Brand Effects on the Landscape of Consumer Experience

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Background: In previous reports we have discussed how to analyze consumer motivations data[1,2]. Such data typically come from studies in which consumers evaluate a series of degree of agreement statements about possible motivators. For example, if the product is a cranberry juice drink the motivation statements might include measures concerning taste and odor while also including statements concerning health benef ts. Different consumers may respond to these questions differently because their motivations for product consumption may differ. At the individual level each consumer compares their experience of their actual motivation with each of the potential motivators and reports degrees of agreement based on similarity between their experience and the potential motivators. Since similarity judgments are used as a basis for the degrees of agreement, Landscape Segmentation Analysis® (LSA) can be used to better understand consumer motivations. In this report we build on this idea of comparing an experience to a concept as we apply LSA to learn more about the effect of branding on consumer experience.

Scenario: Your company produces a wide range of wines. You would like to gain better insight into how your products are perceived both with and without branding so that you may learn the effect of imagery variables on consumer perception. In particular, you are interested in investigating the effect of branding on two of your products. The first of these two products is a premium wine that your company has produced for many years. The second is a new wine that your company wishes to position as an economy brand. In order to research this area you conduct a large scale consumer test in which a representative sample of f ve hundred consumers evaluates each of your products, both blind and branded, on liking as well as on eight applicability scales dealing with product quality and imagery variables. The applicability scales are shown in Table 1 and the liking scale is a nine-point word category scale ranging from *Dislike Extremely* to *Like Extremely*. You are interested in possible changes in the underlying consumer landscape induced by branding and you will use the results of your analysis to evaluate brand strength.

Table 1. Statements rated on a nine point degree of agreement scale: "This wine is…":

Robust	*Good with Lunch*
Good for Everyday	*Inexpensive*
Good for Parties	*Boring*
For Special Occasions	*Well Balanced*

Modeling Applicability Data: Suppose that a consumer has experienced a product and is now asked to rate their degree of agreement with a statement about the product. One could view this process as a similarity comparison between the consumer's actual product experience and the consumer's hypothetical experience of a product for which that statement would apply exactly. For those already familiar with LSA this means that instead of having many products appearing on the same LSA map, we instead have a different LSA map for every product. On each map we no longer have products but instead have concepts that may or may not apply to the product to which the map corresponds. Each consumer is then placed on the map so that their nearness to the various concepts is determined by how well their experience of the product in question matches these concepts. When a consumer's location on the map is close to a concept's location that means that the consumer's experience of the product was resonant with that concept. When a consumer is far from a concept, their experience of the product was not resonant with that concept.

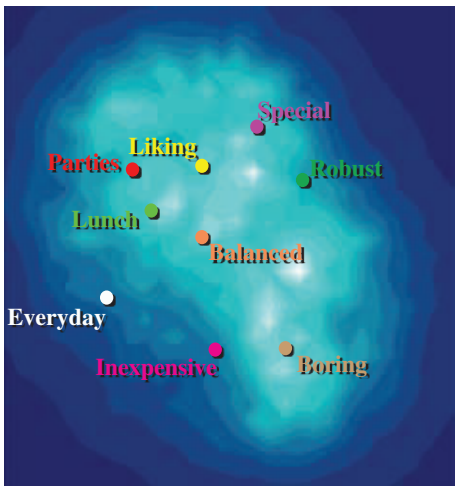

Figure 1a. Blind evaluation of the premium product. Lighter areas represent greater densities of consumers

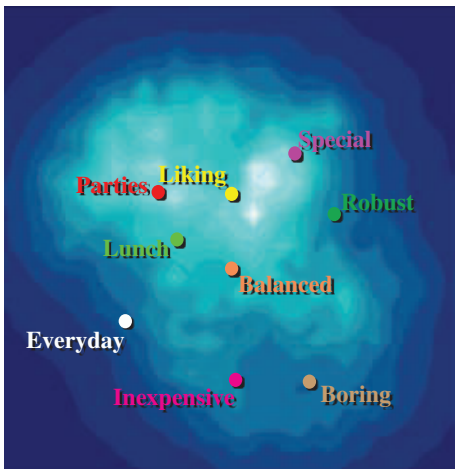

Figure 1b. Branded evaluation of the premium product

Blind and Branded Maps: Returning to blind and branded data we take the idea of the previous section one step further. When different products are evaluated blind and branded, the consumer's experience of the product could easily be affected by branding. By allowing one to gauge how consumer experiences change in the presence of branding this application of LSA provides a tool to study branding effects. Note that this use of LSA to study branding is different from a use described in a previous technical report,[3] in which liking was unfolded to reveal individual ideal points.

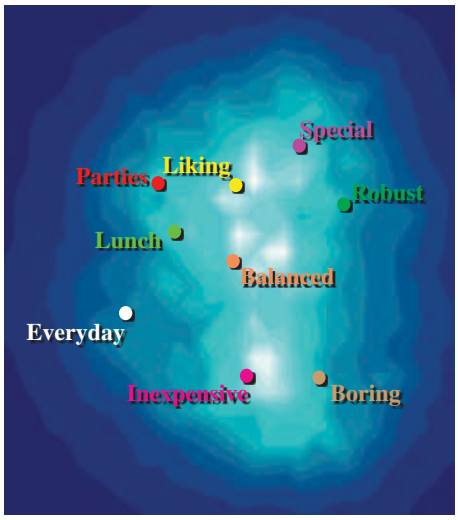

Figure 2a. Blind evaluation of the economy product

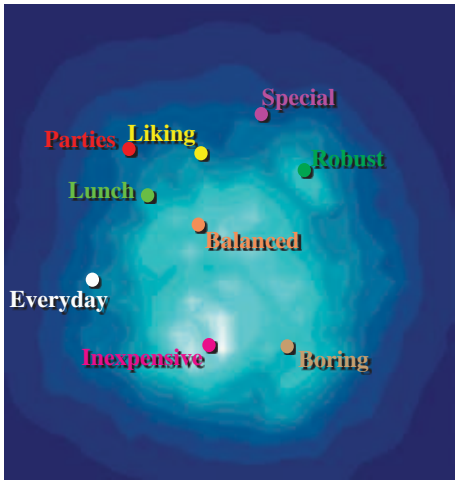

Figure 2b. Branded evaluation of the economy product

The LSA results for the blind and branded data from our scenario are shown in Figures 1 and 2. Figures 1a and 1b show the results for the premium product while Figures 2a and 2b show the results for the economy brand. Moreover, Figures 1a and 2a show the results for the blind data while Figures 1b and 2b show the results for the branded data. Visual inspection of the blind LSA map for the premium product indicates that multiple segments exist including those who believe that the product is *For Special Occasions* and those who believe the product is *Boring*. However, when the premium wine is branded the segmentation shifts. When branded, the consumer density changes so that most consumers both like the wine and believe that the wine is *For Special Occasions*. This indicates that the wine has strong, positive brand strength.

In the second case, the LSA map for the new brand indicates that there is again segmentation among individuals. Unlike the case for the premium brand, when the new wine is branded the positive perceptions drop dramatically as indicated by a consumer density shift away from *Liking* and *For Special Occasions* towards the qualities *Boring* and *Inexpensive*. This result demonstrates that the economy brand currently experiences a strongly negative branding effect.

Interpretation of the LSA Maps: These LSA results clarify many issues regarding your brands' features. For instance, the LSA results for the economy brand indicate that there is a relatively high hedonic value for the blind product as demonstrated by the large cluster of consumers near *Liking*. In addition, individuals in this cluster agree that this product is *For Special Occasions* and is *Robust*. However, when the wine's product name and concept are presented to consumers, the hedonic value drops significantly. It is possible that the wine's intrinsic sensory profile is incompatible with its image as an economy brand. To improve your overall product portfolio, one option is to redesign the product image to move into a product-concept region that is not occupied by your premium brand but that will still allow liking of the economy brand to increase. Repositioning the wine to have higher *Good for Everyday* and *Good for Lunch* resonance once branded appears to fulfill both requirements.

Conclusions: Prior research has demonstrated the ability of LSA to derive unique insights regarding branding. Traditionally LSA has been used to unfold ideal points from liking ratings. In this present report we demonstrated an alternate use of LSA to reveal the relationship between consumer experiences and various concepts related to those experiences. In this way we showed how LSA can be used to qualitatively assess brand strength.

References:

[1]Rousseau, B. and Ennis, D.M. (2002). Motivations for product consumption. *IFPress*, **5**(*3*) 2,3.

[2]Ennis, D.M. and Rousseau, B. (2004). Motivations for product consumption: Application of a probabilistic model to adolescent smoking. *Journal of Sensory Studies*, **19**, 107-117.

[3]Rousseau, B. and Ennis, D.M. (2008). An application of Landscape Segmentation Analysis® to blind and branded data. *IFPress*, **11**(*3*) 2,3.