Consumer Embarrassment

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Although embarrassment is a widely occurring emotion that can be found in a variety of situations pertaining to consumer behavior, there has been very little research studying consumer embarrassment. This thesis attempts to fill this literature gap by examining embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency in the context of consumer purchase. Experimental study was conducted to investigate the impact of embarrassing product purchase on subsequent purchase intention of cross-selling products. Two types of cross-selling products, products cross-sold for profit and products cross-sold for charity (For-Profit vs. For-Charity), were investigated. The results indicate that embarrassed consumers have a higher purchase intention for For-Charity cross-selling products than unembarrassed consumers but not for For-Profit ones. This study sheds light on the link between embarrassment and its subsequent egoistic helping behavioral tendency. It is also expected to provide some managerial implications for charity marketers to plan for their promotional strategies in raising donations.

ABSTRACT (CHINESE)

尷尬是一種常見的情感，在眾多與顧客行為有關的不同場合下，也能發現它的存在。雖然它與顧客行為息息相關，可是至今，也只有很少有關顧客窘境的研究。這篇論文嘗試填補這方面研究的不足，以顧客購物為背景，仔細調查尷尬情感與其隨後的行為傾向。本篇論文以實驗形式，深入調查購買使人尷尬的產品如何影響隨後購買交叉銷售產品的意欲。研究包括兩種交叉銷售產品，分別是為賺取利潤的交叉銷售及為慈善籌款的交叉銷售（圖利產品　對　慈善產品）。研究結果顯示，尷尬顧客比一般顧客對慈善交叉銷售產品有較高購買意欲，但這情況並沒有出現在圖利交叉銷售產品當中。這項研究連繫了尷尬情感與隨後的利己幫助行為傾向，並期望能給予慈善團體一些經營管理上的主意，以助他們計劃推廣籌款策略。

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Kam-yuen Wong and Tsz-shum Cheung,

who support me monetarily and emotionally in my journey to pursuit of

knowledge.

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Having this thesis completed and bound as it is now from scratch has never been an easy job. I do not think that I could have made it without support from my parents, teachers, colleagues, friends, and participants for my study.

Support from my parents has made my pursuit of degree after degree possible. They kept me from worries about earning livings to sustain the family, letting me to freely choose what I want to do. When I am lost and stressed out, they give me warmth and encouragement. As they do not understand English, I would like to write this in Chinese "爸爸媽媽：謝謝・感激!"

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CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

1.0 OVERVIEW

In this chapter, the background of consumer embarrassment issues, the research objectives and the expected contributions of this thesis are discussed. The first section introduces the background of consumer embarrassment issues, and the motivations to study consumer embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency in this thesis. Then, the research objectives are highlighted in the second section. In addition, the expected contributions of this thesis are emphasized in the third section, followed by the final section of the thesis outline.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Embarrassment is a widely occurring emotion that most of us are familiar with. Actually, we may experience embarrassment in a variety of situations. Looking for this emotion in our daily lives, it is not difficult to recognize that we might feel embarrassed when we are purchasing condoms (i.e. during product acquisition stage), when we are using credit card to pay the bill but it is denied (i.e. during product usage stage), and when we are returning an adult video (i.e. during product disposition stage) (Dahl, Manchanda and Argo 2001). Also, we might feel embarrassed when we have to explain for an "accidental" ordering of an adult film during check-out (i.e. hotel service experience), when we have to cough up a fish bone in a fancy restaurant (i.e. restaurant service experience), when we are running treadmill in a gymnasium next to a busy road with many pedestrians watching through the glass wall (i.e. recreational service experience), or even when we are having medical check-up (i.e. medication

service experience). Undoubtedly, embarrassment is a pervasive emotion pertaining to consumer behavior. Nevertheless, there has been very little research studying consumer embarrassment.

Since embarrassment is an aversive emotion that everyone has a strong desire to avoid it, there should be many cases in which consumer giving up the opportunity to fulfill his/her needs by not purchasing or consuming those embarrassing products/services just to prevent himself/herself from being embarrassed. For example, sexually active teenagers know that it is risky to have sex without using any contraception but they may fail to do so just because they think it is embarrassing to obtain contraception from a physician or pharmacy (Leary and Dobbins 1983). A social study shows that many girls want to keep fit but they do not do so just because they are too embarrassed to exercise in front of the others (BBC News 2004a). Another social study shows that many men are reluctant to seek medical advice for their bladder problems just because they are too embarrassed to do so (BBC News 2004b). Recently, British Government has even launched a campaign urging people not to 'die from embarrassment' but to talk openly about their bowel symptoms in order to raise the awareness of bowel cancer (BBC News 2006). It is clear that embarrassment can be a headache to both marketers and consumers, causing potential business loss to the former and being a solution obstacle to the latter.

In order to combat the unfavorable impacts of this emotion on marketing exchange, we as a marketing researcher may approach this emotion by investigating the antecedents of consumer embarrassment and suggesting ways for reducing the embarrassment level that consumers may feel during the exchange process. Certainly, it is very important to study consumer embarrassment from this perspective. However,

I would like to take another approach, studying consumer embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency, in this thesis to see if certain insights could be drawn for better understanding of this emotion in the context of consumer behavior.

Sometimes, it may be very difficult for the marketers to think of a way or very costly for them to implement a plan to reduce the embarrassment level felt by the consumers. Since we all grow up with our own set of social norms and moral standards, we may feel embarrassed once we perceive that we have violated these rules. Marketers may do only little with that and may have to pay a lot of effort to change the minds. Also, some may argue that those who give up the opportunity to fulfill their own needs by not purchasing or consuming certain products/services due to embarrassment must be a minority. The reason is that if the consumer really needs the product/service, he/she must think of his/her own way to cope with this emotion and to finally get the needed product/service. For example, consumers may ask the others for help and buy the product for them; consumers may choose to buy the product in a remote outlet, during off- peak hours, or even buy it online. To a certain extent, these arguments may be correct. Thus, despite seeking ways to reduce consumers' embarrassment level seems to be a concern of more interests, this thesis attempts to examine consumer embarrassment from another angle of view by studying its subsequent behavioral tendency.

Although embarrassment is an unpleasant emotion that all of us dislike, it is an adaptive emotion. It alerts the embarrassed individuals the potential emergence of adverse social outcomes and may even motivate desirable behavior that reassures others (Miller 2001a). In the context of consumer behavior, embarrassment may be an unfavorable emotion to marketers that prevents consumers from purchasing what they

need, but it may also be a favorable emotion if embarrassed consumers are motivated to perform certain "desirable" behaviors by this emotion.

To fill the theoretical gap with important practical applications, this thesis investigates consumer embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency. It is proposed that embarrassment may stimulate consumers to have higher purchase intention for cross-selling products which are sold for charity. The nature of embarrassment and the notion of impression management, which are discussed in next section, may account for these predictions.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Given the sparse research on consumer embarrassment, this thesis addresses the issue by examining the behavioral tendency of those embarrassed consumers. More specifically, it focuses on the following question:

How does embarrassing product purchase (i.e. condom purchase) affect the purchase intention of cross-selling products? Two types of cross-selling products would be investigate, namely Products Sold for Profit vs. Products Sold for Charity (For-Profit vs. For-Charity).

1.3 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

Obviously, embarrassment is an emotion that deserves marketing researchers' attention. As mentioned before, although embarrassment is a prevalent emotion which can easily be found in various situations that involve consumer behavior, there has

been very few research studying it. To fill the literature gap, this thesis is expected to offer insights on consumer embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency as well.

In the marketing literature, the first empirical study on embarrassment examines social presence of others as the antecedent of this emotion in the context of consumer purchase (Dahl et at. 2001). Later on, research investigates the impacts of this emotion in personal selling, showing that embarrassment leads salesperson to avoid future contact with the customer (Verbeke and Bagozzi 2003). This thesis attempts to advocate that embarrassed consumers may be more inclined to help. It is expected to demonstrate the adaptive nature of embarrassment in the context of consumer behavior.

Finally, it is also expected that this work would also provide some managerial implications for charity marketers to plan for their promotional strategies in raising donations.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The content of this thesis is organized as follows: First of all, the literature review of embarrassment in both psychology and marketing literature is presented, the conceptual model is explained, and the development of the hypothesis is depicted in Chapter Two. Then, in Chapter Three, the methodology is discussed, including a description of the scenarios and a delineation of the structured questions used to test the hypothesized relationship. The results of the study are analyzed and discussed in Chapter Four. Following the discussion of the results, the key theoretical and

managerial contributions, research limitations and suggestions for future research are

presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 2   LITERATURE REVIEW & RESEARCH MODEL

2.0 OVERVIEW

In this chapter, a model of consumers' purchase intention for cross-selling product influenced by the presence of embarrassment and the type of cross-selling product is presented. The model provides a framework of the relationship between embarrassment and purchase intention for cross-selling product by taking the impact of cross-selling product type into consideration. In the following sections, a comprehensive literature review on embarrassment is presented and the conceptual definitions of all the main constructs in this thesis are explained. Then, the research model which links up all the constructs is presented. Finally, a testable hypothesis is proposed to describe the causal relationships among the constructs specified in the conceptual model.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW ON EMBARRASSMENT

To begin with, the feelings of embarrassment may be first briefly described as "an uncomfortable, aroused state of mortification, abashment, and chagrin" (Miller 1996 p.1). Related literature from psychology and marketing on embarrassment are reviewed to provide a comprehensive background to understand the conceptual definitions and the development of the conceptual model that follows.

2.1.1 Embarrassment and Its Antecedent

In spite of the fact that this thesis focuses on consumer embarrassment and its

subsequent behavioral tendency, it is necessary to look at the causes of this emotion first in order to get a big picture of the impact of this emotion on consumer behavior.

Embarrassment plays an important role in social life. Extensive studies have been done by sociologists and psychologists to examine the nature and causes of this emotion. There are several models of embarrassment proposing different ultimate cause for this emotion. Although a definite conceptualization of embarrassment has not been reached yet, it is believed that the conceptual models in extant literature are not mutually exclusive and each may contain important insights in understanding this emotion (Miller 1996).

Three models of embarrassment are introduced in the following sections, namely, the Dramaturgic Model, the Social Evaluation Model, and the Self-Esteem Models. Each model advocates its own antecedent to embarrassment. These three models are compared and contrasted, enabling a better understanding of the factors that causes the emotion of embarrassment.

2.1.1.1 Dramaturgic Model

The Dramaturgic Model suggests that the primary reason for one to feel embarrassed is because of his/her inability to act coherently in that particular social interaction (Silver, Sabini, and Parrott 1987). Actually, this model is adapted from Goffman's (1959) self-presentational approach to social interaction.

Erving Goffman, who was a sociologist, ingeniously compared social behavior to a theatrical performance in his ground-breaking book, *The Presentation of Self in*

Everyday Life (Goffman 1959). As in a theatrical play, actors played parts with scripts on stage and they could relax and drop their roles in backstage areas. Smooth performance without people flubbing lines or acting out of character is the central goal of a play. Building on this analogy between social behavior and theatrical performance, the Dramaturgic Model proposes that embarrassment can be thought of an emotion arisen from a disrupted situation. It is similar to situations that actors forget their scripts or cannot smoothly react to their partners in a play. Thus, when one is unable to calmly and gracefully continue a social interaction which is disrupted by some unwanted predicaments, one may feel embarrassed (Parrott and Smith 1991; Silver et al. 1987).

Embarrassment is the flustered uncertainty that follows an unexpected social event leaving a person at a loss about what to do or say next. The Dramaturgic Model emphasizes on the sudden inability to act a part as the cause for embarrassment. Scholars supporting this model acknowledge that embarrassed people are usually worried about how the others are thinking of them. However, they argue that such concerns about others' evaluation on self merely accompany, but do not cause, embarrassment (Silver et al. 1987).

2.1.1.2 Social Evaluation Model

Another view, the Social Evaluation Model, holds that the most crucial component in embarrassment is the concern for what others are thinking of us. The Social Evaluation Model suggests that when one is under the threat of being evaluated undesirably by the others, one may feel embarrassed (Edelmann 1987; Miller 1996).

Actually, like the Dramaturgic Model, this model also follows closely from Goffman's theatrical perspective. In a theatrical play, every actor has his/her own role. The role guides and confines how the actors perform. Playing the role out properly is the ultimate goal of the actors. Similarly, we always try to project certain images of ourselves to the others in real life. It is like creating a character or a role on our own. It is believed that embarrassment is likely to be elicited when one realizes that "the expressive facts at hand threaten or discredit the assumptions a participant finds he has projected about his identity" (Goffman 1956, p. 269). In other words, when there is any indication showing that our attempts to construct a desired image have failed, we might feel embarrassed.

The Social Evaluation Model stresses that any potential evaluation that implies an undesired impression has been made publicly can cause embarrassment. Researchers for this model acknowledge that embarrassing interactions often leave one at a loss for what to do and say next, which is the ultimate cause of embarrassment proposed by the Dramaturgic Model. However, such sudden inadequacy in reacting properly is thought to be a result of embarrassment rather than a cause of it, according to the Social Evaluation Model (Miller 1996).

2.1.1.3 Self-Esteem Models

Similar to the Social Evaluation Model, the Situational Self-Esteem Model agrees that "embarrassment reflects a failure in one's self-presentation to others" (Modigliani 1971, p.16). However, this model proposes the temporary loss of self-esteem resulted from such public failures, rather than the failure itself, as the root cause of embarrassment.

In fact, the knowledge of being undesirably judged by the others is believed to lead to a short-lived but acute loss of self-esteem. As such loss of self-esteem is unlike the chronic type of global low self-esteem, it is suggested that feelings of embarrassment is derived from a loss of situational self-esteem. Specifically, when one perceives oneself as being evaluated as deficient and loses self-esteem in a particular situation, one may feel embarrassed (Modigliani 1971).

From this perspective, embarrassment is caused by a person's private disapproval of his/her public acts. Therefore, no matter how undesirable the impressions that the others have made on a person, when this person retains a positive self-evaluation, he/she would remain unembarrassed (Miller 1996).

Another theory called the Personal Account of Embarrassment is very similar to the Situational Self-Esteem Model and is also related to lowered self-esteem (Parrott and Smith 1991), but it may hold a more extreme view on the role that self-evaluation plays in causing embarrassment. The Personal Account of Embarrassment suggests that embarrassment primarily stems from violations of "persona", which is a set of personal standards or rules for how to behave in a particular situation, but not primarily because of our inability to live up to the expectations of others or our fear of social disapproval (Babcock 1988).

2.1.1.4 A Broader View

Despite the fact that the four models of embarrassment described in the previous sections all propose a different framework as the ultimate cause of embarrassment, it

is believed that they are not mutually exclusive and each may contribute to the formation of the embarrassment emotion. This section tries to compare and contrast these existing models to offer a clearer picture on the current understanding of embarrassment and its antecedents.

Since empirical studies show that people rarely experience embarrassment when being alone (Parrott and Smith 1991; Tangney et al. 1996), the validity of Personal Account of Embarrassment has been questioned. The Personal Account asserts that embarrassment is based on private distress over the failed "persona". Contrary to the other three conceptualizations, it also contends that individual can experience embarrassment in private as well as in public. However, only a few retrospective self-reported embarrassments occur in the absence of others (Parrott and Smith 1991). Also, it is believed that those scarce cases of private embarrassment found in the studies should involve an imagined presence of others (Miller 1996). Perhaps the cases appear to be a private event, but presence of imaginary audiences or anticipated discovery by others should turn the situation into public. Moreover, as there is no empirical result providing particular support for the Personal Account of Embarrassment, it may be more appropriate to consider the feelings of "embarrassment" defined by the Personal Account as the feelings of shame, which is a very close neighbor to embarrassment and is arisen from violations of one's ideal self.

Like the Personal Account, the Situational Self-Esteem Model also insists that personal judgments on self play a fundamental role in producing embarrassment. However, the Self-Esteem Model does address the just presented problem for the Personal Account by taking the public nature of embarrassment into account. It suggests that it is the others' unwanted evaluations provoking the reduction in

situational self-esteem that in turn leads to embarrassment. Although the Situational Self-Esteem Model does a better job in this aspect, its notion of decreased self-esteem as the root cause of embarrassment does not seem to have ample empirical support either. Several studies show that embarrassment is more closely related to how we perceive the others think about us than how we think about ourselves (Manstead and Semin 1981; Miller 1996; Parrott and Smith 1991). In other words, perceived social image may be a better predictor of embarrassment than "self-esteem".

Apparently, extant literature on embarrassment is more inclined to support the Dramaturgic Model and Social Evaluation Model (Miller 1996; Sabini et al. 2000). Specifically, the flustered and awkward indecision (Dramaturgic Model) and the dread of what others are thinking (Social Evaluation Model) are more widely accepted as the essential antecedents for embarrassment. Supporting the Dramaturgic Model, existing empirical results suggest that self-presentational difficulties and sudden inability to act a part should be the most possible root cause for embarrassment among all the models described previously (Parrott, Sabini, and Silver 1988; Parrott and Smith 1991). However, it is argued that the results obtained from the self-reported studies may be only an artifact. Embarrassments induced by the unwanted evaluations from the others may often be anticipated and people would simply avoid it to happen. That is why much fewer cases of embarrassment caused by unwanted evaluations are reported. For the experimental study, it is also found that the awkwardness induced in the experiments is always confounded with the unwanted evaluations from the others (Miller 1996).

Unfortunately, there has not been any published study directly comparing these two models to see which one is closer in identifying the cause of embarrassment.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to think that both the Dramaturgic Model and the Social Evaluation Model together form a comprehensive framework providing a set of necessary and sufficient features as the causes of embarrassment.

People have an innate social motive, the need to belong (Baumeister and Leary 1995). From the evolution perspective, our ancestors who were not liked or even rejected by the others were certainly less likely to find a partner to reproduce. Apart from this reproductive benefits, it is also true that groups can share foods, cooperate to hunt, work together to defend enemies, etc. for survival goods. Thus, as a matter of life and death, concerning what the others are thinking of us serves a vital role. As such, under the Social Evaluation Model, embarrassment evolves as one manifestation of the fundamental human need to seek inclusion and avoid rejection during our social interaction with others. As mentioned in the very beginning, embarrassment is an adaptive emotion that alerts people the potential threats of social disapproval and rejection. It usually motivates desirable behavior to rectify one's transgressions. Also, embarrassment is an emotion that reliably communicates one's mortification at the predicament and my even engender liking (Mill 1996). Accordingly, it seems that the Social Evaluation Model can provide a logical and coherent reasoning in proposing perceived undesirable evaluations from the others as the cause of embarrassment while the Dramaturgic Model lacks such a strong background.

However, the Dramaturgic Model does have its merit in explaining embarrassment. It should be noted that embarrassment is different from social anxiety (Leary and Kowalski 1995; Miller 2001b). Social anxiety is often anticipatory and occurring before anything actually goes wrong while embarrassment is reactive and typically following unexpected events (Miller 2001b). Consequently, they have

difference physiological responses (Miller 1996). Without the sudden inability to act a part introduced by the Dramaturgic Model, it seems that the "embarrassment" defined by the Social Evaluation Model may be more similar to social anxiety.

Therefore, it may be concluded that the influences proposed by the Social Evaluation Model and the Dramaturgic Model work together to cause embarrassment. A sudden inability to act a part in addition to the perceived threat of being evaluated negatively are believed to be a set of necessary and sufficient features to cause embarrassment. It is important to compare and contrast all the four models of embarrassment in this section so as to convey a clearer conceptualization of this emotion.

2.1.1.5 Marketing Application

As mentioned earlier, there has been very little research on embarrassment in marketing. The first empirical study that identifies embarrassment as a relevant and important emotional construct in marketing examines the antecedents that may underlie the emotion in the consumer behavior context (Dahl et al. 2001).

In the Dahl et al. (2001) study, the roles of social presence and purchase familiarity on embarrassment were investigated in the context of consumer purchase. Embarrassment is conceptualized as an aversive and awkward emotional state following events that increase the threat of unwanted evaluation from a real or imagined social audience.

Specifically, the study tests the validity of this conceptualization by varying the

social presence of the others during a condom purchase encounter, either a presence or absence of a real vs. imagined passerby. As mentioned in previous section regarding the psychology literature on embarrassment, this emotion should occur in public. It is because there must be the presence of others to serve as a subject for one to think that he/she has been undesirably evaluated in order to give the feelings of embarrassment. However, there may be cases for one to feel embarrassed in a solitary situation. The reason is that an imagined presence of others is involved. Thus, this study appears to examine the robustness of the Social Evaluation Model for embarrassment in the context of consumer behavior. Furthermore, a relevant construct in marketing, condom purchase familiarity, is also introduced as a moderator in the study.

The empirical results verify the findings from psychology literature showing that the social presence of the others is necessary for one to feel embarrassed in condom purchase encounters. Condom purchase familiarity is also found to moderate the relationship between real social presence of others and the embarrassment level by reducing the effect of the real social presence. That is, the more familiar consumers are with purchasing condoms, the less embarrassed they are likely to feel when there is a passerby during the purchase encounter.

Serving as the first empirical study in examining embarrassment in the marketing context, this study has established that the Social Evaluation Model is applicable in consumer behavior, providing a clear conceptualization on consumer embarrassment for future research on this topic. Undoubtedly, it also offers several promising future research directions on the topic.

2.1.2 Embarrassment and Its Subsequent Behavioral Tendency

Following the previous section of delineation of embarrassment and its antecedents, this section focus on what happens after the occurrence of the emotion. It is all about embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency. Likewise, related psychology literature and marketing literature are discussed.

2.1.2.1 Coping Strategies

Previous study shows that there is a variety of coping strategies that people could choose to deal with embarrassment (e.g. Cupach and Metts 1992; Cupach, Metts, and Hazleton 1986; Tarr, Kim, and Sharkey 2005). Since embarrassment is an aversive emotion, people always try to avoid engaging in activities that are potentially embarrassing. Simply speaking, when the embarrassment is foreseeable, people would try their best to avoid it. However, there must be occasions that it is too costly to evade the embarrassment or the embarrassment is simply inevitable. In this case, people have to undergo the emotion and may have different responses to the emotion.

Extant literature on communications provides a classification of remedial strategies to embarrassing predicament. Eight types of remedial strategies employed by embarrassed individuals are identified: Apology, Excuse, Justification, Humor, Remediation, Avoidance, Escape, and Aggression (Metts and Cupach 1989). There are also attempts from this field to examine if contextual and individual characteristics determine remedial responses to embarrassing predicaments (e.g. Cupach and Metts 1992; Cupach et al. 1986; Tarr et al. 2005). These studies focus on investigating the coping strategies to embarrassment in the context of interpersonal communications.

On the other hand, a field study investigating the coping strategies in the context of consumer purchase is found. Interestingly, results of this field study show that consumers who buy "girlie" magazines are more likely to buy other products compared with those who buy other kinds of magazines (Lewittes and Simmons 1975). It is believed that the act of buying other products like gum and candy is an attempt to restore present face for those who bought "girlie" magazines. This unobtrusive study suggests that consumers may be highly motivated to control the impressions the others form on them in certain situations. It seems that the underlying reason for such findings in this study is the embarrassment caused by the fear of being evaluated as "oversexed" or preoccupied with sexual stimuli and the flustered awkwardness during the purchase encounter.

Generally, the choice of coping strategy to embarrassment depends on both individual and situational characteristics, resulting in idiosyncratic responses. Hence, it may be difficult to predict the exact responses to embarrassment. However, by regarding embarrassment as an adaptive emotion and considering it under the framework of impression management, some insights may be drawn in concluding the responses to this emotion.

2.1.2.2 Adaptive Emotion

As described in the previous section, embarrassment is a manifestation of human's innate needs to seek acceptance and avoid social disapproval. Embarrassment is just like the social counterpart of physical pain, which warns people of threats to their physical well being. The emotion of being embarrassed alerts ones

being at the edge of social rejection, to which logically motivates one to take action to restore one's desirable social image, but one may or may not be aware of this motive. Also, it must be noted that one's responses to embarrassment should not always guarantee a favorable outcome with the damaged image successfully repaired.

When considering the responses to embarrassment from the perspective of its root cause and its adaptive function, it may be concluded that the coping strategies to this emotion are basically conciliatory in nature. That is, these strategies are used by the embarrassed individual to avoid further negative evaluation from the others and seek social approval.

2.1.2.3 Impression Management

During everyday life, people always seek to acquire information such as socio-economic status, trustworthiness, attitude toward a person, attitude toward an issue, etc. of the others. Usually, people base their actions toward the others on such information that has already been possessed. For example, when one meets a new friend, one would probably get some clues from this new friend's conduct and appearance. One may then apply untested stereotypes to this new friend and categorize this new friend into a particular group of people under his/her own schema. One's past experiences on interacting with roughly similar people may also affect his/her attitudes toward this new friend. In this way, one is said to have formed an impression on this new friend. By doing so, information about the others helps define how the social interactions should be and one's role in them, enabling people to guess or "know" in advance what should expect from the others. As a result, people in a social interaction "know" the appropriate way to act in order to get a desirable

response from each other (Goffman 1959).

However, the information acquired may not guide ones to a correct interpretation about a person. It should be realized that people do not lead their lives and make their every decision either statistically or scientifically. We live by inference for most of the times. Actually, impression management refers to the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions the others form of them (Leary and Kowalski 1990). Since people would not conduct experiments for their every judgment about a person, the communication processes during every social interaction involve one to self-present and another one to interpret such self-presentation by inferences. In this way, impression management becomes possible. The ultimate motive for impression management is to control the interaction so that the others would act voluntarily in accordance to one's own plan (Goffman 1959). To be specific, impression management increases the likelihood that people can be "perceived as they wish and deserve to be, allowing the interaction to proceed with less confusion and greater grace" (Miller 1996 p.110).

Although people are motivated to manage the others' impression on them, they may not be aware of their cognitive processing on doing so. People appear to attend to those impression-relevant information at a preattentive level. In other words, typically, people monitor the others' impression on them unconsciously (Leary and Kowalski 1990). They may not realize that they are indeed actively considering how the others perceive them. Besides, performing behaviors that are consistent with the desired social image may even be a habitual process. It may become a personal habit to self-present in a particular way so that the image that has already been established successfully can be maintained (Schlenker 1980).

Actually, the extent to which people are motivated to direct their behaviors towards impression management may be influenced by a variety of situational and dispositional variables. It is suggested that there are three central factors determining such impression motivation: the goal-relevance of the impressions, the value of the desired outcomes, and the discrepancy between one's desired and current social image (Leary and Kowalski 1990).

According to these impression motivations proposed in the literature, it is implied that one may be highly motivated to implement impression management tactics when one is embarrassed. Referring back to the conceptualization of embarrassment described previously, embarrassment is an emotional state following a perceived threat of being evaluated undesirably from the others. In other words, embarrassed individuals must believe that there is a discrepancy between their desired and current image, which is one of the three impression motivations mentioned above. Therefore, under the framework of impression management, embarrassed individuals are probably eager to repair their damaged social images, but they may do so unconsciously.

2.1.2.4 Embarrassment and Compliance with Helping Request

Drawing on the conceptualization of embarrassment and impression management depicted in the previous sections, eager to please the others seems to be the general response to embarrassment, in spite of a variety of coping strategies ranging from hysterical escape to calm compose that may be employed by embarrassed individuals.

In line with this argument, complying with a helping request has been introduced as a pertinent response to embarrassment in existing literature (Apsler 1975; Cann and Blackwelder 1984). However, the underlying cause for embarrassed individuals to have higher likelihood to comply with a helping request was interpreted either as the higher tendency of embarrassed ones to relieve the negative state by helping or to enhance the mood by compliance in these studies. Obviously, such explanations are applicable to all cases with subjects in any negative state, without taking care of the essence of embarrassment. Besides, two constructs, compliance and helping intention, may be involved in the measured dependent variable leading to less clear interpretation.

One of the abovementioned empirical studies tested whether the higher compliance with a helping request could be found in both the observer and non-observer conditions (Apsler 1975). Observer condition was a laboratory setting in which a confederate who made the helping request witnessed how the subjects would be embarrassed while the confederate in the non-observer condition did not witness so. It was a laboratory study that participants had to first perform an embarrassing task (e.g. turn on a tape recorder and dance to the record, laugh for 30s as if they had just heard a funny joke, sing the Star Spangled Banner, and imitate a 5-year-old having a temper tantrum because he does not want to go to kindergarten) and then were asked by a confederate who need their help to participate in a study. The study required them to fill out a questionnaire for a number of days which is of their own choice and this was the measured dependent variable.

Based on the findings that embarrassed individuals comply more than unembarrassed ones with a helping request regardless of being in an observer or

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non-observer condition, it was argued that the Negative-State-Relief Model (see Cialdini, Darby, and Vincent 1973) rather than the notion of impression management explained the results. The argument lie in the reasoning that the concern of the undesired impression made and the motivation to restore the damaged image should not be expected to influence embarrassed individuals' compliance tendency toward people who were totally unaware of the embarrassing incident. It was therefore concluded that complying with a request of help is a positive experience that the embarrassed individuals sought to relieve their discomfort of being embarrassed.

Admittedly, the reasoning of embarrassed individuals does not need to improve or correct the image presented for the non-observer sounds logical. However, this argument may be only applicable to those embarrassed ones who are consciously executing the impression management tactics. As mentioned previously, many people carry out impression-relevant behaviors unconsciously. If the embarrassed ones are not aware of the fact that their actions are indeed aiming at restoring the social image ruined by being observed in an embarrassing incident, it may be possible for them to please the observers as well as the non-observers. More importantly, as mentioned earlier, embarrassment is an adaptive emotion that warns people dangers of being repelled. Thus, it seems that embarrassment may stimulate people to have a general tendency to please all the others no matter they are observers or non-observers.

Therefore, concluding the finding as a phenomenon which can be explained by the Negative-State-Relief Model may narrow the contribution of its own. The greatest contribution of this study may be the empirical evidence that embarrassed people have a higher general tendency to help the others, regardless of these recipients of their help are observer or non-observers.

Results of another abovementioned study also showed that significantly higher compliance rate for a helping request was found for embarrassed (vs. unembarrassed) individuals (Cann and Blackwelder 1984). This was a field study asking participants who are exiting from a lavatory or walking in a hallway to perform a small helping behavior, delivering notes for a stranger (who is in a big hurry) to his/her friend who is about 40 meters away. Similar to the Negative-State-Relief explanation of the Apsler's (1975) study, it was believed that agreement to assist the others acts as a source of positive affect that embarrassed individuals find appealing. However, taking another perspective, it may be argued that embarrassed individuals are simply more vulnerable to social influence attempts (Miller 1996; Verbeke and Bagozzi 2003). In other words, higher compliance rate may be alternatively explained by the higher susceptibility to helping request from embarrassed ones as they are nervous, confused, and disorganized at that moment.

As a remark, it should be noted that Apsler's study focused on measuring the helping tendency while Cann and Blackwelder's study focused on measuring the compliance tendency, yet both studies described compliance with a helping request as the dependent variable.

Although the underpinning theory proposed for the findings by these two studies may not be the perfect one due to the existence of some problems and alternative explanations which are presented above, their empirical results are inspiring and deserve further examination. The results appear to substantiate the core idea of embarrassment and impression management, suggesting that embarrassed individuals are inclined to please the others or seek social approval by way of helping the others

or complying with a helping request for the sake of image repair.

2.1.2.5 Marketing Application

To provide a more comprehensive review on this topic in the area of marketing application, the distinction between fear of embarrassment and embarrassment itself are briefly described first.

Undeniably, embarrassment has fuzzy boundaries with social anxiety (Miller 1996). As mentioned earlier, people dislike the feelings of embarrassment, so they try to avoid this emotion whenever possible. In fact, the emotional state of dreading to be embarrassed is very different from that of being embarrassed (Miller 2001a; Miller 2001b). Dread of embarrassment is an anticipatory social anxiety blending with apprehension and excitement while embarrassment itself is a reactive and adaptive emotion characterized by feelings of surprise and fluster. As a consequence, it is thought that fear of embarrassment often leads people to do things in an illogical or stupid way with avoidance inclination while moderate embarrassment ordinarily leads people to have a constructive response to adverse situations.

Extant marketing literature does have mentioned about the plausible consequence of fear of embarrassment. It is suggested as a promising extension in a word-of-mouth (WOM) study that the psychic cost which might be incurred for spreading embarrassing market information through their own social networks would probably prevent consumers from doing so, similar to the impact of economic cost that might be incurred on a consumer for spreading valuable and costly market information

(Frenzen and Nakamoto 1993). For example, consumers are often reluctant to spread WOM regarding their psychiatrists, bankruptcy consultant, divorced attorneys, etc. It should be noted that such avoidance behavioral tendency is attributed to the dread of embarrassment but not embarrassment itself in this case.

To further illustrate, an empirical study on consumers' motivation for disclosing personal information to product/service provider indicates that consumers with deep (vs. shallow) relationship with the product/service provider are more likely to reveal "privacy-related" personal information such as address and phone number. However, they are more reluctant to reveal embarrassing information such as purchase history of Playboy/Playgirl magazine and condoms (White 2004). The results are explained by the higher perceived costs in losing face when providing embarrassing information to trusted or esteemed others. This piece of work suggests that when dealing with marketers who are seeking embarrassing information, consumers also have an avoidance behavioral tendency in disclosing the information, just like the case in spreading embarrassing market information through the social networks mentioned above. Similarly, it is more appropriate to attribute such avoidance behavioral tendency to dread of embarrassment instead of embarrassment itself.

Certainly, it is important to study the subsequent behavioral consequences for both fear of embarrassment and embarrassment itself in consumer behavior. This thesis focuses on examining the latter.

Study on embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency is scant in marketing. These studies examine the emotion in the context of personal selling and word-of-mouth communications (WOM). It is not surprising because series of

research on embarrassment and its coping strategies first come from the field of communications and most of our current understandings in this area are based on these early attempts in this field (e.g. Cupach et al. 1986; Metts and Cupach 1989). As personal selling and WOM largely involve interpersonal communications, they seem to be the most suitable marketing contexts for those established theoretical frameworks in communications to extend.

Empirical studies on personal selling find that the experience of shame and embarrassment leads the salespeople to have protective reactions, which in turn negatively impact performance (Verbeke and Bagozzi 2002; Verbeke and Bagozzi 2003). It is suggested that shame and embarrassment cause salespeople to have lower adaptive resources. Consequently, they are likely to engage in protective actions and their assertiveness is lowered, reducing chances for successful selling. Specifically, once embarrassed, salespeople involuntarily react with protective actions such as eye contact aversion, blushing, and become silent. They then deliberately engage in protective behaviors like apologize, avoid switching to informal topics, and refrain from closing a deal, etc. Obviously, the notion of impression management has not been touched on in the theoretical framework of these studies. The underlying reason for such protective behavioral tendency is solely due to the reduction in adaptive resources when experiencing self-conscious emotions, shame and embarrassment in this case. It is clear that the essence of embarrassment has not been taken into detailed consideration in these studies as the focus is on self-conscious emotions but not specifically on the emotion of embarrassment.

On the other hand, an empirical study on WOM suggests that the motives of self-bolstering and impression management may lead consumers to deliberately

misrepresent during interpersonal communications (Sengupta, Dahl, and Gorn 2002). Empirical results of this study indicate that misrepresentation about one's possession value and personal wealth is more likely when the communication recipient is a member of an aspirational group. It is believed that such misrepresentation is made in the pursuit of psychic rewards such as respect and esteem, enabling consumers to create a positive impression. Although this study does not directly relate consumer embarrassment to misrepresentation, insights may be drawn to suspect one of the possible subsequent behavioral consequences of embarrassment is lying. As mentioned earlier, since embarrassed individuals have high impression motivation, it is likely for embarrassed consumers to have misrepresentation in order to restore a desirable image or to repair the damaged image.

In spite of the scarce studies in marketing on embarrassment and its subsequent behavioral tendency, the studies mentioned in this section may have altogether established a tentative framework for future research on this topic. Roughly speaking, research on this topic may be classified into two groups, behavioral consequences for fear of embarrassment or for embarrassment. Contexts that have already been investigated for this topic are personal selling, WOM, and consumers' information gathering.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Following the detailed literature review on embarrassment just presented, the conceptual definitions of the three main constructs in this study are explained.

2.2.1 Consumer Embarrassment

Drawing on the conceptualization of embarrassment from psychology and marketing literature presented in previous sections, this thesis defines embarrassment as a flustered and awkward emotional state following unexpected events that increase the threat of being evaluated undesirably by real or imagined social audience during purchase. This definition is mainly built on the Social Evaluation Model and the Dramaturgic Model of embarrassment.

This emotion originates from human's natural need to belong. Like a social counterpart to physical pain, embarrassment serves as an emotional mechanism alerting people the potential threats of being rejected by others. As it is an emotion with obvious and recognizable signs (e.g. gaze aversion, blushing, body shifting), it clearly expresses to the audience that the embarrassed individuals are sensitive, feeling ashamed and regretful about their transgressions. Apart from these conciliatory facial and gesture expressions, it may also motivate impression-relevant behaviors aiming at restoring the damaged image according to the notion of impression management.

During a purchase encounter, consumers may be embarrassed in various ways. They may slip on the wet floor and fall down, find themselves too short from reaching the products at the upper shelf, break an item accidentally, etc. However, embarrassing product purchase is chosen as the means to induce embarrassment in this thesis. It is hoped that the findings can stimulate new thoughts for marketing embarrassing products.

2.2.2 Cross-selling

As presented earlier, past empirical studies in psychology literature show that embarrassed individuals are more likely to comply with a helping request than the unembarrassed. It may be interesting to test this finding in the context of consumer behavior to see if embarrassed consumers also behave in this way. Nowadays, it is very common for the cashiers to cross-sell, asking the consumers to additionally buy a product, at the check out counter. This kind of situation with cross-selling request is chosen as the context in this study for examining the robustness of the empirical results found in the psychology literature.

Actually, cross-selling is a strategy widely used in bank marketing, describing the act of selling customers additional bank products or services according to ones' own needs inferred from his/her personal profiles (Kane 2005; Li, Sun, and Wilcox 2005). From a more technical point of view, it is also a common criteria used in the field of data mining in which models or rules in associating variables in databases are developed by considering cross-selling effect (Wong, Fu, and Wang 2005).

In this thesis, cross-selling refers to a common practice that cashiers in a supermarket ask consumers to additionally buy a particular product when checking out their merchandize. Consumers shopping in a supermarket alone may leave without any interaction with other consumers, but it is necessary for them to interact with the cashier, who is responsible to check out the merchandise for them. Marketers may realize that such a necessary interaction between cashier and consumer is a golden opportunity to promote products and sell the consumers. It is very usual to see cashiers cross-selling consumers other kinds of products during check-out today.

Unlike cross-selling in bank and financial marketing, cross-selling at check-out counter is not tailor-made. When cross-selling financial products or services, marketers are likely to look at individuals' financial profiles first in order to determine the most appropriate products/services to cross-sell. In contrast, it may be more like a scripted check-out procedure for cross-selling at check-out counter. Without taking individuals' needs into account, cashiers just cross-sell the same products to every consumer. Besides, any kinds of products may be cross-sold at check-out counters ranging from newly launched products to products on sale, from food products to personal hygiene products.

2.2.3 Helping Behavior

Rather than being a replication study with context transfer, this study attempts to make the established linkage between embarrassment and its subsequent compliance with a helping request clearer. It is speculated that the helping behavior which would be performed after complying with a helping request plays a crucial role in determining whether the embarrassed individuals would be more likely to comply

with the request. Thus, helping behavior is one of the constructs that should be defined first.

Helping behavior does not restrict to those magnificent ones like risking one's life to save another, it also includes trivial ones like giving a seat to an old man on a train. In fact, helping behavior may have many forms. People may help the others directly (e.g. donating used computers to children in a poor family), but they may also help the others through an intermediary organization (e.g. donating money to a charity) (Bendapudi, Singh, and Bendapudi 1996).

On the other hand, extant psychology literature suggests that the motivation for helping may be egoistic, altruistic, or both (Bierhoff 2002; Batson 1991). Specifically, people performing helping behavior with egoistic motives look for increasing their own welfare while those with altruistic motives look for enhancing the welfare of the needy. Moreover, as pointed out by an integrative framework for enhancing helping behavior in marketing literature, compilers to a helping request may make either token help (i.e. modest contribution) or serious help (i.e. substantial contribution) (Bendapudi, Singh, and Bendapudi 1996).

Unlike previous studies on embarrassment and compliance with helping request, the helping behavior that would be performed after complying with the helping request is in form of a token help through a charity, but not a direct help to the needy, in this study. The helping behavior is performed by complying with a cross-selling request for product which is sold for charity. In other words, by complying with the cross-selling request and purchase the For-Charity cross-selling product, the consumer can help those needy people who are sponsored by the charity. On the other hand,

consumers do not supposed to perceive that they are helping the others when they comply with the cross-selling request for product which is sold for profit.

2.3 HYPOTHESIS

To test the hypothesis, the cross-selling products are distinguished into two types, namely For-Profit and For-Charity. For-Profit refers to products which are cross-sold for profit, just like any other ordinary product sold in the store. On the other hand, For-Charity refers to products which are cross-sold for charity. Profits made from selling the For-Charity ones may be wholly or partly donated to a charity. Thus, buying For-Charity cross-sold product may be similar to donating money to a charity directly. Referring back to the conceptualization of helping, this is like making a token help.

Since embarrassment is an adaptive emotion with origin that serves as a warning to human beings who are at the threat of being excluded and rejected by the others in a social group, it is believed that the emotion leads the embarrassed ones to have a general tendency to seek social approval (Miller 1996). Such a general motive to please the others may not provoke embarrassed individuals to initiate a helping behavior by themselves, however, they would probably be more likely to comply with a helping request. It is because they would not take the risk of being evaluated negatively by the others further when they are asked to make a token help for needy people in the society, like being cross-sold the For-Charity product in this study. On the other hand, when embarrassed individuals are asked by an ordinary request, like purchasing a For-Profit cross-selling product in this study, the risk of being negatively evaluated further may not be so strong that can urge the embarrassed ones to comply

with the request.

When one suddenly perceives his/her presented-self as deficient, one is feeling embarrassed. According to the idea of impression management, embarrassment induces embarrassed ones to have a high impression motivation, being eager to control how the others judge and evaluate them. The impression people try to construct depends on their self-concept, desired and undesired identity images, role constraints, target's values, and current or potential social image (Leary and Kowalski 1990). Generally, people want to look kind and warmhearted. Hence, embarrassed individuals are more likely to help so that they can restore their damaged social image. In this study, it is easier for the embarrassed to present such a desired social image when they are asked to buy a For-Charity cross-selling product rather than the For-Profit one. Thus, it is expected that the effect of embarrassment on compliance with a cross-selling request must be greater for the For-Charity cross-selling product than the For-Profit one.

Obviously, motive for an embarrassed individual to help is entirely egoistic. Embarrassed ones are motivated to help in order to gain reward, a desirable impression, for helping. At the same time, they are motivated to help for the sake of avoiding further punishment, a social rejection, for not helping as they have perceived themselves as being repelled by the others already.

Based on the link between embarrassment and compliance with helping request established in psychology literature, this study proposes that embarrassed individuals are more likely to comply with a cross-selling request for For-Charity product. This gives rise to the hypothesis in this thesis.

H: When being cross-sold by cashiers at the check out counter, the effect of embarrassment on purchase intention for cross-selling products is greater for products cross-sold For-Charity than for those that are cross-sold For-Profit.

On the basis of the preceding analysis, Figure 3.1 presents a model of consumers' purchase intention for cross-selling product, by taking the emotion of embarrassment (Presence vs. Absence) and product type (For-Profit vs. For-Charity) into consideration.

Figure 3.1

A Model of Consumers' Purchase Intention for Cross-Selling Product


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          │   Cross-Selling Variables    │
          │  ┌──────────────────────┐    │
          │  │ Cross-Selling        │    │
          │  │ Product Type         │    │
          │  │  - For-Profit        │    │
          │  │  - For-Charity       │    │
          │  └──────────────────────┘    │
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                           │
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  Emotional States of         ▼        Behavioral Outcomes
     Consumer                         ┌──────────────┐
  ┌────────────────┐                  │  Purchase    │
  │ Embarrassment  │─────────────────▶│  Intention   │
  │  - Presence    │                  └──────────────┘
  │  - Absence     │
  └────────────────┘
└ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘                 └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
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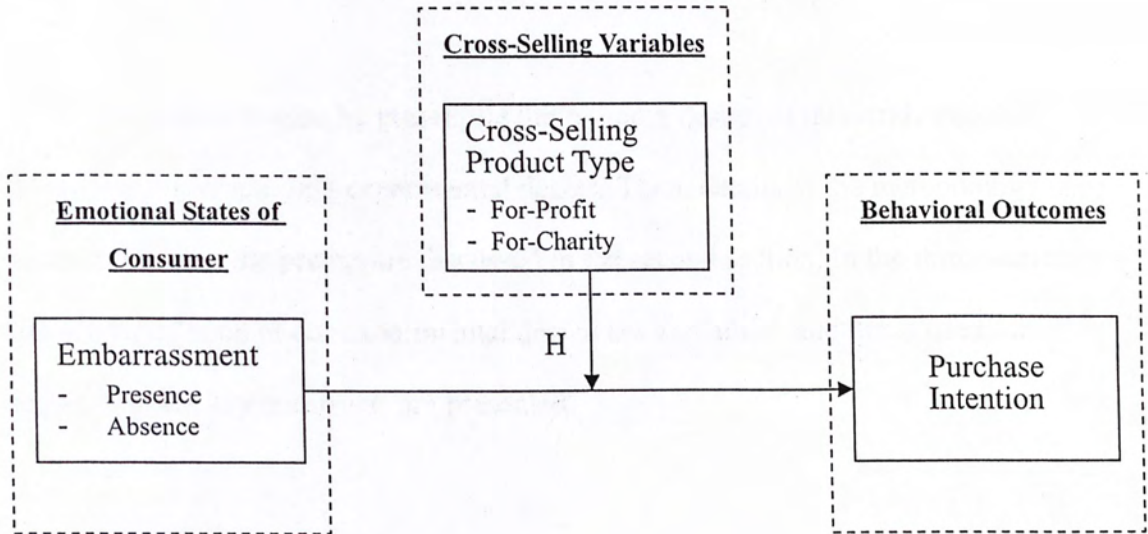
CHAPTER 3   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter begins by presenting the research design of this study and the advantages of employing experimental design. Then, details of the methodology used and results from the pretest are discussed in the second section. In the third section, the scenarios used in our experimental design are explained, and items used for measuring the key constructs are presented.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology adopted by study on emotions is of great variety, ranging from experiment with scenarios, laboratory experiment, field study, to retrospective self-reports. In this study, an experiment with scenarios was chosen as the methodology to test the hypotheses to permit the establishment of a clearer cause and effect relationship between the variables specified in the model.

This thesis used a between-subjects experimental design to investigate embarrassed consumers' purchase intention toward cross-selling products. Scenarios were employed to ask participants to imagine and involve themselves into a consumer purchase journey. Probably, there are several advantages of employing experimental design with scenarios. The key advantage is the improvement in internal validity while keeping the time and expenses required to carry out an experiment low. Such research design enables better control over the manipulated variable and can greatly reduce the random errors induced in the experimental setting (Lewis-Beck 1993).

Also, causal relationship can be inferred from such research design. Actually, the extensive use of this methodology in existing embarrassment study affirms its validity and effectiveness in conducting research in this area (e.g.; Higuchi and Fukada 2002; Parrott et al. 1988; Sabini et al. 2000; Tarr et al. 2005; Verbeke and Bagozzi 2003). Furthermore, using a between-subjects design can make demand effects less likely (Sawyer 1975).

All participants in this thesis were students at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Employing students as participants in experiment is a common practice in previous embarrassment studies (e.g. Cupach and Metts 1992; Dahl et al. 2001; Higuchi and Fukada 2002; Parrott et al. 1988; Parrott and Smith 1991; Singelis and Sharkey 1995). By doing so, many extraneous variables, such as age, education, and income level can be controlled, as students possess homogeneous background. As a result, unnecessary bias which may arise in the experiment can be removed.

In this thesis, a pretest and a main study were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. Details of the pretest and the main study are presented in the following sections.

3.2 PRETEST

The purposes of the pretest were to determine the product that could elicit the emotion of embarrassment, develop scenarios that could effectively manipulate the independent variables, refine questionnaire items that could be understood by participants, and pretest the hypotheses for the main study. The pretest was conducted throughout the whole month of April in 2006. Details are depicted in the following

sub-sections.

3.2.1 Embarrassing Product

Although past study has already established the relevance and effectiveness of using condom as the product-to-purchase for inducing feelings of embarrassment (Dahl et al. 2001), pretest was conducted to verify its legitimacy in this thesis.

Firstly, a survey with an open-end question, "Which product would you find embarrassing to purchase?" was conducted. Totally, there were 111 answers provided by 72 participants. According to this pool of suggested embarrassing products, a list of seven most common embarrassing products was generated. They were underwear, sanitary napkin, pregnancy test stick, pornography magazine, condom, deodorant, and hemorrhoid ointment

Then, another survey asked the participants to choose three out of the seven listed products as those they found most embarrassing to buy in a supermarket. An option of others was also provided. Finally, this survey got 51 responses, 23 of them were males. As the participants were asked to give their answers in descending order (i.e. from the most embarrassing to the third most embarrassing to buy), points were assigned accordingly with three points for the most embarrassing one, two for the second most, and one for the third most. The results showed that condom was chosen by most participants and got the highest point, for both male and female group. Therefore, it was decided to use condom as the product-to-purchase in the scenarios of the main study.

3.2.2 Scenario Development

This thesis consisted of two independent variables, embarrassment (presence vs. absence) and type of cross-selling product (For-Profit vs. For-Charity). Embarrassment was manipulated by varying the product-to-purchase in the scenario. For the embarrassment presence condition, participants were asked to purchase condom; for the embarrassment absence condition, they were asked to purchase drink. On the other hand, cross-selling product type was manipulated by varying whether the participants were told that the profit gained from selling the product would go to a charity. For the For-Charity condition, participants were told about this while those in the For-Profit condition were not told about this. Without explicitly telling the participant where the profit of selling the For-Profit product would go, they should probably look it as an ordinary cross-selling product, assuming that the product were cross-sold for profit.

Scenarios were tested by a series of pretests. They were gradually refined in wordings, sentence structures, events sequence, etc. in order to have an effective manipulation on the two testing independent variables. The effectiveness of embarrassment manipulation was assessed by three items adapted from previous study on consumer embarrassment in purchase (Dahl et al. 2001). Participants responded to a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored with the following labels: not embarrassed at all/very embarrassed, not uncomfortable at all/very uncomfortable, not awkward at all/ very awkward. The effectiveness of Type of Cross-Selling Product manipulation was assessed by one item seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "stronger agree". The English translation of the manipulation checks items is shown in Table 3.3

In the scenarios, shampoo was chosen as the cross-selling product because the pretests show no obvious association could be easily thought of between shampoo and drink/condom. The English translation of the scenarios is shown in Table 3.2.

3.2.3 Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire consisted of the following measures: dependent measures, control measures, self evaluation measures, purchase habits measures, reality measure, and suspicion probe.

Dependent Measures

Consumers' purchase intention for the cross-selling product and their likelihood of rejecting the cross-selling request were measured by an single item on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "stronger agree".

Control Measures

Interestingly, it was found that some participants might feel embarrassed when they were cross-sold by the cashier, as they were worried about how the cashier evaluated them and they just did not know how to respond to the request. Thus, control measures were introduced to assess level of participants' embarrassment elicited by the cross-selling request (vs. those elicited by purchasing an embarrassing product). Similar to the manipulation checks for embarrassment, embarrassment induced by the cross-selling request was measured by semantic scales anchored with the following labels: not embarrassed at all/very embarrassed, not uncomfortable at all/very

uncomfortable, not awkward at all/ very awkward (Dahl et al. 2001). Furthermore, the belief that they would feel uneasy if they did not purchase the cross-selling product was assessed by a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "stronger agree".

Since it has been found that familiarity with a product purchase affects the subsequent embarrassment level during purchase, items measuring the familiarity with drink/condom purchase adapted from previous study on consumer embarrassment were included (Dahl et al. 2001). Participants' purchase familiarity with drink/condom were measured on seven-point scales asking the frequency they purchase drink/condom (very rarely/very often), the last time they purchased drink/condom (never have purchased/purchased within the last month), and the familiarity they were with purchasing drink/condom (not familiar/very familiar).

These control measures were included in the questionnaire to ensure that the results obtained were due to the effects of the manipulated variables under investigation rather than those extraneous factors just mentioned.

Self Evaluation Measures

As the impression motivation is proposed as one of the underlying reasons for the embarrassed ones to comply with the cross-selling request, it might be interesting to look at how the participants perceive their competency in presenting themselves in front of the cashier before and after such impression management attempts. Thus, the perceived self-presentation and self-perception ratings before and after making the response to the cross-selling request were accessed for exploratory purposes. They

were assessed by items in a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored with very bad/very good.

Purchase Habits Measures

After conducting a pilot test, it was believed that the purchase of the cross-selling product could arise habitually without anything to do with alleviating embarrassment. Thus, items measuring the frequency of complying with cross-selling requests and likelihood of rejecting cross-selling requests were added. They were assessed in a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored with not often/very often and a Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "stronger agree" respectively.

Reality Measures

An item asking participants to indicate whether they have had such experience of being cross-sold at the cashier was assessed on seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "stronger agree". This item was included to ensure the findings obtained from the scenario would be applicable to real life marketing context.

Suspicion Probe

Participants were asked to complete an open-ended question indicating what they think the study was about. It was found that although the participants could not guess exactly what the study was about, some of them guessed that the study was about testing whether product cross-sold for charity would induce them to have higher purchase intention or they would be more likely to buy the cross-selling product when

they were embarrassed by the cashier's request. It was believed that the measures themselves might already arouse demand characteristics as it was too clear for them to guess what the focus of this study is. Therefore, after the pretest, it was decided to do the manipulation checks separately from the main study which measures the dependent variables. Without the manipulation checks, it was much more difficult for the participants to guess about what the study was really about in the main study.

3.2.4 Experimental Setting

Initially, the pretest was carried out with an average of 20 participants per session. However, it was observed that the participants were quite conscious about other participants' responses especially those who were randomly assigned to the presence of embarrassment condition. It was obvious that these participants would look around trying to see what the other were doing while those assigned to the absence of embarrassment condition would just look down and focus on completing the questionnaire. It was suspected that participants in the presence of embarrassment condition felt uncomfortable to fill in a questionnaire with such a sensitive topic and feared that their responses to the questions could be seen by the others. Therefore, the subsequent pretest was conducted in a much larger classroom with an average of 8 participants per session in order to increase the distances between participants. This could assure the participants that all the others would not be able to look at their answers and know their responses.

3.3 MAIN STUDY

After the pretest, the main study was conducted on CUHK campus during the end of April and the beginning of May 2006. It was a 2 (Embarrassment: Presence vs. Absence) X 2 (Type of Cross-Selling Product: For-Profit vs. For-Charity) between-subject experimental design. As mentioned in the previous section, manipulation checks were done separately from the main study for the sake of reducing the effect of demand characteristics. Details of the procedures are presented in the following sub-sections while the results and the data analyses are depicted in the next chapter.

3.3.1 Participants

Participants for the main study consisted of 100 CUHK students. Among the 100 participants, 2 of them were eliminated due to their misbehavior (i.e. talking on the mobile phone) during the study. Data were collected using individually completed booklets with an average of 6 participants per session.

3.3.2 Materials

Material used in the main study was the final version after a series of modifications throughout the pretest. It was a booklet consisting of a cover, a consumer purchase scenario, and a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three parts, measures on participant's responses based on the scenario, questions about participant's purchase habits, and questions about participant's demographic information (see Appendix I)

3.3.3 Scenarios

Based on the results from the pretest, four scenarios corresponding to the 2 (Embarrassment: Presence vs. Absence) X 2 (Type of Cross-Selling Product: For-Profit vs. For-Charity) experimental design were used for the main study. The English translation of the scenarios is shown as follows (with italics as manipulations):

Absence of Embarrassment & For-Profit Cross-Selling Product

One day, you went to a supermarket. It was not very crowded.

You went to the aisle placed with *drinks*. You thought for a moment in front of the shelf and picked the *drink* you decided to buy.

Then, you took the *drink* to the cashier to pay for it.

In a skilful way, the cashier packed your *drink* in the bag efficiently. Like treating all the other customers, the cashier asked if you would like to buy the *shampoo in promotion this week.*

Presence of Embarrassment & For-Profit Cross-Selling Product

One day, you went to a supermarket. It was not very crowded.

You went to the aisle placed with *condoms*. You thought for a moment in front of the shelf and picked the *condom* you decided to buy.

Then, you took the *condom* to the cashier to pay for it.

In a skilful way, the cashier packed your *condom* in the bag efficiently. Like treating all the other customers, the cashier asked if you would like to buy the *shampoo in*

promotion this week.

Absence of Embarrassment & For-Charity Cross-Selling Product

One day, you went to a supermarket. It was not very crowded.

You went to the aisle placed with *drinks*. You thought for a moment in front of the shelf and picked the *drink* you decided to buy.

Then, you took the *drink* to the cashier to pay for it.

In a skilful way, the cashier packed your *drink* in the bag efficiently. Like treating all the other customers, the cashier asked if you would like to buy the *shampoo for charity, the profits generated will be partly donated to a charity for charitable purpose.*

Presence of Embarrassment & For- Charity Cross-Selling Product

One day, you went to a supermarket. It was not very crowded.

You went to the aisle placed with *condoms*. You thought for a moment in front of the shelf and picked the *condom* you decided to buy.

Then, you took the *condom* to the cashier to pay for it.

In a skilful way, the cashier packed your *condom* in the bag efficiently. Like treating all the other customers, the cashier asked if you would like to buy the *shampoo for charity, the profits generated will be partly donated to a charity for charitable purpose.*

3.3.4 Manipulation Checks

Manipulation checks items were identical to the pretest. For embarrassment

manipulation, participants responded to seven-point semantic differential scales anchored with the following labels: not embarrassed at all/very embarrassed, not uncomfortable at all/very uncomfortable, not awkward at all/ very awkward. For Cross-Selling Product Type, participants responded to one item seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "stronger agree". The English translations of the manipulation checks items are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Manipulation Checks Items

Variable	Measuring Item
Embarrassment	When purchasing the drink/condom at the cashier, I feel: 1- not embarrassed at all 7- very embarrassed 1- not uncomfortable at all 7- very uncomfortable 1- not awkward at all 7- very awkward
Cross-Selling Product Type	Based on the scenario, part of the profit made from selling the shampoo will be contributed for charitable purpose.

The participants for the manipulation checks consisted of 109 CUHK students. They range from 19 to 26 years old. Data were collected using individually completed booklets with an average of 10 participants per session.

Material used in the manipulation checks was very similar to the main study. It was a booklet consisting of a cover, a consumer purchase scenario, and a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of the following parts: dependent measures, manipulation checks, control measures, self evaluation measures, reality measures, and suspicion probe (see Appendix II).

3.3.5 Dependent Measures

Dependent measure items were identical to those used in the pretest. Consumers' purchase intention for the cross-selling product and their likelihood of rejecting the cross-selling request were each measured by a single item seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "stronger agree".

3.3.6 Procedures

Each participant was given a booklet titled "Consumer Behavior Study". Booklets containing the scenarios and measurement scales were randomly distributed among the participants. All participants were asked to imagine and involve themselves into the scenario, taking the role of the consumer described in the scenario.

After reading the scenario, participants completed a series of measures regarding their purchase intention for the cross-selling product, embarrassment level when being requested to buy the cross-selling product, self-presentation and self-perception ratings, familiarity of being cross-sold, and personal habits on cross-selling product purchase. Participants then completed an open-ended question that asked them what they thought the study was about serving as a suspicion probe. Lastly, they were asked to provide demographic information to finish the booklet. After completing the booklet, each participant was given a remuneration of HKD30 for participation. The average completion time of the experiment was around ten minutes.

None of the participants could guess the real purpose of the experiment in the suspicion probe. Probably, this suggests that all the participants were blind to the

experiment and their responses were not influenced by the demand characteristics.

Results of the main study are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 OVERVIEW

In this chapter, results of the main study is presented and discussed. Manipulation checks for the manipulated independent variables are presented in the first section, followed by reliability analyses of the scale items. In the third section, analyses of variance (ANOVA) are adopted to test the hypothesis, followed by other findings in the fourth section. Finally, discussion for the results is then presented to finish the chapter.

4.1 RELIABILITY OF SCALES

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess all the multiple-item scales in the main study. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed for scales with three or more items. Results reveal that the reliability of all the scale measurements exceeded 0.7, the threshold suggested by Nunnally (1978). Details of the reliability analysis are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Reliability of Key Measurement Scales

Key independent variables	Cronbach's coefficient alpha
Embarrassment elicited by the product-to-purchase (3 items)	0.97
Embarrassment elicited by the cross-selling request (3 items)	0.88
Familiarity with purchasing drink/condom (4 items)	0.93
- Familiarity with purchasing drink (4 items)	0.77
- Familiarity with purchasing condom (4 items)	0.81
Embarrassment elicited by the cross-selling request (3 items)	0.93

4.2 MANIPULATION CHECKS

The manipulation checks and confounding checks were evaluated by ANOVAs. For the manipulation check on the presence of embarrassment, significant differences in the mean score of embarrassment level was expected between the two groups of different product-to-purchase (drink vs. condom). For the manipulation check on the type of cross-selling product, significant differences in the mean score of agreeing that the proceeds from selling the cross-selling product would be for charity purposes was expected across the two groups of different product-being-cross-sold (For-Profit vs. For- Charity). For the confounding checks, the mean score of embarrassment level between the two conditions of cross-selling product type should not be significantly different. The mean score of agreeing that the proceeds from selling the cross-selling product would be for charity purposes between the two conditions of embarrassment should also not be significantly different.

The results from the ANOVAs showed that the manipulation of embarrassment was successful. Specifically, the mean score of embarrassment level under the condition of condom purchase was significantly higher than those under the condition of drink purchase (M $_{Presence\ of\ Embarrassment}$ = 4.75, M $_{Absence\ of\ Embarrassment}$ = 1.79, p = 0.000). The mean score of agreeing that the proceeds from selling the cross-selling product would be for charity purposes under the condition of being cross-sold For-Charity product was significantly higher than those under the condition of being cross-sold For-Profit product (M $_{For-Charity}$ = 5.54, M $_{For-Profit}$ = 2.30, p = 0.000).

Besides, the results from the ANOVAs showed that there was not any confounding effect in the manipulation. Specifically, the manipulation of presence of

embarrassment did not have a significant effect on the mean score of agreeing that the proceeds from selling the cross-selling product would be for charity purposes ($F_{1,106}$ = 0.457, p = 0.501). The manipulation of cross-selling product type also did not have a significant effect on the mean score of embarrassment level ($F_{1,107}$ = 0.064, p = 0.801).

Furthermore, results from ANOVAs showed that the interaction tests of the two variables were clean. For embarrassment level, the interaction effect was not significant ($F_{1,105}$ = 0.362, p = 0.548). For the check on type of cross-selling product, the interaction effect was also not significant ($F_{1,104}$ = 2.805, p = 0.097).

In sum, the manipulations of embarrassment and type of cross-selling product were successful without any confounding and interaction effects. These results demonstrated that the manipulated independent variables were enacted or perceived by the participants as intended.

4.3 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis were tested by ANOVA based on the 2 (Embarrassment: Presence vs. Absence) X 2 (Type of Cross-Selling Product: For-Profit vs. For-Charity) between-subject design with data collected in main study.

Providing support for the hypothesis, the ANOVA indicated a marginally significant interaction effect between embarrassment and cross-selling product type on consumer's purchase intention ($F(1, 94) = 3.00$, $p < 0.1$, see Table 4.2). A planned contrast showed that the effect of embarrassment on purchase intention for

60

cross-selling product is significantly greater for products cross-sold For-Charity (M's difference = $M_{embarrassed|For-Charity} - M_{unembarrassed|For-Charity}$ = 3.52 - 2.40) than for those that are cross-sold For-Profit (M's difference = $M_{embarrassed|For-Profit} - M_{unembarrassed|For-Profit}$ = 2.80 - 2.52) (t(94) = 1.73, p < 0.05). Therefore, H was supported (see Figure 4.1 for a graphical depiction)

Table 4.2

ANOVA Analysis Results

Independent Variable	F
Embarrassment (Absence vs. Presence)	**8.27 ****
Type of Cross-Selling Product (For-Profit vs. For-Charity)	1.51
Embarrassment X Type of Cross-Selling Product	**3.00 ***

R^2 = .121, Adjusted R^2 = .093
*p<.10, **p<.05

Figure 4.1

Impact of Embarrassment on Purchase Intention for

Product Cross-Sold For-Profit and For-Charity
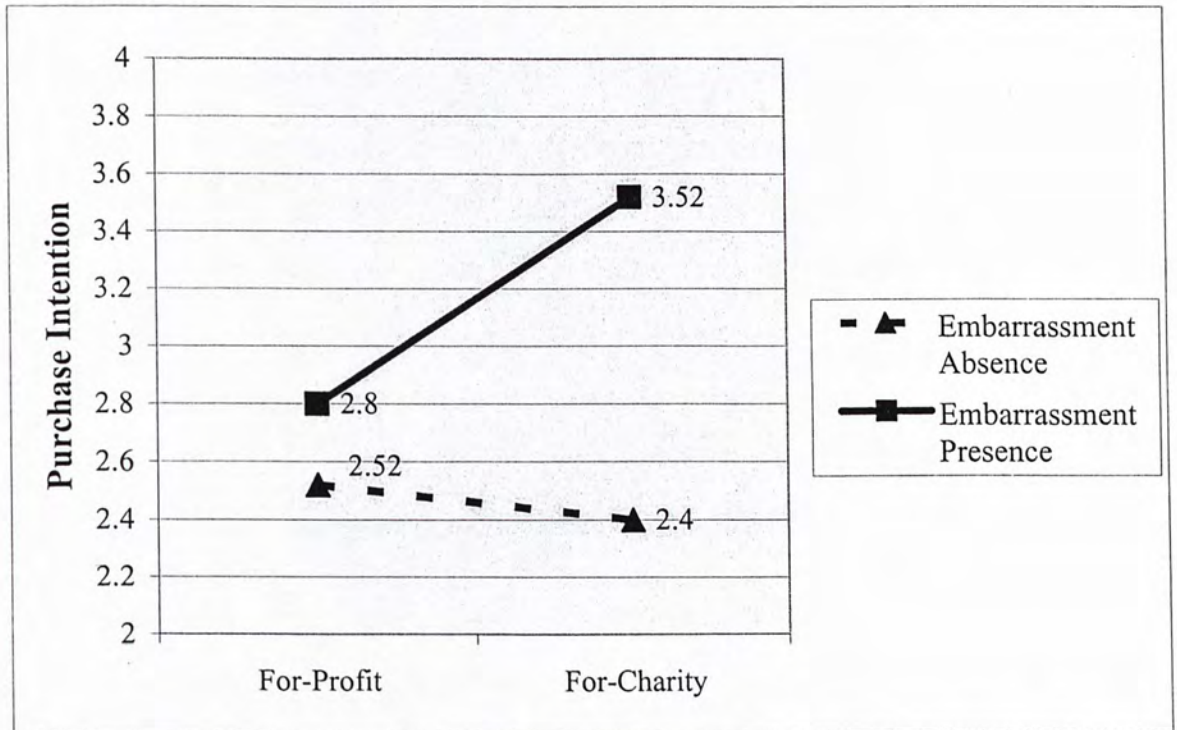
4.4 DISCUSSION

The results indicate that consumers' purchase intention for a cross-selling product depends on the interaction of two factors, whether the consumers are embarrassed, and whether the cross-selling product is sold for charity. The results support the hypothesis that the effect of embarrassment on purchase intention for cross-selling products is greater for products cross-sold For-Charity than for those that are cross-sold For-Profit. Specifically, embarrassed consumers have a higher purchase intention for For-Charity cross-selling product than the unembarrassed. On the other

hand, embarrassed consumers have a similar purchase intention for For-Profit

cross-selling product as the unembarrassed.

CHAPTER 5   CONCLUSION

5.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter concludes the whole thesis by highlighting the contributions, limitations, and future research directions. The first section presents the theoretical and managerial contributions of the thesis. Limitations are discussed in the second section, followed by the suggestions for future research. Finally, conclusion of this thesis is presented at the end of the chapter.

5.1 CONTRIBUTIONS

5.1.1 Theoretical Contribution

Study on embarrassment in psychology literature suggests three models to explain the root cause for this emotion, the Dramaturgic Model, the Social Evaluation Model, and the Self-Esteem Models (Higuchi and Fukada 2002; Miller 1996; Sabini et al. 2000). Although actual cases of embarrassment may include elements proposed from all these models, there should be a set of necessary and sufficient features to elicit the emotion (Parrott and Smith 1991). This thesis adopts the view of taking the antecedents suggested by both the Dramaturgic Model and Social Evaluation Model as the ultimate cause for embarrassment (c.f. Miller 1996). Such perspective offers a conceptualization of embarrassment which may allow better differentiation from shame and social anxiety.

Extant psychology literature shows that embarrassed individuals have a higher compliance with a helping request than the unembarrassed (Apsler 1975; Cann and

Blackwelder 1984). As embarrassment is such a widely occurring emotion pertaining to consumer behavior, this study tries to test the robustness of this finding in the context of consumer behavior. More importantly, this study also aims at further examine the exact cause for the embarrassed ones to have such a higher compliance with a helping request. It is believed that the previous empirical findings depend much on the nature of the request. Specifically, whether embarrassment leads to a higher compliance to all kinds of request including helping request or the emotion leads to a higher compliance with helping request only but not with any other types of request may need further investigation.

By regarding embarrassment as an adaptive emotion and considering this emotion under the framework of impression management, this study is inclined to support the latter suggestion that embarrassed individuals have a higher compliance with the helping request only. It is the helping behavior the embarrassed individuals are going to perform after complying with the helping request, but not the helping request itself, that matters. For ordinary request, without the helping behavior which would have to be performed, embarrassed individuals may not be more likely to comply with the request than the unembarrassed. The reason is that helping behavior may act as a means for the embarrassed to avoid social rejection and repair the ruined images while compliance with an ordinary request without helping behavior performed may not achieve such purposes.

More specifically, in the context of consumer purchase, this thesis proposes that embarrassed consumers have a higher purchase intention for cross-selling product than the unembarrassed and this effect is greater for those which is sold for charity than those for profit. Results of the experiment support this hypothesized relationship.

This study sheds light on the link between embarrassment and its subsequent egoistic helping behavioral tendency.

5.1.2 Managerial Contribution

Charity is a big business. In 2003, Americans donated about USD241 billion to charity, an increase of 2.8% from 2002 (American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel 2004). The total contributions were estimated to be 2.2% of GDP in 2003. However, it has never been an easy task for charity to elicit help and donations. Today's environment may make this job even challenging as there is a growing need for their services yet with a shrinking government support. This thesis may provide insights for charity on their promotional strategy planning that targets on individual donors, who is the largest source of contributions for charity (American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel 2005)

Since it is found that embarrassed consumers have a higher purchase intention for those cross-selling product which is sold for charity, it may be true that charity can draw more donations if it can cooperate with stores that sell embarrassing products. Obviously, embarrassing product does not limit to condom and other sex-related products. Many women indicated that they found buying cosmetics, skin care products, body slim products, and even trousers embarrassing in our pretest. Some men also said that buying toys, foods supposed for kids, and shaver were embarrassing. Thus, charity may cooperate with stores selling these ordinary yet potentially embarrassing products to see if donations can be boosted.

Admittedly, this thesis may not offer an immediate and direct managerial

implication to the marketers on dealing with embarrassment at this stage. However, it is believed that this kind of preliminary study may be necessary before any concrete managerial implications can be provided. It is hoped that the theoretical understanding accumulated from all study on embarrassment including those contributed from this thesis form a foundation for later research in this area.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

Despite the emergence of interesting findings and implications from this thesis, limitations exist in this study. In order to test the hypothesis, scenarios were set in a cross-selling context with manipulations in source of embarrassment (condom) as well as cross-sold product (shampoo). Although experiment with scenarios has been widely used in previous studies on embarrassment (e.g. Higuchi and Fukada 2002; Parrott et al. 1988; Sabini et al. 2000; Tarr et al. 2005; Verbeke and Bagozzi 2003), this method has its limitations.

Some may doubt the generalizability and applicability of the results. The findings may only apply to cases with embarrassment elicited from sex-related product purchase like condom, but cannot generalize to the other embarrassing product purchase such as deodorant, body slim product, mouth wash, etc, which are entirely irrelevant to sex. Also, instead of asking the embarrassed consumers to buy a cross-selling product for charity, the findings may not be generalized to the other context like the one that the charity asks the embarrassed consumers to make the donations directly. Moreover, only students were employed as participants in this study, the findings may not be representative of the general public. The embarrassment arisen from condom purchase may only due to their general

unfamiliarity with doing so. It is possible that the findings cannot be generalized to those with more experiences in buying condom. Therefore, the model and hypotheses presented in this thesis are waiting for further scrutiny in other settings, by other methods, and with different samples to complement its limitations.

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Consumer embarrassment is a topic with fruitful avenue for future research. Due to the lack of understanding of this emotion in the marketing context, study proposing frameworks for classification may be of great constructive values. Based on the findings as well as the exploration process of this thesis, some promising future research directions are described in the following sub-sections.

5.3.1 Embarrassing Product Typology

Although condom is chosen as the product to purchase for eliciting embarrassment in this thesis, probably, some people would not be embarrassed by buying condom. In contrast, it is interesting that some of the participants indicated that buying toys, trousers, and identical products in large quantity were embarrassing in the pretest. According to these findings, this thesis points to a wide variety of potentially embarrassing product that consumers may feel embarrassed to buy. However, it seems that the underlying reasons for these products to be embarrassing are different. Certainly, based on the conceptualization of embarrassment presented in this thesis, they are embarrassed because all of them perceive their presented-self as deficient suddenly.

Therefore, developing a framework classifying different types of embarrassing product is important for future research on embarrassment in consumer purchase. Actually, a categorical framework of embarrassment has been developed in psychology literature (Miller 1996 p.52). It may be of huge value for study in developing a similar framework on types of embarrassing product. For example, buying toys may be embarrassing because it implies departures from personal goals like being mature; buying trousers is embarrassing because it may lead to failures of privacy regulation like disclosure of size; massively buying the same product is embarrassing because it is conspicuous to others turning the consumer to be the focus of attention. Obviously, an embarrassing product typology not only useful in itself, it also aids better conceptualization of this emotion in the marketing context.

5.3.2 Coping Strategies to Embarrassment and Fear of Embarrassment

As mentioned earlier, most research on coping strategies to embarrassment comes from communications literature. It appears that the coping strategies under investigation in these studies focus on verbal communications coping like apology, excuse, and humor. On the other hand, behavioral coping strategies which may be more commonly found in consumer behavior have not yet been examined extensively. For example, helping behaviors investigated in this thesis may be one of the many possible behavioral coping strategies to consumer embarrassment. Also, as suggested by a previous field study (Lewittes and Simmons 1975), buying additional items like candy and gum may be another possibility. It may be useful to develop a categorization scheme for coping strategies to embarrassment in the marketing context.

In spite of the distinct differences between embarrassment and the fear of embarrassment regarding their emotional states, it may be interesting to look at them together in the context of marketing. As mentioned in previous sections, many consumers have their own coping strategies to avoid the anticipated embarrassment. Apparently, the most common way to deal with the anticipatory embarrassment is to avoid it to happen. Hence, consumers may simply give up the chance to satisfy their needs and wants for the sake of not being embarrassed. For example, consumers may choose not to buy the hemorrhoids ointment from the pharmacy but just let their hemorrhoids to recover on their own so as to avoid the potential embarrassment they anticipated. On the contrary, consumers may cope with it in other ways. Consumers may go to a pharmacy in remote area where no one knows them; consumers may buy it online without getting noticed by the others. Thus, it seems that developing a classification framework for copying strategies to fear of embarrassment may be as important as that for embarrassment itself in consumer behavior.

5.3.3 Coping Strategic Inclinations to Embarrassment

Until this moment, it may become clear that coping strategic inclinations to embarrassment may be largely distinguished into two types, approaching matches to the desired image (promotion focus) vs. avoiding mismatches to the desired image (prevention focus) (see Higgins 1998). For example, salespeople may be more inclined to perform protective reactions like apologize and refrain from closing a deal when embarrassment strikes during a personal selling encounter (Verbeke and Bagozzi 2002). These acts seem to be more prevention focus, intending to avoid any further mismatch to ones' desired social image. On the other hand, as proposed in this thesis, embarrassed consumers may be more likely to purchase cross-selling product

which is sold for charity, intending to create an impression closer to their desired social image. This may said to be more promotion focus.

Actually, prevention and promotion focus coping inclinations toward embarrassment may be similar to the ideas suggested in self-presentation literature that there are acquisitive vs. protective self-presentation styles (Arkin 1981). Acquisitive self-presentation focus on achieving a successful presentation of self while protective one focus on avoiding significant losses in social approval. Drawing on the conceptualizations in regulatory focus and self-presentation styles, it may be rewarding to investigate whether it is legitimate to classify embarrassment into two types, promotion focus and prevention focus, and what the reasons are for their subsequent behavioral inclinations different.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This thesis presents a conceptual model that integrates and extends previous literature on embarrassment and helping behavior. The thesis findings support the impact of embarrassment on purchase intention for cross-selling product. More specifically, the results indicate that embarrassed consumers have a higher purchase intention for For-Charity cross-selling products than unembarrassed consumers but not for For-Profit ones. These findings not only enhance the theoretical understanding of how embarrassed consumers behave after undergoing this aversive emotion, but also provide managerial implications for charity to plan for their promotional strategies. The results of this thesis also point to many avenues for future research on this topic. Future research may be extended to examine the typology of embarrassing product, coping strategies to embarrassment and fear of embarrassment in consumer

behavior, and strategic inclinations toward embarrassment.

Undeniably, consumer embarrassment deserves more research efforts to explore its nature and impact in consumer behavior. The proposed relationships between consumer embarrassment and its subsequent helping tendency provide a very preliminary framework waiting for further exploration. The underdeveloped topic welcomes all of us to have a discovery journey.
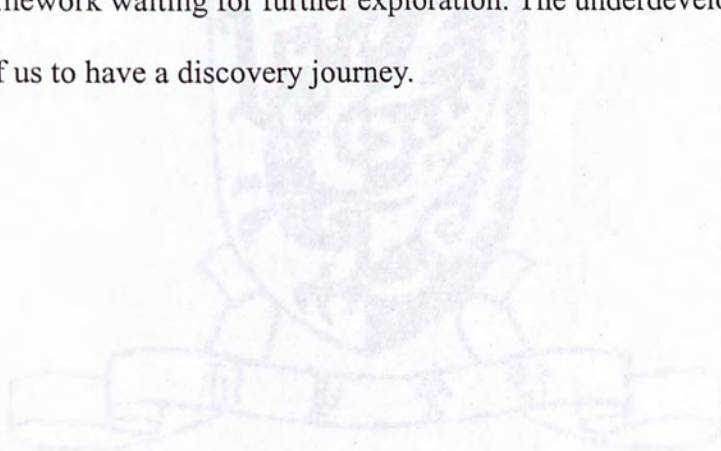
香港中文大學
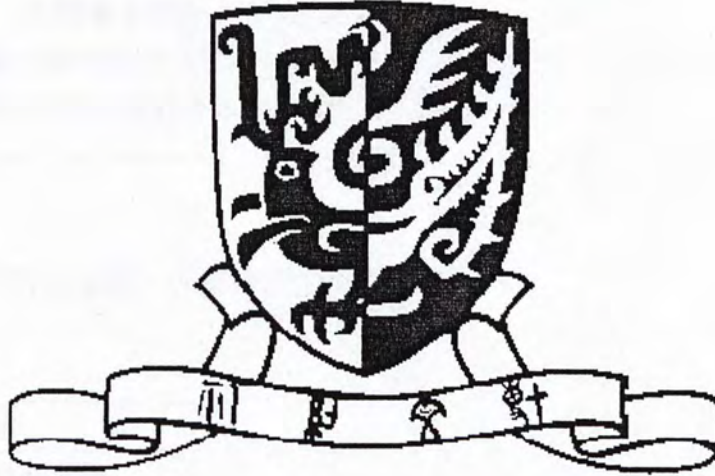
市場學系

顧客行為問卷調查

填寫問卷須知：

- ♦ 於作答期間，請保持安靜，以免騷擾他人。
- ♦ 你的所有答案將絕對保密，問卷將以不記名方式收集，請放心作答。
- ♦ 請認真代入所描述情景，並誠實回答所有問題。
- ♦ 於作答期間，請勿與其他問卷調查參加者討論問卷內容。
- ♦ 如有任何疑問，請舉手示意，切勿胡亂離開座位發問騷擾他人。

以下文字描述一段有關超級市場購物的情景。

試**想像**你就是下面**情景中所描述的主角**。請仔細閱讀下面的情景，然後回答有關問題。

```
一天，你走到超級市場，人不算多。
你走到擺放飲品的通道。你站在飲品架前，想了一會，選擇了一款
你想要買的飲品。
然後，你便拿著飲品，前往收銀處排隊付款。
收銀員熟練地給你迅速袋好了飲品，然後跟對之前其他顧客一樣，
問你要不要加錢購買本週推廣洗髮水。
```

第一部份---
請根據以上所描述情景，圈出最適合你的答案：

	非常不同意		無意見			非常同意	
我會購買洗髮水	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我會拒絕收銀員的促銷	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常差					非常好	
在剛排隊輪到我，我把所購貨品拿給收銀員結帳時，我認為自己是一個____的人	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在剛排隊輪到我，我把所購貨品拿給收銀員結帳時，我認為收銀員對我的第一印象：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在我付款後，拿著所購貨品離去時，我認為自己是一個____的人	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在我付款後，拿著所購貨品離去時，我認為收銀員對我的印象：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不尷尬					非常尷尬	
在收銀員詢問我要否加錢購買洗髮水時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常自在					非常不自在	
在收銀員詢問我要否加錢購買洗髮水時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不難為情					非常難為情	
在收銀員詢問我要否加錢購買洗髮水時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

第二部份---

請根據你的日常購物習慣，圈出最適合你的答案：

	不常						經常
我遇到在付款結帳時，收銀員向我促銷其他貨品的頻密度	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	從未曾嘗試過						一個月內
我上一次遇到在付款結帳時，收銀員向我促銷其他貨品是	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不熟悉						非常熟悉
我對在付款結帳時，收銀員向我促銷其他貨品的熟悉程度是	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	不常						經常
日常生活中，你購買收銀員在你付款結帳時所促銷的其他貨品的頻密度	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常不同意			無意見			非常同意
日常生活中，你常常拒絕收銀員在你付款結帳時所促銷的貨品	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

第三部份---

個人資料：

請提供以下資料：

性別　（請圈出）	男	女
出生年份		

你認為這份問卷調查正研究甚麼呢？（如不知道或不清楚，請填不知道／不清楚）

~　謝謝　~

香港中文大學

市場學系

超級市場購物體驗問卷調查

是項問卷調查目的：
研究顧客在超級市場購物的感受，深入了解顧客的需要。

填寫問卷須知：

- ♦ 你的所有答案將絕對保密，問卷將以不記名方式收集，請放心作答。
- ♦ 請確定已閱畢所有圖文才開始填寫問卷。
- ♦ 請認真代入所描述處境之角色，並誠實回答所有問題。
- ♦ 於作答期間，請勿與其他問卷調查參加者討論。

以下文字描述一段有關超級市場購物的情境。

現假設閱下為所描述<u>處境之主角</u>，請細心閱讀，<u>運用幻想並全情投入角色</u>，然後回答有關問卷。

一天，你走到超級市場，人不算多。

你走到擺放飲品的通道。你站在飲品架前，想了一會，選擇了一款你想要買的飲品。

然後，你便拿著飲品，前往收銀處排隊付款。

收銀員熟練地給你迅速袋好了飲品，然後跟對之前其他顧客一樣，問你要不要加錢購買本週推廣洗髮水。

請圈出你的答案：

	非常不同意			無意見			非常同意
我會購買上述洗髮水	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我會拒絕收銀員的促銷	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不尷尬						非常尷尬
在付款購買上述飲品時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常自在						非常不自在
在付款購買上述飲品時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不難為情						非常難為情
在付款購買上述飲品時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不尷尬						非常尷尬
在收銀員詢問我要否加錢購買上述洗髮水時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常自在						非常不自在
在收銀員詢問我要否加錢購買上述洗髮水時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不難為情						非常難為情
在收銀員詢問我要否加錢購買上述洗髮水時，我感到：	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常差						非常好
我認為收銀員對我的第一印象是	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在我付款後離去時，我認為收銀員對我的印象是	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	不常						經常
我購買飲品的頻密度	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	從未嘗試購買					一個月內	
我上一次購買飲品是	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	毫不熟悉					非常熟悉	
我對購買飲品的熟悉程度是	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我對在超級市場購買飲品的熟悉程度是	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常差						非常好
在排隊剛輪到我付款時，我認為自己是一個這樣的人	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在我付款後離去時，我認為自己是一個這樣的人	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常不同意			無意見		非常同意	
根據以上文字，售賣上述洗髮水的收益將有部份作慈善用途	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
不購買上述洗髮水會讓我感到不好意思	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
日常生活中，我也有遇過在結帳時，收銀員向我推銷其他商品這情況	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
你認為這份問卷調查正研究甚麼呢？							

請提供以下資料：

性別 （請圈出）	男	女
出生年份		

~ 謝謝 ~

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