, Cavanaugh and Fitzsimons (2015) demonstrated the ability of these products to reduce the guilt derived from hedonic consumption. However, when people receive a product from someone else such as a gift (rather than a product purchased by oneself), the extant literature does not offer guidance regarding the relevance of these benefits for gift

recipients. Do customized products or cause-related products offer the same benefit to a gift recipient? Does the gift receipt context amplify the benefits associated with a product? If such a product might deliver benefits to the recipient, what happens when the recipient does not feel comfortable with the gift? For instance, when consumers purchase a product that is in breach with their moral values, they morally justify it and consequently evaluate the product as less unethical. Does the same happen if such product is gifted rather than self-purchased?

The contribution of this dissertation is to offer an answer to these timely questions. In this regard, I suggest that the gift acts as a *resonance box*, a container in which a sound bounces and echoes, acquiring its own features. I propose that gifts allow for two types of resonance box experience. With a qualitative analysis (*Chapter 2*) and a set of experimental studies (*Chapter 3*), I show that gifts generate the *mediated* experience of emotions, namely pride. The second effect I demonstrate is how gifts *amplify* the consequences of the consumption of certain products. In two chapters, I respectively demonstrated that unethical gifts originate greater cognitive processing – that is, moral rationalization – while eliciting an emotional misalignment when gifted compared to when self-gifted (*Chapter 4*), and I show that the self-laundering process generated by cause-related gifts is greater for gift recipients than gift givers (*Chapter 5*).

The first part of the thesis offers a theoretical background in which the empirical studies are immersed. Specifically, a review of the extant literature on gift exchange in consumer behavior and related fields is provided and re-interpreted through the lenses of the main theoretical approaches applied to gift exchange research (*Chapter 1*). Two empirical parts follow, each comprising two research chapters wherein I investigate gift receipts employing qualitative and quantitative tools. In the following sections, I summarize the objective of this dissertation and provide a visual and verbal overview of the structure of the thesis.

II. Research objectives

This dissertation provides a conceptual and empirical analysis of gift receipt from a consumer behavior perspective. It consists of a collection of articles resulting from four individual research projects conducted at the Università della Svizzera italiana in Lugano (Switzerland) between 2012 and 2014 and at the Technical University of Munich (Germany) in 2015. All of the articles have been submitted for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals or relevant international conferences in the field of consumer behavior. Each article addresses a distinct research question regarding product consumption in the gift context, while taken together the articles contribute to the main research objective of this dissertation: to investigate whether and how gift receipt acts as resonance box, wherein the effects of products are mediated or amplified.

The research chapters here presented are conceptually intertwined but empirically separated. With the main aim of offering insight on gift receipts, the empirical studies here reported answer specific research questions and investigate gift receipt from different angles, such as comparing different gifts, comparing interpersonal gifts to self-gifts, or examining similarities and divergences between gift receipts and experiences of giving gifts. In addition, I employed different types of gifts across studies (i.e., personalized gifts and gifts that involve ethical considerations), which, although they belong to distinct product categories, allow for a more nuanced understanding of the resonance power of gifts. The use of different products, indeed, offered the opportunity not only to investigate the gift resonance effect from different perspectives, but also to describe the different effects the resonance has, namely mediation and amplification. Moreover, the use of different product categories allows the thesis to contribute to the overall understanding of gift exchange, while contributing to the relevant streams of literature related to personalization and (un)ethical consumption. Therefore, the empirical part of this dissertation is

theoretically divided into two parts, one concerning personalization and the second concerning ethical consumption.

Personalization allows consumers to self-create the product by selecting product features from a set of options. Scholars who have investigated personalization agree that product personalization increases the fit between consumer's desires and product features (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005; Simonson, 2005; Wind and Rangaswamy, 2001), which in turn affects willingness to pay (Franke and Piller, 2004). Moreover, it appears that the efforts required from the consumer to design the product are rewarded by the uniqueness of the product (Franke and Schreier, 2007; Franke et al., 2010) and by the feeling of accomplishment (Fuchs, Prandelli and Schreier, 2010; Franke et al., 2010). Recently, it has been shown that personalization toolkits (e.g., platforms that allow consumer to self-configure products) are suitable sources of gifts (Moreau, Bonney and Herd, 2011). The infinite set of possible combinations alleviates the anxiety involved in choosing the right gift, making the gift creation even more enjoyable than personalizing products for oneself (Moreau et al., 2011). So far, researchers have typically investigated the personalization on the customizer's side (e.g., the consumer who designed the product online), while less is known about its effect when the customizer is not also the user of the product, as is the case of the recipient of a personalized gift. In this dissertation, I aim to fill this literature gap by investigating whether, how and why personalized gifts are a viable way to please recipients.

Ethical consumption refers to all the consumption experiences of products that involve strong ethical considerations or implications for morality (Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993). In this sense, investigating the consumption of products that involve ethical consideration means examining either products highly ethical or products highly unethical. Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993) have mapped the ethical space of consumption, defining it as a continuum from selfish products (e.g., drugs, products from various animal species like ivory) to selfless products (e.g.,

recyclable product or donations to charity). In this dissertation, I employed Cooper-Martin and Holbrook's (1993) map to identify the products to investigate. Specifically, I used products from each extreme of the continuum (i.e., products obtained from the poaching of endangered species and donations) to investigate whether and how gift receipt modifies consumers' reactions to such products.

III. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters, which address its objectives and which are intertwined while empirically separated. The empirical studies aim at showing how gifts are a kind of resonance box, wherein benefits associated with products are mediated or amplified (see Figure I - Graphical Abstract).

Chapter 1, "*A roadmap into the terrain of gift exchanges*", is intended to provide a comprehensive literature review on gift exchange in marketing and consumer behavior. In this chapter, the process of gift exchange is described, together with special cases of gifts relevant for the scope of this thesis (i.e., donations and self-gifts). The final section of this chapter re-interprets the main studies and findings through the lenses of the main approaches adopted to analyze gift exchange.

*Empirical Part I - Personalization*¹ consists of two chapters, which describe a qualitative and a quantitative investigation of personalized gifts. Chapter 2, "*Did you design that yourself? – And just for me? An exploratory analysis of personalized gift receiving*", presents two qualitative and exploratory studies on personalized gift acceptance. It provides initial empirical evidence that the feeling of pride the customizer feels while self-designing something translates from the giver (i.e., the customizer) to the recipient in a vicarious way. In this chapter, acceptance of

¹ In this dissertation *personalization* and *customization* are used as synonyms.

personalized gifts is analyzed from a holistic perspective, showing how these gifts are simultaneously giver- and recipient-congruent.

The third chapter, “*Vicarious pride: When gift customization increases recipients’ appreciation of the gift*”, is a more detailed examination of the mechanism of vicarious pride, which allows for a greater appreciation of personalized gifts. It demonstrates the existence of a vicarious experience of pride in personalized gift receipt: when receiving personalized gifts, recipients feel the same pride the customizer experiences after having self-created a product. The chapter presents four experiments testifying to the existence of vicarious pride and showing the moderating role of psychological closeness.

The next chapters belong to the second empirical part of this dissertation (*Empirical Part II – Ethical Consumption*) and also contribute to sub-streams of the gift exchange literature (i.e., self-gifts and donations). The third set of studies (Chapter 4, “*Unpacking the (un)ethical gift: Psychological distance and emotional misalignment in unethical consumption*”) investigates the effects of unethical gifts by comparing situations of gift receipts and self-gifts. A set of experimental designs demonstrates that recipients process the unethical gift by morally rationalizing it. This moral rationalization allows gift recipients to perceive the product as less unethical, but they feel guilt because of the gift. This suggests that in such situations, emotions and cognitions follow two dissociable paths: the moral conflict between the personal interest (i.e., to not offend the giver) and the moral value important to the recipient (i.e., not to take products that harm animals) is cognitively solved but emotionally unsettled.

The last research here presented (Chapter 5, “*Ego me absolvo: Asymmetrical appreciation between givers and recipients and interpersonal guilt in charitable gifts*”) investigates the effect of interpersonal guilt on donation in the context of gift exchange. Building on prior work on guilt as an antecedent for donations and on

asymmetrical evaluation of gifts by givers and recipients, we examine (i) how interpersonal guilt increases the appreciation of charitable gifts, (ii) whether such gifts are differently appreciated by givers and recipients, and (iii) whether charitable gifts allow for self-absolution, i.e. self-forgiveness for prior negligence. Across five experimental designs, we consistently found that recipients appreciate charitable gifts, in the form of both donation certificates and products associated with a charitable cause, more than givers do, especially when they feel interpersonal guilt. Furthermore, we provide evidence that recipients self-absolve more from interpersonal guilt thanks to the higher appreciation of charitable gifts. The findings provide further evidence of the impact of guilt on donations, add to the literature on the asymmetry between givers and recipients, and contribute to the existing knowledge on the benefits associated with donations.

The final chapter (Chapter 6, “*Conclusions*”) offers a summary of the contents and findings of the research, focusing on how the chapters contribute to the extant knowledge regarding gift exchange. I also elaborate and discuss the limitations of the present work, while proposing possible venues for future research on the topic.

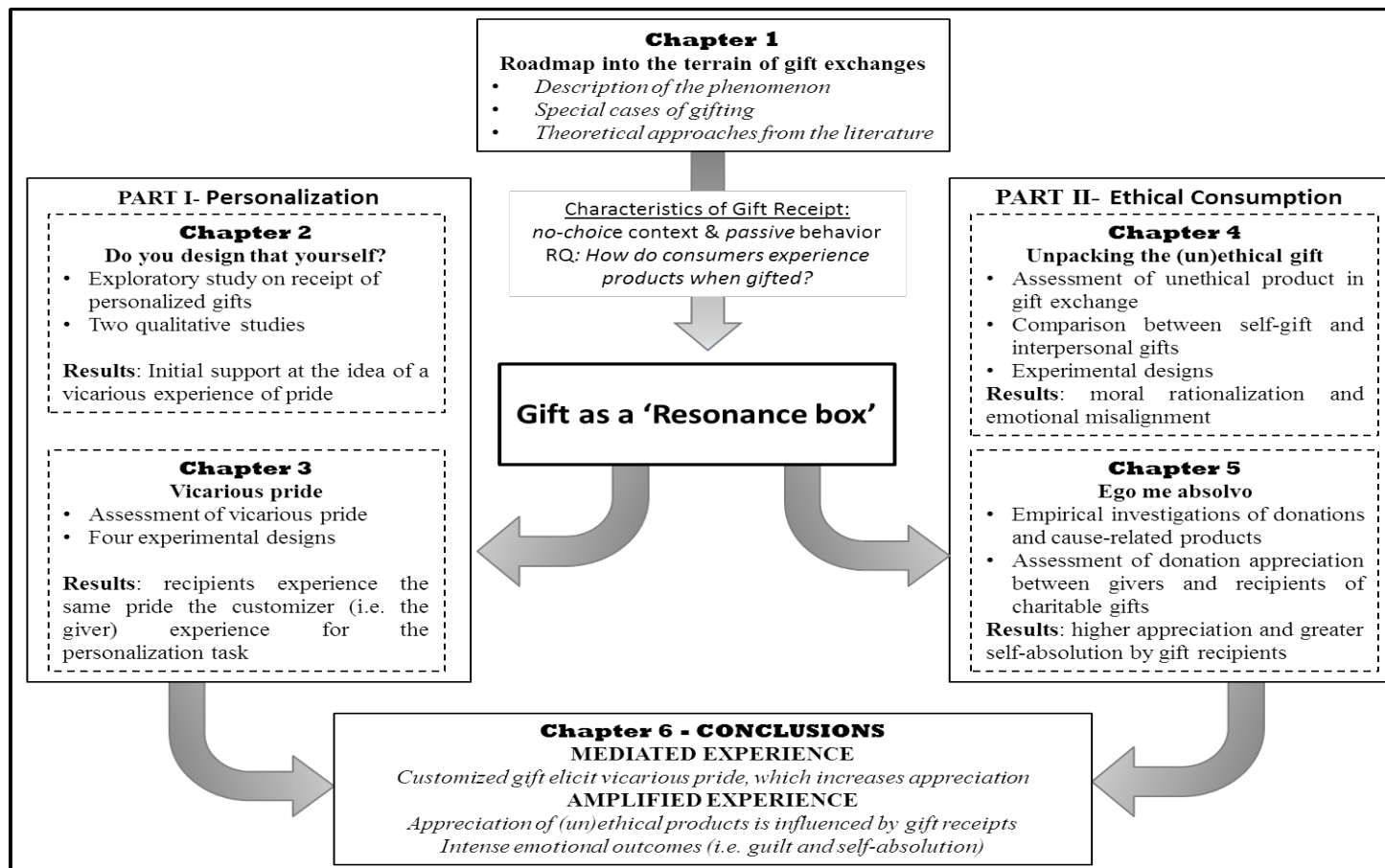


Figure I – Graphical Abstract

Chapter 1

A Roadmap into the Terrain of Gift Exchange

This first chapter is aimed at providing a comprehensive literature review of the studies conducted on the phenomenon of gift exchange. A complete description of the gift giving and receiving phenomenon is followed by a classification of the prior research in five approaches – transactional, social exchange, agapic love, expressive and discrepancy. Particular attention is devoted to highlighting the current knowledge gaps and to showing how this dissertation tries to fill them. This chapter is intended to be a roadmap, showing where the empirical studies included in this dissertation are positioned and how they can contribute to the extant knowledge.

1.1 Introduction

Gift exchange is a universal form of interpersonal communication across human societies (Areni et al., 1998; Belk, 1976; Cheal, 1988; Lotz, Soyeon and Gehrt, 2003). Since ancient times (Tourtellot and Sabloff, 1972), gift exchange has been used to celebrate key life events and to show gratitude and love, with the aim of building and cementing relationships (Schwartz 1967). Today, gifting rituals still play a central role in cultures around the world, which have adapted ancient and traditional ways of gifting to suit modern consumption practices (e.g., online shopping, online gift customization, experience gifts, frenzied holiday shopping, and self-gifts).

Gift exchange is also relevant to national economies and to practitioners. The relevance of the phenomenon in terms of retail sales is uncontested; gifts account for about 10% of US family budgets (Unity Marketing, 2012), suggesting that gift purchases are still a routine activity despite the economic downturn. Indeed, several occasions require a gift purchase; in addition to ritualized occasions such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Mother's and Father's Day, most people buy gifts for other occasions throughout the year.

Given its social integration function and relevance in consumption rituals, gift exchange has fascinated a great number of scholars within the social sciences, who have investigated the phenomenon through different disciplinary lenses, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics and marketing (Otnes and Beltrami, 1996). Anthropologists were among the first contributors to the topic, offering the first theories on the phenomenon, which have been developed across disciplines over the last 100 years.

Ethnographic studies of the beginning of the 20th century have documented gift exchange rituals handed down from one generation to the next in native or primitive populations, such as the potlatch among Native Americans and the Kula Ring in

Papua New Guinea (Malinowski, 1922; Barnett, 1938). The impetus to the study of the phenomenon was offered by the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1925) in his essay “The Gift”, wherein he defined gift exchange as a social event by means of which social relationships can be explained. Recently, his theory on gift exchange has been successfully used to explain more modern forms of exchange and sharing, like peer-to-peer and consumption communities (Giesler, 2006; Corciolani and Dalli, 2014), place attachment (Debenedetti, Oppewal and Arsel, 2014), social behaviors (Skågeby, 2010), and, more broadly, social solidarity (Komter, 2005).

While anthropologists have described gift exchange as a social process, evolutionary psychologists have sought to understand its relevance for human survival. Their theoretical assumption is that gift exchange is an adaptive mechanism based on altruism (Hamilton, 1964; Trivers, 1971) and mate selection (Trivers, 1972). They propose that gift exchange evolved from a form of food sharing into a male courtship strategy (Saad and Gill, 2003). A third position on gift exchange is offered by economists, who have a more disenchanting view of gift giving as a waste of resources. Famous to this stream of literature is the concept of “the deadweight loss of Christmas”, which refers to the disparity in dollar terms between the gifts given and gifts received, calculated around the 10% and 30% of loss (Waldfogel, 1993).

Marketing scholars have more recently analyzed the phenomenon in order to incorporate this knowledge from a managerial perspective. An early paper by Banks (1979) drew attention to gifts as drivers of purchase and consumption, given the self-perpetuating cycle of giving, receiving, and reciprocating. Over the last two decades, marketing researchers have begun to analyze gift purchase and consumption patterns. Early efforts have been focused on comparing gift purchases to regular purchases (Belk, 1982; Goodwin, Smith and Spiggle, 1990; Heeler, Francis, Okechuku and Reid, 1979), then on consumer characteristics and occasions (e.g. Caplow, 1982; Laroche, Saad, Browne, Cleveland and Kim, 2004). More recently, the research on

gifts has overcome the borders of western societies, widening the available knowledge by comparing the gift phenomenon across cultures (e.g. Jolibert and Fernandez-Moreno, 1983; Joy, 2001; Qian, Adbur, Kau and Keng, 2007).

The following sections provide a review of the relevant literature on gift exchange in consumer behavior and aim to show how this dissertation is positioned in relation to the existing literature. The first two sections deal with the definition of the phenomenon and the process of gifting, then I provide in-depth descriptions of the three elements of the gift exchange – the gift, the giver, and the recipient. In the sixth section of this chapter, I draw attention to two special categories of giving – namely self-gifting and donations, which are cases that sometimes depart from the mainstream literature – and, by including them, broaden the gift construct. In the conclusion sections, I critically debate the knowledge of older and more recent research on gift giving through the lens of theoretical approaches applied to the investigation of gift exchange, discussing main concepts and limitations of each approach. Table A.1 summarizing the main articles included in this literature review is provided in Appendix A.

1.2 Towards a definition of gift exchange

Gift exchange is conceptualized as the circulation of goods to nurture social bonds among individuals (Belk, 1979). Based on an in-depth investigation of rituals in primitive societies, Mauss (1925) suggested that the gift mechanism comprises giving, receiving and repaying and is based on the reciprocity principle. This principle identifies a self-perpetuating circular system of exchanges, summarized in three obligation imperatives:

- 1) the obligation to give;
- 2) the obligation to receive;

3) the obligation to repay.

The obligation to give is based on “moral and religious imperatives, the need to recognize and maintain a status hierarchy, the need to maintain peaceful relationship, or simply the expectation of reciprocal giving” (Belk, 1976, p. 155). The obligation to receive is based on the implicit rule that refusing a gift is an impolite or even hostile act (Sherry, McGrath and Levy, 1993). The acceptance of a gift is the recognition of being in debt to the giver (Godbout, 1998), and the social obligation to repay must be fulfilled in order to re-establish the symmetry between the donor and the recipient (Sahlins, 1972).

Differential emphasis has been placed upon the socialization function of gifts, which has been discussed in terms of its relevance for the development and maintenance of relationships or of identity. The effects of gifts on the giver-recipient dyad have been a major topic of marketing research (e.g. Ruth et al., 1999; Schiffman and Cohn, 2009; Sherry, 1983). Theoretically this literature relies on the assumption that gifts are a symbolic form of communication, “a language that employs objects instead of words as its lexical elements” (Caplow, 1984, p. 1320), by means of which givers convey relational and emotional meanings without the use of language (Areni et al., 1998; Belk, 1996). The gift is a medium to symbolically express the relationship between the giver and the recipient, to show the giver’s commitment and feelings toward the recipient (Belk, 1979; Belk and Coon, 1993; Wolfenbarger, 1990) and to help the giver to reinforce or affirm the relationship (Ruth et al., 1999). In addition, studies on heirlooms and family assets (e.g., money, bonds, property, etc.) provide evidence that families preserve their legacy and collective identity by means of the transfer of family-related items that are passed from one generation to another (Bradford, 2009; Curasi, Arnould and Price, 2004; Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2003).

The effect of gift giving, however, may also be detrimental for the relationship. In some instances, gifts harm the quality of the relationship between the giver and the recipient, weakening the perceived bond between them or even breaking the relationship (Ruth et al., 1999; Sherry, 1983; Sherry et al., 1993). In other instances, the gift does not meet the goal of reinforcing the relationship but has a minimal effect on the relationship overall quality (Ruth et al., 1999).

Gift giving has been also conceptualized as generator of identity (Schwartz, 1967). This function begins in early childhood with items related to gender identification. Toy soldiers and dolls are traditional masculine and feminine gifts, respectively, gifted to project images of a brave man or a dedicated mother. Also, kitchen supplies given to a woman, such as cooking appliances or tableware, implicitly convey the social role of a caring wife. Gifts carry out this function not only for the recipients but also for the givers, who can rebuild and protect social aspects of their identity by means of giving gifts (Klein et al., 2015; Segev, Shaham and Ruvio, 2012).

1.3 The gift exchange process

The gift exchange model consists of the selection of a product or service to be presented as a gift from individual “X” (the giver) to individual “Y” (the recipient) on a specific occasion. Thus, it concerns not only the actual giving, but also the giver’s choice process and the recipient’s pre- and post-exchange behaviors. An early conceptualization of this model was made by Banks (1979), who conceptualized it as a four-stage process: the purchase, the actual exchange, the consumption and the communication. Sherry (1983) further articulated the model, which consists of a dialectical cycle of reciprocity between the giver and the recipient. His model, which is currently the most akin to consumer behavior studies, comprises three stages: Gestation, Prestation and Reformulation.

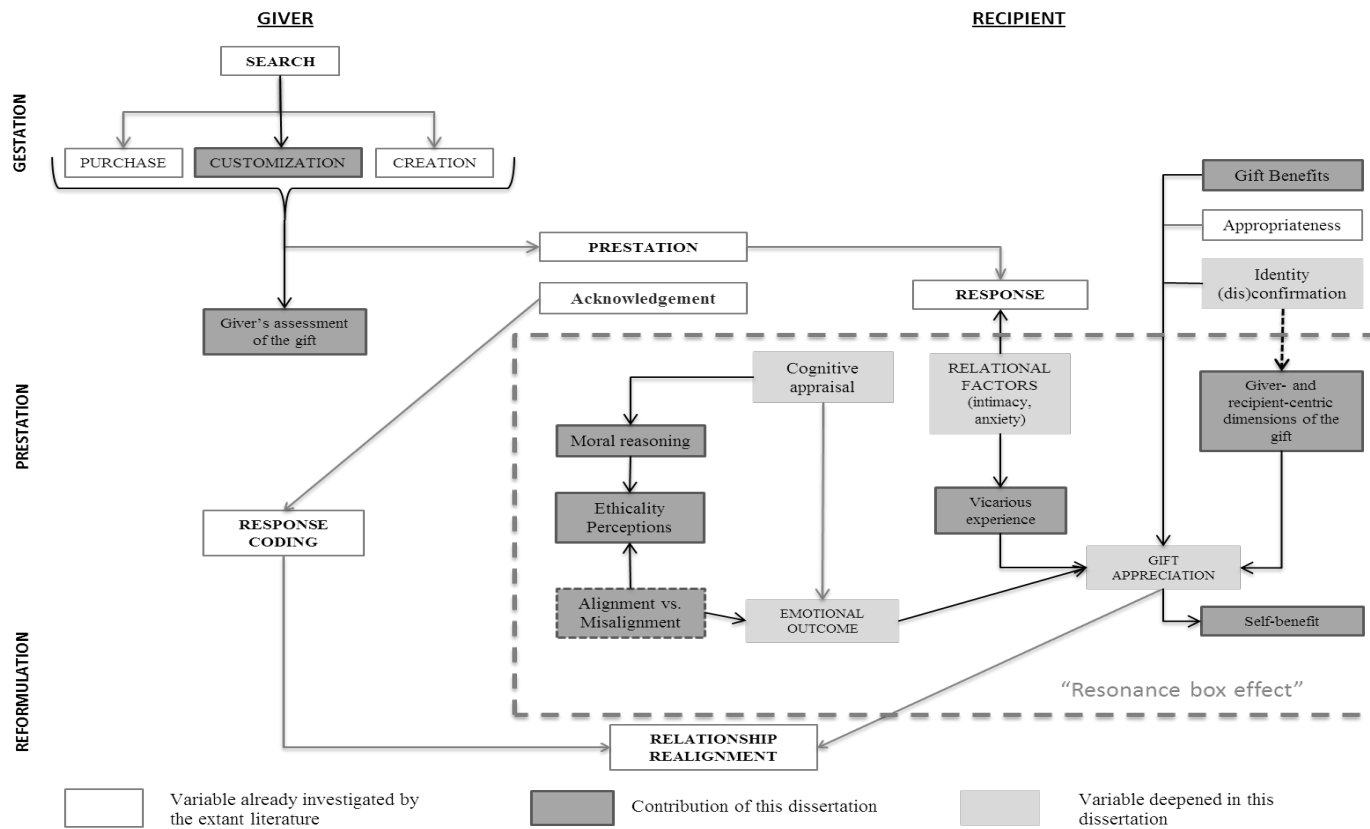


Figure 1.1 -Sherry's model (1983) adapted with the main variables under investigation in this dissertation

Initially, the giver is involved in the *Gestation* phase, during which he or she searches for the product or service to give. The search can be conducted both internally (thinking about the recipient and his or her preferences) and externally (searching for the gift in the market environment). The gift can be purchased or created, as in the case of handmade or personalized gifts (Moreau et al., 2012). At this stage, the recipients are traditionally passive, although they can elicit the gift decision with direct requests or unintentional behaviors (Sherry, 1983). Today, however, recipients are becoming more and more active at this stage, such as by using gift registries to declare their preferences and reduce the risk of unwanted gifts (Gino and Flynn, 2011; Ward and Broniarczyk, 2011). Most of the extant theorizing on consumer gift exchange focuses on this stage. Cleveland, Babin, Laroche, Ward and Bergeron (2003), for instance, investigated gender differences in information acquisition during gift shopping behavior, while Heeler et al. (1979) studied the selection of brands for giving gifts.

The gift is offered in the *Prestation* stage (Sherry, 1983), when the actual gift exchange occurs. At this stage, contextual factors, such as the time and place of the gifting, and situational factors, such as ritual elements or the quality of the relationship, impact the value of the gift (Areni et al., 1998; Otnes et al., 1993). The *Prestation* stage consists of a series of feedbacks between the giver and the recipient, starting with the gift presentation and ending with the expressed gratitude of the recipient. If the giver is concerned about the success of the gift, it is necessary for the recipient to decode the meaning of the gift and then respond to the giver (Roster, 2006), who in turn must seek to understand the recipient's response (Sherry, 1983). Focusing on this phase are Ruth's (1995) study of psychological ambivalence and mixed emotions as well as Roster and Amann's (2003) paper on impression management techniques used by recipients to disguise their disappointment with unwanted gifts. This dissertation also concerns this stage, taking into account antecedents and consequences of gift appreciation (see Figure 1.1).

Reformulation, the last stage of the model, consists of the disposition and consumption of the gift. In this stage, the giver-recipient bond is re-evaluated by both actors based on the gift success and interactions that occurred in the Prestation stage (Ruth et al., 1999; Ruth et al., 2004). As the outcome of the Reformulation stage, the relational bond can be strengthened, affirmed, weakened or damaged, while in some instances it has a negligible effect (Ruth et al., 1999). Relatively few studies have been devoted to analyzing this crucial phase and its effect on the relationship. Notable exceptions are the studies of Sherry et al. (1992) and Adams et al. (2012) on gift disposition and re-gifting as a social taboo, respectively.

Figure 1.1 depicts the Sherry's model (1983) with a specific focus on the variables discussed and analyzed in this dissertation.

1.4 What is a gift?

According to most disciplines, gifts are goods or products voluntarily given by one person or a group to someone else (Belk, 1979). The giving of a gift differs from other forms of exchange. The Polish anthropologist Malinowsky (1922) first suggested that gift exchange differs from barter and trade. Mauss (1925) supported and expanded this assumption, proposing that gifts differ from commodities in the realm of market exchange, because gifts acquire an immaterial connotation – the *hau* – that is the spiritual essence of the gift. Unlike regular commodities, the gift embodies the identity of the giver, meaning that in addition to receiving something material, the recipient receives a part of the giver. The *hau* of the gift increases the value of the product itself, making it inappropriate for the recipient to give it away (Sherry et al., 1993).

Research in the realm of consumer behavior supports the idea that gifts differ from other products because they symbolize the relationship with the giver, which bestows a quality of “sacredness” upon the gift (Areni et al., 1998; Belk, Wallendorf

and Sherry, 1989; Carrier, 1991). The sacredness and the *hau* of the gift lead recipients to believe that givers are somewhat entitled to determine the fate of the gift, which makes re-gifting the product uncomfortable, if not a social taboo (Adams et al., 2012). Belk (1988) supports this assumption, suggesting that gifts become part of the extended self, as other extended possessions, like collections, money or pets (Belk, 1988). Notably, gifts acquire a role in individuals' extended self not only when received, but also when gifted (Wong, Hogg and Vanharanta, 2012). Indeed givers describe objects that they had given as gifts to close others as part of their own possessions (Wong et al., 2012).

Another perspective on this situation, however, suggests that the gift reveals the giver's mental image of the recipient (Schwartz, 1967). The gift is a projection of the giver's beliefs about the recipient – an objectification of the recipient's identity through the eyes of the giver. This determines two consequences: the imposed identity may or may not be incongruent with the recipient's self-identity; and accepting (or rejecting) a gift means confirming (or disconfirming) this identity (Sherry, 1983). Given that receiving a gift helps recipients to affirm and recognize their own identity (Ruth et al., 1999), receiving a gift that is incongruent with the recipient's identity threatens his or her ego and may harm his or her relationship with the giver (Sherry, 1983).

Belk (1996) has investigated the characteristics of perfect gifts. Belk has identified six principles that a gift should meet to be considered 'perfect'. Such a gift (i) requires an extraordinary sacrifice on the part of the giver and (ii) should be aimed only at pleasing the recipient, with no expectation of return. The notion and etymology of sacrifice are rooted in religion: sacrifices were fundamental in the majority of ancient civilizations' rituals and typically consisted of the killing of an animal or person as an offering to a deity to obtain its benevolence. The classical usage of this concept has evolved in the centuries, although the meaning of 'cost' and 'deprivation of something' have remained. In the gift exchange literature, the

giver's sacrifice has assumed the meaning of costs the giver must face to acquire the gift. Specifically, givers' costs comprise three components: monetary, effort, and temporal sacrifice (Cheal, 1987; Wooten, 2000). Although valuable gifts are often assumed to be expensive, recipients prefer gifts that require a considerable amount of time and effort from the giver, and the economic value is secondary when the behavioral costs of a gift are high (Gino and Flynn, 2011; Robben and Verhallen, 1994). This aspect of sacrifice suggests that recipients recognize the "mental investment" a giver makes in giving a special gift (Areni et al., 1998). Often, the sacrifice is associated with crafting the item, such as in the case of handmade gifts (Belk, 1988) or careful planning of the gift exchange moment (Areni et al., 1998).

The perfect gift also (iii) should be a luxury and (iv) should delight the recipient, for whom the gift (v) should be distinctively appropriate. Finally, Belk (1996) stated that the perfect gift should (vi) surprise the recipient. Surprise seems to be the most valued characteristic of a gift and a central emotion in gift exchange, because it makes the gift memorable (Areni et al., 1998; Belk, 1996; Ruffle, 1999). Gifts elicit surprise because they are exchanged outside ritual occasions or because they are atypical gifts, such as those that are highly personalized (Areni et al., 1998). Gifts given as a surprise are "sacred" to their recipient (Belk et al., 1989) and are perceived as more spontaneous compared to requested gifts, such as gifts taken from a gift registry (Otnes and Lowrey, 1993).

Naturally, not all gifts achieve the goal of being perfect. To be successful, a gift only has to be appropriate. The traditional assumption regarding gift appropriateness says that gifts have to fit the recipient's identity; however, in contrast to this expectation, the giver's identity is the major predictor of gift selection (Belk, 1979; Belk and Coon, 1991). Extending this concept, recently it has been demonstrated that some incongruence with the recipient's identity might actually be beneficial. Recipients, indeed, particularly appreciate those gifts that match the giver's identity,

regardless of the gift's congruence with their own identity (Paolacci et al., 2015). This is particularly true in the case of dating couples (Belk and Coon, 1993).

The first empirical study of this dissertation (*Chapter 2*) investigates how gift recipients appreciate gifts that are simultaneously giver- and recipient-congruent: gifts that portray both the giver's and the recipient's identity. The chapter focuses in particular on personalized gifts, which are analyzed by means of qualitative methods.

The criteria for appropriateness evaluation are based on unwritten rules and defined according to the giver-recipient relationship, recipient's or giver's stage of life, or the occasion (Caplow, 1982). For example, money is an appropriate gift from a grandparent to a grandchild but may be problematic for romantic occasions. Humorous gifts that are good for a bachelor party may not be appropriate on Valentine's Day (Belk and Coon, 1991). Adherence to such rules might enhance the chance of gift appreciation; however, inaccurate predictions jeopardize the gift success. Research consistently shows that many people are poor gift givers, and their recipients know it; about 50% of recipients expect to return or re-gift at least one gift each year during the holiday season (Gino and Flynn, 2011). The literature offers several examples of givers' misinterpretation of recipients' desires. For example, gift givers often opt for luxury or expensive products, mistakenly linking economic value to recipients' appreciation. Conversely, recipients dislike gifts for which money substitutes for mental effort (Flynn and Adams, 2009). In addition, givers and recipients weigh gifts' attributes differently. The asymmetry between givers' choice and recipients' preference might be due to cognitive biases, which lead givers to have an abstract mental representation of the recipient (Baskin et al., 2014), to over-project their personal preferences on the recipient (Lerouge and Warlop, 2006), or to over-individuate gifts (i.e., to select the gift that seems most appropriate for a given recipient relative to others but that may not be appropriate in an absolute sense; Steffel and LeBoeuf, 2014). Chapter 5 describes an empirical research that extends

the current literature on giver-recipient asymmetry and shows how gift givers and gift recipients differently appreciate charitable gifts.

1.5 The one who gives: The giver

Several taxonomies have been developed to explain the giver's motives beyond gifts. These can be summarized in three macro-categories. Some gifts are *purely altruistic*, meaning that the giver's goal is only to convey happiness to the recipient (Sherry, 1983; Goodwin et al., 1990; Wolfinbarger, 1990). These gifts are expressions of agapic love and are a means by which the relationship is celebrated (Belk and Coon, 1993). An *agonistic motive* is when the gift's purpose is to enhance the giver's personal interests (Sherry, 1983; Wolfinbarger, 1990). Givers driven by agonistic motives tend to see gifts as an investment and to consider gifting as an economic exchange (Belk and Coon, 1993). Apology gifts belong to this category, as the giver uses such gifts to encourage forgiveness. Gifts are also often exchanged with tactical motives in romantic relationships (Saad and Gill, 2003), ranging from starting the relationship to defining its social boundaries (Belk and Coon, 1993; Andrus, Silver and Johnson, 1986). In other instances, givers give gifts to comply with social norms, such as reciprocity or rituals (*obligatory motive*; Wolfinbarger, 1990). This view suggests that gifts are often not given voluntarily but rather due to a sense of indebtedness and reciprocity (Goodwin et al., 1990; Joy, 2001). However, these motives are not necessarily discrete; rather, more than one motive can lead givers to give, meaning that all three can be the reasons for a gift simultaneously (Beatty, Kahle and Homer, 1991).

Emotions are also antecedents of gift giving. Positive emotions exert a positive influence on gifting, encouraging gift exchange (de Hooge, 2014). Love, pride and gratitude, for instance, stimulate gift giving to show emotional states and express affection to the recipient (Belk and Coon, 1993; Cheal, 1988; Fisher and Arnold,

1990; Ruth, 1996). The same thing occurs when the giver experiences self-focused negative emotions (i.e. emotions generated by the evaluation of one's own behavior, such as guilt and shame (Haidt, 2003). Self-focused negative emotions are a signal that the relationship needs to be improved, and gifts are used to achieve this goal (de Hooge, 2014). On the contrary, when negative emotions are other-focused (i.e., caused by other people, such as anger and fear), the giver is less motivated to give gifts (de Hooge, 2014).

Nguyen and Munch (2011) suggested that for half of the population gifting is more an obligation than a pleasure, even with romantic partners. The gift purchase process is a challenging activity for the giver, who has to take the perspective of the recipient and guess his or her tastes (Belk, 1982; Ward and Broniarczyk, 2011). For the same reason, buying a gift is more complex than buying something for oneself (Belk, 1982), although it may result in a more enjoyable process (Moreau et al., 2012). The inner tension between choosing something that is appropriate for the recipient while reflecting the giver and the relationship often causes anxiety (Wooten, 2000). More recently, identity research has shown that buying a gift may also threaten the giver's self-identity (Ward and Broniarczyk, 2011). When searching for a gift, a giver sometimes faces the need to make a purchase that is inconsistent with, or even opposed to, his/her own identity, in order to meet the desires of the intended recipient. In such situation, the giver might cope with the identity-threat by purchasing the identity-incongruent product to please the friend but subsequently engaging in identity-reaffirming behaviors, such as buying an identity-expressive product in a subsequent purchase. However, giving gifts is not only a negative experience; in some situation, the giver might also benefit from the gift. Evidence suggests that givers experience several psychological benefits from gift exchange: they feel more effective, useful and generous (Langer, 2000; Shapiro, 1993) and can affirm their independence (Segev et al., 2012). In addition, Klein et al. (2015) recently provided insight on the importance of gift giving in self-regulating behavior

and in identity restoration. With an in-depth analysis into gifting behavior in identity-stripping contexts, the authors showed that gifts are meant for givers to re-establish their lost agency, autonomy and control and to reaffirm the sense of belonging to a family and, more broadly, to humanity.

The gift selection and the gift purchase experience are affected by the giver's personal characteristics. For instance, gift-giving theories mention attitude toward shopping and bargains (Locander and Hermann, 1979; Otnes, 1990), self-esteem (Schaninger and Sciglimpaglia, 1981), and attitude towards Christmas (Laroche, Saad, Cleveland and Browne, 2000) as significant factors. The giver's attachment style is particularly relevant in gift giving, because it shapes how individuals see themselves versus others (Nguyen and Munch, 2007). Individuals with high anxiety or a high avoidance attachment style do not experience gifting as a voluntary and pleasurable activity but rather feel forced and obliged to comply with the social norm of giving gifts (Nguyen and Munch, 2007). Gender appears to be one of the most important predictors of one's gift-giving experience. Gifting is traditionally identified as a woman's job (Caplow, 1982; Cheal, 1988, Fischer and Arnold, 1990): women appear to enjoy gift-giving more (Caplow, 1982; Fischer and Arnold, 1990), buy more expensive gifts (Saad and Gill, 2003), pay greater attention to the importance of buying something to suit the recipient's taste or identity (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 1996). Men, on the other hand, are less enthusiastic gift givers (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 1996), are more concerned about price compared to women (Rucker, Freitas, and Dolstra, 1994), and tend to seek help from sales personnel when searching for the right gift (Laroche et al., 2000). Although there is a convergence among studies regarding the fact that gift giving is more enjoyable for women than for men, there is an ongoing debate regarding the reasons why women are more motivated to give gifts. Various physiological and personality-based explanations have been put forward for these gender differences, such as differences in information elaboration (Krugman, 1966; Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991) or

cortical organization (Meyers-Levy, 1994). A cultural approach, however, suggests that girls receive specific training from their parents regarding gifts, because gifts are symbols of caring (Moschis, 1985); or, more broadly, women are socialized to be shoppers to a greater extent than men (Scanzoni, 1977).

Recipients' characteristics also impact the gift-purchase process. Givers spontaneously classify recipients as "easy" or "difficult". "Easy" recipients tend to be children or close friends, while "difficult" recipients tend to be older or more distant relatives or friends (Otnes et al., 1993). Affluent recipients – those who appear to have everything – are perceived as difficult to satisfy, and gift purchasing for them is a high-anxiety and time-consuming activity (Wooten, 2000). Givers adapt the gift-selection strategy according to the category to which the recipient belongs. The strategy may involve negotiating with the recipient or replicating the same gift year after year for difficult recipients, whereas givers are more eager to buy fun gifts for easy recipients (Otnes et al., 1993). Givers also seek to achieve different goals when selecting gifts (Otnes et al., 1993; Sprott and Miyazaki, 1995). Some givers prefer to please the recipient and buy products that the recipient would enjoy, while others try to maximize the utility of the gift by providing recipients with something useful (Otnes et al., 1993). In some cases, givers want to compensate a loss (material or otherwise) with a gift, while in other cases they use gifts such as books as learning agents (Otnes et al., 1993).

1.6 Gift end consumer: The recipient

The recipient is the ultimate consumer of the gift, and the giver's experience partially depends on the recipient's response (Sherry, 1983; Ruth, Brunel and Otnes, 2004). Thus, the recipient's role is critical from the early phases of the gift exchange. Indeed, the recipient's first act may have already taken place at the point of Gestation. At this stage, the recipient's goal is to convey gift expectations (Wooten

and Wood, 2004), such as by offering hints or lists, while avoiding being labeled as a difficult recipient (Otnes et al., 1993). Today, the elicitation of a specific gift is simplified by the flourishing of online gift registries, which provide a list of products the recipient desires for an upcoming event. At the Prestation stage, the recipient's goals are to open the package and to show appreciation (Wooten and Wood, 2004). The recipient's last act is consumption during the Reformulation stage, where recipients are expected to demonstrate that they value the gift by using or displaying it (Sherry, 1983; Wooten and Wood, 2004).

A considerable part of the literature has focused on the emotions experienced by the recipient in the Prestation and Reformulation phases. Although receiving a gift is usually associated with a happy experience, it can elicit both positive feelings, such as gratitude (Tesser, Gatewood and Driver, 1968) or love (Belk and Coon, 1993; Fischer and Arnold, 1990), and negative ones, like indebtedness (Greenberg and Solomon, 1971; Greenberg and Westcott, 1983), fear and uneasiness (Schwartz, 1967), embarrassment (Sherry et al., 1993) or sadness (Belk, 1991; Mick and DeMoss, 1990). The emotions people experience when receiving a gift are based on a cognitive appraisal of the giver's motives, the sacrifice required for the gift, the intrinsic value of the gift, and the reciprocity that is expected (Ruth, 1996). However, in gift receiving as well in any other interactions among humans, individuals rarely experience a single and discrete emotion. Specifically, in gift receiving, recipients experience multiple emotions, which are systematically associated with relational outcomes (Ruth et al., 2004). While it is evident that positive emotions (e.g. gladness, joy) naturally strengthen relationships, it is less obvious that even embarrassment and uneasiness may reinforce the relationship in the long term, depending on the coping strategies employed to face these negative emotions (Ruth et al., 2004). In this dissertation, I expand the current knowledge on emotions in gift exchanges, showing how gift receipts could generate vicarious emotional

experiences: specifically, Chapter 3 reports an empirical study that demonstrates how recipients feel vicariously proud of the personalizing effort made by the giver.

In the foundational paper on the gift-giving model, Sherry (1983) pointed out that recipients might react emotionally in two ways when receiving a gift: by showing genuine emotions or by dissimulating internal feelings. While genuine emotions are the natural consequences of an appreciated gift, recipients prefer to deceive when confronted with an inappropriate one. Showing no appreciation for a gift is seen as impolite and might even damage the recipient's relationship with the giver (Roster, 2006). For this reason, recipients often use strategies to mask their disappointment with a gift, such as diverting attention from the gift (Roster and Amann, 2003). When a gift is unappreciated, it is easier for the recipient to be honest in the case of truly close relationship, but only when the giver does not appear to have made significant investments of time and money in searching for the gift (Roster and Amann, 2003). Showing gratitude and thanking the giver reduce the potential negative consequences of a gift failure, since givers see ingratitude as a severe social norm violation (Roster, 2006). Thus, the recipient's need to offer immediate and positive feedback, coupled with the unconscious obligation to reciprocate, makes the recipient's role less enjoyable than the giver's (McGrath, 1995; Sherry et al., 1993).

Complicating the situation is the feeling of indebtedness resulting from the failure to comply with social norms, such as in the case of receiving a gift that cannot be reciprocated (Cialdini, 2001; Gouldner, 1960), or from asymmetry in the relationship with the giver. Whereas with close friends there is no obligation to reciprocate, the obligation norm is stronger when the gift comes from an acquaintance, generating more feelings of indebtedness (Joy, 2001; Shen et al., 2011). According to Godbout (1998), the feeling of being in debt is a normal and desirable state in gift exchange, which guarantees the fulfillment of the reciprocity principle. In Godbout's terms (1998) gift exchange is a moral and "positive debt system voluntarily maintained by its partners" (p. 566), who sustain the cycle of gift

exchange by obeying the moral imperative to repay debts. In this dissertation, I investigated how the guilt originated by failed reciprocity affects gift appreciation (Chapter 5) and another instance wherein the gift may result in feeling of uneasiness or even guilt. Chapter 4, indeed, describes an empirical study on the receipt of unethical gifts (i.e., products whose production harms animals) (Oh and Yoon, 2014).

To conclude, when a recipient receives a gift, he or she may not consume or evaluate the gift in the same way he or she would do if he or she had purchased the same product instead of received it as a gift. Indeed, recipients may feel forced to use or display this product, in order to avoid offending the giver (Sherry et al., 1993) or may feel entrapped in this situation, given that they have no other choice. They cannot choose among different options as when buying a product, nor can they decide not to accept, because gift refusal is socially inappropriate (Mauss, 1925; Sherry et al., 1993). In addition to these constraints, it has been demonstrated that gift recipients perceive the gift differently than their gift givers do, and, plausibly, differently from products they purchased for themselves. Such characteristics might imply a differential appreciation not only of products when gifted but also of associated emotions and cognitions, which are worthy of further investigation. This dissertation specifically focuses on these aspects of gift receipts, which are qualitatively and quantitatively investigated in the next empirical chapters.

1.7 Special cases of gifts

1.7.1 Giving something to oneself: Self-gifts

Consumer research on gift giving has primarily focused on dyadic gifts that are given from one individual to another. However, there is another type of giving in which the giver is also the recipient of the gift – that is, self-gifts. Thanks to the

seminal studies of Mick and DeMoss (1990), the topic of self-gifts has developed into a sub-field of consumer behavior research. The relevance of the topic is also signaled by marketers' extensive use of claims that directly invite consumers to purchase gifts for themselves. For instance, the industries of cosmetics and clothes especially employ appeals that encourage self-gifts with messages such as "love yourself" or "treat yourself" (Heat, Tynan and Ennew, 2011).

It is significant to note that this form of giving does not abide by Mauss' imperatives of giving, receiving and reciprocating, and it has been questioned whether self-gifts can be considered gifts rather than simply regular purchases individuals make for themselves. Compared to regular purchases for personal use, however, self-gifts are deliberate acts that usually follow the rationalization of an event. According to Mick and DeMoss's (1990) early definition, the self-gift is a symbolic self-communication that is highly premeditated and context-bound (Mick and DeMoss, 1990, 1992; Mick, DeMoss and Faber, 1992). With regard to the communication dimension, self-gifts involve a symbolic self-dialogue regarding the Self and the ideal Self, and they influence self-esteem and self-definition (Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippè and Gould, 2015). Given the symbolic connotation, self-gifts have specialty and sacredness aspects, and although they can be any product, luxury and expensive items purchased for personal use are often categorized as self-gifts (McKeage, Richins and Debevec, 1993).

Another feature identified by Mick and DeMoss (1990) is the context-bound of self-gifts. This means that self-gifting tends to occur in certain contexts (Mick and DeMoss, 1990, 1992; Mick et al., 1992), including reward, compensatory, birthday, and extra money occasions (Heat, Tynana and Ennew, 2015). In some instances, the self-gift is a self-indulgence that individuals feel they deserve as a reward for their personal success or another achievement (Mick and Faure, 1998). Achievements are strong drivers of self-gifts, especially for men, but only when the achievement is attributed to one's own merit, effort or sacrifice (Heat et al., 2015). On many

occasions, consumers buy gifts for themselves to alleviate stress, irritation, and negative moods (Mick and DeMoss, 1990; Luomala, 1998; Heath et al., 2015). Women especially engage in self-gifting behaviors to recover from negative events and feel better (Heath et al., 2015). On occasions involving sorrow or family bereavement, self-gifts allow individuals to feel closer to the deceased (and, consequently, to feel better) (Heath et al., 2015). In other words, self-gifts can be seen as a therapeutic coping strategy by which individuals escape from negative feelings and regulate their moods. When self-gifts assume such a compensatory and therapeutic connotation, their purchase tends to be less premeditated and more impulsive (Luomala, 1998).

Although gifts are self-gifted to maintain positive emotions or to recover from negative ones, sometimes they arouse negative feelings, such as guilt or regret (Luomala and Laaksonen, 1999). This might happen because the self-gift is not able to alleviate the negative mood or because the therapeutic effect is too short (Clarke and Mortimer, 2013). Generally, guilt and post-purchase regret appear when products are purchased as self-gifts for therapeutic motives; conversely, a self-gift purchased to celebrate a success is more likely to be highly valued and not to generate negative feelings (Clarke and Mortimer, 2013).

Self-gifts are increasingly common in Western society (Popcorn, 1991) and appear to be linked to self-orientation and the materialistic belief that purchasing is necessary to achieve happiness (McKeage et al., 1993). Given the self-oriented nature of self-gifts, this behavior has been mostly investigated in individualistic cultures, especially in the United States, while less is known about self-gifting behavior in collectivistic cultures. The notable exception (Tynan, Heath, Ennew, Wang and Sun, 2010) describes self-gifting behavior in China as a less self-oriented behavior; rather, it is characterized by the willingness to share with important others (such as family members).

So far, researchers do not agree on the nature of self-gifts – whether they are a separate concept from interpersonal gifts (those gifts made by one individual to another) or whether they are a flower of the same bunch. This open debate inside the academic community has led to a lack in the literature of a holistic approach that directly compares interpersonal gifts to self-gifts. Besides one notable exception (Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015), Chapter 4 is a first attempt to fill this gap by analyzing how consumers cognitively and emotionally react when confronted with a gift that challenges moral values.

1.7.2 Giving something to unknown others: Charitable donations

A second type of gift that does not abide by the rules identified by Mauss (1925) is donation. While donating or receiving donations may be an imperative for some, donations do not imply reciprocity.

Charitable giving is an important market. On average, each US household gave approximately \$2,974 to charities in 2013 (Giving USA, 2014). However, non-profit organizations are constantly in need of donations and striving to reach larger parts of the population and convince them to provide donations. Researchers in the fields of economics, psychology, and marketing have devoted considerable efforts to expanding the knowledge on charitable giving over the last 20 years. This can be easily observed in the number of studies on this subject published in high-ranking journals, such as the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing* and *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (e.g. Kleine, Kleine and Allen, 1995; Krishna, 2011; Liu and Aaker, 2008; Reed, Aquino and Levy, 2007).

The current scientific debate around charitable donations focuses on the nature of donation as an expression of pure altruism or a strategy employed by individuals for achieving self-interest. The first view portrays donations as an archetypal altruistic

act, motivated by the ultimate desire to help others (Alessandrini, 2007; Boenigk, Leipnitz and Scherhag, 2011; Ferguson, Atsma, de Kort, and Veldhuizen, 2012). The opposite view contests the altruistic nature of charity and instead suggests that donations are often based on egotistic motives, such as the intention to save money through tax deduction (Boskin, 1976), the desire to bolster self-esteem and sense of belonging (Lee and Shrum, 2012), or the alleviation of guilt caused by a hedonic purchase (Chattarjee, Mishra and Mishra, 2010; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015).

Research has consistently provided evidence that individuals, while helping others, benefit from the experiential value of their donations, whether in the form of money, voluntary works, blood donation or purchase of products associated with charity campaigns. First, donations alleviate the distress and sadness that arise from knowing that others are suffering, thus enhancing the giver's mood and self-esteem (Fisher, Vandebosh and Antia, 2008). Second, it has been demonstrated that donations elicit a compensatory process, by which charitable behaviors mitigate the guilt derived from indulgent consumption choices (Chattarjee et al., 2010; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015). This suggests that charitable donations have guilt-laundering properties (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015), which may have roots in the popular practice of the 'indulgence sale' during the Middle Ages, which involved the deprivation of something material (usually money) as a form of purification and absolution from sins.

Another benefit donors obtain from donations is prestige and recognition. Donors use donations to make a good impression on others; thus, they want their donating activities be publicly lauded (Chell and Mortimer, 2014; Paulin, Ferguson, Jost and Fallu, 2013; Sargeant and Shang, 2011). Being aware of the role of recognition in charitable donations, non-profit organization worldwide have effectively developed strategies to leverage the donor's desire to be recognized for his generosity, offering donors tokens (e.g., stickers, pens, brooches) for their donations (Glynn, Kleinman, Schreiber, Zuck, McCombs and Bethel, 2003).

In sum, current theorizing emphasizes that donations cannot be completely explained by the adoption of an altruistic or a self-oriented behavior perspective. However, multiple-motives frameworks, which include both selfish and altruistic motives, have been successfully applied to explain donation behaviors, showing how one motive is more relevant than another in specific contexts (e.g. Lee and Shrum, 2012; Saito, 2015; Shang et al., 2007).

This dissertation contributes to the current knowledge on donations by integrating this form of giving into the gift exchange between single individuals. Specifically, the last empirical study here presented (Chapter 5) investigates how donations are appreciated by gift recipients and gift givers.

1.8 Traditional and emergent approaches to gift exchange

In conducting this review, I was guided by two issues. The first was the need to provide a panorama on the several topics included under the umbrella of gifting, some of which do not seem to belong to the gifting research at first glance, while others remain very much in the background in the traditional mainstream research on gift exchange. The second issue I noted in conducting this review is a lack of a single and holistic theoretical framework building upon the descriptive model of Sherry (1983). Analyzing the research conducted so far, we can see that the topic has been investigated through different theoretical lenses emphasizing various aspects of gifts. Specifically, the existent works can be classified into five approaches according to the main theme of their investigation: how gifts stimulate (if not oblige) reciprocity (e.g., Pieters and Robben, 1998; Robben and Verhallen, 1994); how gifts influence relationships with others (e.g., Ruth et al., 1999; Sherry, 1983); whether and when gifts are used to show love (e.g., Belk and Coon, 1993; Wolfenbarger, 1990); the self-definition and self-expression role of gifts (e.g. Klein et al., 2015; Ward and

Broniarczick, 2011); and the effects of gifts on consumers' mindset (Baskin et al., 2014; Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014).

Below, the five approaches to gift exchange are described, while contributions to the general literature of gifting and limitations are highlighted. The five approaches have been identified both by relying on prior literature reviews on gift exchange (Davies et al., 2010; Larsen and Watson, 2011) and by considering additional articles on the gifts, which escape from prior reviews. Table 1.1 summarizes the main approaches here described.

Transactional Approach

The transactional approach rose early in the studies on gift exchange, based on the historical investigations of anthropologists. In this framework, gift exchange is based on the concept of reciprocity, which guarantees the perpetration of exchanges among individuals (Mauss, 1925). In other words, the giving of a gift is generally considered to be accompanied by an expectation of receiving something in return, which could take the form of a business favor, a gift, the recipient's loyalty, increased power over the recipient, or, in some cases, a simple 'thank you'. Reciprocity is a social norm that regulates the exchange among individuals (Ruth et al., 1999) and determines social punishment or exclusion when individuals fail to comply with it.

In gift exchanges, a balanced reciprocity is expected when givers and recipients obtain the same amount of benefits. However, it has been noted that individuals usually strive to maximize personal benefits; in other words, to receive more than they give (Sherry, 1983). This creates a tension in the gift exchange process, given that each individual in the exchange circle is potentially in danger of receiving less than he or she gives, or of giving more than is required.

Some of the studies in the transactional approach apply a more extreme view on gifts, comparing gifts to the concept of trade and emphasizing their utilitarian value; from this perspective, gifts are used to achieve something, or to receive something in return (Robben and Verhallen, 1994; Sahlins, 1972). The value of gifts is determined by the marketplace and by factors such as scarcity and monetary price (Belk and Coon, 1993). Another criterion to assess the value of a gift is its functionality; that is, its perceived utility (Larsen and Watson, 2011).

This sub-stream has been mostly applied to research in the B2B setting or to gifts consumers get from firms (e.g., Beltramini, 2000; Laran and Tsiros, 2003; Trawick, Swan and Rink, 1989). Although this approach explains many gift exchanges, especially in the business setting, it fails to account for altruism and detract the magic surrounding the gift (Camerer, 1988). Even the functional value of gifts cannot completely explain gift appreciation, because many functional products might be seen as undesirable if gifted (Larsen and Watson, 2011). In addition, it excludes from the investigation some special forms of gift giving that do not imply reciprocity, such as self-gifts, tips or charitable donations (Davies et al., 2010). So, although the economic and functional value of gifts must be considered as well as the reciprocity principle, the transactional approach provides a limited theoretical foundation for explaining gift behaviors, and other dimensions (e.g., altruism, identity, relations) must be also analyzed.

Social exchange approach

In the social exchange approach, gifts are media by which social relationships are articulated and shaped. This approach focuses on gift outcomes and on the relation-building qualities of gifts. In this realm, scholars see gifts as tools to build and cement relationships: they create bonds between givers and recipients. The gift's ability to harmonize and enhance interpersonal relationship is common among different cultures, as testified by studies on collectivistic cultures, such as in Asian

(Joy, 2001; Wong et al., 2012) and South-American countries (Jolibert and Fernandez-Moreno, 1983).

The assumption beyond this approach is that gifts symbolize and convey meaning, so the value of a gift goes beyond its economic or functional worth (Camerer, 1988). The symbolic dimension differentiates the social exchange approach from the transactional approach. Indeed, both frameworks conceptualize gifts as based on the reciprocity principle, but while the transactional approach emphasizes the gift's economic worth, in the relational approach the gift exchange perpetuates thanks to its symbolic and relational meaning. Moreover, while in the transactional approach the reciprocity is guaranteed by the feeling of indebtedness recipients experience and want to resolve, in the social exchange approach it is based on moral duty, which individuals do not want to dissolve but instead voluntarily maintain as a "positive debt system" (Godbout, 1998, p. 566).

The efforts of the research in this stream were intended to understand how gifts reinforce relationships and to identify variables that might interfere with this goal. Findings suggest that givers devote intense efforts to obtain gifts that reflect the nature of the relationship they share with the recipients and tune their gift-selection strategies in accordance with relationship (Belk, 1982; Otnes et al., 1993; Sherry, 1983). In addition, gift appropriateness is conceptualized as a function of the nature of the relationship among the giver-recipient dyad (Belk and Coon, 1993; Rubin, 1973; Sherry et al., 1993).

Although the relational implications of gifts are incontestable, this approach fails to investigate the effect gifts have on the self and completely neglect to consider gifts that escape from the exchange model (i.e., those gifts that are given with no expectation of getting something in return). Relational research has been mostly qualitative (e.g. Belk, 1982; Belk and Coon, 1993, Otnes et al., 1993; Sherry 1983), with some exceptions employing survey designs (Caplow, 1982) or experiments

(Bodur and Grohmann, 2005), while some authors (Davies et al., 2010) have called for a more quantitative investigation in this field.

Agapic love approach

In 1993 Belk and Coon rejected the depiction of gift behaviors as mere forms of exchange between parties, accusing the previous gifting models of reducing the complexity of gift exchange and neglecting to recognize the emotional and irrational nature of the phenomenon. In essence, the two authors propose creating a link between gifting and altruistic behaviors, describing the gift behavior as less selfish than it had been previously portrayed to be. Therefore, in this approach, gifts are given with the sole purpose of pleasing recipients and showing love. In other words, givers do not want to achieve a second goal with the gift, nor do they expect to receive something in return besides the recipient's happiness.

Belk and Coon (1993) encapsulate this approach into the romantic love model, wherein partners exchange gifts without thinking of the rewarding elements of the act. However, more recently several scholars have raised doubts regarding the applicability of this approach to real exchanges. Indeed, a number of studies have found that even in romantic relationships such as marriage, the agapic love approach does not completely explain the gifting behaviors. For instance, Nguyen and Munch (2007), and later Schiffman and Cohn (2009), provide evidences that husbands and wives often give gifts to comply with social norms or to avoid arguments, and they often expect something in return for their gifting efforts.

Expressive approach

Although the transactional, social exchange, and agapic love approaches have proved invaluable to understanding the gift-giving process, a number of authors have noted their limitations. For instance, in his seminal work, Sherry (1983) suggested

the importance of the personal dimensions of gifts, as gifts are predominantly expressions of the self.

The basic assumption of this approach is that gifts are possessions that represent part of the extended self (Belk, 1988) and help to narrate stories of the self and reveal self-developmental identity (Belk, 1988; Schwartz, 1967). Notably, gifts express and influence identity both for the giver and for the recipient. Gifts become containers for the being of the giver, who objectifies his or her personal identity in the form of gifts, so accepting the gift means to the recipient symbolically accepting the giver at the same time (Sherry, 1983). This implies that gifts allow for a re-definition of the extended self of the recipients, in which the giver's self is also included (Belk and Coon, 1993).

More recently, this approach has been used to analyze how gifts help individuals to re-establish their lost identity under extreme conditions, such as internment camps (Klein et al., 2015). An in-depth historical analysis of gift exchange in Nazi camps allowed for extending this approach, showing how gifts have identity-defining power not only over the recipient but also over the giver (Klein et al., 2015).

The latest theorizing in this stream of research has explored consumers' gifting behaviors through the lens of the Identity-Based Model (IBM; Oyserman, 2007, 2009), which defines identity as a malleable construct that is constantly under development and is influenced by social and cultural factors. This model has been successfully applied to the identity-restoration power of gifts (Klein et al., 2015) and to explain why recipients look for identity congruence when receiving gifts (Paolacci et al., 2015). In this horizon, the relationship between identity and gift giving is bidirectional: identity influences what and how much to give and identity is influenced by the gift (Aaker and Akutsu, 2009).

This approach offers several insights on the gifting domain at large, including advancement in the knowledge on donations – for example, when donations are

salient to the identity, the amount donated increases (Wheeler, DeMarree and Petty, 2007). However, Aaker and Akutsu (2009) call for further research on when and how givers give. Although such an investigation may be limited to the effect it has on identity, it would probably open new scenarios, showing how the gift context might activate not only different identities but also different cognitive mindsets. This is what the next and final approach tries to achieve.

Discrepancy approach

The last approach here discussed has not been previously acknowledged in the literature but rather emerged as a coherent group of papers from my in-depth analysis of the extant literature. I name it the “*discrepancy approach*” because it groups those articles interested in understanding the gifting phenomenon as behaviors that diverge from any other form of consumption in terms of emotional connotations and cognitive processes. In this approach, scholars are not looking at the outcomes of gifts on the relationship or the self, nor on the motives behind gifts, but rather aim to expand the knowledge regarding how gift context modifies the consumption experience.

Early studies in the gifting domain almost touched upon this topic, but they limited their investigation to describe the differences between regular purchases for oneself and gift purchases for others (e.g., Cleveland et al., 2003; Vanhamme and de Bont, 2008). More recently, this approach has gained momentum, given that several scholars have approached gift exchange as a phenomenon that modifies cognitive processes, emotions, and experiences. For instance, Moreau et al. (2011) found that personalizing something for someone else makes the customization task more enjoyable. Other scholars have empirically tested how gifts activate specific cognitive mindsets, which affect product evaluation (e.g., Baskin et al., 2014; Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014).

This approach has the advantage of offering a fine-grained analysis of the gift selection experience and giving guidance to consumers and marketers on how to overcome cognitive bias in order to be more successful during the gift exchange. However, this approach has barely looked at the recipients, instead privileging giver-centric studies. This dissertation specifically aims at filling this gap, by investigating how gift receipt diverges from other consumption experiences due to the inherent features of the phenomenon.

Table 1.1 - Summary of the approaches of the gift exchange literature

<i>Approach</i>	<i>Definition and Main Theme</i>	<i>Focus of the Investigation</i>	<i>Limits</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
<i>Transactional</i>	Gift exchange is similar to trade. Gift exchange is a circle based on the principle of reciprocity. Giving a gift is accompanied by the expectation of receiving something in return.	Balanced reciprocity; Benefit the giver and the recipient Receive from the exchange; Gift exchange in B2B setting; Gift value.	It does not account for altruistic motives at the base of gift exchange, and it does not provide an explanation for the other functions of gifting (identity generation and relationship building).	Qualitative (in-depth interviews, observation); experiment.
<i>Social exchange</i>	Gifts are a medium to build, cement and reinforce interpersonal relationships. Reciprocity guarantees the virtuous circles of gifts, and is based on the moral principle of repayment (not on obligation).	Gifts that reinforce (vs. weaken) relationships; Gift appropriateness; Dyadic relationship.	It does not consider those gifts that are given with no expectation of getting something in return.	Survey; qualitative (in-depth interviews, critical incident technique, projective technique, story-telling); experiments.
<i>Agapic love</i>	Gifts are tools to show love and affection. Symbolic dimension of gifts: they convey a meaning.	Motives of gifting; Romantic relationships.	Recent findings raise doubts on the pure agapic motives for gift exchange even among married couples.	Qualitative (in-depth interviews, diary); survey.
<i>Expressive</i>	Gifts allow for self-expression and identity definition. They carry out the function of identity generators.	Identity development; Identity restoration; Identity recognition	It neglects to show whether the activation of different identities generates different mindsets.	Qualitative (in-depth interviews, critical incident technique); historical; experiments.
<i>Discrepancy</i>	Gifts are peculiar consumption experiences, which affect individuals' mindset. The gift purchase differs from a regular purchase.	Product purchase process; Cognitive mindset and bias;	Giver-centric perspective with few studies on gift recipients.	Experiments; survey.

1.9 Conclusions

In this first chapter I reviewed the extant knowledge on gift exchange, in order to provide a roadmap for this dissertation. The chapter is meant to give a comprehensive description of the literature in which my work is embedded and to show the current gaps of the literature.

The final part of this chapter was specifically meant to show the theoretical frameworks in which prior research developed and to indicate in which approach my studies are positioned. I described five approaches used in the gift literature. In doing so, I partially based my classification on prior literature reviews on the topic (Davies et al., 2010; Larsen and Watson, 2011), and then I reconciled the articles to the categories by looking at the functions attached to the gifts. Indeed, the first four approaches describe gifts differently depending on the function the gift has: obtaining something of the same value in return (transactional approach); shaping a relationship (relational approach); showing love (agape love a); or defining the self (expressive approach). The last approach (discrepancy approach), in which I position my research, focuses on gifts as a peculiar form of consumption rather than on the outcome of gift exchange. This classification is not completely exhaustive, and some authors may be better positioned in a sub-branch of one of the approaches; however, this classification captures the vast majority of works on gifts. Moreover, it must be also noted that classifying some studies in a single approach might be too restrictive, given that they share concepts and assumptions with more than one approach.

By narrating the gift exchange literature from multiple perspectives and through multiple theoretical lenses, this review clearly shows the complexity of gift exchange as a topic of study. Indeed, gift exchange is a complex interaction of several actors, each bearing unique attitudes, views and personality traits, wherein situational, contextual and relational factors generate a network of intertwined meanings. This literature review also demonstrates that, according to the lenses

applied to the analysis, gift exchange assumes different colors and meaning. Although the integration of the approaches was beyond the scope of this initial chapter, I believe that the gift literature would greatly benefit from a more holistic approach, which might describe the phenomenon in its full complexity.

EMPIRICAL PART I

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PERSONALIZATION

Chapter 2

Did you design that yourself? – And just for me? An exploratory analysis of personalized gift receiving.

This chapter is aimed to provide first insights on how gift receipt influences the consumption of products and to pose the basis for the next empirical set of study. Specifically, the context under investigation here is gift personalization, because personalized gifts can be considered an extreme example of gifts that simultaneously match the recipient's taste and reflect the giver's personality. This chapter reports an exploratory qualitative analysis – critical incidents and semi-structured interviews – which reveals that gift features that contain references to the giver's personality are valued by the recipient and amplify the gift appreciation, even if the gift is not an ideal match with the recipient's taste. In addition, the findings offer initial support for the mediated experience of emotions in gift receipts and offer guidance for the next quantitative investigation of personalized gifts, made by means of experimental designs in Chapter 3.

Keywords: critical-incident technique, gift, gift appreciation, personalization, semi-structured interviews

This chapter is based on a paper [Pizzetti, M. and Gibbert, M., "Did you design that yourself? – And just for me? Distinctiveness and assimilation in personalized gift receiving"] received a "revise and resubmit" from the *Journal of Business Research* and is currently under revision for the resubmission.

2.1 Introduction

Imagine a gift that has been personalized: Has it been personalized so that it perfectly matches the recipient's taste? Or does it reflect the giver's personality because the giver relied on his or her own (and not the recipient's) preferences? In gift-giving, people usually fall into two extreme camps: those who select gifts they themselves like and those who focus squarely on the tastes of the gift recipient. Givers may also employ a third strategy: Buy a suitable gift matching the recipient's tastes and add a personal touch to reflect the giver's personality. Specifically, this personal touch can be a special wrapping paper, a handmade birthday card, or a product personalization. This third strategy is becoming more and more common: Increasing numbers of online personalization platforms (i.e., company websites that allow consumers to self-design products) are now positioning themselves as a source for unique gifts (Moreau et al., 2011).

Now imagine being the recipient of such personalized gift: Would you appreciate the gift more because it matches your tastes or because its features remind you of the giver? Traditionally, gift exchange research has emphasized the need to identify the recipient's tastes and preferences, somewhat overshadowing the giver's personality. The underlying assumption is that gifts reflecting the recipient's taste are sure to please because they allow for the recipient's self-affirmation (Belk and Coon, 1991). Conversely, a gift that is inconsistent with the recipient's identity but consistent with the giver's personality might be perceived as a kind of imposition by the recipient (Sherry et al., 1992). Recent findings have questioned this assumption: Paolacci et al. (2015) showed that some egocentrism on the side of the giver in gift selection may in fact be beneficial. That is, recipients actually do appreciate so-called giver-congruent gifts (i.e., gifts that reflect the giver's personality). However, less is known about the nature of such giver-congruent characteristics that are appreciated by the gift recipient and, conversely, which gift characteristics should be recipient-congruent to guarantee the gift appreciation.

This first chapter offers evidence that recipients appreciate gifts more when they are simultaneously recipient- and giver-congruent. It explores the consumer behavior exhibited in the receiving and usage of personalized gifts (i.e., gifts tailored by the giver especially for the recipient). The gift personalization is ideally suited to expanding the understanding of recipient- vs. giver-congruent gifts because the very process of gift personalization involves identification of the recipient's preferences, but the inherent difficulty of overcoming personal taste might lead the giver to over-project his or her own preferences on the recipient, resulting in a gift that reflects both the giver and the recipient (or neither). Through data analysis and comparison to the extant knowledge on gift exchange, we find that personalized gifts simultaneously portray the giver's and the recipient's identity. Product uniqueness, functionality, and aesthetic match reflect the recipient's personality. We also find that personalized gifts make the giver's identity tangible. Recipients value these gifts because they recognize (1) the giver's creativity and (2) the giver's touch and because the gift (3) elicits nostalgia and (4) reveals the giver's image of the recipient. In addition, we find that personalized gifts elicit a mediated experience of pride and psychological ownership: Although the gift recipient is not the customizer of the product, he or she feels pride in the personalized gift.

The chapter begins with a review of the relevant literature on gift receiving. Thereafter, the methodology is outlined. Specifically, the empirical analysis is realized by means of qualitative tools (critical incidents and semi-structured interviews). Given that gift exchange is a complex consumption practice with an important symbolic dimension (Sherry, 1983), qualitative methods are most appropriate to fully understand the unexplored phenomenon. After presentation of the empirical results, the findings are discussed and theoretical implications are provided.

2.2 Giver- and recipient-congruent gifts

Research on gift exchange has generally found that gifts matching the recipient's personality are particularly appreciated, offering few insights into the relationship between the gift and the giver or the extent to which the gift portrays the giver. The traditional perspective was based on the assumption (Sherry et al., 1992) that matching the gift to the recipient's identity is highly desirable. Conversely, the greater the incongruence between the portrayed identity and the recipient's perceived self, the greater the recipient's dissatisfaction (Belk, 1976). A gift that is incongruent with the recipient's identity may even damage the giver-recipient relationship; it can be seen as a lack of caring in the giver (Sherry, 1983) and threaten the recipient's self-view because gifts are considered part of an individual's extended self (Belk, 1988; Schwartz, 1967). The incongruence might be due to the human tendency to assume that others like what we like (Davis and Rusbult, 2001) or that similar people are attracted to each other (Belk, 1976). Not recognizing an eventual dissimilarity with the recipient creates an imbalance in the gifting process and increases the chances of gift failure. In a situation of high dissimilarity between the giver and the recipient, the giver might end up buying a gift he or she dislikes but which will please the recipient (Ward and Broniarczyk, 2011). However, the egocentric bias (i.e., the tendency to judge based on the egocentric viewpoint) complicates the perspective (Epley et al., 2004; Lerouge and Warlop, 2006) and might increase the difficulty of identifying the other's preferences. In addition, gifts are a symbolic projection of the giver's beliefs about the recipient, an objectification of the recipient's identity. This complicates matters further, as some givers might be better than others in "objectifying" the recipient's personality and this personality as seen by the giver does not always match the perception of the recipient – effectively resulting in a sense that one is misunderstood or misinterpreted when receiving a gift (Schwartz, 1967).

While traditionally, matching the gift to the recipient's identity was paramount, more recently, some scholars have suggested that deviating from the recipient's preferences may not always be detrimental. Counter-intuitively, receiving a gift of one's favorite brand may result in a negative perception of the giver and the self (Sprott, Czellar, Lebar, and Karlicek, 2012). Moreover, a seminal paper from Paolacci and colleagues (2015) shows that some giver egocentrism in gift selection is beneficial and recipients appreciate giver-congruent gifts, regardless of a match or mismatch with the recipient's identity. Researchers have argued that individuals expect identity-congruent actions not only from themselves, but also from others: Thus, givers are supposed to buy gifts consistent with their own identity.

Furthermore, consumer research on gift exchange has so far focused narrowly on either the giver's or the recipient's identity and how each influences the gift exchange (Gino and Flynn, 2011; Paolacci et al., 2015; Ward and Broniarczyk, 2011). Prior research, indeed, has artificially separated giver-congruent and recipient-congruent gifts (i.e., gifts that reflect the giver's or recipient's identity, respectively). In contrast, in a real gift exchange context, it is likely that the gift portrays both the giver's and the recipient's identity and does so at the same time. Consider, for instance, the case of Morgan and Robin, who are passionate for hiking and a TV series, respectively. Robin may gift Morgan a sporty T-shirt personalized with a picture of the cast from her favorite TV series. Would Morgan appreciate the gift only because it fits his hobby or also because it is intrinsically associated with Robin?

2.3 The present research

The purpose of this first chapter is to explore the recipient's appreciation of gifts that are simultaneously giver- and recipient-congruent and to shape the initial understanding of the behaviors associated with the receiving of personalized gifts. In particular, the study intends to:

- Examine which gift dimensions that are perceived as giver- or recipient-congruent and how such dimensions influence the gift appreciation.
- Extract any areas of discrepancy or emphasis from the generic gift exchange theory attributable to the personalization process.
- Identify experiential values associated with the receiving of gifts that portray both the giver's and the recipient's identity.

2.3.1 The context under investigation: The personalization process

Personalization entails the production of individually customized products or services. It is based on online platforms that allow consumers to personalize standard products by selecting features from wide sets of options. The literature about product personalization suggests that asking consumers to co-design a product positively influences their evaluation of the product (Troye and Supphellen, 2012) because of the increased preference fit, uniqueness, and the feeling of accomplishment in having created something personal and unique (Franke and Piller, 2004; Franke, Schreier and Kaiser, 2010). Over the last few years, personalization has been of interest to marketing scholars given its trade-off between obtained benefit (e.g., a product tailored around the consumer) and cost (e.g., mental energy required to personalize something). A consumer may voluntarily decide to expend energy personalizing a product for a variety of reasons. The need for uniqueness and the need for optimization are included as antecedents of mass personalization (Hunt, Radford and Evans, 2013; Park, Han and Park, 2013) while the experiential value of personalization, which consists of the enjoyment and pride derived from the

personalization process, also drive personalization (Buechel and Janiszewski, 2014; Franke et al., 2010; Merle, Chandon and Roux, 2008). In addition, personalization allows for self-expression because consumers can state their identity by adding their personal taste and touch to an identity-neutral and standard product (Merle et al., 2008).

Furthermore, recent research on personalized gifts suggests that personalization platforms allow givers to make a gift distinguishable from other gifts by tailoring it to the recipient's and their own preferences (Moreau et al., 2011). However, personalizing a gift online can also be challenging for the giver. Prior studies demonstrate that some consumers feel uncertainty, anxiety, and confusion during online personalization because of their inability to identify their preferences (Franke, Keinz and Steger, 2009). This uncertainty and anxiety might be even more evident when personalizing something for someone else, leading givers to rely more on personal taste than the recipient's desire. Those characteristics make personalized gifts an extreme case of gifts that can reflect both the giver and the recipient simultaneously and hence offer the ideal context for the aims of this investigation.

2.3.2 Research methodology

Given the nature of the research aims, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate technique for achieving the research goals. We triangulated qualitative data: semi-structured interviews and critical-incidents. We chose the semi-structured interview because this method enables respondents to reveal their views of the phenomenon and deep emotions, meanwhile allowing the researcher to gain a better understanding of the participant's perspective (Spiggle, 1994). The critical-incident technique (CIT) asks participants to recall and describe events that are the most relevant to them for the phenomenon under investigation (Gremier, 2004) and was used because it has been proven to be a suitable method for examining gift exchanges (Areni, Kiecker, and Palan, 1998; Ruth, Brunel, and Otnes,

2004). Triangulation allowed us to deal with the usual problems of retrospective biases, as well as representing a means to boost construct validity of the findings (Gibbert, Ruigrok and Wicki, 2008; Yin, 2003).

2.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were conducted in a meeting room at a European university, in the presence of two blind interviewers. Twelve 24- to 28-year-old students were interviewed (see Table B.1 – Appendix B for details). Since gender is a relevant variable in gift receiving (Areni et al., 1998), informants of both genders were included; 67% of informants had experience with personalization, but only 33% had experience with personalized gifts given and/or received. Table 2.1 summarizes the interview sample and details respondents' previous experience with mass personalization.

Table 2.1 – Semi-structured interview sample

	Frequency
Age	
24 years	7
25 years	2
26 years	1
27 years	1
28 years	1
Gender	
Male	6
Female	6
Nationality	
Italian	8
Swiss	2
German	1
Singaporean ²	1
Experience with personalization	
Yes	9
No	3
Experience with personalized gift	
Yes	1
No	8

² The inclusion of a Singaporean participant in a sample of Europeans is justified by the similarities between European and Singaporean cultures (Piron, 2002).

Informants were recruited through the snowball sample procedure. First, master's degree-seeking students from a European university were asked to personalize a fashion look for a friend on a mass-personalization platform and then to provide the research team with the email address of the intended recipient. The indicated recipients were contacted by email, shown the gift personalized by the giver, and invited to a meeting room for an interview. This hybrid approach was employed to reproduce a situation similar to real gift exchange and avoid retrospective biases (Gibbert et al., 2008; Gibbert and Ruigrok, 2010; Yin, 2003). Informants' participation was totally voluntary and informants were rewarded with a small gift.

The interview started relatively open-ended and with a "grand tour" question about gifts (Ruth et al., 1999; Schiffman and Cohn, 2009). Then, the interview progressed with questions about the personalized gift shown in the invitation email. The questionnaire guideline was designed to cover the main aspects of the gift receiving, but leave room to extend the discussion to other emerging issues. The questionnaire guideline consisted of questions aimed at eliciting an emotional response, the meaning of the gift, and the recipient interpretation. In line with qualitative inquiries, the questionnaire guideline and question wording changed slightly and evolved over the course of the interviews. For instance, questions to investigate participants' prior experience with gift personalization and personalization in general were added because the theme of prior experience spontaneously emerged from the participants' narratives. The interviewer was able to create an environment free of distraction and allowing for free expression. Most of the informants enjoyed talking about gifts, and spontaneously described past experiences, and interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes each. All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to be shared among the team members. In addition, interview reports were collected and circulated to the research team. A contact form

after each interview for follow-up questions to clarify and refine issues during the transcription and the coding phase was also generated.

2.3.4 Critical Incident Survey

Twenty-five respondents from the U.S. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) panel were recruited to complete the questionnaire in exchange for small compensation (see Table B.2 –Appendix B for details). Previous studies have shown the reliability of MTurk panels for conducting studies online (Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling, 2011). The limited size of the sample was justified by the integration of the data obtained through the critical-incident survey with the semi-structured interviews (Gremler, 2004). Respondents were asked to evoke and write about a real situation in which they received an online personalized gift. Participants were explicitly required to remember and describe the occasion on which they received the gift, the emotions they felt, and what they did with the gift. The choice to ask participants to describe a single experience instead of multiple extreme experiences (as researchers employing critical incidents often do; Gremler, 2004) was meant to collect richer data regarding the gift personalization, which were essential for our subsequent analysis (Gremler, 2004). The questionnaire comprised open-ended questions so as to collect participants' perspective and gain a description of the phenomenon in their own words. The anonymity of online questionnaires and the flexibility of the questions allowed participants to express themselves freely.

The critical incident survey yielded rich information on personalized gift exchange. Three critical incidents were eliminated because they described a gift that was not personalized. Of the 22 critical incidents remaining, 45% was gifted on a ritualized occasion (i.e., birthday or Christmas), 45% came from a friend, while 36% came from a partner and 18% from a relative. The critical incidents comprised different product categories of gifts, which are summarized in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 - Critical incident sample

	Frequency
Age	
20-29 years	12
30-39 years	7
40-45 years	3
Gender	
Male	14
Female	8
Education	
High School	11
Bachelor Degree	11
Personalized gift received	
Cup/mug	4
T-shirt	3
Calendar	2
Bag	1
Book-cover	1
Bracelet	1
Christmas ornament	1
Computer case	1
Garden decorative item	1
Guitar pics	1
Keyboard	1
Lighter	1
Money-clip	1
Play mat	1
Shoes	1
Wristwatch	1
Occasion of the personalized gift	
Birthday	7
Christmas	5
Other	10
Giver of the personalized gift	
Friend	10
Spouse/partner	8
Relative(s)	4

Using both methods enabled us to triangulate our findings across the interviews and critical incidents and to increase our understanding of recipients' reactions. The narratives acquired by means of interviews and critical incidents yielded 6 gift experiences of giver-congruent gifts, 9 of recipient-congruent gifts, and 19 with a balance between the giver and the recipient identity. The transcripts of the interviews, the interview reports, follow-up emails, and the online questionnaire

yielded 69 pages of text. The data were suitable for the thematic coding analysis (Gremler, 2004; Kassirjian, 1977; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

2.4 Analysis

Combining the two datasets, the narratives were analyzed through iterative inductive thematic coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Following McGrath and colleagues (1993), two researchers of the team analysed the interviews separately and then shared their impressions during several meetings to achieve a consensus of interpretations. A third coder, who was blind to the objectives of the study and not involved in the interviews, analysed the texts separately to guarantee the reliability of the interpretations. Extensive analysis was performed among data, emerging themes, and relevant literature to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics and the themes associated with gift receiving. The analysis, rather than taking the individual as a unit of analysis, was performed by analysing the individual gift receiving experiences as a unit of analysis. This allowed us to cut across individuals and their experiences to determine general patterns of gift behaviour as evidenced across instances of gift giving and receiving. The analysis across instances of gift giving and receiving followed three steps.

Step 1: Initial data coding. Our initial approach was meant to identify the first-order codes among interviews and critical incidents. As Thompson (1997) suggested, the analysis followed an iterative procedure. All coders initially read all the texts to gain a gestalt understanding of the narratives, and then they categorized half the texts using first-order codes. The first coding was done separately by each of the coders and, thereafter, codes were discussed among team members. Each code was analysed and approved by team members as distinctive and meaningful compared to the other codes. We relied on informants' own language to capture the finest nuances in the concepts and used their words as a source for our first-order

codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This first phase of the iterative process allowed for developing a codebook that was subsequently used to categorize the remaining texts. The same procedure was followed for the second half of the documents, updating the codebook when new codes were found. We developed a fine-grained coding scheme consisting of 76 first-order codes. The cross-validation by the third coder allowed us to assure ourselves about the interpretation, as well as increase the rigor of the analysis.

Step 2: Theoretical categories. In the second step of the analysis, first-order codes were grouped in abstract and generalizable categories. More specifically, this process was derived from previous literature on gift exchange and personalization, research objectives, and data. Again we used a constant comparison technique to reach a higher level of theoretical abstraction. The team members interpreted the data individually and then negotiated agreement among their individual interpretations. Again, the coding process moved back and forth between the data and existing theory to develop categories grounded in the data but linked to existing theoretical concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This process identified nine theoretical categories (i.e., utility, aesthetic match, uniqueness, psychological ownership, nostalgia, giver's creativity, detector, pride, entitlement).

Step 3: Aggregate themes. In the third step, a further abstraction of data occurred. The identified theoretical categories were assembled into three aggregate themes: recipient-congruent dimensions; giver-congruent dimensions; and emotional connotation. This process involved a rigorous analysis of the relationship among first-order codes, theoretical categories, and aggregate themes.

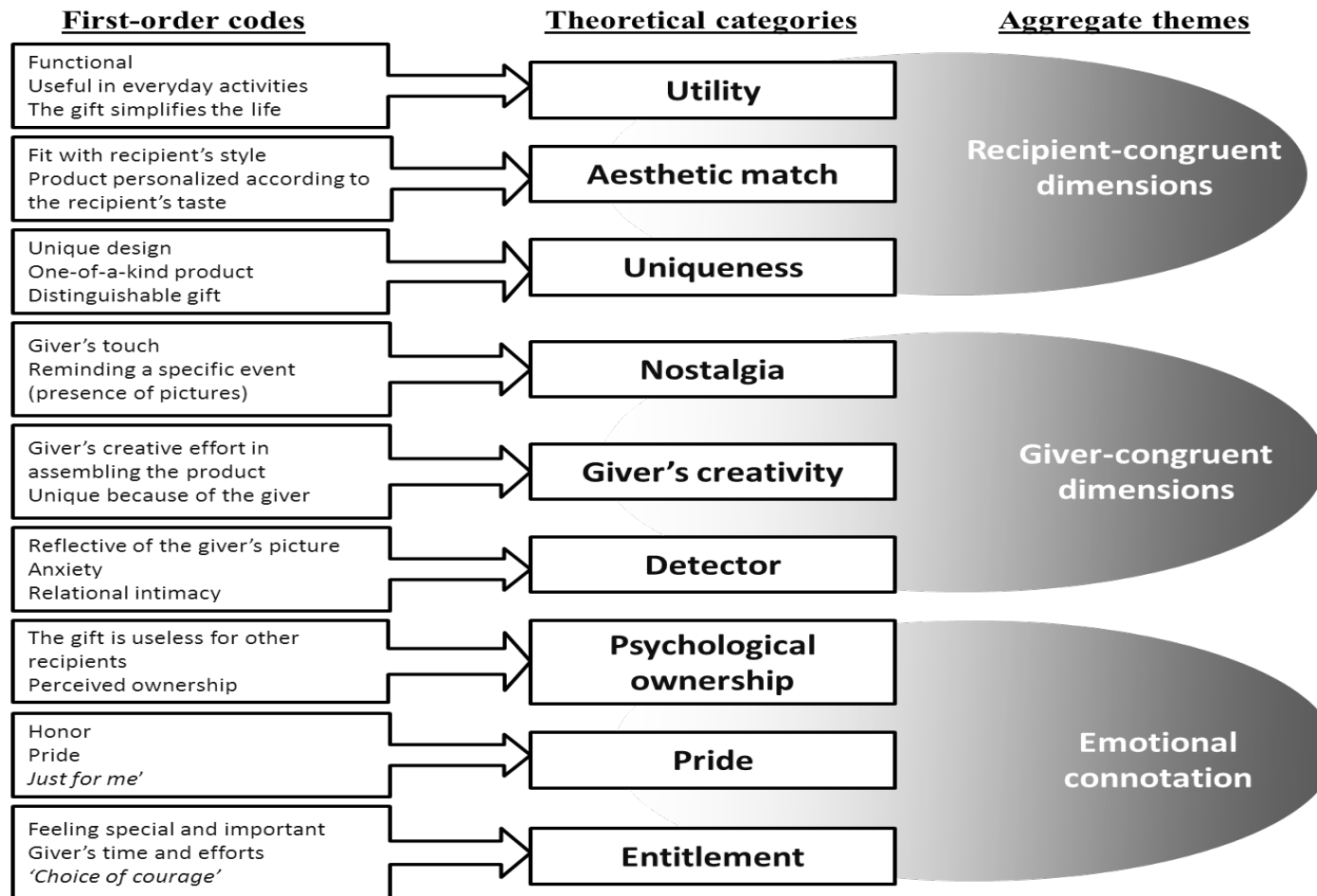


Figure 2.1 - Data Structure

2.5 Emergent themes from personalized gift receiving

Figure 2.1 shows the data structure for our findings. Our data are organized to represent how recipients experience personalized gifts. We find that informants perceive some dimensions of the personalized gift as congruent to their own identity and personality, while other dimensions are related to the giver. Moreover, data revealed the emotional connotations of personalized gifts.

2.5.1 Theme 1: Giver-congruent dimensions

Utility. Informants acknowledge that the personalized gift delivers several benefits. First, in line with prior research, the personalized product drives higher utility: Informants define personalized gifts as functional and useful in their everyday activities. A functional gift is something that reflects the recipient's way of life, such as with Charles ("he chose sporty clothes and I'm a sporty guy"), or simplifies some activities, such as with Peter ("I received a money clip from my wife one year. It had my initials on it. She knows I don't like a big, bulky wallet so she got me the clip. I used it pretty much immediately when I got it. I keep all of my cash on the clip. It also has an extra outside clip for credit cards, which I use as well. I typically only carry this and my phone around with me. I use it every day"). Moreover, a functional gift is also something the recipient needs and can use often, such as in the case of Alexander, a 24-year-old programmer who received a play mat:

"The play mat is a standard trading card game play mat, but it was customized with an image placed on it rather than an official game mat. I really appreciated the gift since I really needed a play mat for my cards. I play trading card games a lot so I really needed a play mat but I couldn't find one for a decent price. This play mat is different than the other gifts I have previously received because all of my previous gifts

were either cash or digital goods. It has been about a year since I got it, and I have used it every time I play any card game with my friends. I felt grateful to my friend and I was happy that my friend cared enough about me to get me something I could really use.”

Notably, the gift’s functionality directly affects the gift’s appreciation. For example, Christopher complained about the limited functionality of the gift he received from his wife, “The cup doesn't hold a whole lot, so I don't use it as often as I would like to use it. If it was bigger I would appreciate it much more.” Lucy, in particular, considered the functionality of the gift a critical aspect for appreciation of the gift. Lucy received a personalized Christmas ornament from a former colleague and found it inappropriate because she would have preferred something more practical, such as a retailer gift card, as depicted in the following vignette:

“I received a Christmas ornament from a good friend. It had my son's name on it and it was to commemorate his first Christmas. I was very appreciative of the gift because I know she must have spent quite a bit of money on it. It is heavy porcelain or china and it's not something I would normally buy for myself (because I would be concerned about it breaking over time). I have not received a gift like this in the past. It appears to be good quality, based on the weight alone.

I received the ornament about five years ago. I actually only hung it on the tree that first year. The other four years I haven't hung it because it is so heavy I am afraid it would pull off the tree branches.

I wondered why she had chosen this particular gift. A Christmas ornament is something that, I feel, should be picked out by family members. It's something that will be on your tree year after year and bring back memories. I feel like it's a little too personal of a gift for good friends to give one another. When I read this that sounds mean and

unappreciative! I am just not really into lots of knick-knacks and that is what this ornament is to me. I would more appreciate receiving something I could use...like diapers or a gift certificate to Target. Wow, that also sounds mean when I read it. I am just a more practical person so a Christmas ornament that has very limited usability and is purely decorative is not the kind of gift I usually enjoy.”

Aesthetic match. A second benefit the personalized gift delivers is the fit with the recipient’s style. The narratives offered several examples of the aesthetic match the gift had with the recipient. Vincent, for example, received from his girlfriend a personalized T-shirt which “had my name on the back and in front there was a picture of my favorite musician. It was great because the shirt was also in my favorite color.” Irina defined the personalized shoes she received as “absolutely perfect” because “they were the exact shoes I'd been talking about, the exact colors I wanted, even down to the right laces.” Simon appreciated the keyboard gifted by his cousin that “had a few logos from games I really like and the key layout was adjusted slightly to my personal preference.”

Uniqueness. Uniqueness refers to the unavailability of the same product on the market: The personalized gift is a one-of-a-kind product, different from the other products in the same category (Tian, Bearden and Hunter, 2001). Many narratives showed that uniqueness is important for recipients, who feel satisfied owning something with different features than standard products in the market. Irina described the personalized pair of shoes she received as: “I loved it, and I don't think there's anything like it. It was made especially for me, nobody else will ever have a pair quite like those.” A quotation from Matthias confirms the importance of uniqueness, he said, “There are few chances that someone else owns the same product. The uniqueness is an important driver of appreciation.” Lim’s quotation typifies this finding. Guided by the desire to purchase uncommon products, Lim

revealed that such gifts allow him to differentiate himself from the rest of consumers and feel himself unique:

“Uniqueness of the gift adds value somehow. I like things that are different; I try to be different sometimes. A personalized gift adds value.”

In addition, uniqueness also refers to the extent to which the personalized gift is distinguishable from other gifts. For example, Jan said about the bag he received, “I got a leather bag with my initials stitched into the side. The initials definitely distinguished it from other gifts I’ve received previously [...] I don’t think I’ll get another gift quite like that one.” Andrew, a real estate agent, received a personalized lighter from his girlfriend and explained:

“Since she made the gift, or put in the order for it with custom specs, I think that makes it distinguishable from other gifts. I’ve never seen something like that before in my life, so I felt very appreciated and loved.”

2.5.2 Theme 2: Recipient-congruent dimensions

Nostalgia. In the previous sections, we explain the elements of the personalized gift that recipients perceived as intrinsically associated with their own identity. Within our data, however, we detect a vital role of the giver in gift appreciation. Maria explained that the gift wouldn’t come from a different giver because of its features. Paula appreciated the picture on the mug because it reminded her of a specific event in her life. In this section, therefore, we probe how the personalized gift becomes a memento of the giver, assuming a deep emotional connotation and eliciting intense feelings of nostalgia.

Our informants gave many examples of how the gift is a memento of the giver, which made the gift even more appreciated. First, informants often noted the giver's touch, a feature or detail of the gift as a tangible clue of the giver. We interpret this as a marker of the giver's identity, which is valued by informants because it reminds them of the giver. Maria's experience typified this finding. Because the received gift had a specific pattern, she associated the gift with the giver; she said,

“The polka dot T-shirt that was in the gift I've received from my friend is typically something she would choose. It is something that she would use and therefore I can see that she's behind this gift because no other friend would choose it! I can see her identity behind this gift.”

A second way the personalized gift carries out the function of memento is through the presence of pictures, logos, or words associated with a specific event of the recipient's life. Patrick described a coffee mug “with a custom logo and name. It was from a friend I played games with, and the logo was of the team we played on together.” He appreciated the gift and uses it for pen storage because it “brings back good memories.” Mothers are particularly pleased by such gifts, which often portray images of their children. For example, Ann received a calendar personalized with pictures of her children and defined it as “the greatest gift I have ever gotten! No other gift could come close to this one! I will always have this to remember all the special moments while my kids were little.” Paula, a young homemaker mother, was touched by a personalized gift made by her husband and son:

“He put a picture of my son on the mug and the caption below “Love You Mommy.” Below that he put “Mother's Day 2013” to remind me when he and my son bought me the gift. The mug was pink, my favorite color, and had little red hearts on it surrounding the picture. The fact that he put the holiday and date on the mug distinguished it from any gift

I might receive in the future because I will now always remember what year I received this gift.”

Because the gift acts as a memento of the giver, recipients take care and try to preserve the gift from use. Martha, a 31-year-old mother, revealed that she did not write on the personalized calendar she received because she didn't "want the writing to ruin the next month's picture." Carl hand-washes his personalized mug "... and don't put it in the dishwasher because I worry about the heat ruining it. It still looks really new so I'm glad it's holding up because it really is special to me." Another example came from Sarah, a sales agent who received a personalized T-shirt. After having worn it several times, she stopped wearing it:

“I received a customized shirt from my grandmother. The shirt has a picture of us on it. I appreciate the gift completely. I can't wear it anymore because I don't want to ruin it. This gift is more special to me than any other gift I've ever received, mostly because my grandmother is getting older and I know she won't be with me much longer. I doubt any gift could ever mean more to me than the shirt my grandmother had made for me. It was a very special gift that I still cherish to this day. At first, I wore the shirt all the time. Then I noticed a hole was wearing in the sleeve. I started wearing it less. It occurred to me that I wanted to keep the shirt forever. So I stopped wearing it as much. Now I barely wear it and I plan to put it away in a bag to keep it in the same shape it's in now. I've had the shirt since 2005 and I must have worn it over 500 times by now.”

Unfortunately, the giver's touch sometimes overcomes the recipient's desire. Although the presence of a giver's touch is generally appreciated, it is counterproductive when it takes precedence over the recipient's taste. In some instances, the prevalence of the giver's identity over the recipient is independent

from the personalization, but solely due to the product chosen. Notably, the majority of informants admitted that they also avoid buying a product they do not like regardless of it supposedly being for someone else. Christopher described the experience of receiving a product that was particularly appreciated by the giver, who had a lot of the product. Christopher received a personalized Tervis cup from his wife and said, “I rolled my eyes in my head as the gift giver loves these Tervis cups and has a bunch of them. It was as if she was giving a gift to herself.” David’s experience replicates this one. In his case, David received a bracelet, something he would not purchase for himself:

“It was a bracelet type of gift, where you could pick the color and the amount of money she wanted to put it in. Alongside this, she was able to pick nearly most of the details and have my name engraved in it as well. I’m not the biggest fan of it, haha, because I don’t like wearing stuff, but I wear it to make her happy. I usually just wear it anywhere I go, it’s not too feminine so I guess I’m used to it. I’ve used it for about 5-6 months now. If I had the choice without her getting upset at me I probably would have swapped it for something else personally. I was happy, but not like super happy because I’m not a huge fan of bracelets. It’s the thought that counts though I guess so I thanked her and never really looked back at it. [...] when I first received it I was kind of like ‘Why a bracelet? Is it really for me?’”

Giver’s creativity. We also note that informants acknowledge the giver’s creativity and originality in assembling and configuring the gift. Put another way, the gift would not be the same without the giver’s creative effort in tailoring the product. For example, Markus, who spontaneously described his own experience of personalizing a gift, explained that the recipient particularly appreciated the gift because “... I put in my inventiveness.” The creative effort, even if limited to choice of color or word decoration, adds value and a symbolic meaning to the gift. Maria

explained that the giver's creative effort makes the gift "...meaningful because of the creativity she (i.e., the giver) puts into it, the fact that she chooses. So you can make something very simple but you add the value of customization... also you have the creative effort because of the effort of thinking of something meaningful... it adds value to the gift." The creativity adds value to the uniqueness of the personalized gift: Nevertheless, the uniqueness per se is appreciated; for many of our informants, this uniqueness added value because of the thought and effort made by the giver in thinking about the best gift configuration. Lisa typified this finding:

"The uniqueness is because it has been done for you... this is what distinguishes the gift from other gifts. If it has been chosen for you, then you feel special, important. If, instead, it's unique because it's a rare exemplar... well, I would probably be happy because it has been gifted, but it misses the dimension of having been thought, created, required time to decide the best configuration."

Notably, spontaneous descriptions of gift personalization experiences confirmed that givers voluntarily made visible their contribution when facing a personalization process. For instance, Miki revealed, "For me, it is really important to make my own contribution." Our interpretation of this finding is that gifts reflect the giver because of a deliberate willingness of the giver to be recognized in the gift given.

Detector. Our interpretation of the texts revealed that, often, informants felt concern and anxiety about the personalized gift. Typically, these feelings came when first unwrapping the gift and, to some extent, the anxiety amplified the joy the recipient experienced later. For example, Ann, a 37-year-old mother who received a personalized calendar, indicated that she cried with joy when she saw the gift, but before unwrapping it, "I was anxious to see what was in the box. When I began to open it, I was clueless! Then I saw it through the paper! I cried right then and there!"

Our informants gave two reasons why such gifts generate anxiety. For some, the anxiety comes from the awareness of the personalization process, which was guided by the giver's beliefs and opinions about the recipient: The gift reveals how the giver perceives the recipient, and the giver's picture may conflict with the recipient's self-image. Miki explained that she was worried that she would not recognize herself in the gift:

"I was scared because if someone makes a fashion outfit for you, it is also revealing something. The fashion outfit could be overly trendy or super-ancient style. When configuring a gift, you expose your beliefs about someone else. And if it's a look, it is also part of the identity, it's risky! So I was concerned about the final result of the customization."

Counter-intuitively, the anxiety also arises when the gift perfectly matches the recipient's taste. For example, Lim received a gift consistent with his style and felt simultaneously satisfied and scared because his friend knew him so well that he was able to pick out the perfect clothes for him:

"After seeing the outfit chosen, I felt satisfied. That's what I normally wear. I thought: 'Hey that's actually what I always wear.' My friend was able to recognize my taste. I was satisfied. At the same time, it is a bit scary when someone knows you so well."

Lim explained that such mixed feelings depend on the intimacy with the giver: The lower the intimacy, the greater the anxiety; "I think the perception (of the gift) changes according to the giver. If you don't really know the giver, it is weird, I feel weird. I will think like, 'How do you know this?' If I receive it from a close friend, then it is nice." Our informants explained that personalized gifts are more expected from close friends: With non-intimate friends, they wouldn't expect such a thoughtful gift, and they would guess about the motives behind giving it. Cyrill, a

24-year-old student, mentioned, “If the personalized gift comes from a not-close friend, I think he or she is interested in me. I would ask myself, ‘What’s going on?’” Charles confirmed that a personalized gift can be a tool for the giver to reinforce the relationship, “From a not-close friend, I wouldn’t expect a personalized gift and I would be positively surprised. Maybe he or she wants to have a closer relationship with me.” Our interpretation of this finding is that personalized gifts are seen as relational markers of where the relationship stands and in which direction it is going. Informants interpret the personalized gift as a symbolic communication by the giver, who wants to show his or her attachment and affection. Lisa typified this finding “because with this gift, she demonstrated that our friendship is important. So you can measure the relationship you have... clearly this friendship is going up... we are starting a new kind of friendship.” Also, personalized gifts assume the role of relation marker when the relationship is already intimate. Carl, a cashier who received a personalized mug from one of his close friends, said, “We’ve had a great friendship over the years and this definitely again really made me happy and is one of my favorite moments with her; however, our relationship was pretty strong already. But I had to say it certainly was a very positive thing for her to do for us.”

2.5.3 Theme 3: Emotional connotations

Psychological ownership. The literature defines psychological ownership as the psychological “state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or piece of that target is ‘theirs’” (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks, 2003, p. 86). Personalization research has shown that psychological ownership is generated by the responsibility for the final outcome (Fuchs et al., 2010). In the case of a recipient of a personalized gift, who actually has no responsibility for the product design, the psychological ownership derives also from the awareness of being the only possible user of the gift, which makes the gift “useless to someone else,” as Irina, a 35-year-old web developer, explained. Our interpretation of this finding is that a personalized

gift often portrays images of the recipient or giver or has the initials of the recipient. In addition, we note that the personalization itself generates the psychological ownership because the product is tailored around the recipient. For example, Lisa, a 24-year-old student, mentioned that “[if] a gift is personalized for you, even with a single feature, it makes the gift more yours.” John typified this finding, as clearly depicted in this vignette:

“If you gift me a pair of green shoes with these specific laces, there are 100,000 of the same pairs, I guess. I feel they are more mine. It’s my pair of shoes. I’m not the kind of guy who wants to be original or wants to have original things... so owning a unique pair of shoes doesn’t change so much, like for someone else. But the sensation that if something was truly and entirely done for me, it’s more something I own.”

Pride. The narratives of our informants reveal that informants experienced pride and felt honored by the gift. An example of the pride derived from the gift came from Lisa; she stated, “I thought Delphine (i.e., the giver) chose the gift only for me, and this makes me feel proud.” Miki, the informant who was scared before the gift opening, supported previous quotations, saying “When I saw the look, my feelings were relief, then like compliment because I liked it, mostly positive. To a certain extent I felt honored, proud.” Informants acknowledged the ability of the giver in personalizing the gift. Alice, a 24-year-old student, analogized the personalized gift with a handmade product because of the time and effort the giver spent in personalizing it; she said:

“Someone who creates something especially for you, handmade, who spends time on it, thoughts something... on online website, you surf there and customize something, it’s basically the same thing... it’s something done just for me.”

The analysis of the text shows an alignment between the giver and the recipient in terms of psychological symmetry. Previous studies on personalization have shown that self-designing a product generates accomplishment and pride for the outcome of the effort (the “I designed it myself” effect; Franke et al., 2010). Notably, our informants spontaneously defined the gift as “*designed just for me.*”

Entitlement. Entitlement refers to the recipient’s feeling of being different from other gift recipients. Informants spontaneously defined this feeling with different words: Sarah and Andrew said “I felt special,” Vincent and Carl felt “really appreciated,” and Lisa felt “special and important.” Respondents interpreted the personalized gift as a voluntary communication by the giver, who wants to convey his or her attachment and affection by means of the gift, given that online personalization might be a risky process for a giver. The chance of the giver’s misinterpretation of the recipient’s desire (and the subsequent lower fit with the recipient’s needs) is high when the gift is personalized: Personalizing something for someone else created a lot of constraints, and the lack of confidence about recipient’s preference generated anxiety and uncertainty, as expressed by the following quotations from the Lim, Markus, and Miki interviews, respectively:

“Configuration is not easy [...] you make a lot of considerations. There are many factors coming in, and you get confused when doing these things.”

“The configuration process is difficult: you don’t know the other’s tastes perfectly, and it takes time.”

“Configuring a gift is exposing. It’s a risky process. You cannot do it completely freely, and there is tension.”

Entitlement derives also from the recognition of the giver’s sacrifice in terms of time and mental effort. Notably, respondents recognized that the online

personalization could reduce the giver's physical costs. Online personalization and e-commerce in general, can be much more convenient and easy compared to travelling from store to store to pick the right gift: Online givers have access to a wide array of options through just a click. However, respondents valued the mental energy spent by the giver in thinking about and finding the object, as well as the practical execution of personalizing the gift online. Given that recipients valued the giver's attempt to make something personalized, they kept the gift even when they disliked it, because the giver's behavioral costs were an obstacle to gift disposal. It seemed that personalization allowed for forgiveness of the faux pas, and recipients were thankful and not eager to declare their disapproval to the giver.

2.6 Discussion

The traditional approach to gift exchange suggests that recipients do not appreciate giver-congruent gifts, perceiving them as selfish and inconsiderate. However, a recent study (Paolacci et al., 2015) has documented that giver-congruence is not necessarily detrimental per se for gift appreciation. In fact, in some instances, giver-congruence might even increase gift appreciation. Decades ago, early studies on gift exchange showed that giver congruence is a predictor of gift choice: Givers present themselves through the gift and find it easier to purchase gifts coherent with their preferences (Belk, 1979). Real gifts, however, are much more complex: Gifts can simultaneously portray both the giver's and the recipient's identity, being meanwhile giver- and recipient-congruent. The present chapter rectifies this narrow perspective on gift receiving and, explicitly allowing for this complexity, provides a richer understanding of the nuances that drive gift appreciation. We believe that the present study contributes to both the gift exchange literature and product personalization, as well as opens venue for future intriguing research.

In particular, the present study investigates which dimensions of the gift are perceived as recipient-congruent and giver-congruent. By studying personalized gifts, which are taken as an extreme example of gifts that can be recipient- and giver-congruent, the present research illustrates in which dimensions such gifts are valued by gift recipients as giver- or recipient-congruent. Beyond reflecting on the general motives of gift acceptance and appreciation, our first contribution is that certain gift dimensions acquire symbolic meaning as markers of the giver's or recipient's identity. Gift feasibility and benefit are drivers of gift appreciation (Baskin et al., 2014; Gino and Flynn, 2011) and are seen as self-identity signals. We find that recipients often perceive the gift's utility as a signal of the giver's recognition of their identity and, consequently, functionality increases the appreciation of the gift.

The functionality and the fit of the given product are vital for gift appreciation and are achieved thanks to the personalization process, wherein the giver puts himself or herself into the recipient's shoes and makes a careful and planned selection of product attributes. Encapsulating gift personalization in Sherry's (1983) model of gift exchange, the personalization process belongs to the first phase of the model (i.e., gestation phase), which comprises gift selection and purchase. Following Sherry (1983), when searching for the right gift, the giver looks for inspiration internally (i.e., exploring the concept of self and others) and externally (i.e., search in shops and websites). For a personalized gift, the internal search is especially relevant because the giver needs to put himself or herself into the recipient's shoes to identify the most suitable attributes for the recipient. When asked to describe the searching phase in gift personalization, informants illustrated a two-stages process. First, the giver singles out the recipient's style ("think about me, about my style"; Lim) and identifies what the recipient likes ("for example, if a person always wears black, I will certainly not gift something yellow"; Maria). The second stage comprises removing irrelevant product attributes, such as "leave out all the things that my friend knows I don't like" (Charles), and then combining all the

pieces coherently to design the product. In this way, the personalization generates a highly unique product, a one-of-a-kind combination that cannot be owned by someone else and that renders the gift useless for any other recipient. Critically, when the gift is seen as useless for the recipient's lifestyle, it is considered meaningless, regardless of the giver's kind gesture. Other dimensions, however, are perceived by recipients as an expression of the giver's identity: The giver's self-concept drives the personalization process, resulting in a product that reflects the giver's creativity or reminds the recipient of the giver because of some specific feature (e.g., an image or an engraved word).

We find that recipients recognize the giver via different dimensions of the gift. The giver recognition is particularly valued by recipients because the gift becomes a tangible token of the giver. For the same reason, recipients of such gift are less willing to swap it or return it; rather, they show affection for the gift, revealing their intent to take care of it. Moreover, we find that personalized gifts allow for a psychological alignment with the giver in terms of emotional outcomes (e.g., pride). Scholars have praised mass personalization because it increases the preference fit and allows consumers to self-design unique products, which in turn increases their willingness to pay (Franke et al., 2010). From a psychological perspective, scholars have found that consumers love being engaged in activities requiring their time and mental energy because the personalizing effort generates higher psychological ownership, feelings of accomplishment, pride in the results, and the "I designed it myself effect" (Franke et al., 2010). The same outcomes are observed in gift receivers: Recipients feel proud of the giver's selection and creative effort and spontaneously define the gift as "*just for me.*" The alignment with the giver plays a formative role, augmenting the gift appreciation. We believe that these findings are intriguing: So far, researchers have provided evidence of psychological ownership and pride as results of the consumer's own behaviors and achievement. Critically, pride is recognized as a self-focused emotion, elicited by self-achievements,

behaviors, and consumption patterns (Zammuner, 1996). The results of this exploratory investigation shed new light on pride as an emotion that is mediated and experienced through the achievements of someone else.

2.6.1 Managerial implications

Several repercussions for the firms employing mass-personalization platforms arise from this research. Because our findings ultimately show that the recipient's happiness with the personalized gift depends on the balanced presence of the giver's and recipient's identity-signals, managers can provide design support to suggest a perfect mix of giver- and recipient-congruent product features. This goal can be obtained by asking consumers to first identify their and the recipient's favorite product features, and then an automatic process generates a product which presents a balanced presence of identify features. The presence of a personalization support tool might also reduce the anxiety derived from personalizing something for someone else, and decrease the perception of riskiness associated with the process.

2.7 Limitations and future research

Inherent to any study are limitations and opportunities for future research that should be acknowledged. The focus on the personalized gift as the context of investigation limits the generalizability of the result. Although our choice was driven by the objectives of the research, the inclusion of different types of gift might increase the generalizability of the results. For instance, other gifts can be simultaneously giver- and recipient-congruent, such as handmade gifts or experiential gifts. Moreover, investigating whether giver- or recipient-congruent gift dimensions are associated with core or peripheral characteristics of the gift and how such variation affects gift appreciation will increase our knowledge of gift appreciation patterns.

Another shortcoming of this investigation is the size of the interview sample. Although we stopped the interviews when we felt we had reached the theoretical saturation, and the data from the interviews are supplemented by those of the critical incident survey, an enlarged sample would provide a richer understanding of themes that partially emerged in our interviews. For instance, the role of the relational intimacy with the giver, or of some emotions (e.g. surprise, anxiety), although beyond the scope of this investigation, would extend the knowledge of gift receipts.

The findings offer important implications for researchers interested in mass personalization, particularly when consumers are personalizing for someone else. From the narratives of our informants, it is clear that gift personalization is perceived as a risky process. Such riskiness might hinder consumers from employing personalization for gifts. Future research should investigate the factors that might prevent anxiety or simplify the personalization process. Moreover, beyond the personalization context, the psychological symmetry in terms of pride has implications for relational outcomes of the gift and gift disposal. For example, does sharing emotions with relevant others strengthen the relational bond? Does alignment with the giver reinforce the dyadic relationship? What are the effects of this alignment on gift consumption?

2.8 Conclusions

Research in gift exchange has traditionally emphasized the need for the giver to identify the recipient's preference. However, givers often rely on their own tastes in selecting a gift, and such coherence between the giver and the gift is sometimes appreciated by gift recipients. The present research employs a holistic approach to the behavior associated with receiving gifts by investigating gifts that are simultaneously giver- and recipient-congruent and showing which gift dimensions associated with the gift giver and gift recipient. The giver can increase the recipient's

happiness by personalizing gifts in order so that they portray both giver and recipient identity. Such gifts are also highly appreciated because they elicit mediated experiences of pride and psychological ownership.

Chapter 3

Vicarious pride: When gift personalization increases recipients' appreciation of the gift

This third chapter, in line with Chapter 2, investigates the receipt of personalized gifts. Based on the findings of the qualitative investigation of Chapter 2, here I examine why a personalized gift leads recipients to appreciate the gift more highly. Findings of four studies revealed that, when receiving a personalized gift, recipients feel the same pride (vicarious pride) the customizer experiences after having self-created a product. In the first two experiments (Study 1a and Study 1b) with real pairs of friends, vicarious pride was documented among recipients of personalized gifts. The findings showed that the relationship between personalization and gift appreciation was mediated by vicarious pride. Study 2 and Study 3 replicated the results of the first experiments, confirming the role of vicarious pride in gift appreciation and testing the effect of psychological closeness (i.e., relational intimacy and relational anxiety, respectively) on this relationship. Specifically, intimacy with the giver did not affect vicarious pride, which was, in contrast, influenced by relational anxiety. The findings of all studies provide support for the notion that the gift receipt modifies product consumption and, specifically, allows for a mediated experience of emotions.

Keywords: personalization; gift; gift appreciation; pride; vicarious experience

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3.1 Introduction

Traditionally, customization researchers have investigated whether consumers appreciate customization, as well as the boundary conditions that affect this appreciation (Fiore, Lee and Kunz, 2004; Franke et al., 2009). However, consumers often personalize products for someone else as a gift. Recently, Moreau et al. (2011) showed that consumers value a gift more highly if it is self-created, but they did not examine the recipients' appreciation of such personalized gifts. The current chapter focuses on how customization affects the recipient's appreciation. We contend that gift recipients appreciate personalized gifts because they experience *vicarious pride* – the pride that arises from evaluation of the giver's behavior. Grounding our research in simulation theory (Ackerman, Goldstein, Shapiro and Bargh, 2009), we propose a psychological transfer between giver and recipient: The feeling of pride generated by self-designing a product ('I designed it myself' effect; Franke et al., 2010) translates from the customizer to the final user of the product (i.e., the recipient). Four studies confirm our hypothesis on vicarious pride and consistently reveal recipients' greater appreciation for personalized gifts.

3.2 Vicarious experience with personalized gifts

Personalization is the process by which consumers self-design a product by choosing product attributes according to their own preferences (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005; Franke and Piller, 2004). Nevertheless, self-designing something might be an onerous process for consumers (Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Broniarczyk and Griffin, 2014); they must love to be engaged in such challenging activities, and the effort they spend in self-designing the product is rewarded by psychological benefits, such as perceived uniqueness (Franke and Schreier, 2010), psychological ownership (Fuchs et al., 2010), and pride (Franke et al., 2010).

However, researchers have typically investigated personalization from the customizer's perspective, but less is known about the effect when the customizer is not the user of the product, as is the case with the recipient of a personalized gift. Indeed, mass personalization platforms are suitable sources of unique gifts: Gift customization is even more enjoyable than personalizing products for oneself, and givers place higher value on those gifts they self-create (Moreau et al., 2011). Because the presence of a recipient is essential to the gift exchange, we believe investigating the recipient's appreciation of a personalized gift will contribute to our understanding of the personalization phenomenon and gift receiving.

We propose that recipients appreciate a personalized gift because it elicits *vicarious pride* – the pride that arises from evaluation of the giver's behavior and which translates from the giver to the recipient. Pride is a self-focused emotion (Tracy and Robins, 2004), which arises as an emotional response to positive outcomes. Pride facilitates self-control (Patrick, Chun and Macinnis, 2009) and sustainable choices (Antonetti and Maklan, 2014), increases uniqueness seeking (Huang, Dong and Mukhopadhyay, 2014), and derives from luxury brand consumption (McFerran, Aquino and Tracy, 2014). Of greater interest to this investigation, pride is an important consequence of personalization: Customizers refer to pride in the personalized product, which increases the financial value placed on the product (Franke et al., 2010).

Although pride is a self-focused emotion, arising when people achieve something (Zammuner, 1996), it is intriguing that pride can arise not only from the evaluation of one's own achievement, but also from the assessment of other's people achievement (Decrop and Derbaix, 2010). In other words, people can feel pride vicariously. Vicarious pride refers to all instances of pride that people experience because of the achievements of others, regardless of whether they also achieved something. An example is the pride that parents experience for academic goals achieved by their children. Prior research suggests that vicarious pride is facilitated

in contexts of high connectedness, such as the case of soccer fans who share a sense of belonging with the soccer team and feel pride in the victories of the soccer team. Critically, gift exchange is one of the primary forms of interaction between individuals that increases connectedness and reinforces relational bonds (Mauss, 1925; Ruth et al., 1999). Given the bond between the gift giver and the gift recipient, it seems plausible that pride would be an emotional response to a personalized gift. Put differently, we propose that a similar mechanism that elicits pride in the gift giver when customizing a product may occur when a recipient takes the perspective of such giver: The recipient experiences vicarious pride.

Theoretically, this proposition builds on simulation theory: Individuals react to others' mental states and actions by mentally replicating them, and this internal simulation elicits the same psychological effects as the actual performance of the action (Goldman, 2006; Decety and Sommerville, 2008; Mitchell, 2008; Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004). The internal simulation means that people put themselves in the shoes of another person by taking that person's perspective, which induces a variety of vicarious experiences (Goldstein and Cialdini, 2007; Kouchaki, 2011), for instance, the convergence of pain feelings (Jackson, Brunet, Meltzoff and Decety, 2006), vicarious shame (Welten, Zeelenberg and Breugelmans, 2012), and dishonesty (Gino and Galinsky, 2012). Therefore, we might assume that the description of the giver's personalization process generates in the recipient the same psychological outcome (i.e., vicarious pride), which then amplifies the feelings of appreciation for the gift.

Since gift exchange is a social process that involves at least two actors (the giver and the receiver), the relational aspects of the exchange should also be considered when investigating gift appreciation. Moreover, vicarious experiences are facilitated by relational variables, such as psychological closeness (i.e., feelings of attachment and emotional connection with another person; Gino and Galinsky, 2012). When individuals are psychologically close to others, they experience their

emotions (Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1994) and behave in the same way (Gino and Galinsky, 2010). Although psychological closeness is common in intimate relationships (Aron, Aron, Tudor and Nelson, 1991), not all intimate relationships have a high emotional connection, which is characteristic of non-anxious relationships (Bartz and Lydon, 2004). We believe that a careful manipulation of such relationship variables will contribute to a fine-grained understanding of gift receiving and vicarious experiences in general. Here we focus on relational intimacy and relational anxiety because of their relevance in the gift-exchange literature (e.g., Caplow, 1982; Nguyen and Munch, 2011, 2014; Ward and Broniarczyk, 2011). Specifically, we expect that low intimacy, such as in the relationship with an acquaintance, does not hinder vicarious pride, given that the gift per se creates the social bond (Mauss, 1925) needed for the perspective taking. On the contrary, we argue that relational anxiety influences the vicarious experience of pride because relationships filled with anxiety prevent connection with others (Bartz and Lydon, 2004) and consequently might be an obstacle to the vicarious experience of pride.

We conducted four studies to investigate whether gift personalization elicits vicarious pride and influences gift appreciation and to test the moderating effect of psychological closeness variables. The next sections provide a description of the studies and the findings.

3.3 Study 1a and Study 1b: Gift appreciation and vicarious pride

The aim of Studies 1a and 1b was to demonstrate that recipients appreciate a gift more when it is personalized (vs. selected between a set of standard options) because of vicarious pride. One can argue that personalized gifts are more appreciated because of a general increase in positive emotions: In both studies, we show that gifts elicit the same level of positive emotions; consequently, they cannot explain the greater appreciation for personalized gifts.

Both studies involved real pairs of friends, with one as the giver and the other as the recipient of the gift. First, students of our university were involved as the givers, asked to think about a friend as the possible recipient of a gift and indicate his or her email address. Subsequently, we contacted the recipients and asked them to complete a questionnaire regarding a fictitious gift. The involvement of givers was only meant to increase the authenticity of the experience of receiving a gift and to recruit participants via snowball procedures. We then manipulated the gift condition by presenting two fictitious processes via written description (Study 1a) or video (Study 1b). Moreover, we assessed gift appreciation with two measures. Given that high gift appreciation might imply that recipients are more eager to accept a gift with the attributes chosen by the giver and less willing to change the features of the gift, in Study 1a, we assessed gift appreciation by asking recipients to change the attributes of the gift. We expected recipients who received the personalized gift to change fewer items. In Study 1b, conversely, we directly asked recipients to rate the gift appreciation on a scale.

3.3.1 Study 1a

Method

Seventy-four participants (41.9% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 25.45$) from the surrounding area of our institution participated in this study as recipients and were enrolled in a raffle for gift cards. The gift was exactly the same in both conditions (a clothing look), but differently described: Whereas in the personalized gift condition, the scenario presented a selection process carried out step by step via adding look attributes, in the non-personalized gift condition, the look was selected between a set of predefined looks (all the scenarios employed in all the studies are listed in Appendix C – Table C.2). To assure ourselves that the two scenarios were perceived similarly by the recipients, we assessed, with two items adapted from Franke and

Schreier (2010), the perceived time and mental energy spent in buying the gift because they are important elements in gift appreciation (Robben and Verhallen, 1994). The manipulation check on scenario similarity revealed a non-significant difference between the two scenarios ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 2.67$ vs. $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 2.31$; $t(72) = -1.326$, $p > .05$). Then, following the procedures to assess the “I designed it myself” effect (Franke et al., 2010), we measured vicarious pride and positive emotions with two items adapted from Soscia (2007) (a complete list of the items used in all the studies is included in Appendix C – Table C.1). Then recipients were allowed to change the attributes of the look they did not like. Given that the clothing look was composed of four items, the amount of changes ranged from 0 (= no changes) to 4 (= all items were changed).

Results

The results supported our hypothesis that recipients are less willing to modify a gift when it is personalized. Recipients of personalized gifts changed fewer items ($M = 1.05$, $SD = 1.26$) than recipients of non-personalized gifts ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 1.61$, $t_{(72)} = -2.048$, $p < .05$). Moreover, the results revealed higher scores of vicarious pride for personalized ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.52$) than for non-personalized gifts ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.57$, $t_{(72)} = 2.566$, $p < .05$). In addition, we found a non-significant difference in positive emotions between the two conditions ($t_{(72)} = .885$, $p > .05$).

We also tested whether vicarious pride explained the lower amount of changed items in the personalized gift condition. A bootstrap analysis with 5,000 samples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) showed that vicarious pride fully mediated the relationship between gift personalization and appreciation ($b = -.6886$, $-0.7285 < 95\% \text{ CI} < -.0386$, $Z = -1.8164$, $p = .06$). The same analysis with positive emotions instead of vicarious pride showed that positive emotions did not mediate the relationship between gift personalization and appreciation ($b = -.6886$, $-.1017 < 95\%$

CI < .4725, Z = .8270, p > .05) (all mediation intervals are reported in Appendix C – Table C.3).

These findings provide initial support for the idea that personalization increases vicarious pride and lowers the amount of changed items. Although the p value of the Sobel test is slightly non-significant, the results might suggest that gift appreciation for personalized gifts is driven by vicarious pride. However, changing a gift is often seen as impolite by the recipients (Sherry et al., 1992) so they might decide to keep the gift only to avoid offending the giver. For this reason, in Study 1b we directly asked participants to rate their appreciation for the gift and tested the effect of vicarious pride on gift appreciation.

3.3.2 Study 1b

Method

Fifty-eight participants from the surroundings of the authors' institution participated in this study as recipients of the gift (42.4% male; $M_{age} = 25$). Recipients were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in a between-subjects design. The gift was exactly the same between the two conditions (a T-shirt), but we showed two different videos to manipulate the gift-selection process: One showed a personalization process undertaken via online toolkits (personalized gift condition) while in the non-personalized gift condition the gift selection was made by surfing different websites. After the video, two questions, adapted from Ward and Broniarczyk (2011), assessed how much recipients appreciated the gift; then, recipients answered questions about vicarious pride and positive emotions as measured in Study 1a.

Results

Recipients appreciated the T-shirt more when it was personalized ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.52$) than when it was selected between a set of predefined options ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.45$; $t_{(57)} = 2.052$, $p < .05$). Moreover, the vicarious pride was greater in the personalized gift condition ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 4.43$, $SD = 1.40$ vs $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 3.31$, $SD = 1.57$; $t_{(57)} = 2.900$, $p < .01$). Conversely, positive emotions did not significantly vary between conditions ($t_{(57)} = -1.940$, $p > .05$). Confirming our hypothesis, a bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 samples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) revealed that vicarious pride fully mediated the relationship between gift and appreciation ($b = .7954$, $.2627 < 95\% \text{ CI} < 1.3265$, $Z = 2.6456$, $p < .01$). Conversely, the same analysis with positive emotion as the mediator was non-significant ($b = .7954$, $.0252 < 95\% \text{ CI} < .8201$, $Z = 1.6851$, $p > .05$).

Findings of Study 1b confirmed that recipients appreciate a gift more when it is personalized thanks to vicarious pride (Table 3.1 summarizes the main statistics of all studies). However, an alternative explanation of the results might consider the role of psychological closeness on the vicarious experience of pride and its effect on gift acceptance. Given that in both studies we involved real pairs of friends, we did not control psychological closeness. To allow for a rich understanding of psychological closeness in the vicarious experience, we manipulated it in two different ways, as relational intimacy (Study 2) and as anxiety (Study 3), hypothesizing different effects. Regarding relational intimacy, if the effect of vicarious pride on gift appreciation is conditioned on intimacy with the giver, appreciation should vary according to the degree of intimacy with the giver. On the contrary, we hypothesized that relational intimacy does not influence vicarious pride because, even in a context of low intimacy (i.e., gift from an acquaintance), the gift itself bonds giver and recipient (Mauss, 1925), facilitating the perspective taking. As a consequence, we expected that the greater appreciation for a personalized gift is not influenced by intimacy with the giver.

Table 3.1 - Main statistics of all studies

Means (and standard deviations) per conditions for all studies				
	Study 1a		Study 1b	
	Personalized	Non-personalized	Personalized	Non-personalized
Items changed	1.05(1.26)	1.71(1.61)		
Gift-appreciation			4.93(1.52)	4.13(1.45)
Vicarious pride	4.87(1.52)	4.12(1.57)	4.43(1.40)	3.31(1.57)
Positive emotions	7.76(2.17)	8.17(1.67)	8.00(1.63)	7.09(1.97)
Study 2	Intimate friend		Acquaintance	
	Personalized	Non-personalized	Personalized	Non-personalized
Gift-appreciation	6.16(0.84)	5.40(1.29)	5.86(1.43)	4.71(1.60)
Vicarious pride	5.42(1.34)	4.71(1.71)	5.31(1.77)	4.03(1.48)
Surprise	8.17(2.04)	7.67(1.98)	9.07(1.24)	7.93(2.01)
Study 3	No-anxiety		High-anxiety	
	Personalized	Non-personalized	Personalized	Non-personalized
Gift-appreciation	6.39(0.84)	5.91(1.25)	6.11(1.05)	6.32(0.97)
Vicarious pride	5.83(1.32)	5.25(1.39)	5.26(1.31)	5.59(1.29)
Surprise	8.15(2.17)	7.94(2.09)	8.45(1.79)	8.97(1.12)

3.4 Study 2: Effect of relational intimacy

3.4.1 Sample, design and procedures

One hundred twenty-four participants (62.1% male, $M_{age} = 32.60$) were recruited from the U.S. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) panel. Participants were randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (gift: personalized vs. non-personalized) x 2 (relational intimacy: intimate friend vs. acquaintance) between-subjects design. We manipulated intimacy by asking participants to think about and describe an intimate friend (vs. an acquaintance) (Ward and Broniarczyk, 2011) and to imagine that they had received a gift from that friend. We provided a definition of intimate friend and acquaintance according to Ryu and Feick (2007) and assessed the degree of intimacy with one item adapted from Laroche et al., (2004) to check the effectiveness of the manipulation ($M_{intimate_friend} = 9.10$ vs $M_{acquaintance} = 3.11$, $t_{(122)} = 26.650$, $p < .001$). Then the participants read a scenario wherein the gift (i.e. shoes) was presented as

personalized or not and answered questions about gift appreciation and vicarious pride. For gift appreciation, we used a combined version of the measures of Studies 1a and 1b, averaging in a single appreciation index the recipient's appreciation of the gift (two items of Study 1b) and willingness to change the gift. Finally, we used a single item measuring the recipient's surprise as the control variable to ensure that we could differentiate the effect of vicarious pride from this alternative explanation.

3.4.2 Results

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) on gift appreciation showed a significant main effect of the gift, with greater appreciation for personalized ($M = 6.02$, $SD = 1.48$) than non-personalized gifts ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.48$, $F_{(1,120)} = 15.886$, $p < .001$). The effect of intimacy was also significant ($F_{(1,120)} = 4.811$, $p < .05$), showing greater appreciation for gifts from intimate friends ($M_{\text{intimate}} = 5.79$, $SD = 1.13$ vs $M_{\text{acquaintance}} = 5.25$, $SD = 1.63$). Notably, the interaction was not significant ($p > .05$), meaning that appreciation for the personalized gift was not influenced by relational intimacy (see Fig. 3.1). A simple contrast analysis revealed that a personalized gift, compared to a non-personalized gift, was significantly more appreciated when the gift came from an intimate friend ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 6.16$, $SD = 0.84$ vs $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 5.40$, $SD = 1.29$, $t_{(120)} = 2.351$, $p < .05$) as well as an acquaintance ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 5.86$, $SD = 1.43$ vs. $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 4.71$, $SD = 1.60$, $t_{(120)} = 3.344$, $p < .01$).

Results of an ANOVA on vicarious pride confirmed the findings of previous studies, revealing higher feelings of pride for recipients of personalized gifts ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 5.37$, $SD = 1.53$ vs $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 4.39$, $SD = 1.63$, $F_{(1,120)} = 12.246$, $p < .01$). Moreover, a bootstrap analysis with 5,000 samples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) showed a partial mediation of vicarious pride on gift appreciation ($b = 0.9409$, $0.1438 < 95\% \text{ CI} < 0.8447$, $Z = 3.0345$, $p < .01$) given that the direct effect of the gift on appreciation was still significant ($b = 0.5171$, $p < .05$), suggesting the existence of

a further variable which may better explain the relationship (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010). However, the same analysis on the subsample in the acquaintance condition showed that vicarious pride fully mediated the relationship between gift and appreciation ($b = 1.1145$, $.1083 < 95\% \text{ CI} < 1.4546$, $Z = 2.2713$, $p < .05$).

Testing the alternative explanation of the effect of surprise on gift appreciation, the ANOVA showed a significant main effect of gift personalization ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 8.56$, $SD = 1.78$ vs $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 7.79$, $SD = 2.06$; $F_{(1,120)} = 5.705$, $p < .05$), but no effect of relational intimacy or the interaction effect. Moreover, the mediation analysis on 5,000 samples showed non-significant results ($b = .9409$, $-.1483 < 95\% \text{ CI} < .0674$, $Z = -.1623$, $p > .05$).

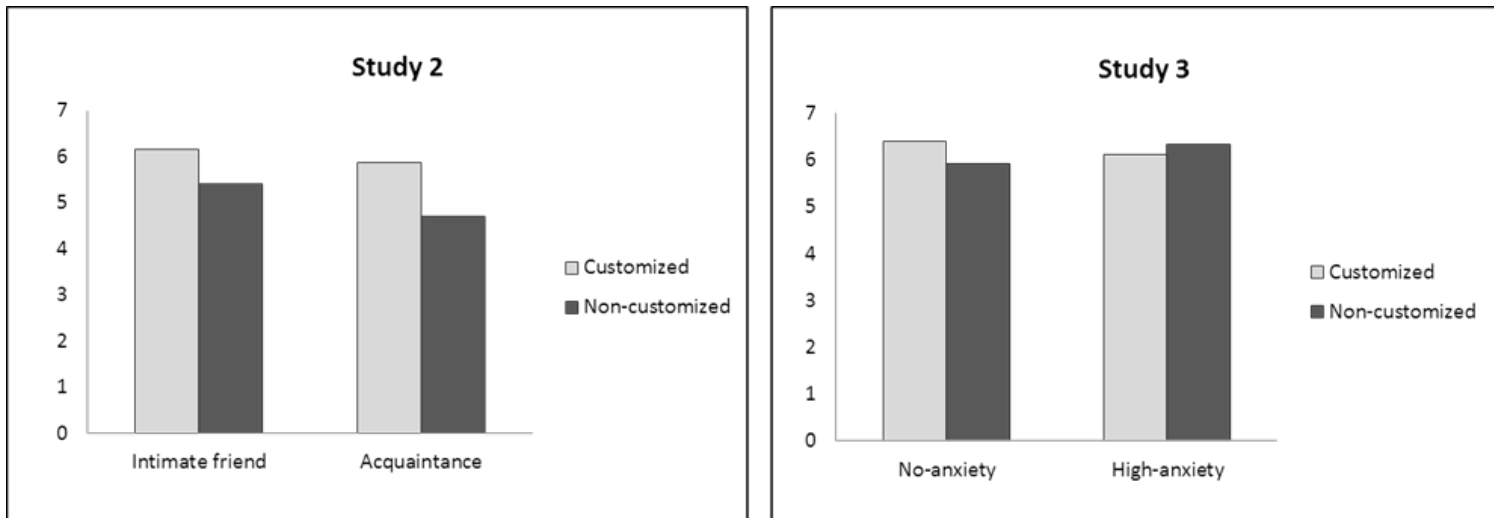


Figure 3.1 - Gift appreciation means between conditions of study 2 and study 3

Study 2 confirmed the finding that personalized gifts are appreciated more, and this effect of personalization appears to be independent of relational intimacy and surprise. Moreover, this study supports the idea that personalized gifts generate feelings of vicarious pride. The pride in a personalized gift completely explains the increased appreciation for gifts when the gift comes from an acquaintance. Conversely, when the relationship is more intimate, other factors might affect the gift appreciation.

Counter-intuitively, even intimate relationships can be filled with anxiety and, given that relational anxiety prevents emotional connection with others (Bartz and Lydon, 2004), it might be an obstacle to perspective taking and vicarious pride. The next study manipulated relational anxiety, providing evidence of a boundary condition for vicarious pride.

3.5 Study 3: The role of relational anxiety

3.5.1 Sample, design and procedures

One-hundred eighty-four participants (58.7% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 32.73$), recruited online through MTurk, participated in a 2 (gift: personalized vs. non-personalized) x 2 (anxiety: no vs. high) between-subjects design. Procedures were exactly the same as in Study 2, but intimacy was kept constant at the intimate friend level. Following Bartz and Lydon's (2004) procedures, relational anxiety was manipulated as difficulty (vs. ease) of being emotionally close to someone: Participants in the high-anxiety condition were asked to think about and visualize a friend who was reluctant to get emotionally close (vs. with whom it was relatively easy to be emotionally close). Then, the scenario about the gift (watch personalization vs. watch selection

between standard watches) was presented, followed by items on gift appreciation, vicarious pride, and surprise.

3.5.2 Results

Consistent with our hypothesis, a two-way ANOVA on vicarious pride revealed a significant interaction effect between anxiety and gifts ($F_{(1,180)} = 5.199$, $p < .05$) (see Fig. 3.1). In the no-anxiety condition, simple contrasts showed that personalized gifts elicited greater vicarious pride ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 5.83$, $SD = 1.32$ vs $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 5.25$, $SD = 1.39$, $t_{(180)} = -2.243$, $p < .05$). In addition, when gifts were personalized, the vicarious pride was greater in the no-anxiety than in the high-anxiety condition ($M_{\text{no-anxiety}} = 5.83$, $SD = 1.32$ vs $M_{\text{high-anxiety}} = 5.26$, $SD = 1.31$, $t_{(180)} = -2.026$, $p < .05$).

Similarly, the two-way ANOVA on gift appreciation revealed a significant interaction effect ($F_{(1,180)} = 4.746$, $p < .05$), such that personalized gifts were significantly more appreciated than non-personalized gifts in the no-anxiety condition ($M_{\text{personalized}} = 6.39$, $SD = 0.84$ vs. $M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 5.91$, $SD = 1.25$, $t_{(180)} = -2.351$, $p < .05$). A bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 samples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) on the no-anxiety condition confirmed that vicarious pride mediated the relationship between gift personalization and gift appreciation ($b = 0.4765$, $.0462 < 95\% \text{ CI} < .5581$, $Z = 2.0839$, $p < .05$).

As expected, the two-way ANOVA on surprise revealed a non-significant interaction effect and a non-significant effect of gift personalization. Relational anxiety, conversely, was significant with higher rates of surprise for high anxiety ($M_{\text{high-anxiety}} = 8.70$, $SD = 1.52$ vs $M_{\text{no-anxiety}} = 8.05$, $SD = 2.12$; $F_{(1,180)} = 5.488$, $p < .05$). We also ran the mediation analysis with surprise as the mediator, revealing non-significant results ($b = -.1917$, $-.0841 < 95\% \text{ CI} < .1072$, $Z = .2855$, $p > .05$).

Study 3 replicated the findings of prior studies and showed the moderating role of relational anxiety. Specifically, relational anxiety prevents the experience of vicarious pride. Conversely, in relationships with no anxiety, vicarious pride emerges and increases gift appreciation.

3.6 General discussion

Vicarious pride is the emotion that individuals experience when observing the achievement of others. The literature has shown that experience of vicarious pride can be observed in consumption contexts (Decrop and Derbaix, 2010), but the outcomes of and the factors that affect such experience remain unclear. The results of our studies show that the connotation of the relationship between individuals (whether individuals share an intimate or anxious relationship) activates or acts as an obstacle the experience of vicarious pride in the gift exchange context. Importantly, when vicarious pride is elicited, the gift appreciation is augmented.

Specifically, we investigated the vicarious experience of pride analyzing the effect of gift personalization from the recipient's point of view. Consistent with our prediction, we found that gift personalization elicits vicarious pride, which mediates the relationship with gift appreciation. In all four studies, recipients appreciated personalized gifts more than non-personalized gifts thanks to vicarious pride. Study 1a and Study 1b showed that vicarious pride mediates the relationship between gift personalization and gift appreciation, using two different measures of gift appreciation and visual and textual descriptions of the personalization process. Then, we tested the influence of psychological closeness (i.e., relational closeness and anxiety) on the elicitation of vicarious pride, showing that this effect is not influenced by relational intimacy (Study 2) but is affected by relational anxiety (Study 3): When the relationship is filled with anxiety, vicarious pride is prevented.

We argue that simulation theory (Ackerman et al., 2009) accounts for our findings: A simple description via video or written scenario activates an internal replication of the action made by the giver and, as a consequence, generates the same mental state – that is, vicarious pride. Also in line with the theory, the vicarious experience generates outcomes similar to the actual performance of the action: increased appreciation for the personalized product. In addition, we tested our hypothesis against alternative explanations (i.e., the greater appreciation for personalized gift is explained by greater positive emotions or surprise associated with personalized gifts). The empirical results disconfirm the alternative explanation, showing that neither positive emotions nor surprise influences gift appreciation.

We believe that the findings of this research contribute to both the personalization and gift-giving literature. Previous research has investigated personalization in depth with an eye on the customizer or the firm. To our knowledge, this is the first research that explores personalization from the point of view of a further actor who is not involved in the production process but benefits from it.

The findings suggest that customization is a viable and successful way for givers to please recipients, regardless of the level of intimacy they share. Companies that allow consumers to customize products should encourage consumers to personalize products as gifts. One way to do this is to have a separate section for gift customization, wherein gift customizers find suggestions and guidance on how to please their friends with gifts. Another option is to offer inspiration for gifts by showing examples of customized products for different recipients. For example, on the Converse customization platform, consumer can personalize the shoes starting from a blank pair or find inspiration and modify an existing pair. Such inspirations might be extended to include suggestions for different recipients.

Moreover, it might be crucial to help recipients distinguish customized gift from an off-the-shelf gift. For instance, a customization platform should allow and suggest that gift givers include on the customized gift signs of the customization he or she made, such as writing the giver's name in short sentences like "Made by" or "Designed just for you by".

3.7 Limitations and future research

The authors acknowledge that the studies may have potential limitations. All the studies were based on scenarios and did not involve real gift exchanges. The generalizability of the results can be enhanced to demonstrate the findings with actual gift giving. In all the studies mentioned in this article, products from the fashion industry as gifts were employed because clothes and fashion accessories are the most common gifts among consumers (Caplow, 1982). The gift exchange literature has emphasized the preference of recipients for experience as gifts (Clarke, 2007, 2008). Notably, the travel or entertainment industry enables consumers to personalize service packages. Future research should further examine recipients' reactions to the customized experience.

Study 3 manipulates relational anxiety by adopting the manipulation procedures of attachment style, but focusing only on one dimension (anxiety) of attachment style and keeping constant the avoidance dimension, which refers to the tendency to avoid closeness with or dependence on others (Bartz & Lyndon, 2004). The effect of the avoidance dimension on the exchange of personalized gifts, and gift receiving in general, needs additional research to more fully understand the role of attachment style in gift-receiving experiences.

Our choice to examine relational characteristics did not allow for examining other boundary conditions for vicarious pride. For instance, prior studies have suggested that only positive and successful personalization experiences enhance the

evaluation of self-designed products (Norton, Mochon and Ariely, 2012). Note that in the gift-giving context, the risk of wrongly personalizing a product is even higher (Baskin et al., 2014; Gino and Flynn, 2011; Steffel and LeBoeuf, 2014). Moreover, prior research on personalization has shown that consumers obtain several benefits from self-designing products, such as increased fit, uniqueness and perceived usefulness of the product (Franke and Schreier, 2007; Tang, Luo and Xiao, 2011). Investigating which role those effects play in gift exchange might provide other boundary conditions of vicarious pride.

Finally, further research should explore the role of relational intimacy in vicarious experience; though the direction of the impact is not clear, intimate recipients generally appreciate gifts more, but vicarious pride is more elicited and better explains the increased appreciation when the gift is given by an acquaintance. Although intimacy per se was not an obstacle for the appreciation of a customized gift, further research is needed to investigate why intimate friends do not have a higher degree of vicarious experience.

3.8 Conclusions

Across four studies, we have shown that personalization is a valuable source of gifts because of the activation of vicarious pride: Recipients are vicariously proud of the personalized gift. The parallelism in terms of pride between the giver and recipient also affects the gift evaluation: Personalized gifts are more highly appreciated regardless of the source of the gift (intimate friend vs. acquaintance), but even more when givers and recipients are emotionally connected. Future research should investigate whether and how other characteristics of the gift, such as the fit with the giver's desire or product uniqueness and usefulness, amplify or reduce the effect of vicarious pride.

EMPIRICAL PART II

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ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

Chapter 4

Unpacking the (un)ethical gift: Psychological distance and emotional misalignment in unethical consumption

In this chapter and the following chapter, the focus of the analysis shifts from product personalization to ethical consumption. Ethical consumption has gained attention in academic journals and the popular press in recent years. In addition, increasing numbers of companies offer products with ethical attributes to meet the desires of consumers. However, despite the high visibility of ethical issues, ethical products remain niche products, meaning that consumers do not walk what they talk and may even buy unethical products (Auger and Devinney, 2007). Given these premises, I conducted two research projects on ethical consumption employing products at the extremes of the continuum, from selfish and unethical products (i.e., products obtained from the poaching of endangered species) to selfless and ethical products (i.e., products that contribute to charitable causes).

This chapter describes the research on unethical products, wherein I compared cognitive and affective reactions of individuals when they receive or self-gift unethical gifts. The research is based on three experimental designs, which consistently showed asymmetrical differences between self-gifter and gift recipient in evaluating the unethical gift and in their emotional response.

Keywords: interpersonal gift, self-gift, unethical consumption, psychological distance, moral rationalization

This chapter is based on a paper that has been presented to the EBEN conference 2015, and from February 2016 it is under revision (2nd round) to the *European Journal of Marketing* [Pizzetti, M., Seele, P. and Gibbert, M., "Gift experience and psychological distance: How distancing reduces unethicality"].

4.1 Introduction

Imagine that your best friend, to celebrate your career achievement, gives you a gift with which you feel uncomfortable. How might you judge the gift? Now imagine that you want to celebrate your professional achievement and so you give yourself a gift that turns out to discomfort you. Would you evaluate it any differently? According to our research, maybe yes.

The theorizing around giving gifts has mostly developed on interpersonal gifts. From the early works of Sherry (1983) and Belk (1979), the gift literature has expanded into several branches, including research specifically focusing on the gift selection process (e.g., Caplow, 1982; Laroche et al., 2000; Rucker et al., 1994; Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 1996), the driver of gift appreciation (e.g., Belk, 1996; Cheal, 1987; Paolacci et al., 2015), and the emotions that occur over the gift exchange (e.g., Belk and Coon, 1993; Ruth, 1996), or advance the relational connotations of gifts (e.g., Ruth et al., 1999; Ruth et al., 2004; Schwartz, 1967). A sub-stream, intrinsically intertwined but significantly less deep, deals with self-gifts, that is, gifts the individual gives to him- or herself (Mick and Demoss, 1990). The self-gifting literature has limited its attention to the motivations for self-giving gifts (Faure and Mick, 1993; Luomala, 1998; Mick and Demoss, 1990; Heath et al., 2015), with a few exceptions on post-purchase emotions (Clarke and Mortimer, 2013), and few studies have applied a holistic approach to integrate interpersonal gifts (IGs) and self-gifts (SGs) (Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015). This is surprising considering that many people engage in both types of gifting behavior (Heath et al., 2011; Ward and Tran, 2007) and the two behaviors have many commonalities. In this regard while some authors have treated the SG as a separate concept from the IG (Heath et al., 2011; Ward and Tran, 2007), others have looked for similarities in the two behaviors (Mick and Demoss, 1990; Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015), but none has extensively examined the cognitive and emotional processes activated by the two forms of gifting. In addition, so far, what happens when gifts challenge individuals,

such as gifts in conflict with moral values, has been overlooked. Critically, both streams of literature on IGs and SGs have provided evidence that gifts often challenge individuals, generating feelings of guilt (Clarke and Moritmer, 2013; Ertimur et al., 2015; Mick and Faure, 1998) and regret (Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015).

The research reported here compares IGs and SGs, investigating how they affect cognitive processes and affective outcomes if the gift morally challenges the individual. We propose that IGs and SGs are perceived differently. Consider receiving a gift: Recipients of an IG would imagine using the gift while thinking about the giver who bought the gift, with the consequent concerns of pleasing that person (as recipients often do, as demonstrated by research into IGs; Roster, 2006; Roster and Amann, 2003; Sherry, 1983; Wooten and Wood, 2004). Therefore, given the focus on the giver, we believe that recipients think about the gift with a substantial social distance. Conversely, when the gift is self-gifted, individuals would imagine themselves using the product and think about the moment they purchased the gift for themselves, thereby viewing it with a short social distance. Critically, this hypothesized difference in social distance has important implications for how individuals evaluate IGs and SGs. For instance, gifts are evaluated with different criteria. In addition to the more general gift appreciation, which is more subjective in relational aspects, feasibility, functionality, and economic value might be more objective criteria for the gift assessment. Another criterion might be the ethical assessment of the gift, that is, the degree to which the gift production wastes natural resources or harms humans or animals (Oh and Yoon, 2014). Applying psychological distance theory (Trope and Liberman, 2010), we predict that receiving an unethical gift (e.g., a product that harms animals) leads individuals to morally rationalize the gift more than individuals who self-gift the same product. As a result, IGs will be evaluated as less unethical than SGs. Moreover, we expect that reducing this psychological distance will amplify the perceived unethicality of the gift, but

generate higher guilt. In this chapter, three studies which investigate this conceptualization are reported.

4.2 Theoretical background

4.2.1 Interpersonal versus self-gifts

The relevance of gifts to national economies is uncontested. Research has shown that the gift market accounts for up to 10% of the retail industry in the US, generating revenues of \$500 billion annually (National Retail Federation, 2012). Although the concept of gift immediately brings to mind the interpersonal exchange of products and services from a giver to a recipient, in several instances gifts are not dyadic, but self-gifted. SGs are of particular relevance in Western society (Tynan et al., 2010), despite still being understudied compared to IGs (Heath et al., 2015; Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015). In recent years, the investigation of SG behaviors has emerged as a sub-stream in the literature on gifts, which has above all focused on the motivations for giving gifts to oneself (Faure and Mick, 1993; Luomala, 1998; Mick and Demoss, 1990; Heath et al., 2015). Even so, this literature has not applied a holistic approach to such gifting behavior (Sherry, 1983), limiting the analysis to SGs and neglecting IGs. This is surprising considering that individuals often engage in both behaviors (Ward and Tran, 2007) and that IGs and SGs share several commonalities.

Indeed, both types of gifts are gifted on ritualized occasions such as birthdays, but also outside formal occasions such as consolation for a negative event or reward for goal achievement (Mick and Demoss, 1990; Sherry, 1983). Both forms of gifts assume the connotation of personal possessions and become part of the extended self (Belk, 1988). They also influence self-definition. Whereas IGs are the projection of the giver's beliefs on the recipient (Sherry, 1983) and function as

generators of identity since childhood (Schwartz, 1967), SGs influence self-view, especially gender identity and self-construal (Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015). Moreover, IGs and SGs have a symbolic value which overcomes the economic value and tangible features of the gift, assuming the connotation of special possessions which remind of specific events (Belk, 1979; Mick and Demoss, 1990; Sherry, 1983).

Note that IGs and SGs differ significantly because of the presence of a second actor (at least) in IGs, which complicates the matter. Indeed, compared to SGs, IGs are affected by reciprocity expectations (Mauss, 1925), relational variables (Roster, 2006; Ruth et al., 2004), and gift exchange rules (such as the obligation to receive, the necessity to thank, or taboos related to gifts; Adams et al., 2012; Roster, 2006; Sherry, 1983; Sherry et al., 1992). Thus, many studies have investigated SG and IG separately, neglecting to compare the two behaviors. The notable exception (Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015) has suggested that the inherent focus on the self in SG, against the focus on the other in IG, leads to divergent effects on the self. Moreover, an investigation between gift givers and gift recipients revealed that the asymmetrical focus on the self or on the gift exchange partner leads to divergent appreciation of feasibility (vs. desirability) attributes (Baskin et al., 2014). The authors explained this effect by means of psychological distance theory: Focus on the self leads to feeling closer to the gift, which consequently increases the preference for feasibility attributes (Baskin et al., 2014).

We propose another effect of the asymmetrical focus of individuals who receive a gift or self-give a gift. We believe that the focus on the self or on the giver, and the consequent feeling of psychological distance or closeness with the gift, affects the cognitive process, specifically the assessment of the product's ethicality and moral reasoning. Research in the realm of psychological distance has shown that events and objects are differently evaluated depending on whether they are perceived as close or distant (Lieberman, Trope, and Wakslak, 2007). For example, individuals

find performing tasks that are psychologically distant less difficult (Thomas and Tsai, 2012) and value high-priced products more favorably when the purchase is psychologically close (Bornemann and Homburg, 2011). A product or event is psychologically distant when, for example, it belongs to someone else or comes from a foreign country (Fujita, Eyal, Chaiken, Trope, and Liberman, 2006). In the context of this research, both types of gifts are owned by the individual, whether the recipient or the self-giver, but thinking about a relational partner (such as the gift giver) in evaluating a product increases the psychological distance. Research on gift receiving has shown that recipients are concerned about their gift exchange partners (Adams et al., 2012; Roster, 2006; Sherry, 1983; Sherry et al., 1992; Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015). In fact, most people value the gifts they receive based on the relationship they share with the giver (Belk and Coon, 1991; Caplow, 1982) and they do not want to disappoint the giver, making the re-gift or rejection of the gift awkward or even impossible (Sherry et al., 1992). Thus, the focus on the giver, the fact that the gift is intrinsically related to the giver (e.g., gift recipient thinks about the giver selecting the gift or imagines the gift in the hands of the giver), generates more psychological distance than a product purchased for oneself as a gift.

This has important consequences for the way gifts are evaluated. Specifically, in this chapter, we investigate how receiving or self-gifting an unethical gift (i.e., a gift that is inconsistent with moral values such as a product whose production harms animals) influences the ethicality assessment of the gifted product. Recent findings demonstrate that feeling close or distant from a product or event leads individuals to flexibly apply their moral values to decision making and misinterpret the unethical choice in a more ethical way (Gino and Galinsky, 2012; Paharia et al., 2013). For example, Wood, Noseworthy, and Colwell (2013) reported that under specific conditions unethical decisions are more bearable to individuals when psychological distance is great. We contend that the gift experience is not an exception.

Building on and extending this research, we predict that a gift may be

considered as more or less unethical depending on the source of the gift (self vs. giver). Specifically, in a gift-receiving situation, the recipient will focus on the giver. As a result, the recipient will perceive the gift as psychologically distant and less unethical. Furthermore, to explore and explain the proposed gift-recipient/self-gifter differences, we involve moral reasoning. The literature on moral reasoning provides evidence that facing a discrepancy between moral values and decisions, individuals tend to self-justify a decision to reconcile it with moral values. This process is known as moral rationalization, by means of which unethical actions are self-justified and, consequently, considered less unethical and more acceptable (Bandura, 1991). Moral rationalization allows consumers to neutralize negative information about brands they love (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, and Unnava, 2000) and to justify non-sustainable consumption choices (Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014). Given that feeling distant from a product or an event leads to application of more flexible moral values (Wood et al., 2013), we propose that gift recipients morally rationalize the unethical gift more than those who self-give the gift. More formally, our first hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Receiving (vs. self-gifting) an unethical gift influences the unethicality assessment of the product, leading to lower rates of unethicality of the gift.

H2: Moral rationalization mediates the relationship between the gift experience and unethicality assessment of the gift.

4.2.2 The multiplicative effect of psychological distance

The literature on psychological distance has demonstrated that psychological distance has multiple dimensions. For instance, products and events are perceived as distant when they will happen in the future (temporal distance; Kivetz and Kivetz, 2006; Trope and Liberman, 2003), in far-away locations (spatial distance; Fujita et al., 2006; Henderson, Fujita, Liberman, and Trope, 2006), or to others (social distance; Zhao and Jihong, 2011). In this framework, IGs and SGs vary in terms of

social distance given that IGs are caused by others (vs. self-purchase) and activate thoughts about others (vs. about the self). Critically, prior research has focused only on a single dimension of psychological distance; few studies have investigated how multiple dimensions interact.

Although the different dimensions of psychological distance have similarities, there are also important differences which lead to variations in judgment and evaluations (Liberman et al., 2007). Moreover, the scant research involving two dimensions of psychological distance provide evidence that the dimensions interact. For instance, Kim, Li, and Zhang (2008) found that temporal and social distance have a joint influence on product evaluation. Kim, Zauberger, and Bettman (2012) demonstrated that spatial distance influences the judgment of future events. Based on these findings, we argue that a second dimension of psychological distance might interact with the social distance generated by the source of the gift, amplifying its effect on moral rationalization. Between the psychological distance dimensions, spatial distance is less subjective to personal interpretations, and often spatial distance descriptions are used to conceptually map other forms of distance, such as temporal (Kim et al., 2012). Specifically, we expect that spatial closeness inverts the effect of a gifting situation: Feeling close to an object means constructing it with concrete and rich details (Trope and Liberman, 2010), which hinders the moral rationalization. Thus, our hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Spatial distance moderates the relationships among the gift experience, moral rationalization, and unethicity assessment. Receiving (vs. self-gifting) a spatially distant (vs. close) gift increases the moral rationalization of the unethical gift, which then reduces the unethicity assessment.

Furthermore, we believe that the two dimensions interact not only on

cognitions, but also on affective outcomes. So far, the psychological distance literature has mostly neglected emotions; the few studies on affective outcomes found that temporal distance reduces the intensity of negative emotions (Williams, Stein, and Galguera, 2014). Critically, negative emotions are of high relevance in the gift context. Several studies have documented that gift recipients often feel guilt, embarrassment, sadness, and uneasiness (Sherry et al., 1993; Ruth et al., 1999, 2004) and that individuals who purchase a self-gift experience guilt or regret after the purchase (Clarke and Mortimer, 2013). Such emotions are also relevant to consumer behavior in general, and particularly to ethical consumption. Guilt, blame, and embarrassment are moral emotions (Haidt, 2003) because they act as a compass in defining an act as good or bad. Indeed, impulsive purchases, compulsive consumption (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989), overspending (Pirisi, 1995), active or inactive violation of societal standards (such as not recycling or not donating to charity; Dahl et al., 2003), and purchase decisions that involve environmental and social issues (Antonetti and Maklan, 2014) elicit moral emotions.

The presence of moral emotions does not contradict the moral rationalization of the unethical gift. Current theorizing on moral reasoning has emphasized the presence of two dissociable psychological processes that provide independent responses to moral decisions. Neuroimaging studies have shown that a morally ambiguous situation activates two neurological paths: One is associated with emotions, the other with cognition, such as moral rationalization (Cushman and Green, 2012). The emotional outcome might also be misaligned with cognition: Unethical products elicit moral emotions, such as guilt (Antonetti and Maklan, 2014; Bandura, 2002).

In this chapter, we empirically test how spatial distance interacts with the gifting experience and shapes the affective outcome. Given the psychological distance of IGs, we believe that IGs reduce the elicitation of moral emotions. Furthermore, we might expect that an unethical product, which is perceived as

spatially close, shifts the intensity of the emotion, thus generating more moral emotions. More formally:

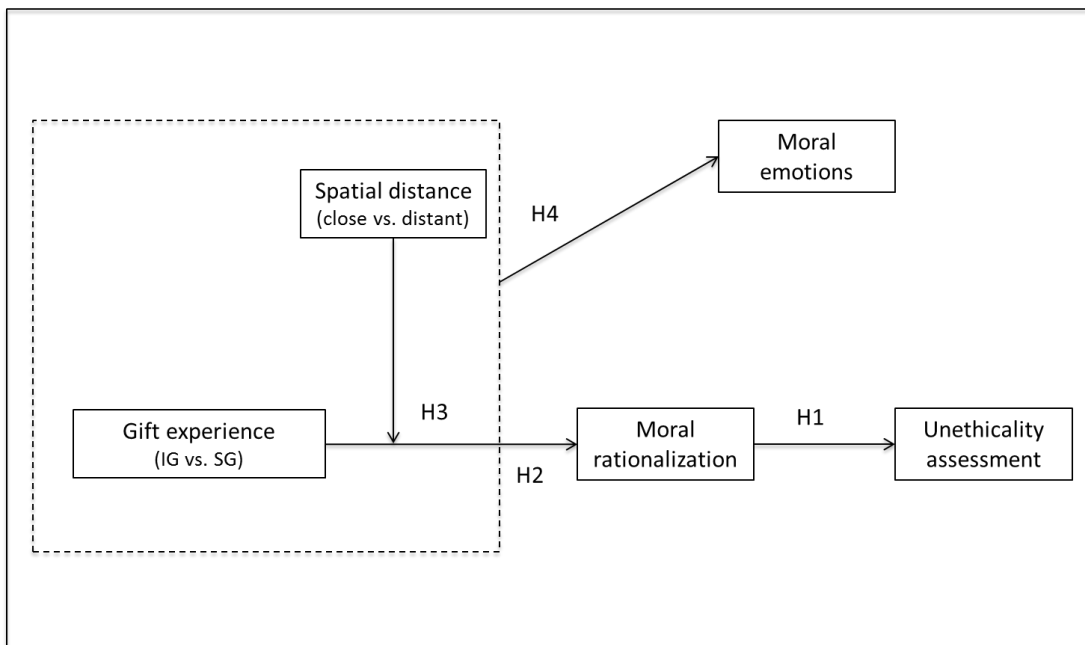
H4: Receiving (vs. self-gifting) a spatially distant (vs. close) gift leads to lower moral emotions.

4.3 Overview of the studies

Three experiments have been conducted to test whether the experience of receiving or self-giving an unethical gift affects the unethical assessment of the product (H1) and the moral reasoning regarding it (H2), how spatial distance moderates the mentioned relationships (H3), and how it influences moral emotions (H4) (see Figure 4.1). Study 1 and study 2 seek exploratory and confirmatory evidence that gift experiences affect unethical assessment and moral rationalization. Study 3 examines how spatial distance moderates the effect of gifting experiences on ethical assessment and moral rationalization and how the two factors interact on moral emotions. Table 4.1 summarizes the studies.

The experiments presented items obtained from the poaching of endangered animals as unethical products. Unethical consumption covers a wide array of consumption practices; it is defined as the consumption of products whose production wastes natural resources or harms humans or animals, such as products produced in sweatshop factories or tested on animals (Oh and Yoon, 2014). In a first attempt to categorize unethical vs. ethical consumption, Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993) found that ivory items, and generally items derived from animals, like fur, are perceived as highly unethical but relevant and accessible to consumers. Specifically, an ivory item (study 1 and study 2) and a chiru wool scarf (study 3) were used as the unethical gift. Ivory items are made from elephant tusks, for which elephants are killed. The trade of ivory has been banned since 1989, but the illegal

trade is still increasing (CITES, 2013). The chiru is an endangered species of Tibetan antelope that is killed to obtain its wool, known as shahtoosh. The wool of at least three antelopes is needed to make a scarf. The number of chiru is decreasing each year due to poaching in many Asian regions (Guardian, 2014).



Overview of the studies

- Study 1 tests H1
- Study 2 tests H1 and H2
- Study 3 tests H3 and H4

Figure 4.1 - Research model

To identify the stimuli for our investigation, a pretest was conducted asking 83 participants (mean age = 39.7; 47% male) to rate the unethicality of products derived from the illegal trade in wildlife (i.e., an ivory item, a coral item, a chiru wool scarf, a shell). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that the ivory item ($M = 4.97$) and the chiru wool scarf ($M = 5.00$) were perceived as significantly more unethical ($F = 24.397$, $MSE = 19.777$, $p < .01$) than the coral item ($M = 4.07$) and shell ($M = 4.23$).

Table 4.1 – Summary of the study design

Study	Hypothesis tested	Independent variables	Dependent variables
Study 1	Testing H1	- Gift experience: IG vs. SG	-Unethicality assessment
Study 2	Testing H2	- Gift experience: IG vs. SG	-Unethicality assessment -Moral rationalization
Study 3	Testing H3 & H4	- Gift experience: IG vs. SG - Spatial distance: close vs. distant	-Unethicality assessment -Moral rationalization - Moral emotions

In our experiments, fictitious scenarios to manipulate the levels of the independent variables were used. The scenarios consisted of moral dilemmas to generate ambivalence and ambiguity in the participants regarding the right thing to do. Moral dilemmas, which comprise short stories about a moral situation (Kohlberg, 1971; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma, 1999), have mostly been used to study moral reasoning and moral development; however, they have also been applied to consumer behavior research (Moores and Chang, 2006; Kim and Johnson, 2013) because they are particularly well suited to trigger participants' moral reasoning (Bhattacharjee, Berman, and Reed, 2013; Moores and Chang, 2006). The moral reasoning was then measured in studies 2 and 3 with the moral rationalization scale originally developed by Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996), slightly adapted to the context of the investigation. The assessment of the gift's unethicality was made by means of two items adapted from Bhattacharjee et al. (2013).

In every experiment, scenarios described a situation of receiving (IG) or self-gifting (SG) a gift to celebrate an achievement (e.g., work success, new job). We chose to use a pretext for the gift because pretext is essential to make a gift

acceptable for the recipient or to motivate a self-gift (Faure and Mick, 1993; Mick and Demoss, 1990). We used the celebration of an achievement as the motive for the gift because prior research has shown that interpersonal gifts and self-gifts are often exchanged or self-given to celebrate a success in life (e.g., Mick and Faure, 1998; Ruth *et al.*, 1999; Weinberger and Wallendorf, 2012).

4.4 Study 1: How gifts are perceived as less or more ethical

The first study provides initial evidence that gift experiences affect how consumers assess products in terms of ethicality. To test whether IG (vs. SG) an unethical gift causes a different assessment of the gift's unethicality (H1), a single-factor between-subjects experimental design was developed.

4.4.1 Sample, design and procedures

Fifty participants (mean age = 39.8; 52.4% male) were recruited through the US sample of the Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMTurk) panel. The participants were randomly assigned to the conditions and exposed to a gifting scenario after a short introduction. In the IG condition, the scenario described a decorative ivory elephant gifted by a friend and outlined the ambivalence of the gift, describing both the unethicality of the product and the friend's kindness. In the SG condition, the same situation was described, but the unethical product was a self-gift. In this case, too, the scenario highlighted the ambivalence of the gift (elephant as a protected animal vs. deserved self-gift) (see Appendix D – Table D.2 for a complete description of the scenarios). After the scenario, participants were asked to assess the gift in terms of unethicality (Cronbach's $\alpha = .884$) (see Appendix D – Table D.1 for scale items).

4.4.2 Results

An ANOVA with the gift experience conditions (IG vs. SG) as a factor and the assessment of unethicity as a dependent variable was conducted. Our findings showed a significant difference between the conditions. The participants in the SG condition rated the product as more unethical than those in the IG condition ($M_{IG} = 3.91$ vs. $M_{SG} = 5.11$; $F_{(1,49)} = 5.743$, $p < .05$). Table 4.2 summarizes the results of all studies.

Table 4.2 - Main statistics of all studies

Means (and standard deviations) per conditions for all studies				
	Study 1		Study 2	
	IG	SG	IG	SG
Unethicality assess.	3.91(1.74)	5.11(1.78)	4.03(1.30)	4.78(1.61)
Moral rationalization			2.91(1.31)	2.25(1.25)
Study 3				
	IG		SG	
	Close	Distant	Close	Distant
Unethicality assess.	5.24(1.37)	3.34(1.20)	6.23(.96)	5.34(1.68)
Moral rationalization	3.81(1.44)	2.78(1.28)	2.08(.99)	2.67(1.31)
Moral emotions	2.89(1.20)	2.24(.82)	1.86(1.21)	2.11(1.27)

4.5 Study 2: Examining the moral rationalization

In a follow-up study using a procedure similar to that in study 1, the cognitive process beyond the gift's unethicity assessment in the IG experience was examined. Our prediction was that the IG would activate greater moral rationalization, which would affect the assessment of the gift unethicity (H2).

4.5.1 Sample, design and procedures

Sixty-three participants (mean age = 38.1; 39.7% male) were recruited through the AMTurk panel and took part in the experiment in exchange for small compensation. Our scenarios and manipulation of the gift experience were similar to

study 1. After reading the scenario describing an IG experience (vs. SG experience), participants were asked to assess the unethicity of the gift (Cronbach's $\alpha = .667$) and then to answer questions on moral rationalization (Cronbach's $\alpha = .907$).

4.5.2 Results

The data revealed a significant effect of the gifting experience on unethicity assessment ($F_{(1,62)} = 4.117, p < .05$) and moral rationalization ($F_{(1,62)} = 4.192, p < .05$). Importantly, the results of study 2 confirmed the findings of study 1, showing that the assessment of unethicity was influenced by the gift experience, with lower rates in the IG condition ($M_{IG} = 4.03$ vs. $M_{SG} = 4.78$). In addition, the data showed that the moral rationalization was greater for participants in the IG condition ($M_{IG} = 2.91$ vs. $M_{SG} = 2.25$). Supporting H2, an analysis with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (model 4; Hayes, 2013) showed that moral rationalization mediated the effect of the gift experience on the unethicity assessment ($b = -0.6599, .0431 < 95\% \text{ CI } .6966$).

4.6 Discussion of the results

In study 1 and study 2, the effect of gift experiences on unethicity perception was measured. Confirming H1, individuals who received an unethical gift assessed it as less unethical. Thus, we reject H1 null hypothesis, that gift experience does not affect unethicity assessment. Study 2 showed the cognitive mechanism that allows for lower rates of unethicity: moral rationalization. The findings of these first studies offer initial support that the same product is assessed differently according to its source (i.e., self or others), which generates greater or lower moral rationalization.

To better understand the effect of psychological distance on unethicity assessment and to test H3 and H4, the next study included spatial distance as a second factor.

4.7 Study 3: The multiplicative effect of spatial distance

Having demonstrated the asymmetrical assessment of unethicity between IG and SG experiences (study 1) and the cognitive process of moral rationalization (study 2), we next sought to demonstrate the role of spatial distance in this mediated relationship. Furthermore, we also wanted to examine whether the two dimensions of psychological distance (i.e., social and spatial) interact on moral emotions.

4.7.1 Sample, design and procedures

In return for a small payment, 152 participants (mean age = 38; 46% male) from the US AMTurk sample were involved in a 2 (gift experience: IG vs. SG) x 2 (spatial distance: close vs. distant) experimental design. Our manipulation of the gift experience and scenarios was the same as in study 1 and study 2 but modified in terms of the second factor (i.e., spatial distance). Participants imagined having recently achieved an important work success and receiving a chiru wool scarf from a friend (vs. purchasing it as a self-gift).

Spatial distance was manipulated by presenting a product sourced locally (vs. far away). To keep the gift constant across conditions and based on the literature that estimates a psychologically distant event as farther than 750 miles from the participant (Wood et al., 2013), the spatial distance was manipulated by describing a different country of origin for the product: In the spatially close condition, the product came from a local market (vs. a market in Bangkok).

To reinforce the manipulation, we followed Williams and Bargh (2008) and asked participants to mark off two points on a world map: one indicating their home town and the second the marketplace in which the item was purchased. The obtained data were also used to check the manipulation's effectiveness. An ANOVA revealed a significant difference between the two conditions, confirming that the spatially distant condition led to the two points on the map being farther from each other ($M_{\text{close}} = 45.4$ vs. $M_{\text{distant}} = 198.4$; $F_{(1,148)} = 32.599$ $p < .01$).

After the gifting scenario, the participants were asked to assess the gift ethicality (Cronbach's $\alpha = .801$) and answer questions about the moral rationalization (Cronbach's $\alpha = .869$) and moral emotions (four items from Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Cronbach's $\alpha = .864$). Participants also answered various background questions covering individual differences in animal rights activist identity (Bolton and Reed, 2004) and demographic variables.

4.7.2 Results

Unethicality assessment. We ran an analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) on the dependent variable with the gifting experience and the spatial distance as the factors and the animal rights activist identity as a covariate. The ANCOVA confirmed that the gifting experience influences the unethicality assessment, which was lower in the IG condition ($M_{\text{IG}} = 4.30$ vs. $M_{\text{SG}} = 5.83$; $F_{(1,147)} = 55.249$, $p < .01$). Moreover, the analysis revealed a significant main effect of spatial distance ($M_{\text{close}} = 5.65$ vs. $M_{\text{distant}} = 4.47$; $F_{(1,147)} = 31.25$, $p < .01$) and a significant interaction effect ($F_{(1,145)} = 4.437$; $p < .05$). Specifically, post-hoc tests revealed that on average spatial closeness increased the unethicality rates (IG: $M_{\text{close}} = 5.24$ vs. $M_{\text{distant}} = 3.34$, $F_{(1,73)} = 37.225$, $p < .01$; SG: $M_{\text{close}} = 6.23$ vs. $M_{\text{distant}} = 5.34$, $F_{(1,73)} = 8.391$, $p < .05$), and especially in the SG versus IG condition ($M_{\text{IG}} = 5.24$ vs. $M_{\text{SG}} =$

6.23; $F_{(1,88)} = 15.478, p < .01$). The covariate was significantly and positively related ($\beta = .336, t = 4.586, p < .01$).

Moral rationalization. The ANCOVA revealed two significant main effects. When the unethical product was gifted ($M_{IG} = 3.29$ vs. $M_{SG} = 2.33; F_{(1,147)} = 24.530, p < .01$) and when the product was perceived as spatially close ($M_{close} = 3.10$ vs. $M_{distant} = 2.52; F_{(1,147)} = 24.196, p < .01$), individuals were more engaged in moral rationalization. The covariate was significantly and negatively related ($\beta = -.308, t = -5.095, p < .01$). No other significant results were found.

Moderated mediation analysis. We examined whether the relationship between the gifting experience and the assessment of unethicity is mediated by the moral rationalization. In our model, the relationship between the gifting experience and the moral rationalization (mediator) was moderated by the spatial distance. According to H3, the path from the gifting experience (independent variable) to the unethicity assessment (dependent variable) runs through the moral rationalization and applies differently across the spatial distance conditions (see Figure 4.2 for reference).

To assess the proposed moderated mediation model, we used the bootstrapping method proposed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007, model 2). In this study, the indirect effects' 95% confidence interval was obtained with 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher et al., 2007). The first model regressed the moral rationalization on the gifting experience ($B = -1.58, SE = .69; t = -2.25, p < .05$), the spatial distance ($B = -1.45, SE = .66; t = -2.22, p < .05$), and their interactions, which yielded a non-significant two-way interaction ($B = .44, SE = .41; t = 1.05, p = .29$). The second model regressed the unethicity assessment on the moral rationalization, gifting experience, spatial distance, and their interactions, which produced a significant effect ($B = -.70, SE = .33; t = -2.13, p < .05$).

In support of H3, we found that the moral rationalization mediated the gifting experience's effect on unethicity assessment ($B = -.69$, $SE = .07$; $t = -10.54$, $p < .05$), and that the relationship between gift experience and moral rationalization is conditional to spatial distance. Indeed, testing for the moderator's (spatial distance's) indirect effect, we found that in the spatially close condition, the conditional indirect effect was significant ($B = .48$, $SE = .18$; $z = 2.54$; $p < .05$), but it was higher in the spatially distant condition ($B = .78$, $SE = .23$; $z = 3.32$; $p < .01$) (see Figure 4.2).

Moral emotions. The analysis confirmed that the gifting experience's effect on moral emotions was significant ($M_{IG} = 2.57$ vs. $M_{SG} = 2.01$; $F_{(1,147)} = 8.954$, $p < .01$) and moderated by the spatial distance ($F_{(1,147)} = 4.559$, $p < .05$). A post-hoc test revealed that when the unethical gift was spatially close, participants reported higher moral emotions for received vs. self-given gifts ($M_{IG} = 2.89$ vs. $M_{SG} = 1.86$; $F_{(1,88)} = 8.158$, $p < .05$) (see Figure 4.3). The covariate animal rights activist identity was significantly and positively related to negative emotions ($B = .207$, $t = 3.710$, $p < .01$).

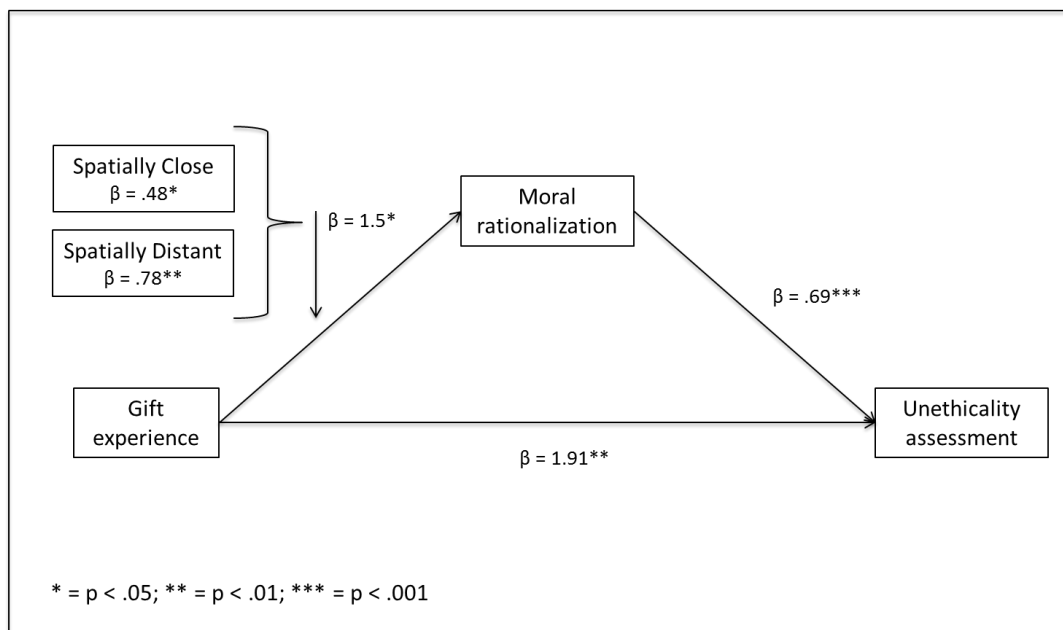


Figure 4.2 - Study 3: Moderated mediation

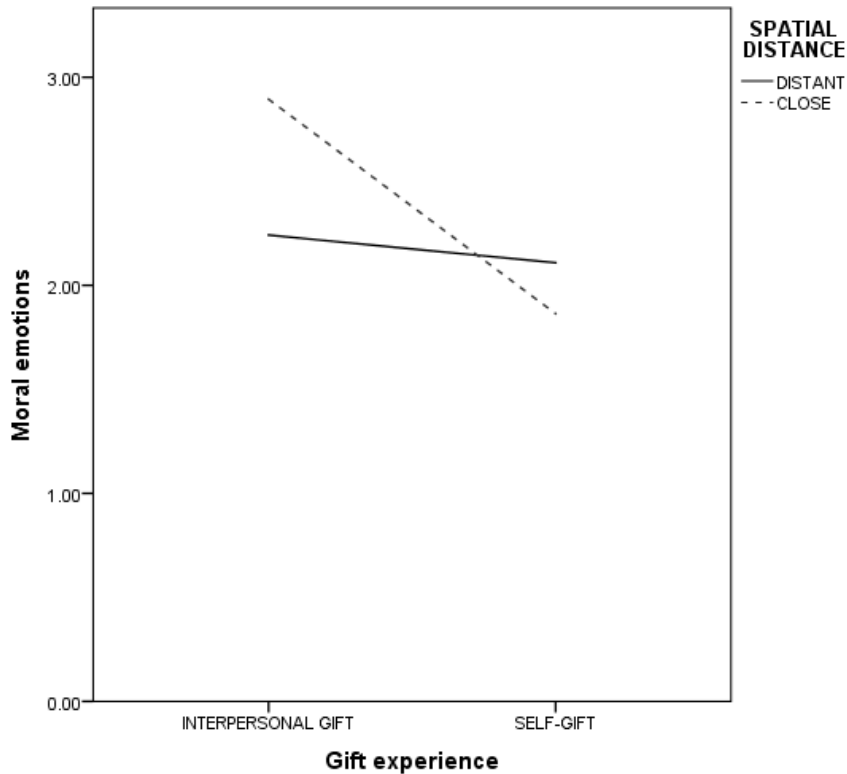


Figure 4.3 - Study 3: Interaction of gifting experience and spatial distance on moral emotions

4.7.3 Discussion

Study 3's findings confirmed the results of study 1 and study 2 and provided support for H3 and H4. Study 3 showed lower unethicity assessment in the IG experience, which is mediated by the moral rationalization. Specifically, we found that moral rationalization per se was not moderated by spatial distance, but that spatial distance moderated the relationship between the gifting experience and the moral rationalization when the unethicity assessment was added (H3 supported). Surprisingly, feeling spatially close to the gift amplified the moral rationalization but the unethicity assessment remained greater compared to the distant condition. We explained this result by means of construal level theory (CLT; Liberman et al.,

2007). Psychological closeness is associated with detailed and concrete mental representations of events and objects (Trope and Liberman, 2010). Likewise, the participants might have been more engaged in self-rationalizing the unethical gift, but these cognitive efforts were not strong enough to reduce the unethicality of such products. Thus higher moral emotions in IG compared to SG when the gift was spatially close allowed to confirm H4 and reject the null hypothesis (i.e. no difference in moral emotions between gift experiences, and between spatial distance conditions).

Moreover, the findings supported the idea that unethical gifts elicit two dissociable consequences. We demonstrated that moral rationalization affects evaluation, but not emotions. Testing the relationships in the gifting experience → moral rationalization → moral emotions, the multiple regression analyses demonstrated a non-significant c' path ($B = -.0813$, $t = -1.09$, $p > .05$), also when spatial distance was included as a moderator in a moderated mediation ($B = .68$, $t = 1.03$, $p > .05$). Two regression analyses and two correlation analyses showed also that moral emotions are not significantly related neither to moral rationalization (Regression: $B = .005$, $t = .073$, $p > .05$; Correlation: Pearson $r = .006$, $p > .05$), nor unethicality assessment (Regression: $B = .010$, $t = .159$, $p > .05$; Correlation: Pearson $r = .013$, $p > .05$). Consequently, the recipients still felt guilt after receiving an unethical gift, especially when the product was spatially close. Notably, spatial distance annuls the effect of the gift experience on moral emotions, which are equally expressed in both gifting conditions. Conversely, spatial closeness amplifies the intensity of moral emotions in the gift-receiving condition.

4.8 General discussion

This research advances the understanding of interpersonal and self-gift behaviors in four ways. First, it adds to the gift exchange literature by demonstrating

that individuals are more malleable in their unethical assessment when products are gifted. Second, this study is the first to empirically compare interpersonal gifts and self-gifting by focusing on how they differ with respect to individuals' unethicality assessment and moral reasoning. Third, it adds to the psychological distance literature by showing how two dimensions of psychological distance (i.e., social and spatial) interact on moral reasoning and unethicality assessment. Finally, this research has implications for unethical consumption theory, showing that unethical consumption has two dissociable outcomes, cognitive and affective, which are in trade-off.

In a series of three studies, the present research extends the research on gift exchange by focusing on the cognitive and affective outcomes of interpersonal gifts and demonstrating that the mere fact of receiving a gift modifies the unethical assessment of the product. Study 1 aims at assessing differences in ethicality perception between self-gifter and gift recipients and demonstrates that individuals rate the unethicality of a product differently depending on the gift's experience (IG vs. SG). The effect appears to be robust. We find evidence that individuals rate unethicality lower when they receive an unethical gift across three studies with two different products. In study 2, we build on the results of study 1 and illustrate that in response to an unethical gift, participants engaged in moral rationalization, which led to lower rates of gift unethicality. To explain the results, we refer to the literature on psychological distance, arguing that the asymmetrical unethicality assessment of gift-recipients and self-gifters is related to the differential social distance by which SGs and IGs are perceived. Indeed, in line with prior investigations on psychological distance, consumption decisions for the self are made with a shorter social distance compared to decisions made for others (Kay, 2000; Kray and Gonzales, 1999). Therefore, we can argue that gifts purchased for the self are perceived with a shorter psychological distance compared to gifts purchased by someone else.

The differences found between IGs and SGs support the notion that integrating the two forms of gifting is a suitable approach to extend the knowledge on both types of gifts. Traditionally, IGs and SGs have been treated separately, but Sherry (1983) called for a holistic approach that examines both forms simultaneously as a method to investigate gifting and recent research has emphasized how the two forms are intrinsically intertwined (Heat et al., 2011; Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015). Blending SG and IG and measuring the changes in the unethicity assessment instead of appreciation, this research contributes by describing how the same product is differently evaluated according to the source of the gift (self or other).

This research also contributes to the literature on psychological distance. On one hand, it highlights that feeling a product as more or less socially distant modifies how individuals assess it as more or less unethical. On the other hand, study 3 delineates how the two dimensions of psychological distance interact and shape cognitive and affective outcomes. These results advance the understanding of the effect of psychological distance on product assessment, which traditionally has been analyzed by considering single dimensions of psychological distance and neglecting the effect of their interactions. In addition, this finding contributes to the current debate on the role of psychological distance in moral reasoning, showing that psychological distance softens the ethical assessment and might allow for a more flexible application of moral values to consumption.

Our findings contribute to prior research on unethical consumption in a relevant and untested field (i.e., gifts) and demonstrate the presence of two dissociable outcomes of the unethical gift: cognitive and affective. More specifically, this research demonstrates that individuals partially solve the moral dilemma of the unethical gift by assessing it as less unethical (study 1) and disengaging from it by means of moral rationalization (study 2), but emotions are misaligned with cognitions (study 3). Indeed, the recipients still felt guilt about the unethical gift, especially when the product was spatially close (study 3). The lower unethicity

arising from the moral rationalization in the gift-receiving experience is consistent with the literature on neutralization in unethical decision making (e.g., Chatzidakis, Hibbert, and Smith, 2006; Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014; Vitell, Nwachukwu, and Barnes, 2011). Critically, the findings of our experiments add to this theorizing, showing that moral rationalization is particularly relevant when the product is perceived as psychologically distant vs. psychologically close. An alternative explanation might apply the attribution theory (Weiner, 1986) and consider the divergence of IGs and SGs in terms of locus of control, with IGs being external – the individual is not responsible for the purchase – and SGs internal – the individual self-purchases the gift. In this sense, the current findings call into question the assumption that when the locus of control is internal, individuals revert to moral rationalization (Detert, Treviño, and Sweitzer, 2008), showing that under the context of gift exchange it is actually the opposite.

The second contribution to the unethical consumption literature relates to the affective outcome of the unethical gift. In essence, we found that the unethical gift has two dissociable consequences because the moral dilemma seems to be cognitively solved, but the recipient is emotionally unsettled. This research makes an important contribution because it advances the idea of two distinct paths in moral consumption, in line with the literature on moral decision making (Haidt, 2001; Valdesolo and DeSteno, 2006). These results highlight the “price” of consuming unethically: Individuals pay a double price for unethical consumption. In addition to the cognitive effort spent to morally rationalize the unethical gift, gift recipients self-blame. We argue that consumers are eager to pay this psychological price to avoid the social price of offending a friend but only when they do not pay a monetary price to purchase an item.

4.9 Limitations and future research

Limitations are inherent in any research. First, we only measured the gift unethicity and the affective outcome at the delivery stage. A longitudinal study might provide insights into the subsequent realignment between emotion and reasoning, as well as a posteriori moral rationalization along the reformulation phase (Sherry, 1983). Moreover, this study does not consider the wide array of disposal options available to the recipient (i.e., storage, return, redistribute; Sherry, 1983) that might lead to different cognitive and affective outcomes along the reformulation phase; nor does it consider contextual and social factors that might influence the cognitive and affective outcome of unethical gifts. For instance, manipulating the intimacy among the dyad giver-recipient or the motive of the gift (e.g., more vs. less ritualized occasion, therapeutic vs. rewarding reason) might allow for a more nuanced understanding of unethical consumption inside the gifting context. Moreover, here the difference between IG and SG is conceptualized in terms of social distance. Another way to look at this might apply Weiner's (1986) attribution theory, differentiating the two behaviors in terms of locus of control. Within this conceptualization, further studies might investigate whether the same pattern found with IGs applies to a situation in which the individual is not in charge of the product choice, such as when products are found.

A second shortcoming of our research concerns the sample. The experiments included only US participants and did not allow for a comparison between different cultures. Previous research has emphasized the role of culture in gifting behavior (Joy, 2001; Leung, Heung, and Wong, 2008; Shen et al., 2011). Conducting this research in a different culture would allow for more insight into the culture-specific rules of gift giving and self-gifts, which have scarcely been investigated outside the American culture (Tynan et al., 2010). Furthermore, expanding the research to different cultural settings would enrich our knowledge of violations of moral values in consumption behaviors, which are self-indulgent by nature. Cross-cultural studies

have also demonstrated the mediating effect of culture on ethical beliefs (Vitell et al., 1993; Wimalasiri, 2004). Enlarging the sample with non-American participants would hence allow for investigating the role of culture in moral rationalization.

Third, in our study, we operationalized unethical consumption in terms of a product obtained from the poaching of animals. We made this decision because of (i) the significance of the illegal trade in wildlife (i.e., it is a worldwide problem valued at between US \$70 billion and \$213 billion annually and the second largest illegal trade after narcotics; Nellemann et al., 2014; WWF, 2014), (ii) the relative ease with which these products can be purchased (Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993), and (iii) the relevance of these products for understanding unethical consumption (Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993). However, unethical consumption can be manipulated in many different ways, which would also allow for varying the violation's perceived severity. For instance, a possible extension of our research could include counterfeit products or illegal items. It is likely that varying the perceived severity influences both the moral rationalization and the moral emotions.

Finally, future research can deepen the understanding of consumer coping strategies in morally ambiguous situations by differently manipulating psychological distance. The use of only social and spatial distance, and their only assessment via point marks on a map, limits the generalizability of our findings, which could be improved by including other dimensions of psychological distance, such as temporal or hypothetical distance. We also acknowledge that our scenario studies may have potential limitations due to the word choice. For instance, in the SG condition we did not clarify whether the self-gifter was aware of the product unethicality before or after the purchase. A variation in the word choice would allow to decrease the ambiguity of the situation and better understand the consumer's coping strategies to unethical products.

4.10 Conclusions

In conclusion, our research investigated how IGs and SGs differ in terms of ethicality assessment, moral reasoning, and moral emotions. Three experiments placed participants in the situation of being the recipient or the self-gifter of an unethical gift (i.e., a product that harms animals). This research has shown that people who receive (vs. self-gift) an unethical gift reduce the discrepancy between the product and their moral values by engaging in moral rationalization of the product, which is consequently assessed as less unethical. We argue that this happens because of the different social distance with which IGs and SGs are perceived: IGs are socially more distant than SGs, which are socially closer. Adding a second dimension of psychological distance (i.e., spatial), we demonstrate that the two dimensions interact and generate opposite patterns. A spatially close IG is assessed as more unethical than a spatially distant IG. Furthermore, we found that the two dimensions interact on cognitive processes and moral emotions. This research adds to the existing literature on gifts and illuminates how unethical gifts, when received, can be cognitively reinterpreted but still be emotionally misaligned.

Chapter 5

Ego me absolvo: Asymmetrical appreciation between givers and recipients and interpersonal guilt in charitable gifts

Chapter 5 reports the last empirical investigation I conducted during my stay in Munich. With this study on asymmetrical differences between gift givers and gift recipients in gift appreciation, I approached ethical consumption by means of highly ethical products: donations and products that sustain a charitable cause. In this way, I attempted to investigate ethical consumption from the opposite standpoint of Chapter 4. By means of three sets of experimental designs, I tested whether the preference for charitable gifts is affected by interpersonal guilt and conditional on the role played by the individual in the gift exchange (being the giver or the recipient of the gift).

Keywords: donations, gift exchange, guilt, self-absolution

This chapter is based on a paper that is under review to the *European Journal of Marketing* from February 2016 [Pizzetti, M., Seele, P. and Gibbert, M. "Ego me absolvo": Asymmetrical appreciation between givers and recipients and interpersonal guilt in charitable gifts"]. A former version of this article [Pizzetti, M., Seele, P. and Gibbert, M., "The gift that keeps on giving: Donations appreciation between givers and recipients"] has been submitted in December 2015 to the EMAC 2016.

5.1 Introduction

Gift exchange is a highly ritualized phenomenon. Based on the foundational essay of Marcel Mauss (1925), gift exchange follows three principles: (i) the obligation to give, (ii) the obligation to receive, and (iii) the obligation to reciprocate. Not abiding by these principles prevents the success of the exchange (Swilley et al., 2014) and threatens the dyadic relationship of giver-recipient and personal well-being (Mauss, 1925; Ruth, 1995). For instance, not accepting a gift is seen as a severe social norm violation by givers (Schiffman and Cohn, 2009), while not reciprocating with a gift may hinder further exchanges and cause feelings of indebtedness and guilt (Ruffle, 1999; Sherry et al., 1993; Swilley et al., 2014).

Although on some occasions recipients do not reciprocate with a gift to escape from the infinite circle of gift exchanges or are not expected to give something back (Caplow, 1982; Swilley et al., 2014), on other occasions the failure to reciprocate is totally involuntary, but nonetheless generates guilt (Sherry et al., 1993). If you did not reciprocate, what would you give in the following gift exchange to repay your relational partner for the prior negligence? Which kind of gift would allow you to feel better? If you receive a gift without reciprocating, which gift would more effectively alleviate the negative feelings due to your negligence?

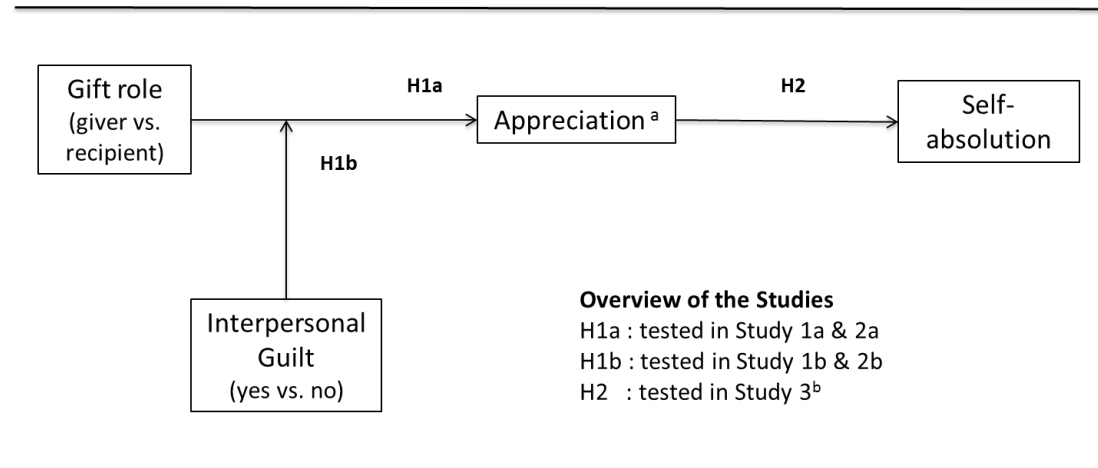
With gift exchanges fostering interpersonal relationships (Ruth et al., 1999; Sherry, 1983) and interpersonal relationships being essential to well-being (Clark and Lemay, 2010), these are consequential questions. To understand what better alleviates the interpersonal guilt due to a failure in gift reciprocation and to offer advice to gift givers of what to give when they owe something to the recipient, this research investigates whether and why some gifts amend the negligence of not reciprocating. Indeed, prior research on guilt and consumption suggests that individuals relieve the guilt by means of compensatory actions, such as donating money to charity (Dahl, Honea, and Machanda, 2003). Donations enhance the

donor's mood (Lee and Shrum, 2012), generate happiness (Liu and Aaker, 2008), and alleviate and mitigate negative emotions such as stress and guilt (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015). Notably, not only do pure donations positively affect mood, but also donations that result from a purchase (e.g., the purchase of products paired with charitable causes) have the power to dilute the guilt associated with the purchase and consequently to increase the appeal of the product itself (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015). In this light, although prior research offers insights into the self-absolution achieved through donations, the question of the relevance of such absolution when the donation is made in the name of someone else or in the name of oneself by someone else is less clear – in particular regarding the appeal of these products.

This research examines under the condition of failed reciprocity (which causes guilt) how being the giver or the recipient of charitable gifts affects the appreciation of the gift and the alleviation of such guilt. The results of five experiments consistently showed that gift recipients appreciate charitable gifts more than givers (study 1a and study 2a), especially when they feel guilt for not having reciprocated (study 1b and study 2b). Moreover, the findings demonstrate that gift recipients self-absolve (form of purification an individual makes to self-forgive) more thanks to charitable gifts than givers (study 3).

This research contributes to the extant literature on gift exchange by investigating the effect of failed reciprocity and adds to the sub-stream of research interested in understanding the asymmetrical differences in givers' and recipients' gift appreciation (see Figure 5.1). The findings of the studies show that givers and recipients not only differently appreciate charitable gifts, but also achieve different levels of self-absolution from charitable gifts. Moreover, the findings extend the understanding of guilt as an antecedent of donation, investigating a specific type of guilt (i.e., interpersonal guilt) and showing that even when individuals are not responsible for the donation (i.e., they are recipients of a charitable gift), guilt increases the appreciation of donations. Finally, this research has actionable

implications for practitioners, showing that charitable gifts are suitable tools for pleasing friends with gifts.



^a Measured as the position in the ranking (Studies 1a & 1b), and with direct items (Studies 2a, 2b, and 3)

^b This study also compared the effect of charitable gifts versus non-charitable gifts.

Figure 5.1 - Overview of the studies

5.2 Theoretical background

5.2.1 Guilt in gift exchange, consumption and donations

The relevance of gifts for relationship networks has received considerable attention in the consumer literature (e.g., Aaker and Akutsu, 2009; Cruz-Cardenas, 2014; Klein et al., 2015; Ruth et al., 1999, 2004; Sherry, 1983). Research has consistently shown that gifts build and cement relationships (Joy, 2001; Mauss, 1925) and investigated on which occasions they fail to do so. When not successful, meaning that gifts are not appreciated by the recipient, gifts cause embarrassment and undermine the relational bond between the giver and the recipient (Ruth et al., 1999). In other instances, the relationship is compromised because the recipient fails to reciprocate, and this failure not only threatens the relationship (Sherry et al., 1992;

1993), but also affects the recipient's mood and well-being (Anton et al., 2014; Ruth, 1995). In balanced reciprocity situations, the recipient repays the gift with something of the same value, and this value can be material (i.e., the recipient gives back a gift of the same monetary price; Belk and Coon, 1993) or immaterial (i.e., the recipient repays the giver by showing affection or gratitude; Belk, 1988; Belk and Coon, 1993; Roster, 2006). Conversely, in unbalanced reciprocity situations, violating the social norm of reciprocity generates feeling of guilt (Sherry et al., 1992, 1993).

Guilt is a prominent emotion in gift exchange, but the literature on gift exchange has devoted little attention to guilt, limiting the investigation to its impact on the quality of the relationship between the giver and the recipient (Ruth et al., 2004), the motives for gifting (de Hooge, 2014), and regifting (Ertimur et al., 2015). Notably, compared to other emotions, guilt has also received little attention in the consumer behavior literature more broadly (Dahl et al., 2003), although it has been identified as a key consumption emotion (Richins, 1997). Guilt is a social emotion defined as a person's "unpleasant emotional state associated with possible objections to his or her actions, inactions, circumstances, or intentions" (Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton, 1994, p. 245). It might be caused by the violation of social norms, dishonesty, or transgression of own duties (Keltner and Buswell, 1996) and might be evoked by an act of commission (e.g., deceiving about something) or omission (e.g., avoiding saying something) (Tangney, 1992). Of more relevance to consumer behavior literature, hedonic consumption, overspending, and impulsive and compulsive buying are antecedents of guilt (Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Basuroy, 2003; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Pirisi, 1995; Rook, 1987). When elicited, guilt inhibits negative word-of-mouth and complaints (Soscia, 2007), induces consumers to return products to the shop (Dahl et al., 2003), and increases the preference for feasibility attributes rather than desirability attributes (Han, Duhachek, and Agrawal, 2014). What distinguishes guilt from other negative emotions such as sadness and fear is that guilt has a constructive side: When feeling guilt, individuals revert to reparative

or compensatory actions. For instance, Dahl and colleagues (2003) found that consumers who experience guilt engage in positive actions such as recycling or donating.

In this regard, research has demonstrated that donating money to a charitable cause reduces guilt (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015) while increasing positive emotions and pure happiness (Anik, Aknin, Norton, and Dunn, 2009; Harbaugh, Myer, and Burghart, 2007; Lee and Shrum, 2012; Liu and Aaker, 2008; McGowan, 2006; Thoits and Hewitt, 2001), regardless of how the donation is made (i.e., as a pure donation or the purchase of a product that contributes to a charitable initiative). These results suggest that the donation is a self-absolution activity, a form of sacrifice by which sinful individuals reorient themselves onto a virtuous path (Seele, 2009). Critically, the etymology of the word sacrifice has its roots in religion. Sacrifices were fundamental in the majority of ancient civilizations' rituals and typically consisted of the killing of an animal or person as an offering to a deity to obtain its benevolence. With the advent of Christianity, the bloody connotation of sacrifice was replaced by 'making something holy' (from the Latin '*sacrum facere*'), which is living in accordance with the religious authority. However, sacrifice as a deprivation of something material persisted, assuming the features of 'indulgence sales' (indulgence is the remission of a sin through absolution granted by an authority; Oxford Dictionary, 2014a), which consisted of charitable donations to good causes. The practice of 'indulgences sales' became extremely popular during the Middle Ages, assuming the feature of a market with pre-defined fares. After the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the sale of indulgences was forbidden. However, today, donations can still be considered a sacrifice (i.e., giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy; Oxford Dictionary, 2014b) made as a form of purification in an individual's attempt to self-absolve (e.g., 'ego me absolvo') and not granted by an authority as in the Middle Ages. In clinical psychology, this process of self-

purification by means of actions aimed at amending and repairing that which was damaged is known as self-absolution (or self-forgiveness; Cornish and Wade, 2015). The self-absolution process is meant to lead to the state of self-forgiveness or ego-me-absolvo, which involves a renewed acceptance of oneself, re-established self-satisfaction, self-esteem, self-trust (Thompson et al., 2005; Woodyatt and Wenzel, 2013), and positive emotions (Bast and Barnes-Holmes, 2015).

Although recent studies have made great strides in understanding the effect of donations on alleviating guilt (e.g., Chatterjee et al., 2010; Liu and Aaker, 2008; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015), the existing literature has mostly focused on the guilt that originates from the failure of self-regulation in consumption. Conversely, less is known about how donations alleviate interpersonal guilt, that is, when the individual perceives his or her action (or inaction) as having a negative consequence for other persons (Dahl et al., 2003), such as the case of not reciprocating a gift. We therefore conducted three sets of experiments to rigorously test whether interpersonal guilt affects appreciation of donation in the gift exchange setting. Furthermore, we examined whether this appreciation is conditional on the role of the individual in the gift exchange (i.e., the giver or the recipient).

5.2.2 Giving and receiving gifts: Two sides of the same coin?

A recent subset of research on gifts has focused on the asymmetry between givers and recipients – comparing the giver’s versus recipient’s evaluation of the same products (Baskin et al., 2014; Gino and Flynn, 2011; Lerouge and Warlop, 2006; Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014). Since both actors – the giver and the recipient – are intrinsically related one with the other (Belk and Coon, 1993; Mauss, 1925) and have experience of both roles (Areni et al., 1998), researchers have begun to explore how the individual’s evaluation of gifts differs according to the role played in the exchange and what these differences imply for consumer behavior. For example, money is better valued by givers than recipients (Flynn and Adams, 2009).

Furthermore, givers over-value the thoughtfulness of a gift, favoring surprise gifts, while recipients prefer solicited gifts (Gino and Flynn, 2011). Givers and recipients also differ in the way they mentally construe gifts: Givers think about gifts abstractly while recipients employ concrete details (Baskin et al., 2014). This difference is attributable to the psychological distance (vs. closeness) with which the gift is perceived, which leads to an asymmetrical preference for desirability (vs. feasibility) attributes (Baskin et al., 2014).

The current research hints at another difference between the two gift experiences, namely, that the mere fact of receiving (vs. giving) a gift influences the appreciation of a charitable gift and the absolution process associated with it. The aim of this chapter is to examine whether and how receiving a charitable gift influences the appreciation and the experience of the gift, compared to a situation where the same gift is given. We define charitable gifts as donations made by a giver in the name of someone else (the gift recipient) or those products associated with a charitable cause (i.e., products for which a portion of the proceeds of the sales is donated to a charitable initiative). Notably, today non-profit organizations are positioning themselves as sources of gifts, offering gift givers products that contribute to one of their charity initiatives. For instance, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has a dedicated section on its website wherein it offers products tailored as gifts. Another example is the collaboration between Save the Children and Bulgari, which produces rings branded with the non-profit organization's logo and contributes to help children in need. Consumers appreciate such kind of products, as consistently documented by research in cause-related marketing, ethical consumption (Antonetti and Maklan, 2014; Pelozo, White, and Shang, 2013; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015) and donations (Chell and Mortimer, 2014). Specifically, we contend that when individuals receive charitable gifts, they appreciate such gifts more and benefit more from them than the gift givers in terms of self-absolution from interpersonal guilt.

This might seem counterintuitive, given that recipients are not involved in the purchase of the gift and do not re-establish a balanced exchange with the giver. However, the giver looks at the gift from a more distant standpoint (Baskin et al., 2014) and doesn't believe he or she is an influencer over the fate of the gifted product (Adams et al., 2012). Conversely, although the passivity of the recipient during the gift purchase, the recipient takes more psychological advantages from the gift because he or she is the real end owner of the product, so that gifts become possessions of the extended self (Belk, 1988, 2013; Pierce et al., 2001). In addition, the literature on psychological ownership has provided evidence that the feeling of being the owner of a product changes the perception of the product, leading individuals to construe the product with more concrete details (Claus, Vanhouche, Dewitte, and Warlop, 2012) and to over-value it (Brough and Isaac, 2012). In this sense, we believe that under the same conditions the recipient is the one who enjoys the charitable gift more in terms of appreciation.

Moreover, interpersonal guilt does not reduce the recipient's appreciation of the charitable gift, but rather increases it because the charitable gift becomes the tool for the gift recipient to self-absolve from interpersonal guilt. Previous research on donations and guilt, indeed, has suggested that individuals revert to donations or to the purchase of cause-related products to counterbalance the guilt derived from self-indulgence (Lee-Wingate and Corfman, 2010; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015). If gift recipients feel guilt because of failed reciprocity, they might see the charitable gift as a tool to relieve such guilt, and consequently they appreciate the gift more. Conversely, if the gift giver believes in not being the owner of the gifted gift, he or she benefits less from the self-absolution quality of the charitable gift, which, consequently, does not result in more appreciation.

In summary, we propose that the appreciation of charitable gifts is conditional on the role of the individual in the gifting exchange. Specifically, we expect that recipients appreciate the charitable gift more than the gift giver, both in the form of a

pure donation and as a product paired with a charitable cause, and especially when they feel a sense of interpersonal guilt due to a failure in gift reciprocation. Furthermore, we expect that the higher appreciation leads to higher self-absolution for the recipient than the giver. Therefore, our formal hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Gift recipients appreciate charitable gifts more than givers (H1.a), especially when they experience guilt (H1.b).

H2: Charitable gifts generate higher self-absolution in gift recipients than gift givers, and the relationship between charitable gifts and self-absolution is mediated by the appreciation of the gift.

5.3 Overview of the studies

To explore the effect of interpersonal guilt on donations in the context of gift exchange and to test the proposed differences in givers' vs. recipients' appreciation patterns, we conducted a series of five studies. All the studies demonstrate that gift recipients appreciate charitable gifts more than gift givers do, whether in the form of pure donations (study 1a) or products associated with charitable causes (study 2a), and especially when recipients feel guilt for not having reciprocated the gift (study 1b and study 2b). Additionally, we suggest that the asymmetry between givers and recipients affects not only appreciation but also self-absolution (study 3), showing that recipients achieve greater self-absolution than givers when confronted with charitable gifts. Table 5.1 summarizes the research design of each study.

In all studies, participants from the US Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMTurk) sample participated in exchange for small compensation. They were asked to read a scenario about giving or receiving gifts and then to rate some gifts.

Table 5.1 – Summary of the study design

Study	Hypothesis tested	Independent variables	Dependent variables
Study 1a	Testing H1a	- Gift role: giver vs. recipient [interpersonal guilt kept constant]	-Gift appreciation: rank position
Study 1b	Testing H1b	- Gift role: giver vs. recipient -interpersonal guilt: yes or no	-Gift appreciation: rank position
Study 2a	Testing H1a	- Gift role: giver vs. recipient [interpersonal guilt kept constant]	-Gift appreciation: scale
Study 2b	Testing H1b	- Gift role: giver vs. recipient -interpersonal guilt: yes or no	-Gift appreciation: scale
Study 3	Testing H2	- Gift role: giver vs. recipient - charitable gift: charity or not [interpersonal guilt kept constant]	-Gift appreciation: scale - Self-absolution: scale

The experiments employed different stimuli as gifts, all taken from relevant literature (i.e., Adams et al., 2010; Baskin et al., 2014; Clarke, 2008; Cleveland et al., 2003; Vanhamme and de Bont, 2008). In studies 1b and 2b we compared situations of interpersonal guilt vs. no guilt to test whether the appreciation of charity donations is higher when individuals experience interpersonal guilt, while in the other three studies all participants were primed with interpersonal guilt. Interpersonal guilt was manipulated by describing a situation in which the participant did not reciprocate a gift. Procedures and aims for each experiment are described in relevant sections, and stimuli are provided in Appendix E. Table 5.2 summarizes the main results.

Table 5.2 - Main statistics of all studies

Means (and standard deviations) per conditions for all studies				
	Study 1a		Study 2a	
	Recipient	Giver	Recipient	Giver
Rank position	7.00(2.49)	8.16(1.99)		
Gift-appreciation			5.28(0.83)	4.68(1.27)
Study 1b	Recipient		Giver	
	Guilt	No-guilt	Guilt	No-guilt
Rank position	3.97(1.99)	4.69(2.16)	6.41(2.84)	5.23(2.25)
Study 2b	Recipient		Giver	
	Guilt	No-guilt	Guilt	No-guilt
Gift-appreciation	5.84(0.94)	5.32(1.33)	4.27(1.47)	4.93(1.68)
Study 3	Recipient		Giver	
	Charity	No-charity	Charity	No-charity
Gift-appreciation	5.66(1.33)	4.74(1.38)	5.02(1.33)	5.63(1.49)
Self-absolution	4.64(1.33)	3.90(1.24)	4.81(1.36)	5.23(1.47)

5.4 Study 1a and study 1b: Charitable donations as gifts

The goal of the first two studies was to demonstrate that recipients (vs. givers) appreciate a charitable donation as a gift (study 1a) more, especially when they feel interpersonal guilt (study 1b).

5.4.1 Study 1a

Method. A total of 62 participants (58.1% male, $M_{age} = 36.24$, $SD_{age} = 12.45$) was randomly assigned to one of two different conditions. Participants in the receiving condition read that they had received 10 gifts from their colleagues for Christmas, while participants in the giving condition read that they had bought 10 gifts for their colleagues for Christmas. The gifts described were exactly the same in both conditions: a coffee maker, a ballpoint pen, a subscription to a newspaper, a gift certificate to a French restaurant, tickets to see a new movie, a photo-editing program, a gift certificate for a wine-tasting experience, a theater ticket, a T-shirt, and a charitable gift, that is, a certificate for a donation to a non-governmental

organization (NGO). After the scenario, participants were asked to rank the gifts in order of preference, from the most to least favorite.

Results. Supporting our hypothesis, appreciation for the charitable gift depended on the role in the gift exchange. Specifically, we compared between givers and recipients the rank position of the charitable gift, which ranged between 1 and 10: The higher the ranking, the more appreciated the charitable gift. Participants ranked the charitable gift higher when they received it than when they gifted it ($M_{\text{recipient}} = 7.00(2.49)$ vs. $M_{\text{giver}} = 8.16(1.99)$; $t = 2.027$, $p < .05$).

5.4.2 Study 1b

Method. A total of 124 participants (51.6% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 36.95$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.81$) was randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (gift role: giver or recipient) x 2 (interpersonal guilt: yes or no) between-subjects design. Half of the participants were told that they did not immediately reciprocate the gifts of their colleagues (guilt condition), while reciprocation was not mentioned in the no-guilt condition. Similar to study 1a, participants read a scenario of giving or receiving 10 gifts: a hairdryer, an electric toothbrush, a toaster, a spa massage, a golf lesson, a gift certificate for go-karting, an Amazon gift card, a wristwatch, a cookbook, and a charitable gift, (i.e., donation certificate for an NGO). Then they were asked to rank the gifts according to their preference.

Results. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the charitable gift ranking with gift role and interpersonal guilt as factors was conducted. As per Study 1a, the higher the position in the ranking (i.e. closer to rank #1), the greater the appreciation. The analysis revealed that recipients appreciated the charitable gift more than the givers did, ranking it closer to position 1 compared to givers, who positioned it more distant from the top position ($M_{\text{recipient}} = 4.31(2.09)$ vs. $M_{\text{giver}} = 5.84(2.62)$; $F_{(1,120)} = 12.592$,

$p < .01$). Additionally, we found a significant interaction effect ($F_{(1,120)} = 5.080, p < .05$). A simple-contrast analysis showed that in the guilt condition, recipients liked the charitable gift more than the givers did ($M_{\text{guilt*recipient}} = 3.97(1.99)$ vs. $M_{\text{guilt*giver}} = 6.41(2.84)$; $t = -4.206, p < .01$), while givers appreciated it more in the no-guilt condition ($M_{\text{giver*no-guilt}} = 5.23(2.25)$ vs. $M_{\text{giver*guilt}} = 6.41(2.84)$; $t = 1.977, p .05$).

5.4.3 Discussion

The findings of these studies provide initial support for the hypothesis that recipients like charitable gifts more than givers do (H1a), and especially when recipients perceive that they owe something to the giver (H1b). However, the intangible nature of the charitable gift here employed, which was presented in the form of a certificate for a donation, might influence the results. Indeed, the gift exchange literature has provided evidence of the importance of material attributes for the success of gifts (Clarke, 2007; Tuten and Kiecker, 2009). To overcome this limitation and obtain further support for our hypothesis, in the next set of studies we presented a product associated with a charitable cause as the charitable gift and assessed gift appreciation directly rather than through ranking.

5.5 Study 2a and study 2b: Add a charitable cause to a gift

This second set of studies aimed at testing H1 again. Study 2a and study 2b replicate study 1a and study 1b, respectively, by employing the same experimental design, but with a different charitable gift and a different measure of appreciation. These changes allow us to generalize the results and offer stronger support for our hypothesis.

5.5.1 Study 2a

Method. A total of 53 participants (59.6% male; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.40$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.36$) was asked to imagine giving or receiving a pen, which was presented as associated with a charitable cause. They then rated the gift with three items on a 7-point Likert scale adapted from Baskin et al. (2014) (“How much do you like the gift?”; “How good is the gift?”; “How positive is the gift?”; 1 = not at all, 7 = very much), and the ratings were averaged in a single appreciation index ($\alpha = .745$).

Results. The one-way ANOVA revealed that recipients appreciated the charitable gift more than givers did ($M_{\text{recipient}} = 5.28(.83)$ vs. $M_{\text{giver}} = 4.68(1.27)$; $F_{(1,52)} = 4.024$, $p < .05$).

5.5.2 Study 2b

Method. This study was a 2 (gift role: giver or recipient) x 2 (interpersonal guilt: yes or no) between-subjects experimental design. A total of 103 participants (57.3% male; $M_{\text{age}} = 36.90$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.52$) was asked to imagine being the giver or the recipient of a gift (the same pen used in study 2a). Gift appreciation was measured with the same items used in study 2a ($\alpha = .929$), and interpersonal guilt was manipulated the same way as in study 1b.

Results. The ANOVA results confirmed our expectation that charitable donations as gifts are more appreciated by recipients than by givers. We found a significant main effect of gift role on gift appreciation: Recipients liked the gift more than givers did on average ($M_{\text{recipient}} = 5.59(1.16)$ vs. $M_{\text{giver}} = 4.56(1.58)$; $F_{(1,103)} = 13.099$, $p < .01$). A significant interaction effect was also found ($F_{(1,103)} = 4.830$, $p <$

.05). A simple-contrast analysis revealed that in the guilt condition, recipients liked the gift more than the givers did ($M_{\text{recipient*guilt}} = 5.84(.94)$ vs. $M_{\text{giver*guilt}} = 4.27(1.47)$; $t = -4.319$, $p < .01$).

5.5.3 Discussion

The findings of studies 2a and 2b provide additional evidence that recipients like charitable gifts more than givers do, and this is especially true when they feel guilt. These findings provide additional support for H1.

In the next study, we sought to obtain further evidence of the positive impact of charitable gifts in gift receiving by comparing gifts associated with charitable donations versus no donations. We expected that the appreciation patterns for charitable gifts would replicate those found in previous studies, whereby recipients appreciate gifts more when they are paired with charitable donations. Study 3 also aimed to examine how the gift role affects self-absolution.

To do so, we assessed self-absolution to test whether recipients experience more positive emotions when receiving a product associated with a charitable donation (vs. not associated with a donation) while we expected that givers would indicate the same level of self-absolution regardless of the presence or absence of a charitable cause.

5.6 Study 3: Testing the ‘ego me absolvo’

5.6.1 Sample, design and procedures

The study was a 2 (gift role: giver or recipient) x 2 (charitable gift: charity or not) between-subjects experimental design. A total of 114 participants (62.3% male; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.31$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.52$) was asked to imagine being the giver or the recipient of

a gift, which was a wine-tasting experience associated with a charitable cause (vs. no charitable cause). All participants were primed with interpersonal guilt, as in previous studies. Appreciation for the gift was again measured with the same items as in previous studies ($\alpha = .933$). Consistent with the psychological literature (Bast and Barnes-Holmes, 2015; Cornish and Wade, 2015; Thompson et al., 2005; Woodyatt and Wenzel, 2013), self-absolution was measured with four items on a 7-point Likert about relevant positive emotions (proud, confident, excited, and happy; $\alpha = .779$).

5.6.2 Results

The analysis of appreciation revealed a significant interaction effect ($F_{(1,115)} = 8.716, p < .05$). Simple contrast analysis showed that recipients appreciated the gift significantly more when it was associated with a charitable cause ($M_{\text{recipient*charity}} = 5.66(1.33)$ vs. $M_{\text{recipient*no-charity}} = 4.74(1.38)$; $t = 2.427, p < .05$).

The analysis of self-absolution revealed that, on average, givers' scores were significantly higher than recipients' ($M_{\text{giver}} = 5.02(1.42)$ vs. $M_{\text{recipient}} = 4.31(1.33)$; $F_{(1,115)} = 8.668, p < .01$) and that a significant interaction effect existed ($F_{(1,115)} = 5.133, p < .05$). Specifically, a simple contrast analysis revealed that recipients had higher levels of self-absolution when the gift was associated with a charitable cause ($M_{\text{recipient*charity}} = 4.64(1.33)$ vs. $M_{\text{recipient*no-charity}} = 3.90(1.24)$; $t = 2.098, p < .05$) and that givers had greater self-absolution when giving a gift not associated with a charitable cause than recipients who received the same gift ($M_{\text{giver*no-charity}} = 5.23(1.47)$ vs. $M_{\text{recipient*no-charity}} = 3.90(1.24)$; $t = -3.604, p < .01$).

Next, we examined whether the relationship between receiving (vs. giving) a charitable (vs. no-charitable) gift and the self-absolution is mediated by gift appreciation. In our model, the relationship between the charitable gift and gift appreciation (mediator) was moderated by the gift role. According to H2, the path

from the charitable gift (independent variable) to self-absolution (dependent variable) runs through the gift appreciation and applies differently across the gift role conditions. To assess the proposed moderated mediation model, we used the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012; model 7) with a bootstrapping resample of 5,000 and 95% confidence intervals. The first model regressed charitable cause ($B = .92$, $SE = .38$, $t = 2.43$, $p < .05$), gift role ($B = .89$, $SE = .38$, $t = 2.37$, $p < .05$), and their interaction ($B = -1.53$, $SE = .51$, $t = -2.95$, $p < .05$) on appreciation. The second model regressed gift appreciation ($B = .54$, $SE = .08$, $t = 6.82$, $p < .05$) and charitable gift ($B = .03$, $SE = .22$, $t = .14$, $p > .05$) on self-absolution. The charitable gift variable had a not-significant direct effect on self-absolution (95% CI: $-.41$; $.47$). Testing for the moderator's (gift role's) indirect effect, we found that in the gift recipient condition, the conditional indirect effect was significant (95% CI: $.10$; $.96$), but not in the gift giver condition (95% CI: $-.64$; $.07$).

5.6.3 Discussion

The findings of study 3 support our hypothesis that recipients appreciate charitable gifts more than givers do, and this generates greater self-absolution. Although givers had higher scores on average, they did not show an increased appreciation for charitable gifts as compared to regular gifts. We also found that the higher appreciation for charitable gifts by recipients generates greater self-absolution. This pattern is not found in gift givers. These findings confirm H2.

5.7 General discussion

Across five studies, we find evidence of the asymmetry in gift givers' and gift recipients' appreciation of charitable gifts. Gift givers, although responsible for the charitable donation, do not like such kind of gifts very much. Critically, we found that charitable gifts are successful, given that recipients highly appreciate them—

particularly those participants who felt a sense of guilt to the giver. This giver/recipient asymmetry also has implications for self-absolution, with gift recipients self-absolving more with charitable gifts than gift givers. The asymmetrical appreciation of gift givers and gift recipients of charitable gifts explains the resulting difference in self-absolution.

This work contributes to the literature in several ways. First, these findings shed light on the self-laundering properties of donations in the new and untested field of gift exchange. Research has demonstrated that moral emotions, such as guilt, enhance the likelihood of donations (Hibbert, Smith, Davies, and Ireland, 2007) because the donations help individuals feel better (Liu and Aaker, 2008) and reduce the guilt associated with a consumption choice (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2015). This work extends the current framework, supporting the notion that guilt increases appreciation for charitable donations. Specifically, it demonstrates that also interpersonal guilt (i.e., guilt caused by having harmed someone else) affects donations. The findings also showed that donations allow for self-absolution (i.e., ego me absolvo) even when the individual is not directly responsible for the donation. Although we did not directly measure the guilt pre and post the charitable gift, we believe that the higher preference for such gift in the guilt condition and the self-absolution assessment with items on positive emotions confirm donations' mood-alleviating properties.

Second, it adds to the increasing volume of literature on the divergences between givers and recipients in terms of gift preferences. While previous work has theorized on cognitive biases, which often lead givers to misinterpret recipients' desires (Baskin et al., 2014; Lerouge and Warlop, 2006; Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014), we focused on the benefits that givers vs. recipients derive from gifts. Notably, within the stream of literature on gift exchange, the benefits recipients might derive from a product, besides the functionality of the product (Anton et al., 2014; Parsons, 2002), have been mostly neglected. Indeed, the major part of the literature has

emphasized the relational outcomes (relationship realignment or reciprocity; e.g., Bodur and Grohmann, 2005; Ruth et al., 1999) of the gift exchange, while the psychological processes elicited by the gift itself have been overlooked.

Our research has actionable implications for non-profit organizations that are interested at increasing the pool of donors through charitable gifts. The results suggest that donations are successful gifts that please recipients and that givers must be persuaded to use donations as gifts. We suggest that charity organizations make clear to givers the benefits associated with charitable donations, showing how gift donations allow for a double achievement: pleasing one recipient while helping many. In addition to demonstrating the effect of a charitable donation on gift recipients, this paper shows that the charitable gift can easily be associated with the self-absolution from guilt. This research shows that self-absolution can be experienced even when the charitable product is not purchased by the consumer, such as in the case of gift recipients. Marketers can, therefore, leverage the self-absolution ability of charitable products in social marketing campaigns to increase consumers' willingness to purchase charitable products for others.

5.8 Limitations and future research

We acknowledge that our studies may have potential limitations. First, given that the aim of this chapter was to demonstrate different patterns of appreciation between givers and recipients, we did not directly compare the gift scenarios with purchases for personal use. Future research should overcome this limitation to provide more fine-grained results on the psychological outcomes of donations. Moreover, whereas scenario studies allow researchers to isolate effects, an observation (e.g., an ethnographic observation or survey) of real exchanges would speak to the real-world relevance of our findings.

Second, interpersonal guilt can arise from reasons other than not reciprocating a gift. The choice to embed the interpersonal guilt into the gift exchange process was meant to facilitate participants in understanding the context because it is close to real-life events. However, employing different manipulations of guilt, such as asking participants to imagine not liking the gift, would greatly contribute to understanding the passive (vs. reactive) guilt-reduction mechanisms.

Third, self-absolution can be measured in forms other than positive emotions. On one hand, the use of positive emotions as a proxy for ego-me-absolvo is in line with the current psychological theorizing, which emphasizes the elicitation of positive emotion when individuals self-forgive (Bast and Barnes-Holmes, 2015). On the other hand, employing a multi-faced measure of self-absolution, which may comprise the other components of that (i.e., self-acceptance, self-satisfaction, self-esteem, self-trust; Thompson et al., 2005; Woodyatt and Wenzel, 2013) would allow for a richer understanding of how consumers self-absolve from previous guilty acts. Another research venue is to generalize our results to other consumption contexts by developing a scale of self-absolution related to consumer behavior.

Future research should also extend the understanding of how interpersonal guilt changes the way gifts are appreciated by givers and recipients. Understanding how such guilt affects the appreciation of gifts other than charitable ones was beyond the scope of this paper, but the ANOVAs conducted on the ranks of studies 1a and 1b revealed unexpected and partially contradictory results. Indeed, we found that interpersonal guilt shifts the recipients' and the givers' preference regarding the gift. In Study 1b, we found that interpersonal guilt lowers givers' appreciation of functional products (i.e. toaster) ($M_{\text{guilt}} = 5.97(2.32)$ vs. $M_{\text{no-guilt}} = 4.43(2.13)$; $t_{(60)} = 2.639$, $p < .01$), while in Study 1a givers appreciated a coffee maker (again functional) more than recipients ($M_{\text{giver}} = 3.28(2.13)$ vs. $M_{\text{recipient}} = 4.80(3.13)$; $F_{(60)} = 5.039$, $p < .05$). These results extends prior research on giver/receiver asymmetries between desirability and feasibility attributes in the gift-giving context, which

suggests that givers do prefer desirability attributes (e.g., thoughtfulness, surprise, etc.) while recipients prefer feasibility attributes (e.g., ease, convenience, etc.) (Baskin et al., 2014). Therefore, future research can fruitfully explore how gift appreciation differs when givers and recipients feel guilt.

5.9 Conclusions

Across five studies, we examined how interpersonal guilt affects appreciation for charitable gifts and how such appreciation varies between gift givers and gift recipients. We found that the appreciation of charitable gift is conditional to the role of the individual in the gift exchange, and influenced by interpersonal guilt. The results also showed that recipients self-absolve more from guilt thanks to charitable gifts than givers do. Our results advance the knowledge on asymmetrical preferences on gifts between givers and recipients, and contribute to the extant literature on the guilt-alleviating properties of donations and charitable products.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

After years of studies on gift exchange, the importance of this phenomenon is widely accepted. The social integration function of gifts and their relevance for the market economy have especially fascinated scholars of different fields, who have approached the study of gift exchange from various perspectives. However, despite the numerous studies and the unquestionable advancement in the understanding of the phenomenon, the current literature has mostly focused on the gift giver, reflecting a giver-centric perspective in the analysis of the phenomenon and neglecting to examine the other actor involved into the exchange – the gift recipient.

This work aims to fill the literature gap on recipients, analyzing the psychological processes that occur when someone receives a gift. While prior research has mostly focused on reciprocity, feeling of obligation, and re-gifting, this work sought to examine gift receipt from a different angle. Specifically, this work has embarked on an endeavor to understand how receiving a gift influences the psychological processes associated with the consumption of products. The assumption of the empirical studies presented is that when individuals receive a gift, they experience the same emotions and the same cognitive processes they would experience if they had purchased the product, albeit in an altered way. I employed qualitative tools (semi-structured interviews and critical incident technique; *Chapter 2*) and experimental designs, which allowed for a comparison between different gifts (*Chapter 3*), between gifts received from others and self-gifted (*Chapter 4*), and between gifts given and gifts received (*Chapter 5*). These efforts were meant to answer Sherry's (1983) call for a more integrative approach to gift exchange, which compares different forms of gifts.

More specifically, this work began with an exploratory investigation of receipt of personalized gifts. The data analysis suggested that recipients of personalized gifts feel the same feelings of accomplishment (Franke et al., 2010) that a consumer feels when personalizing a product. This serves as a prompt for further investigation on how consumers react to gifts, conducted by means of experimental designs. The basic idea of this research was that, although recipients are not responsible for the purchase of the product, they obtain the same psychological benefits (e.g., pride or self-absolution) that they would obtain if they personally purchase the product. Moreover, I expected that those benefits would be perceived in a modified way (i.e., mediated and amplified) and that, in situations wherein the product consumption generates guilt, the same emotion would be experienced by the recipient of the gift. This means that when products are gifted, the recipients would have the same experience that they would have if they had purchased the product, regardless of its positive or negative connotation.

Moreover, I included in my experiments a set of variables deemed important for gift exchange by prior articles. Most existing research has pointed out the importance of relational intimacy in the giver-recipient dyad for the success of the gift and for the relational outcome. While such intimacy is an uncontested facilitator of gift success, other effects of relational intimacy besides gift appreciation and relationship reinforcement have not been investigated before. The results of *Chapter 3* showed that relational intimacy per se does not hinder the vicarious experience, which is conversely facilitated by emotional closeness. In *Chapter 4*, I examined how gift contexts affect moral rationalization, unethicality perceptions and moral emotions including psychological distance. This concept appears to be relevant for product consumption (Claus et al., 2012), purchase decisions (Alexander, Lynch and Wang, 2008; Bornemann and Homburg, 2011; Dhar and Kim, 2007; Goodman and Malkoc, 2012) and especially for moral judgments (Gino and Galinsky, 2011). My findings demonstrate that psychological distance interacts with gift receipt, modifying

unethicality assessments and exacerbating moral emotions. Finally, I used guilt to test how this moral emotion influences the appreciation of ethical gifts (*Chapter 5*). Scholars in consumer behavior agree on the importance of this emotion as an antecedent and a consequence of product choice and consumption (e.g. Burnett and Lunsford, 1994; Dahl et al., 2003; Goldsmith, Cho and Dhar, 2012; Soscia, 2007) and on its relevance in the gift context (Aaker and Akutsu, 2009; Clarke and Mortimer, 2013; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Wolfenbarger, 1990). In *Chapter 4*, I found that guilt originates from the unethical product, and in *Chapter 5* I found that perceiving guilt increases the preference for donations.

On a practical level, this dissertation also suggests strategies for marketers. First, the economic value of gifts is uncontested, as is the asymmetry in gift appreciation between givers and recipients (Baskin et al., 2014; Gino and Flynn, 2010; Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014). However, recipients generally value gifts about 20% less than givers in terms of price (Waldfogel, 2009), suggesting that there is room for improvement when it comes to helping consumers give better gifts. In this regard, marketers already see recipients as the real end consumers (Areni et al., 1998) but should better tailor their advertising strategies to help givers to find the most appropriate gift and see the benefits associated with some gifts. For instance, building on *Chapter 5*'s studies, marketers might encourage givers to imagine themselves receiving a donation as a gift. Imagining themselves receiving such a charitable gift would lead givers to understand the benefits associated with the donation. Moreover, this research has practical significance for retailers and companies that allow consumers to personalize products. Retailers who wish to help gift givers personalize gifts may consider encouraging givers to identify what distinguishes one recipient from another, in order to design gifts that are uniquely tailored to one recipient.

The main findings and the theoretical implications of the present work are summarized in Figure 6.1 and are extensively described in the next sections.

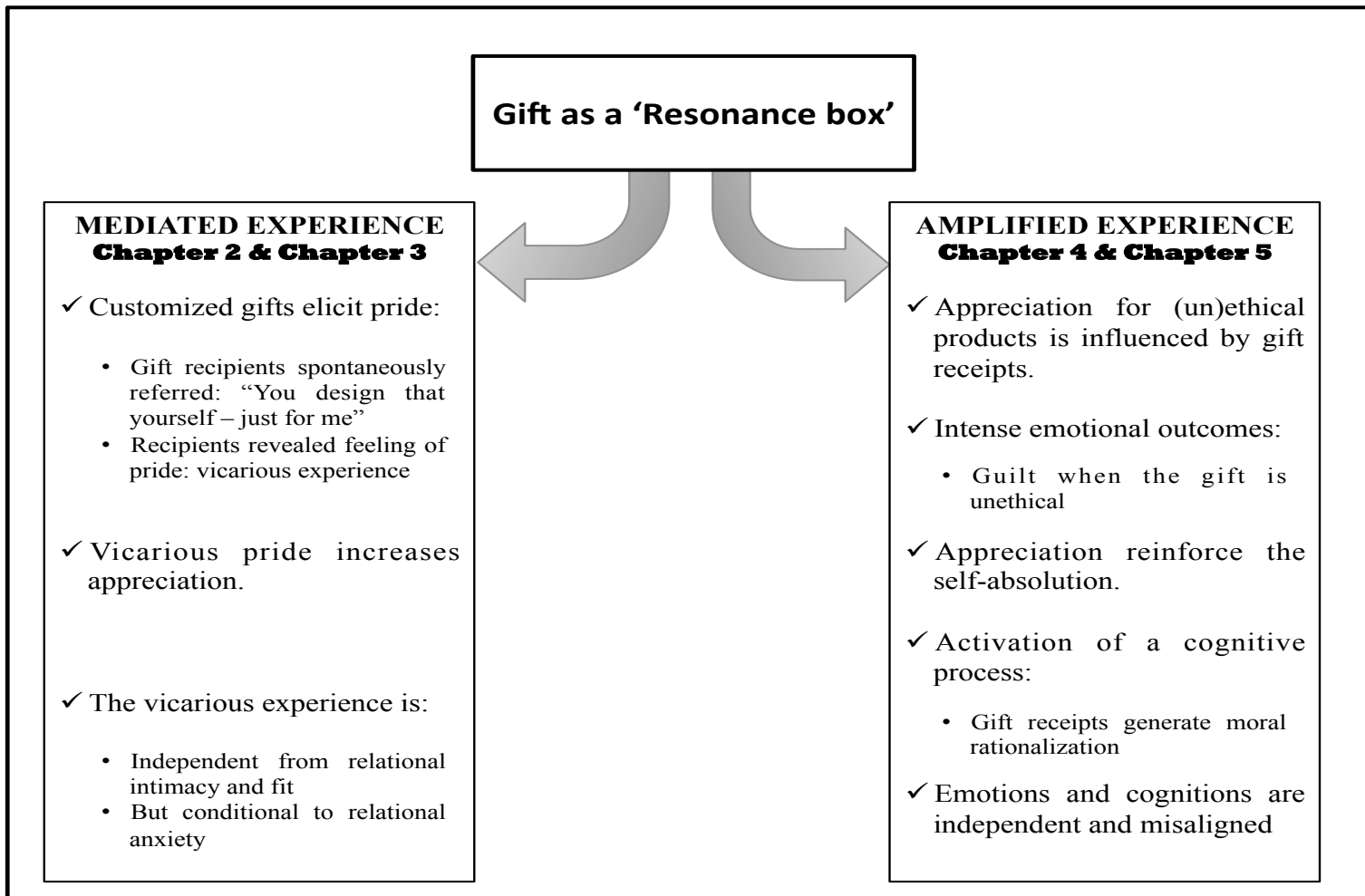


Figure 6.1 - Conclusions: Graphical representation

6.1 Discussion of the findings

This dissertation contributes to the emerging sub-field of research that investigates how the gift context influences consumption. While prior research has offered insights on how gifts differ from regular purchases (Cleveland et al., 2003; Vanhamme and de Bont, 2008), this dissertation is one of the few empirical attempts to specifically focus on the gift recipient. This is surprising because gift recipients are central for the success of gifts, and the inherent characteristics of gift receipt (i.e., passivity, forced-consumption, and lack of alternative choices) have a strong effect on the way products are perceived, valued or evaluated. Nonetheless, extant literature has rarely focused on the gift recipient, favoring the investigation of the gift giver. Besides the contributions of each single study, which are discussed in the relevant sections of this dissertation, I believe that the present work as a whole contributes to the current understanding of consumer behavior and ethical issues in consumption context in several ways.

6.1.1 Consumer behavior

Contribution to the gift recipient literature: Is the gift receipt a resonance box?

The core objective of this work was to investigate whether the mere fact of being given as a gift influences the way in which products are perceived, valued and evaluated. Prior research has pointed out that gifting affects the way in which consumers see products: when consumers are involved in the purchase of products for someone else, they vary their purchasing strategies (Cleveland et al., 2003; Heeler et al., 1979), and unconscious and involuntary cognitive processes affect the purchasing process (Lerouge and Warlop, 2006; Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014). The mentioned studies have, however, analyzed only the side of the giver, while partially, if not completely, neglecting the recipient. Notable exceptions (Baskin et al., 2014;

Gino and Flynn, 2011) have included the gift recipient in the analysis with the aim of describing the differences between givers' and recipients' gift assessment. The present work fits into this stream of research, overcoming past limitations and expanding the extant knowledge.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I presented the concept of the resonance box as a metaphor to explain what happens when products are gifted. I contended that during gift receipt, the perceptions around the products are modified and distorted, generating altered emotional and cognitive effects from those elicited by the purchase of products. By means of qualitative and quantitative studies, I have investigated whether the resonance box is an effective and suitable metaphor for describing the effects of gift receipt. The findings of the studies conducted indicate that gift receipt has unquestionable effects on the way consumers perceive products: it elicits mediated emotional outcomes and amplifies cognitive and emotional processes. These findings seem to suggest that gift receipt actually modifies the product experience, as a resonance box does with the sound that comes into it.

The present thesis points to two effects generated by gift receipt, in line with the metaphor of the *resonance box*. First, I demonstrate how gifts elicit mediated experiences, just as the resonance box releases a sound that is not self-generated but rather replicated in a new form. Second, I show how products that are gifted elicit cognitive and emotional processes, which are similar but more intense compared to situations in which the same products are self-purchased. Specifically, the mediated outcomes of gift receipts integrate the current knowledge on vicarious experiences (i.e., the internal replication of mental and physical states of others) (Ackerman et al., 2009). Vicarious experiences are by definition mediated, because they are “experienced imaginatively through another person or agency” (Oxford Dictionary, 2015a). Two chapters of this dissertation – *Chapters 2 and 3* – present studies that demonstrate the vicarious experience of pride when consumers receive personalized gifts. That literature on mass personalization has consistently demonstrated the

presence of a psychological effect, called the “I designed it myself” effect, which increases the perceived value of the personalized product and, in turn, the consumers’ willingness to pay for it (Franke et al., 2010). The qualitative investigation of Chapter 2 offers initial support for this vicarious experience. Informants of the two qualitative studies spontaneously referred to the personalized gift as something “designed just for me”, indicating an alignment with the feelings of consumers involved into the personalization process. This result led me to deepen the understanding of personalized gifts through further investigations, which have been done by means of experimental designs. Here I hypothesized and demonstrated not only that personalized gifts generate vicarious experience of pride but also that this pride is directly linked to appreciation: the higher the vicarious pride, the greater the recipient’s appreciation for the gift. Again, these results are in line with the literature on product personalization, which contends that the feelings of accomplishment and pride for having self-designed the product increase the value of the product (Franke et al., 2010).

Second, receiving a gift amplifies the experience associated with the consumption of the product, just as a resonance box augments the intensity of the sound. I hypothesized, investigated and tested this effect employing products that involve ethical considerations in *Chapters 4* and *5*. Conversely to the two empirical studies on personalized gifts (which were all in the clothes and apparel product category), herein I employed different products across experiments to illustrate the resonance box effect. This choice was meant to increase the generalizability of the amplifying effect of gift receipt. I included products at the two extremes of the continuum: donations or cause-related products (extremely ethical) and products obtained from the poaching of endangered species (extremely unethical). Regardless of the product employed, the rigorous analysis of the consumers’ reactions supported the notion that gift receipt amplifies the emotional and cognitive experiences associated with a product. The resonance effect, in terms of amplification, appears to

be robust, given that it emerges regardless of the ethicality degree of the product and consequently independently from the fact that the experience is positive or negative. Moreover, the two research projects revealed that the resonance effect is linked to receiving a gift, and not by the role of the individual in the gift experience, because the experiments described in these chapters compared the gift receipts either with self-gifting (*Chapter 4*) or with gift-giving (*Chapter 5*). Results consistently demonstrated that emotional and cognitive experiences are amplified only when products are received. This last finding suggests that recipients and givers have asymmetrical preferences for gifts and appreciate gifts differently.

In summary, this work contributes to the sub-stream of literature seeking to identify the peculiarities of gift consumption and to the general understanding of gift exchange by demonstrating that i) gift receipt allows for mediated and intensified experiences; ii) mediated experience influences the recipients' appreciation of gifts; and iii) givers and recipients have asymmetrical experience of gifts, which lead them to differently value the gifts.

Contribution to mass personalization literature: Is personalization successful in gift exchange?

Personalization has been a major trend in marketing literature over the past decade, as demonstrated by the numerous articles published on the topic in leading journals (e.g., Buechel and Janiszewski, 2014; Franke and Hader, 2013; Moreau et al., 2011; Randall, Terwiesch and Ulrich, 2007; Syam, Krishnamurthy and Hess, 2008; Valenzuela, Dhar and Zettelmeyer, 2009). The remarkable scholarly interest in product personalization derives from the fact that product personalization is a paradox. Indeed, although consumers are required to put effort and creativity into self-personalization – in other words, to do the company's task of creating new products – they are eager to pay a premium price for such a self-created product (Franke et al., 2010). Moreover, despite the fact that consumers often seem to be overwhelmed by huge amount of product options (Randall et al., 2007), they love to

be involved in the complex task of personalization, even when they do not know exactly what they want (Syam et al., 2008). A third surprising result documented by the current literature on personalization is that the personalization process is even more enjoyable when it is done for someone else as a gift instead of for oneself (Moreau et al., 2011).

In this regard, the research by Moreau et al. (2011) on gift personalization served as the impetus for my investigation on personalized gifts. This seminal paper on gift personalization showed how the personalization experience is more pleasurable when it is meant to please a friend, suggesting that gifts modify consumption experiences. However, this paper focused only on givers and thus overlooked the final user of the personalized product – the recipient. With this in mind, I conducted two research projects to understand how personalization is perceived in the context of gift receipt.

In addition to the mediated experience of pride already mentioned, the two projects here presented suggest that gift personalization is a successful way to please recipients. Indeed, findings consistently demonstrate that gift personalization increases the appreciation for the received gift, regardless of the fit with the recipient's desires (*Chapter 2*) and the psychological closeness between the giver and the recipient (*Chapter 3*). Specifically, the qualitative investigation (*Chapter 2*) suggests that recipients value the mental effort made by the giver for personalizing the gift. The informants stated that gift personalization is an uncommon and difficult task for the giver, who is asked to put himself into the shoes of the recipient and design something suitable for him or her. The personalization might exacerbate the inherent difficulties of buying gifts, and, for this reason, when givers decide to embark on such a challenging activity they might be led by a desire to reinforce the relationship with the recipient. Finally, in line with previous studies on personalization, a third element that increases the appreciation for a personalized gift

it is its uniqueness. The recipient enjoys the experience of being the owner of a one-of-a-kind product.

In sum, gift personalization is a viable way to make friends happy with gifts. Gift personalization is appreciated because of i) the time and mental efforts it requires to the gift giver; ii) the uniqueness of the product; and iii) the feeling of pride elicited by the personalized product. In addition to offering further support for prior research, this work contributes to the understanding of personalization by investigating it in the new and untested field of gift exchange.

6.1.2 Ethical issues

Contribution to ethical consumption: What happens when unethical products are gifted?

The interest of marketers and marketing scholars in ethical consumption has steadily growth (e.g., Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993; Crane, 2001; Seo and Scammon, 2014). The findings of several studies seem to suggest the existence of mindful consumers: individuals concerned with production processes, environment and animals, who want to reduce the impact of their consumption (Belk, Devinney and Eckhardt, 2005; Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas, 2011). In this context, ethical products are in line with moral values, because by consuming them individuals feel they are showing concern for others and future generations (Belk et al., 2005; Sheth et al., 2011; Urien and Kilbourne, 2011). Despite the great strides made to understand what facilitates and how to increase ethical consumption, real data show that ethical consumption is still a niche phenomenon.

A different approach suggests that to increase the purchase of ethical products, there is a need to investigate why consumers still purchase products that are in breach with their moral values (Michaelidou and Christodoulifis, 2011). Besides the unquestionable role of price (which is generally higher for ethical

products, thus reducing the number of purchases), unethical products activate cognitive processes that allow consumers to unconsciously reduce the judgment of unethicality by means of neutralization techniques (Eckhardt et al., 2010; Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014). My research on unethical gifts is embedded in this stream of literature and provides evidences that gift receipt amplifies this cognitive process.

The impetus for the experimental design reported in *Chapter 4* was given by an exploratory investigation of real cases of gifts in breach with moral values. Specifically, at the beginning of 2014 I conducted an exploratory inquiry to examine how gift recipients manage the ambiguous situation of receiving an unethical product as a gift and how they resolve the conflict between their moral values and the gift. To do so, I collected 86 user-generated comments from vegan websites and forums regarding reactions to animal-derived gifted products (Veganism refers to a lifestyle that avoids the consumption of animal products; Oxford Dictionary, 2015b). Overall, 69%³ of the respondents declared that they had accepted a non-vegan gift; nevertheless, only 12% used the gift while the majority gave it away (47.9%) and a few did not use it (5%). Examining their justification for accepting the gift, I found that recipients of a non-vegan gift did not want to hurt the giver's feelings (8.5%) and attributed the questionable gift to the giver's unawareness of the recipient's veganism (11.3%). Below is a selection of the user-generated comments describing the reaction and justification for accepting the non-vegan gift:

“A friend gave me goat milk soaps soon after I gave up dairy. I don't think she was aware that giving up dairy also applied to non-edible things. Anyway, I accepted them because I didn't want to hurt her feelings and I used them because I figured the harm was already done.”

³ Percentages were calculated on the total amount of the user generated comments collected (n. 86).

“This is tricky stuff because recently a family friend of mine is dying and he knows it. He’s like 80s or 90s and very well off. He got me a beautiful set of pearl earrings, pearl necklace, and pearl bracelet. They are stunning and I know he spent a bundle of them. So I accepted but I can't help but think of the poor creature...I feel wrong not using them...I don't know what to do...”

As the comments illustrate, recipients felt discomfort and uncertainty when receiving a gift that was inconsistent with their moral values, but they were motivated to accept the gift to please the giver. Furthermore, given the discrepancy between their values and the decision to accept the gift, they reverted to self-justification to reconcile their vegan lifestyle and the gift acceptance with excuses like *“I don't think she knows I'm vegan”* or *“people will have absolutely no clue, because if they know anything about [veganism] at all, they'll think it's only related to food.”* Such self-justifications allowed the recipient to reduce the moral value breach and make the gift more acceptable.

Based on these initial findings, I developed and conducted the experiments described in *Chapter 4*, which provide evidence that such neutralization techniques (therein called moral rationalization) exert a particular effect in gift-receipts, while these techniques are less effective when unethical products are self-gifted. Specifically, the results seem to suggest that consumers who self-gift unethical products are more aware of their ethical transgression and less willing to cognitively justify it compared to those individuals who received the same product as a gift.

A core contribution of this research to the literature on unethical consumption regards the elicitation of moral emotions by the unethical product. Critically, prior research on unethical consumption has mostly focused on cognitive processes, while moral emotions have been investigated as antecedents of ethical consumption rather than outcomes. To my knowledge, this is the first research to integrate cognitive and

affective outcomes and provide evidence of an emotional misalignment. In light of this result, I suggest that the conflict between moral values and unethical gifts is cognitively solved but emotionally unsettled. Although the individual is able to morally justify the unethical product, a residue of the moral conflict remains and is expressed by moral emotions.

Contribution to donation literature: When donating is liberating?

As conceptualized in Chapter 1, a donation is a special type of gift, because it does not oblige recipients to reciprocate; rather, donations are purely altruistic with no expectation of receiving something in return. Marketing scholars have extensively investigated donations, in order to understand their effect on donors and to find successful way to increase donations. Evidence has been provided regarding the positive effect donations have on the psychological well-being of donors, and scholars have suggested several ways to increase donations, such as asking for time rather than money (Liu and Aaker, 2008), or offering tokens to donors (Glynn et al., 2003; Grace and Griffin, 2009).

The current work analyzes donation from a different context and, by doing so, contributes to the understanding of the psychological effect of donations. Indeed, in this dissertation, rather than examining how, why, and what happens when consumers donate, I used donations (or products paired with a charity initiative) as a type of gift and investigated how givers and recipients of such gifts differently appreciate them. The results of *Chapter 5*'s experiments consistently demonstrate that gift recipients appreciate donations more as gifts, and they self-absolve more from not having reciprocated the gift compared to the gift givers. Although givers are responsible for the donation, they do not enjoy the positive effect of it, while recipients are happier with the donation they did not make. I explain this result in terms of the asymmetrical ownership attribution of givers versus recipients. Despite

the fact that the givers make the donation, they entitle the gift to the recipients, who consequently benefit more from it.

6.2 Limitations and future research

Like any scientific work, this dissertation presents some limitations and caveats, which by limiting the contribution of the present work open venues for future research. Besides the specific limitation of each individual chapter, discussed at the end of the chapter, the current work presents two main limitations, due to methodological and conceptual choices.

First, besides the qualitative inquiry of *Chapter 2*, the investigation has been mostly conducted by means of experimental designs. This method was deemed appropriate because it allows for controlling for many variables and ascertaining and rigorously analyzing the processes underlying the resonance box effect. Moreover, although scenario studies allow for the isolation of the effects under investigation, real gift exchanges or surveys of previous experiences would speak to the real-world relevance of my findings. In addition, the choice to limit the investigation to use of the US MTurk sample in Chapters 4 and 5 limits the generalizability of the results to other populations; expanding the sample or varying the sample recruitment procedures would extend the knowledge of gift exchange which has so far been mostly limited to the Western culture. For this reason, I believe that the integration with qualitative methods would allow researchers in this field to better gather the fine-grained nuances of this complex phenomenon, as also suggested by Sherry (1983), who recommended an ethnographic or observational investigation of the phenomenon. I consider these two approaches to be complementary. It must be noted that the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches has been done for personalized gifts, as the subsequent causal research of *Chapter 3* focused on and further investigated one of the findings described in *Chapter 2* (i.e., vicarious pride). The qualitative investigation offered several insights that could serve as a starting point for further investigation. For instance, informants referred to the feeling of being the only possible owner of the gift: further research could investigate and assess the variation of such increased psychological ownership between personalized

and non-personalized products, between gifted products and self-gifted products, or between gift customizers and gift recipients.

Second, in this dissertation I have considered gifts only in the Prestation stage, neglecting to consider the potential implications of the resonance box effect at the reformulation stage. One further issue worthy of investigation is how the processes activated by the consumption of the gift affect the relationship with the giver. Although this was beyond the scope of this research, and given the importance of gifts for relationship reinforcement, this requires additional investigation. How does feeling proud of a gift improve the relationship with the giver? How does being happy with a donation affect the relationship? Does a gift in breach with moral values change the relationship with the giver? To achieve these aims, qualitative studies, such as studies conducted by means of critical incident techniques, would allow for the analysis of real data; conversely, experiments would allow researchers to investigate the resonance box effect by systematically modifying contextual and situational variables, such as ritual occasion, gift registries, or types of gifts.

Finally, the present dissertation contributes to the literature on ethical issues by taking into account only extremely unethical and ethical products. However, (un)ethical products can present themselves in forms other than donations or products derived from the poaching of endangered species. For instance, ethical gifts can also include product with a strong ethical component, such as fair-trade products, pesticide-free items, and products made with recycled materials. Future research should also test the cognitive and emotional trade-off by investigating less unethical products, for instance, by including counterfeit products or brands associated with greenwashing practices. Moreover, the knowledge about consumption ethics would greatly benefit from the inclusion of other variables in the investigation of how gift exchange modifies the way in which individuals look at (un)ethical gifts. Personal characteristics like altruism, materialism and self-construal are factors that might affect the recipient's response to (un)ethical products.

6.3 Final thoughts

Doing a PhD is like running a marathon: a hard start and harder end, where the finish line seems close but is always far, and where there is no time to look back to what has been done but the only need to look forward and run farther. Now, when the finish line is visible and I do not know what is coming next, I know exactly which kilometers were milestones in my course, which required additional effort, and where I met people who supported me, like people giving water to a marathon runner.

At the very beginning, being part of an SNF research project allowed for a smooth start and allowed me to easily conduct my first experiments. Indeed, the SNF projects set the path to follow, from which I partially deviate by investigating personalization within the gift context. Moreover, the courses I attended gave me the basis to try to test my hypotheses with empirical data, and the conferences offered the chance to interact with and receive insightful feedbacks from international scholars. The unsuccessful first experiments and unconfirmed first hypotheses were the first obstacle to overcome and gave me the opportunity to re-interpret the results through new lenses. The inclusion of Prof. Seele in my PhD research project as co-supervisor provided the impetus for new directions of investigation. Given his background in ethics, I included ethical consumption in the empirical investigation, by analyzing first unethical products and then donations. Finally, the period at Technical University of Munich opened venues for further studies, which I will pursue after the conclusion of the PhD, and the opportunity to reconsider findings and studies conducted with a fresh twist.

Countless meetings and discourses with colleagues provided unlimited sources of inspiration and constructive suggestions. The collaborations on specific projects with other colleagues also offered an invaluable opportunity to build team-working skills and to enjoy open comparison as a way to extend the current

knowledge. During meetings with both my advisors, I learnt how to be concise and (hopefully) persuasive when writing a paper, and I am confident that the constant contact with them significantly improved the chances for my papers to be published. In addition, the reviewers' comments to my conference papers and submitted articles were extremely effective in improving the papers as well as improving my understanding of how to write papers. In this regard, the winter school at Skema in Lille (France; October 2013) was extremely fruitful and challenging: the constant discussion with senior scholars and peer colleagues allowed me to come back to Lugano with a bag full of new knowledge and skills.

In addition to the multiple occasions when I had the opportunity to learn as a student, I must mention also my experiences as lecturer, teaching assistant and thesis tutor. While I have been a teaching assistant throughout the years of my PhD in different courses, acting as a link between students and professors, I was on the frontline as a lecturer for two years teaching the "Marketing Tutorial" for fresh master students. I also enjoyed tutoring master's theses, where students were involved in projects I was conducting, or giving them advice on how to conduct their first research. The direct contact with students during these experiences has reinforced my skill in communicating my knowledge to someone else and has encouraged me to pursue an academic career.

I also believe that my involvement in university services has been extremely important for me in the last few years. For some months, I carried out the function of the assistant to the PhD coordinator, helping other PhD students with the PhD program rules and organizing PhD courses that were held in that period, as well as PhD defenses. Moreover, I have been the representative of the PhD students for the academic year 2013-2014. I believe that this experience was extremely formative for me, because I came to better understand the complex reality of universities thanks to my direct involvement in faculty meetings, votes, and study program organization. For two years, I have also been member of the complaint commission, wherein I

evaluated the cases of excluded students together with the other members of the committee. I believe that all these experiences especially contributed to the development of my professional skills outside of research.

Finally, these final thoughts should also mention what I would do differently if I were able to go back to four years ago and start my PhD again. When I was first asked about what to keep and what to change in the thesis, I wanted to say “everything should be improved”, as many (if not all) PhD students would say. However, what I certainly learnt during my PhD studies is that perfection is impossible to reach and, thus, I should be less severe with myself and my work. For the same reason, I would say now that, while there is room for improvement, there are good ideas in my dissertation, although in a raw form so far. I would certainly keep the context (i.e., gift receipt), which I believe is fascinating and a rich venue for further research. I also very much enjoyed the use of experimental designs, which I feel is the method that fits best with me, but I would love to better learn alternative research methods, such as the content analysis that I’m currently employing with a side project. If I could go back and start over, I would ensure that I had a holistic plan of the studies to conduct and the papers to write from the very beginning of my PhD studies.

APPENDIX A

Table A.1 - The main themes from the review of the gift exchange literature of Chapter 1

<i>Gift theme</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
1. The model of gifting process	Giver & recipient	Sherry (1983)	A process model of gift exchange is provided, which consists of gestation, prestation and reformulation phase. Effects on the relationship are discussed.	Conceptual
2. Relational outcomes of gifts	Recipients	Ruth et al. (1999)	Perception of the existing relationship, the gift, the ritual context and recipient's emotional reactions affect relationship realignment. Six relational effects: strengthening; affirmation; negligible; negative confirmation; weakening; severing.	Qualitative (in-depth interviews, critical incident techniques)
3. The notion of a gift continuum	Giver & recipient	Joy (2001)	Social scale of friendship – from Phy-bye friends to romantic partners- that guides gift exchanges in Hong Kong.	Qualitative (in depth interviews)
4. Motivation for gift giving	Giver & recipient	Wolfinbarger (1990)	Altruistic motives lead to greater gratitude and lesser reciprocity expectations.	Qualitative (in-depth interviews) Survey
	Giver	Wolfinbarger & Yale (1993)	Development of a scale on motives for gift giving. It comprises the following dimensions: obligate (giving to reciprocate or because of social norm); experiential (giving for the enjoyment of giving); practical (giving to supply practical assistance).	
	Giver	Babin et al. (2007)	Agape dominates over utilitarian motives: Givers derive pleasure and satisfaction from the gift shopping.	Survey
5. Gift as expression of love	Giver & recipient	Belk & Coon (1993)	The analysis of college students dating gift giving reveals the existence of the agapic approach, which escapes from the traditional instrumental perspective of gift exchange.	Qualitative (in-depth interviews, diary)

Table A.1 - Continued

<i>Gift theme</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
6. Gift exchange between married couples	Giver & recipient	Schiffman & Cohn (2009)	Identification of two rulebooks for exchange between marital dyads: one based on symbolic communication rules and the other on economic exchange rules, which prefer practical and rational gifts.	Qualitative (in-depth interviews)
7. Role of identity in gift giving	Giver & recipient	Larsen & Watson (2001)	Self-identity is passed on from the gift giver to the gift recipient through the gift.	Conceptual
	Giver & recipient	Schwartz (1967)	Gifts have relevance for the development and maintenance of identity.	Conceptual
	Givers	Aaker and Akutsu (2009)	Identity has many implications on whether and how much people give.	Conceptual
	Recipients	Paolacci et al. (2015)	Recipients are appreciative of gifts that figuratively match the recipients. Recipients seek for consistency between the gift and the giver.	Experiments
8. Identity restoration by means of gifts	Givers	Klein et al. (2015)	Gifts allow for identity re-establishment in context of threaten or lost identities.	Historic
9. The gift purchase process	Giver	Laroche et al. (2000)	Three dimensions: i) macro, general information search; ii) micro, specific information search; iii) assistance of sales personnel.	Survey
	Giver	Belk (1982)	Gift purchase entails greater expenditure of time and money compared to purchases for personal use	Survey
	Giver	Steffel & LeBoeuf (2014)	Social context influences givers' choice: they tend to over-individuate gifts when buy multiple gifts for multiple recipients.	Experiments
10. The gift purchase process	Giver	Otnes et al. (1993)	Givers adapt their gift selection strategies according to the recipient. Recipients are classified as "easy" or "difficult".	Qualitative (in-depth interviews)
11. The influence of brand	Giver	Parsons (2002)	Givers vary the brand selection according to the group the recipient belongs to. Gender is a key determinant.	Survey

Table A.1 - Continued

<i>Giftgiving theme</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
12. The role of gender	Giver & recipient	McGrath (1989)	Females perceive gifts as significantly more impactful on the relationship, and exchange gifts significantly more. Men feel uncomfortable with the ritual of gift exchange.	Qualitative (Projective Story telling)
	Giver & recipient	Bodur & Grohmann (2005)	In business-to-consumer the request for reciprocation is high, regardless of the recipient's gender.	Experiment
	Giver	Fisher & Arnold (1990)	Gift shopping is socially construed as a "women's work". Women regard the gift selection as extremely important.	Survey
	Giver	Cleveland et al. (2003)	Sharp differences exist between men and women in gift purchases: females tend to acquire more information, while men seek the assistance of store sales personnel.	Survey
13. Perfect and memorable gifts	Giver & recipient	Belk (1996)	The perfect gift is purely altruistic, motivated by the only willingness to make the recipient happy.	Conceptual
	Giver & recipient	Areni et al. (1998)	Five profiles of gift exchanges: with romantic partners; with parents; with grandparents; with siblings; and with friends and kin.	Qualitative
14. Determinants of gift value	Giver & recipient Recipients	Robben & Verhallen (1994) Pieters & Robben (1998)	Gifts are evaluated according to the time and mental efforts they required to the givers. Reciprocation is determined by giver's sacrifice, gift appropriateness, and gift-recipients relationship.	Experiments Experiments
15. Differences on preferences between givers and recipients	Giver & recipient	Baskin et al. (2014)	Construal level theory explains the trade-off between feasibility and desirability and the opposed preferences of givers and recipients.	Experiments
	Giver & recipient	Gino & Flynn (2011)	Recipients are more appreciative of gift they explicitly request, but givers assume that solicited gifts are perceived as less thoughtful.	Experiments
16. Emotions in gift giving	Giver	Ruffle (1999)	Inclusion of emotions, as pay-off of gifting and application to tipping.	Psychological game
	Giver	de Hooge (2014)	Agency and valence of emotions influence gifting behaviors.	Experiments

Table A.1 - Continued

<i>Gifting theme</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
16. Emotions in gift giving	Recipient	Ruth et al. (2004)	Multiple emotions are co-present when gifts are exchanged. The different patterns of emotions characterize the relational outcome.	Quantitative content analysis
17. Anxiety	Giver	Wooten (2000)	Givers use gift to self-present themselves to recipient: this causes anxiety, especially when the success of the gift is uncertain	Qualitative (In-depth inter. and CIT)
18. Identity threat	Giver	Ward & Broniarczyk (2011)	Gift purchases may threaten self-identity when givers are required to buy identity-contrary gift to please friends. After an identity-contrary purchase, givers engage into identity-confirming decisions.	Experiments
19. Impression management with gifts	Giver & recipient	Segev et al. (2012)	Adolescents instrumentally use gifts to manage and protect their impressions.	Qualitative (in-depth interviews)
20. Disliked gifts and re-gifting taboo	Recipients	Sherry et al. (1993)	Recipients feel entrapped in the symbolism and rituals, which hinder them to express the discontent for a gift.	Qualitative (projective)
	Recipients	Roster (2006)	Analysis of verbal, nonverbal, and behavioral responses to gift failure.	Survey
	Giver & recipient	Adams et al. (2012)	Asymmetric beliefs between givers and recipients regarding re-gifting, due to asymmetric perceptions of entitlement.	Experiments
21. Motives of self-gifts	Self-gifter	Mick and Faure (1998)	Achievement outcomes (success vs. failure) and attributions (internal vs. external) determine the level of self-gift likelihood.	Experiment
		Mick and Demoss (1990)	The self-gift is a form of self-communication the individual does to reward himself or for therapeutic reasons	Survey
		Luomala (1998)	Self-gifts have a mood-alleviating nature: they regulate and mitigate negative mood	Conceptual

Table A.1 - Continued

<i>Giftng theme</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
22. Antecedents to donations	Donor	Lee & Shrum (2012)	Social exclusion increases the amount of donation	Experiments
23. Effects of donations	Donor	Liu & Aaker (2008)	Donations increase happiness, especially when donors are asked to donate time	Experiments

APPENDIX B

Table B.1 - Sample of semi-structured interviews

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>
Alice	Female	24
Miki	Female	27
Lisa	Female	24
Charles	Male	28
Cyril	Male	24
John	Male	24
Markus	Male	24
Matthias	Male	24
Maria	Female	24
Kate	Female	26
Lim	Male	25
Carole	Female	25

All names are pseudonyms

Table B.2 - Sample of the critical incident survey

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Denis	35	Male	Bachelor degree	Forester
Alexander	24	Male	Bachelor degree	Programmer
Martha	31	Female	High school	Homemaker
Sophie	27	Female	Bachelor degree	Office Manager
Diego	22	Male	High school	Mechanic
Vincent	27	Male	Bachelor degree	Production supervisor
Patrick	26	Male	Bachelor degree	Unemployed
David	27	Male	High school	Student
Mark	36	Male	Bachelor degree	IT
Andrew	21	Male	Bachelor degree	Real estate agent
Paul	20	Male	High school	IT
Lucy	40	Female	Bachelor degree	Housewife
Ann	37	Female	High school	CAN
Simon	28	Male	High school	Technician
Jan	29	Male	High school	Student
Carl	43	Male	High school	Retail cashier
Stephanie	32	Female	High school	Interpreter
Sarah	30	Female	High school	Sales agent
Peter	25	Male	Bachelor degree	Secretary
Christopher	45	Male	High school	Sales manager
Irina	35	Female	Bachelor degree	Web developer
Paula	29	Female	Bachelor degree	Homemaker

All names are pseudonyms

APPENDIX C

C.1 Scales and items

Table C.1 - Scales and items employed in the studies of Chapter 3

Variables and items	Scale	Source	Study 1a	Study 1b	Study 2	Study 3
Gift appreciation						
<i>How much do you like the gift?</i>	1= not at all; 7 = very much	Ward & Broniarczyck, 2011	----	$\alpha = .897$	$\alpha = .748$	$\alpha = .732$
<i>How likely are you to wear the gift?</i>						
<i>To what extent would you be willing to change the gift?</i> (Assessed only in Study 2 & 3)	1 = I would not change the gift; 7 = I would change the gift					
Vicarious pride						
<i>The feeling I have can best be described by the word 'pride'</i> <i>I feel proud because my friend did a good job</i>	1 = not at all; 7 = very much	Franke et al., 2010	$\alpha = .890$	$\alpha = .893$	$\alpha = .879$	$\alpha = .780$
Positive emotions						
<i>How intensely do you feel each of the following emotions if you actually receive the gift?</i> <i>Gladness</i> <i>Happiness</i>	1= not at all; 10 = very much	Soscia, 2007	$\alpha = .806$	$\alpha = .848$	---	---
Surprise						
<i>How intensely do you feel the following emotion if you actually receive the gift?</i> <i>Surprise</i>	1= not at all; 10 = very much					

Table C.1 - Continued

Variables and items	Scale	Source	Study 1a	Study 1b	Study 2	Study 3
Scenario similarity						
<i>In your opinion the process of getting your look was exhausting</i>	1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree	Franke & Schreier, 2010	$\alpha = .626$	---	----	----
<i>In your opinion the process of getting your look was time-consuming</i>						
Intimacy with the recipient						
<i>How close is the relationship with the giver of the gift?</i>	1 = we are only acquaintances; 10 = I have a close relationship with this giver	Laroche et al., 2004				

C.2 Scenarios

Table C.2 - Scenarios employed in the studies of Chapter 3

<i>Study 1a</i>	
<i>Scenario personalized gift condition</i>	<i>Scenario non-personalized gift condition</i>
<p>Your friend has configured a fashion outfit for you. She/he had to select one top, one blazer/sweater, one pair of pants and one pair of shoes, between 6 options for each category. Between the following 6 options, your friend selected the item in the green frame for you...</p> <p>[images of T-shirts, pants, blazers and shoes were provided, and then the image of the complete look – see C.3 stimuli]</p>	<p>Your friend has selected a fashion outfit for you. We showed a set of predefined outfits to your friend, and we asked him/her to select one of them and to be sent you as a gift. Here the outfit selected by your friend among a set of predefined looks. [image of the outfit –see C.3 stimuli]</p>
<p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the very beginning of study 1a, recipients were asked to write the name of the giver, and his/her name was shown every time the giver was mentioned in the questionnaire; • The stimuli were showed according with the gender of the recipient: female recipients saw only the female outfit, as well as female pictures while male only the male outfit and pictures. 	
<i>Study 2</i>	
<i>Scenario intimate friend condition</i>	<i>Scenario acquaintance condition</i>
<p>Please think of one of your best friends who might gift you something on your birthday. By best friend we mean a person with whom you are often in touch and to whom you talk with about intimate topics, share your thoughts, emotions and feelings. You feel close to her/him and share a personal connection. Please take a few moments now to think about a person who fits the depiction above, and then provide a short description of her/him, telling us her/his habits, hobbies and tastes.</p>	<p>Please think of one of your acquaintances who might gift you something on your birthday. By acquaintance we mean a person whom you meet occasionally and talk about daily life topics, but with whom you don't have enough intimacy to share your personal thoughts, emotions and feelings. You can consider him/her as friend, but you wouldn't say she/he is your best friend. Please take a few moments now to think about a person who fits the depiction above, and then provide a short description of her/him, telling us her/his habits, hobbies and tastes.</p>

Table C.2 -Continued

Study 2	
<i>Scenario personalized gift condition</i>	<i>Scenario non-personalized gift condition</i>
<p>Nowadays a lot of firms offer customization platforms where users can actually personalize products, thanks to the infinite variety of combinations available.</p> <p>The image below [see C.3 stimuli] is an example of a customization platform, where users are allowed to personalize sneakers, by selecting colors and features.</p> <p>Imagine that you invited the friend you described before for your birthday party. He/she had decided to buy the gift from the website above and had personalized a pair of sneakers just for you. In order to meet your tastes and to make it distinguishable from the rest of the gifts you would receive, he/she carefully considered and selected every relevant feature (for instance lining, laces, overlays, etc.). He/she spent a lot of time trying different combinations of those features to define the most appropriate customization.</p>	<p>Nowadays a lot of firms sell their product through their online shops where consumers can find a wide variety of models.</p> <p>The image below [see C.3 stimuli] is an example of an online shop, where consumers can select products from several items.</p> <p>Imagine that you invited the friend you described before for your birthday party. He/she had decided to buy the gift from the website above and had selected a pair of sneakers just for you. In order to meet your tastes and to make it distinguishable from the rest of the gift you would receive, he/she carefully surfed on the website and selected a gift. He/she spent a lot of time looking different models to define the most appropriate gift.</p>
<p>Note: After the manipulation of relational intimacy, recipients were asked to describe with few sentences the friend they were thinking about, and to write his/her name. The name of the friend was then showed every time the giver was mentioned.</p>	
Study 3	
<i>Scenarios no-anxiety condition</i>	<i>Scenarios high-anxiety condition</i>
<p>Please think about a friend who might gift you something on your birthday and that fits the description given in the next page. Please picture in your mind the person with whom you have that relationship. Please make sure that the person and the relationship you have chosen to focus on is meaningful and important to your life.</p> <p>Please think about a relationship with a friend in which you find that it is relatively easy to get close to him/her and you feel <i>comfortable</i> depending on him/her. In this relationship <i>you don't often worry about being alone or abandoned by him/her</i> and you <i>don't worry about him/her getting too close to you or not accepting you</i>.</p>	<p>Please think about a friend who might gift you something on your birthday and that fits the description given in the next page. Please picture in your mind the person with whom you have that relationship. Please make sure that the person and the relationship you have chosen to focus on is meaningful and important to your life.</p> <p>Please think about a relationship with a friend in which you find that it is relatively easy to get close to him/her and you feel like you <i>want to be completely emotionally intimate with him/her</i> but <i>feel that the he/she is reluctant to get emotionally close</i> as you would like. In this relationship you feel <i>uncomfortable being alone</i> but <i>worried that he/she doesn't value you</i> as much as you value him/her.</p>

Table C.2 - Continued

Study 3	
<i>Scenario personalized gift condition</i>	<i>Scenario non-personalized gift condition</i>
<p>Nowadays a lot of firms offer customization platforms where users can actually personalize products, thanks to the infinite variety of combinations available.</p> <p>The image below [see C.3 stimuli] is an example of a customization platform, where users are allowed to personalize watches, by selecting colors and features, adding images and text.</p> <p>Imagine that you invited the friend you described before for your birthday party. He/she had decided to buy the gift from the website above and had personalized a watch just for you. In order to meet your tastes and to make it distinguishable from the rest of the gifts you would receive, he/she carefully considered and selected every relevant feature (for instance straps, case, loop, dial, hands etc.). He/she spent a lot of time trying different combinations of those features to define the most appropriate combination.</p>	<p>Nowadays a lot of firms sell their product through their online shops where consumers can find a wide variety of models.</p> <p>The image below [see C.3 stimuli] is an example of an online shop, where consumers can select watches from several items.</p> <p>Imagine that you invited the friend you described before for your birthday party. He/she had decided to buy the gift from the website above and had selected a watch just for you. In order to meet your tastes and to make it distinguishable from the rest of the gift you would receive, he/she carefully considered every item before selecting a gift. He/she spent a lot of time looking different models to define the most appropriate gift.</p>
<p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• After the manipulation of relational anxiety, recipients were asked to describe with few sentences the friend they were thinking about, and to write his/her name. The name of the friend was then showed every time the giver was mentioned.• Those recipients who were not able to think about a friend who meets the description provided were not allowed to finish the questionnaire.	

C.3 Stimuli

Study 1a

Personalized gift condition [example]



Non-personalized gift condition



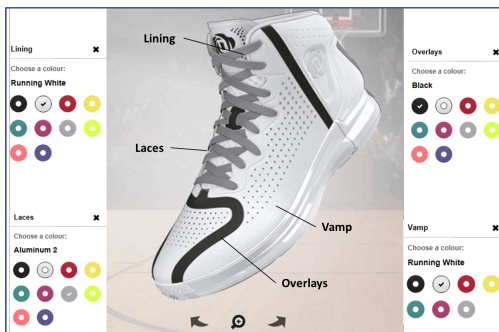
Study 1b



Study 2

Personalized gift condition

Non-personalized gift condition



Study 3

Personalized gift condition

Non-personalized gift condition



C.4 Mediation indexes

Table C.3 - Mediation indexes

Study 1 a					
Mediation: gift → vicarious pride → n. changed items					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → vicarious pride	.74	.36	2.05	p < .05
<i>Path b</i>	Vicarious pride → n. changed items	-.4224	.09	-4.29	p < .01
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → n. changed items [direct effect]	-.37	.31	-1.21	p > .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → vicarious pride → n. changed items [indirect effect]	-.69	.34	-2.05	p < .05
	Confidence intervals	-.7285 < 95% CI < -.0386			
	Sobel test	Z = -1.8164			p .06

Study 1 a					
Mediation: gift → positive emotions → n. changed items					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → positive emotions	-.40	.45	-.88	p > .05
<i>Path b</i>	Positive emotions → n. changed items	-.28	.08	-3.51	p < .05
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → n. changed items [direct effect]	-.80	.31	-2.56	p < .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → positive emotions → n. changed items [indirect effect]	-.69	.33	-2.05	p < .05
	Confidence intervals	-.1017 < 95% CI < .4725			
	Sobel test	Z = .8270			p > .05

Study 1 b					
Mediation: gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → vicarious pride	1.12	.39	2.90	p < .01
<i>Path b</i>	Vicarious pride → gift appreciation	.68	.10	6.84	p < .01
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → gift appreciation [direct effect]	.04	.31	.12	p > .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation [indirect effect]	.80	.39	2.05	p < .05
	Confidence intervals	.2627 < 95% CI < 1.3265			
	Sobel test	Z = 2.6456			p < .01

Table C.3 - Continued

Study 1 b					
Mediation: gift → positive emotions → gift appreciation					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → positive emotions	.91	.47	1.94	p .06
<i>Path b</i>	Positive emotions → gift appreciation	.37	.10	3.83	p < .05
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → gift appreciation [direct effect]	.45	.36	1.26	p > .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → positive emotions → gift appreciation [indirect effect]	.80	.39	2.05	p < .05
	Confidence intervals	.0252 < 95% CI < .8201			
	Sobel test	Z = 1.6851			p > .05
Study 2					
Mediation gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → vicarious pride	.98	.28	3.45	p < .01
<i>Path b</i>	Vicarious pride → gift appreciation	.43	.07	6.62	p < .01
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → gift appreciation [direct effect]	.52	.21	2.41	p < .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation [indirect effect]	.94	.24	3.95	p < .01
	Confidence intervals	.1438 < 95% CI < .8447			
	Sobel test	Z = 3.0345			p < .01
Study 2					
Mediation gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation [only acquaintance condition]					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → vicarious pride	1.28	.44	2.93	p < .01
<i>Path b</i>	Vicarious pride → gift appreciation	.44	.12	3.79	p < .01
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → gift appreciation [direct effect]	.55	.40	1.39	p > .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation [indirect effect]	1.11	.41	2.70	p < .01
	Confidence intervals	.1083 < 95% CI < 1.4546			
	Sobel test	Z = 2.2713			p < .05

Table C.3 - Continued

Study 2					
Mediation gift → surprise → gift appreciation					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → surprise	.77	.34	2.24	p < .05
<i>Path b</i>	Surprise → gift appreciation	-.01	.06	-.18	p > .05
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → gift appreciation [direct effect]	.95	.24	3.89	p < .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → surprise → gift appreciation [indirect effect]	.94	.24	3.95	p < .05
	Confidence intervals	-.1483 < 95% CI < .0856			
	Sobel test	Z = -.1623			p > .05

Study 3					
Mediation gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation					
[only no-anxiety condition]					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → vicarious pride	.58	.26	2.20	p < .05
<i>Path b</i>	Vicarious pride → gift appreciation	.45	.07	7.06	p < .01
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → gift appreciation [direct effect]	.22	.18	1.24	p > .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → vicarious pride → gift appreciation [indirect effect]	.48	.21	2.30	p < .05
	Confidence intervals	.0462 < 95% CI < .5581			
	Sobel test	Z = 2.0839			p < .05

Study 3					
Mediation gift → surprise → gift appreciation					
		B	SE	t	Sig
<i>Path a</i>	Gift → surprise	.08	.28	.29	p > .05
<i>Path b</i>	Surprise → gift appreciation	.17	.04	4.44	p < .05
<i>Path c'</i>	Gift → gift appreciation [direct effect]	-.21	.15	-1.39	p > .05
<i>Path c</i>	Gift → surprise → gift appreciation [indirect effect]	-.19	.16	-1.23	p > .05
	Confidence intervals	-.0841 < 95% CI < .1072			
	Sobel test	Z = .2855			p > .05

APPENDIX D

D.1 Scales and items

Table D.1 -Scales and items employed in the studies of Chapter 4

Variables and items	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Study 1</i>	<i>Study 2</i>	<i>Study 3</i>
Unethicality assessment					
<i>I find the elephant/scarf to be morally blameworthy</i>	1= strongly disagree; 7= strongly agree	Bhattacharjee et al. (2013)	$\alpha = .884$	$\alpha = .667$	$\alpha = .801$
<i>The elephant/scarf is unethical</i>					
Moral rationalization					
<i>It is alright to buy products made from endangered species</i>	1= strongly disagree; 7= strongly agree	Bandura et al. (1996)	----	$\alpha = .907$	$\alpha = .869$
<i>Having items obtained from endangered species is not as bad as some of the other horrible things people do</i>					
<i>People should not be at fault for having products of threatened animals if these products are available on the market place</i>					
<i>People should not be at fault for having products of threatened animals when so many people have them</i>					
<i>It's okay to buy one such product because it doesn't really do much harm</i>					
Moral emotions					
<i>Guilty</i>	1= would not experience at all; 5= would experience very much	Markus & Kitayama (1991)	---	---	$\alpha = .864$
<i>Blameworthy</i>					
<i>Embarrassed</i>					
<i>Repentant</i>					

D.2 Scenarios

Table D.2 - Scenarios employed in the studies of Chapter 4

<i>Study 1</i>	
<i>Interpersonal gift condition</i>	<i>Self-gift condition</i>
<p>One of your friend gifts you a small decorative elephant to wish you good luck with your new job. Elephants are a symbol of good luck in many countries. The elephant is made of ivory, one of the rarest and most precious materials. You feel a bit uncomfortable with the gift because you know that elephants are a protected species, and trade in ivory is no longer legal. However, you appreciate the kind thought of your friend a lot.</p>	<p>You would like to buy something like a good luck self-gift in your new job. You find a small decorative elephant, which is a symbol of good luck in many countries. The elephant is made of ivory, one of the rarest and most precious materials. You feel a bit uncomfortable with the product, because you know that elephants are a protected species, and the trade in ivory is no longer legal. However, you find the elephant very nice, and you think you need a bit of luck in your new adventure.</p>
<i>Study 2</i>	
<i>Interpersonal gift condition</i>	<i>Self-gift condition</i>
<p>Imagine that today is the first day of your new job adventure. You are very excited about it but at the same time worried, as you have much more responsibilities compared to the past. You meet your friend at your usual café. Your friend is very proud of you and your achievement. For this reason, your friend decided to buy for you a special gift. From the backpack near to his/her chair he/she takes out a pack. When you unwrapped it, you find small white elephant inside. Your friend explains the elephant is a symbol of good luck in many countries. She/He thought it is the perfect gift for you who have recently embarked in a new job experience. After, your friend adds that the elephant is made of ivory, a rare material and for the same reason, quite precious.</p>	<p>Imagine that today is the first day of your new job adventure. You are very excited about it but at the same time worried, as you have much more responsibilities compared to the past. You are proud of yourself and your achievement, and you feel like celebrating it with a self-gift. During a shopping tour in a market, you notice on a stand a small white elephant that would be a perfect token of you recent achievement. Indeed, the elephant is a symbol of good luck in many countries. The seller informs you that the elephant is made of ivory- a rare material, and for the same reason, quite precious.</p>

Table D.2 - Continued

<i>Interpersonal gift condition</i>	<i>Self-gift condition</i>
After this you feel a bit uncomfortable with the gift because you know that elephants are a protected species and the commerce of ivory is no more legal. However, you still appreciate the kind thought of your friend and you know that refusing the gift would hurt your friend, who bought this gift especially for you to show his/her friendship. Accepting and keeping the gift, even though you don't like it, would make your friend happy and reinforce your relationship with him/her.	After this you feel a bit uncomfortable with the elephant because you know that elephants are a protected species and the commerce of ivory is no more legal. However, you still like the elephant and given its rarity, you find it perfectly suited to celebrate your new job. After all, your new job is challenging and you need a bit of luck to achieve work goals.

Study 3

[There are a total of four scenarios; the two independent variables—gifting experience and psychological distance—are manipulated. Here two scenarios are reported as example]

<i>Interpersonal gift & spatial closeness condition</i>	<i>Self-gift & spatial distance condition</i>
You have recently achieved an important success at your job. You worked very hard to obtain this result, which is important for your career. You spent many days, also nights, working, and you haven't taken good care of your family and friends during the last months because of this. However, you are now highly satisfied, and you feel that all the efforts and energy you spent were not useless. One day you meet your friend at the usual café. Your friend is very proud of you and your achievement. For this reason, your friend decided to buy you a special gift. From the backpack near his/her chair, he/she takes out a package. You unwrap it, and you find a scarf inside. The scarf is made of Chiru wool, a rare and precious fabric. Your friend explains that it comes from a local market in your town where almost everything is sold, both legally and illegally.	You have recently achieved an important success at your job. You worked very hard to obtain this result, which is important for your career. You spent many days and nights working, and you haven't taken good care your family and friends during the last few months because of this. However, you are now highly satisfied, and you feel that all the efforts and energy you spent were not useless. You thus leave for a vacation in South Asia to celebrate your success and relax. During a shopping tour in a market in Bangkok, where almost everything is sold whether legally or illegally, you notice a nice scarf on a stand. You think that it would be a perfect token of your recent success. The scarf is made of Chiru wool, a rare and precious fabric.

Table D.2 - Continued

<i>Interpersonal gift & spatial closeness condition</i>	<i>Self-gift & spatial distance condition</i>
<p>You feel a bit uncomfortable with the gift because you know Chiru, an endangered species of antelope, are killed to obtain their wool, and that the wool of at least three antelope is needed for a normal scarf. The number of these antelope decreases every year despite the introduced protection laws. However, you appreciate the kind thought of your friend a lot and you know that refusing the gift would hurt this friend, who bought this gift especially for you to show his/her friendship. Accepting and keeping the gift, even if you don't like it, would make your friend happy and reinforce your relationship.</p>	<p>You feel a bit uncomfortable with the scarf because you know Chiru, an endangered species of antelope, are killed to obtain their wool, and that the wool of at least three antelope is needed for a regular scarf. The number of these antelope decreases by the year despite the introduced protection laws. However, you like a lot the scarf and, given its rarity, you find it perfectly suited to celebrate your success. You worked very hard to obtain the result and something unusual is the perfect gift to celebrate it.</p>

APPENDIX E

E.1 Scenarios

Table E.1 - Scenarios employed in the studies of Chapter 5

Study 1a & Study 1b	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Scenario giver role* guilt</i></p> <p>Please imagine that you celebrate Christmas at your office. Last year you were new at office, and you were not aware of the tradition of exchanging gifts: for the same reason last year you received gifts from them, but you did not purchase gifts, and now you still feel guilty and in debt for not having participated. This year your colleagues and you decided to spend 20\$ (maximum) for each gift. Imagine that you came out with a list of gifts, and now you have to decide which one to buy. In the next page, we will provide you a list of gifts, please read and evaluate each gift carefully. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific recipient, as we are only interested to know your preference in general.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Scenario recipient role * guilt</i></p> <p>Please imagine that you celebrated Christmas at your office. You are new at office, and you were not aware of the tradition of exchanging gifts: for the same reason you received gifts from them, but you did not purchase gifts, and now you feel guilty and in debt for not having participated. This year your colleagues decided to spend 20\$ (maximum) for each gift. Imagine that you received several gifts, and you are now guessing about your favorite. In the next page, we will provide you a list of gifts, please read and evaluate each gift carefully. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific giver, as we are only interested to know your preference in general.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Scenario giver role * no-guilt</i> [included only in Study 1b]</p> <p>Please imagine that you celebrate Christmas at your office. You usually exchange gifts with your colleagues, and this year your colleagues and you decided to spend 20\$ (maximum) for each gift. Imagine that you came out with a list of gifts, and now you have to decide which one to buy. In the next page, we will provide you a list of gifts, please read and evaluate each gift carefully. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific recipient, as we are only interested to know your preference in general.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Scenario recipient role * no-guilt</i> [included only in Study 1b]</p> <p>Please imagine that you celebrate Christmas at your office. You usually exchange gifts with your colleagues, but this year your colleagues and you decided to spend 20\$ (maximum) for each gift. Imagine that you received several gifts, and you are now guessing about your favorite. In the next page, we will provide you a list of gifts, please read and evaluate each gift carefully. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific giver, as we are only interested to know your preference in general.</p>

Table E.1 - Continued

Study 2a & Study 2b	
<i>Scenario giver role*guilt</i>	<i>Scenario recipient role*guilt</i>
<p>Please imagine that you have to buy a gift for your friend's birthdays. Last year you were very busy at work and you forgot to buy him/her a gift but you did receive a gift for your birthday from him/her, and now you still feel guilty and in debt for not having gifted something. We will now describe a gift and ask you to read it carefully and evaluate it. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific recipient, as we are only interested to know how you value the gift in general.</p>	<p>Please imagine that you have received a gift for your birthday from one of your friends. This year you were very busy at work and you often to buy him/her a gift for his/her birthday, and now you feel guilty and in debt for not having gifted something. We will now describe a gift and ask you to read it carefully and evaluate it. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific giver, as we are only interested to know how you value the gift in general.</p>
<i>Scenario giver role*no-guilt</i> [included only in Study 2b]	<i>Scenario recipient role*no-guilt</i> [included only in Study 2b]
<p>Please imagine that you have to buy a gift for your friend's birthdays. We will now describe a gift and ask you to read it carefully and evaluate it. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific recipient, as we are only interested to know how you value the gift in general.</p>	<p>Please imagine that you have received a gift for your birthday from one of your friends. We will now describe a gift and ask you to read it carefully and evaluate it. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific giver, as we are only interested to know how you value the gift in general.</p>
Study 3	
<i>Scenario giver role</i>	<i>Scenario recipient role</i>
<p>Please imagine that you have to buy a gift for your friend's birthdays. Last year you were very busy at work and you forgot to buy him/her a gift but you did receive a gift for your birthday from him/her, and now you still feel guilty and in debt for not having gifted something. We will now describe a gift and ask you to read it carefully and evaluate it. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific recipient, as we are only interested to know how you value the gift in general.</p>	<p>Please imagine that you have received a gift for your birthday from one of your friends. This year you were very busy at work and you often to buy him/her a gift for his/her birthday, and now you feel guilty and in debt for not having gifted something. We will now describe a gift and ask you to read it carefully and evaluate it. Please do not evaluate the gift according to a specific giver, as we are only interested to know how you value the gift in general.</p>
<p><i>Stimulus:</i> A gift certificate for a wine tasting experience in a cell, which include a guided tour of the cell, tasting of 5 different wines with some appetizers.</p> <p><i>[This sentence was included only in the charitable gift condition]</i> The gift certificate is associated to a charity campaign: a portion of the proceeds benefit local associations committed in sustaining local agricultures.</p>	

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