

# **The Effects of Brand Relationship Norms on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior**

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September 09, 2001

**Abstract:**

The key premise underlying this work is that different relationships carry with them specific norms of behavior. Three experiments tested the general hypothesis that consumers' brand evaluations are guided by the norms of consumer-brand relationships. Two types of consumer-brand relationships were examined – 'exchange' relationships in which people provide benefits to others in order to get something back, and 'communal' relationships in which benefits are given to demonstrate concern for other's needs. It was hypothesized that the degree of consistency between the actions taken by a brand and the norms of the particular relationship influence consumers' evaluation of those actions.

Results of Experiment 1 showed that charging a fee for providing a special service violated communal relationship norms but not exchange relationship norms, causing communal relationship participants to evaluate the brand poorly relative to the exchange participants. Results of Experiment 2 showed that an offer of an inexpensive gift rather than cash compensation for filling out a questionnaire is perceived as a violation of relationship norms by exchange participants but not by communal participants, leading the former to have a lower evaluation of the brand. Finally, results of Experiment 3 showed that relative to communal participants, exchange participants experienced greater violation of relationship norms, and evaluated the brand lower in response to a request for help from the brand if the request was made after some time gap rather than immediately after they had sought help from the brand. Mediation analysis supported the hypothesis that a violation of relationship norms influenced participants' evaluation of the brand as well as their assessment of the relationship strength. Findings are consistent with the premise that analogous to interpersonal relations, brand-consumer relationships carry with them socially sanctioned norms of behavior and adherence to or violation of these norms influences the appraisal of specific marketing actions.

Branding and brand-based differentiation are powerful means for creating and sustaining competitive advantage. Prior research has examined differences in how consumers perceive and evaluate brands, for example brand equity (Aaker 1991; Aaker and Biel 1993; Keller 1997; McQueen, Foley and Deighton 1993), brand personality (Batra, Lehmann and Singh 1993; Plummer 1985; Aaker 1997) and brand extensions (Nakamoto, McInnis and Jung 1993; Aaker and Keller 1990). More recently, researchers have noted that consumers differ not only in how they perceive brands but also in how they relate to brands (Fournier 1998; Muniz Jr. and O'Guinn 2001, Blackston 1993). This line of research has suggested that people sometimes form relationships with brands in much the same way in which they form relationships with each other in a social context. For example, Fournier (1998) has argued that consumer-brand relationships cover a wide spectrum encompassing 'flings', 'courtships', 'best friendships', 'arranged marriages' and 'enmities' among others. In addition to the existing academic work, there is some support from marketing practitioners that people may sometimes form relationships with brands quite like their relationships with other people. A recent paper in the quarterly strategy journal published by the consulting firm Booz-Allen & Hamilton argues that some loyal consumers, called 'brand zealots' experience a relationship that goes well beyond the fulfillment of a functional need (Rozanski, Baum and Wolfsen 1999). These consumers are militant in their commitment to the brand and have a strong sense of emotional loyalty to the brand. These brand zealots 'animate' the brand, giving it quasi-human qualities and relate to it in a way similar to how they relate to human beings.

In addition, there is abundant anecdotal evidence suggesting that consumers commonly interact with brands in ways that seem more appropriate for relationships between people. Most of us know some people who are 'crazy' about their cars, or their music systems or even their watches. The love affair that some consumers have with their VW Beetle can be seen first hand

on the innumerable web-sites where people have shared their intimate experiences with the brand (e.g., <http://custom1.vw.com/ownExp/>). Consumers have been known to give names to their ‘bugs’, and have been observed talking to them and stroking them with affection<sup>1</sup>. The New Coke experience demonstrates how the millions of dollars spent on product and research failed to capture the powerful emotional undercurrents that consumers experienced with the brand. Mac users, reputed to be very passionate about their brand, have Web pages known to feature an altered picture of Bill Gates that includes devil-style horns, entitled ‘Save us from the Gates of Hell’ (Muniz Jr. and O’Guinn 2001). I personally know an advertising executive who got the ‘Apple’ logo of Macintosh tattooed on his chest – next to his heart! All these examples suggest that people sometimes form a very close bond with brands. And in some extreme cases, a passion, that is often associated only with a close circle of friends and family.

The present work is an effort to understand the implications of forming such strong emotional bonds with brands. This work extends prior work on brand relationships, which has largely been descriptive, by studying the effect of different types of relationships on consumer attitudes, behaviors and brand evaluations. The central premise of this research is that relationships carry with them norms of behavior that guide the actions of the people in the relationships and that affect their evaluation of the relationship partner. In particular, this work uses a relational framework to explain differences in consumer responses to marketing actions taken by a brand. One specific goal of this research is to extend our understanding of the consumer-brand relationships in order to make predictions that would not be possible using existing theories about the effects of brand personality, brand loyalty, imagery, or familiarity. This work also has some important managerial implications. There is a growing interest in brand-related research in this world of fast changing technology and rapid product imitations. One of the few sustainable differentiating tools available to marketers is the brand’s equity that

they can build. The relationship metaphor, and the work presented here, can be seen as an effort at extending the 'static' concept of equity into an interactive, dynamic process.

### **BRANDS AS RELATIONSHIP PARTNERS**

The types of brand relationships outlined in prior work suggest a continuum, depending upon how close, personal and deep the relationship is perceived to be. For example, Fournier (1998) describes one of her participants' relationships with Coke Classic and Ivory as 'best friendship' but with trial size shampoos as 'flings' and with Gatorade as 'committed partnerships'. Her research shows that people describe the relationship with brands in the same terms as relationships with other people. However, the idea that people form relationships with brands is not without controversy. Prior research has noted that people and objects differ in many ways and different approaches may be needed to examine how consumers interact with each of them (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Lingle Altom and Medin 1984; Wyer, Srull and Gordon 1986). For example, Kardes (1986) notes that the effect of initial judgment on subsequent judgments of products is different from the extent of this effect on social judgments and impression formation of people. Lingle et al (1984) suggest that judgments of social stimuli (i.e. people) are likely to depend on inferred, abstract information (e.g. traits) whereas judgments of non-social stimuli (e.g. products) are likely to depend on concrete attributes. Menon and Johar (1997) find that the positivity effect in judgments of social experiences is not likely to manifest in judgments of product experiences. One reason noted for expecting non-social judgments to differ from social judgments is that people often judge others using the self as a frame of reference (Fong and Markus 1982) whereas no such comparison is possible in judging non-social objects (Fiske and Taylor 1991).

While acknowledging that relationships with non-social objects are different from social relationships, there may be reasons why people sometimes interact with brands in ways that parallel human interactions. First, consumers often do not distinguish between brands and manufacturers of brands. To them the company is the brand, and the brand is the company. This perception is more likely for service brands (e.g. hotels, airlines and banks), for brands that have a combination of products and services as their core offering (e.g. many online stores) and for brands in which consumers have a direct interaction with people who work for the company. When people interact with human beings as representatives of the brand, it is easy to use relationships used in human interactions for such brands.

Second, even when companies focus primarily on selling physical products, some consumers may think of the brand as a living being. Animism, the belief that objects possess souls, has long been recognized in the domain of products (Gilmore 1919). McGill (1998) has looked at differences between natural and artifactual (man-made) categories and suggested that ‘... people treat some brands and products as if their characteristics are produced by an underlying, defining essence, analogous to DNA or a soul, and not by human design or construction’. Moon (2000) has demonstrated that many of the social ‘rules’ and conventions that govern interpersonal interaction also apply to the human-computer relationship. This finding is consistent with what other writers have suggested that computers have characteristics of natural categories whereas most other artifactual categories such as tables or chairs do not (Gelman 1988; Gelman and Coley 1991; Keil 1986). Thus, even for some physical products people may think of the products as having a soul or, at least, more human-like properties.

Third, the brand communicates with its consumers in a large number of ways. The dynamic and repeated interactions in the form of direct mail, ad messages, discount-coupons, and freebies have strengthened the sense of an ongoing relationship between the brand and the

consumer. Over time, with the use of interactive media like the internet and emails, this sense of two-way relationship and communication has become even stronger and more pervasive.

Finally, marketing practitioners and researchers often use projective techniques to get the consumers to describe the brands in terms of age, gender, socio-economic characteristics and other personality traits (D. Aaker 1991; Keller 1998). Prior research has found that brands are often perceived to have a gender (Levy, 1959), and three of the five dimensions used to describe brand personality are the same as those used to describe human personality traits (J. Aaker 1997). Marketers also encourage this perception by using brand mascots in advertising messages in an effort to 'bring the brand alive' (e.g., Michelin Man, Energizer Bunny, Mr. Clean, Hush Puppies, Pillsbury Dough Boy, etc). And once products and brands are associated with human qualities, it is easy to see how people may interact with brands in ways that parallel their 'social' relationships'.

It is important to clarify that this work acknowledges that brand relationships are different in many ways from the relationships that people form with other people. The key assertion here is not that people necessarily form relationships with brands that share the same richness and depth as those between human partners, but that consumers often behave *as if* they have relationships with brands that parallel human relationships in a social setting. And when they behave as if they have a relationship with brands, the consumer-brand interactions are mediated by the norms that govern these social relationships. Prior experience with the brand or specific marketing communication may bring the norms of different relationships to the forefront of people's minds so that they interpret the communication and the actions of the brand through the lens of the relationship norms. This work thus attempts to understand how this consumer-brand interaction is influenced by the norms of social relationships.

## **NORMS OF BEHAVIOR AND THEIR ROLE IN SOCIAL INTERACTION**

The key premise underlying this work is that social relationships carry with them norms of behavior that the relationship partners are expected to follow. Norms emerge from interactions with others; they may or may not be stated explicitly, and sanctions for deviating from them come from social networks, not the legal system. These norms include general societal expectations for our behavior, expectations of others for our behavior, and our expectations of our own behavior. One view of norms suggests that norms develop to balance the selfish desires of the individual with the need for social control and collective survival (Walster, Walster and Berscheid 1978). Thus, one of the primary functions of social norms is to allow people to live together in peace. Cialdini and Trost (1993) have argued that these norms are acquired by people in a social setting over long time periods of the socialization process. As these norms become internalized, they serve as a valuable guide for everyday behavior and allow people to function in situations that may otherwise be new. Thus, when faced with different social situations, people use the norms that are salient at the time to guide them on the 'right' thing to do. In addition, people also tend to use these norms to judge others' behavior. A particular action may therefore be a part of the norms of one relationship and be regarded as good and appropriate by one person while the same action may be seen as a serious violation of the norms of another relationship and perceived to be improper by another person. For example, keeping a close tab on how much money one spends on a relationship partner may be considered appropriate in a commercial transaction, but may appear inappropriate in interactions with family members. It is this adherence to or violation of the relationship norms that often determines our appraisals when we interact with our relationship partners.

Using three experiments, this work tests the effect of adherence to or violation of the norms of relationship in the context of consumer-brand interactions. In this work, I use the

norms associated with the receiving and giving of help or providing benefits to test if consumers respond differently to the same marketing action depending upon the type of relationship that they have with the brand. The overall goal of all these studies is to test if consumers' reactions can be distinguished in instances when the relationship with the brand is thought of largely in economic terms (i.e., balanced exchange) from instances when the relationship takes on the characteristics of close personal relationships. This work thus attempts to explain why we might sometimes observe consumer behavior that appears irrational from a business perspective but makes perfect sense from a personal relationship perspective. This work, however, does not attempt to study the antecedents of a relationship per se or to identify which relationship is more naturally formed under different circumstances.

### **NORMS OF COMMUNAL AND EXCHANGE RELATIONSHIPS**

In the present research, I rely on the distinction that is made in social psychology literature between relationships that are based primarily on economic factors and those based more on social factors (Goffman 1961). The differences between economic relationships and social relationships have been studied in some detail by Clark and Mills (Clark and Mills 1979; Clark and Mills 1993; Clark 1986; Clark, Mills and Powell 1986; Mills and Clark 1982, Mills and Clark 1986). These authors distinguish between what they term *exchange* relationships and *communal* relationships mainly in terms of the norms governing giving of benefits to the partner. Other authors have suggested more elaborate break-downs (e.g. Fiske 1992), but for the sake of simplicity in this research I adopt the two relationship-type version of Clark and Mills. Later research could extend this conceptual framework to a more complex one.

Exchange relationships are those in which a person provides a benefit to the partner with the specific expectation of receiving a comparable benefit in return. The receipt of a benefit

incurs a debt or obligation to return a comparable benefit. People are concerned with how much they have received in exchange for how much they have given, and how much is still owed to the partner. Relationships between strangers and people who interact for business purposes are often characteristic of this type of relationship. On the other hand, relationships in which the key concern is mutual support by the partners are termed communal relationships. In such relationships, people give benefits to others to demonstrate a concern for that person and to express attention to their needs. They also expect others to demonstrate a similar concern for their own needs. Most family relationships, romantic relationships and friendships fall in this category. It is important to note here that communal relationships are not completely bereft of a sense of reciprocity and shared giving. Each individual interaction however, is not scrutinized for evenness or balance of the transaction. Instead, the relationship may be evaluated over a longer time period. The norms of behavior of the two relationships are summarized below as has been outlined by Clark and her colleagues (Clark 1981; Clark 1984; Clark 1986; Clark and Mills 1979; Clark and Mills 1993; Clark and Taraban 1991; Clark, Mills and Powell 1986; Clark Mills and Corcoran 1989; Mills and Clark 1982, Mills and Clark 1986)

**Exchange Relationship**

**Communal Relationship**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Prompt repayment for specific benefits received is expected.             | Prompt repayment for specific benefits received is not expected.             |
| 2. Desirable to give ‘comparable’ benefits in return for benefits received. | Less desirable to give comparable benefits in return for benefits received.  |
| 3. More likely to ask for repayments for benefits rendered.                 | Less likely to ask for repayments for benefits rendered.                     |
| 4. More likely to keep track of inputs and outcomes in a joint task.        | Less likely to keep track of individual inputs and outcomes in a joint task. |
| 5. Divide rewards according to each person’s inputs and contributions .     | Divide rewards according to each person’s needs and requirements.            |
| 6. Helping others is less likely.   | Helping others is more likely.   |

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 7. Requesting help from others is less likely.           | Requesting help from others is more likely.           |
| 8. Accepting help with money is preferred to no payment. | Accepting help with no monetary payment is preferred. |
| 9. Keeping track of others' needs is less likely.        | Keeping track of others' needs is more likely         |
| 10. Less responsive to others' emotional states.         | More responsive to others' emotional states           |

In sum, exchange relationships involve a careful and detailed cost-benefit evaluation and the focus is on keeping track of benefits given and benefits received. On the other hand, communal relationships focus on mutual support and cooperation and thus take a perspective that transcends emphasis on self-interest alone. These two relationship types are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible for someone to have a strong communal *and* a strong exchange relationship with someone else depending on the circumstances. For example, a business partnership with one's brother is likely to lead to norms that are communal at certain times and exchange at others. One of the reasons such relationships are difficult to manage in practice is that the partners may often be uncertain about what norms to apply in specific situations. Nonetheless, in this research I have followed the conventions of the social psychology literature and treated these two dimensions as if they are two ends of one scale rather than two orthogonal dimensions that have varying strengths. Later research could explore the implications of more complex, multi-faceted relationships.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING THE HYPOTHESES**

The present research is based on two key premises. First, relationships that people form with others can be categorized as either communal or exchange. Second, these two relationship types have their own distinct norms of behavior that lead to very different and predictable behavior patterns. Thus, if these different relationship norms are made salient in a brand

interaction, then consumers are likely to use these norms to guide their behavior and their evaluation of the brand.

The reason why the context of a 'request for help' was chosen was because the key distinction between exchange and communal relationships is based on the motivation for providing benefits to the partner, and the norms associated with 'request for help' capture the essence of that distinction. In exchange relationships benefits are given to partners with the specific expectation of receiving comparable benefits in return. People are concerned with how much they have received in exchange for how much they have given. In this context, an offer of payment is likely to act as a motivator for providing help. If a comparable reward is not forthcoming a person is less likely to be responsive to a request for help.

On the other hand, in communal relationships people give benefits to others to demonstrate a concern for them, and to express attention to their needs. People feel responsible for the other's welfare and feel obligated to respond positively when the partner has a need. Additionally, members are likely to avoid giving benefits directly comparable to benefits they receive from partners since a 'tit for tat' approach transforms the relationship into an economic one, and expresses a reluctance to be a communal partner (Batson, Coke, Janoski and Hanson 1978; O'Malley and Andrews 1983). Thus, if a person were to seek help without offering any reciprocal compensation it would encourage communal relationship partners to give the help but a request for help accompanied with a reciprocal compensation would be shunned. However, if a reciprocal gesture is made as an expression of gratitude, it is not evaluated on its cash value – even a cheap gift is deemed good enough because symbolism is key, not the value.

These potential reactions to requests for help are consistent with prior work that found that people were more willing to help when they desired a communal relationship than when they desired an exchange relationship (Williamson and Clark 1989), and that monetary payment

for help undermined the social value of help (Batson et al. 1978; O'Malley and Andrews 1983). While prior work has not examined the interaction of relationship type and offer of payment for help, norms of relationship suggest that one might expect a significant interaction effect. For example, it might be expected that relative to exchange relationships, communal partners would react more positively to requests for help if these requests were not accompanied by offers of payments, and more negatively if accompanied by payment.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE EXPERIMENTS**

In three experiments, norms of the two relationship types were first primed with a brief scenario description. Participants were then presented with identical action from the brand in the context of 'request for help'. Finally measures of participants' reactions to the marketing action and their overall evaluation of the brand was taken. The basic premise of this research is that the consumers' evaluation of the brand depends upon whether or not the norms of the relationship are violated. In all three experiments it was expected that if the marketing actions were inconsistent with the norms of the relationship then not only would the actions be evaluated negatively, but the overall evaluation of the brand would also be negative. However, if the marketing actions were consistent with the norms then the participants would have a high overall evaluation of the brand. Thus, in addition to participants' reactions to the specific marketing action taken by the brand, measures of participants' overall evaluation of the brand were also taken. Additionally, in Experiment 3 more direct measures of norm conformity and violation were taken. Mediation analysis was done to study the role of norm violation in participants' evaluation of the brand, and their perception of the strength of the relationship. In three experiments described below I test specific hypotheses about consumer reactions due to a violation of relationship norms under different conditions.

## **EXPERIMENT 1: HELP NORM AND CHARGING FOR RENDERING HELP**

The objective of this experiment was to evaluate the influence of the norms of helping in a brand relationship context. In this experiment I examined participants' reactions to being charged a fee for the help rendered by a brand. The participants were exposed to a brief description of a prior relationship between a consumer and a hypothetical bank and asked to project themselves into the role of the consumer. These descriptions were aimed at triggering either communal norms or exchange norms. In particular, the scenario described a consumer who seeks some help from a bank for resolving a conflict with a utility company and later either gets charged for the help or not. Measures of participants' reactions to the marketing actions and overall evaluation of the brand were taken.

It was hypothesized that a demand for payment violated the norms of communal relationship since the relationship is based on mutual concern for each other's needs, but did not violate the norms of exchange relationship since it is based on quid pro quo. Hence it was predicted that consumers' reactions to being charged and their brand evaluations would be different across the two relationship types with communal consumers evaluating the action negatively relative to exchange consumers. On the other hand, if the brand did not charge any fee for the service, it was in conformity with communal norms but in violation of the exchange norms. Consequently I expected that exchange participants would respond more negatively when not charged a fee compared to the communal participants. Following is the specific prediction made:

Hypothesis 1: Participants' evaluation of a marketing action (being charged or not charged) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, when assessed a fee for a special service, communal participants will rate this action lower than exchange participants. When no fee is assessed, communal participants will rate the action higher than exchange participants.

It was further predicted that a marketing action that violated the relationship norms would not only lead to a negative evaluation of the action but also undermine the perception of

the relationship with the brand. It was thus hypothesized that the response of the participants would manifest itself in their overall evaluation of the brand. Hence the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** Participants' overall brand evaluation in response to marketing action (being charged or not charged) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, when assessed a fee for a special service, communal participants will evaluate the brand lower than exchange participants. When no fee is assessed, communal participants will evaluate the brand higher than exchange participants.

### **Participants:**

Forty students in a mid-sized university in mid-western USA were given \$5.00 for participating in a 20-minute study. This experiment took about 5 minutes within that set of studies. The participants were recruited through notices posted on campus.

### **Stimuli and Procedure:**

Participants were presented with a brief description of their relationship with a fictitious bank. Since relationships are formed over long periods of time, it might seem nearly impossible to manipulate the relationship type over the course of an experiment. However, prior work indicates that even without actual long-term relationships being formed by participants, the effects of relationship norms may nevertheless be observed – suggesting that these norms can be primed in laboratory studies (Clark and Mills 1993). Participants were thus presented descriptions to prime relationship norms, and were randomly assigned to one of exchange or communal descriptions. The participants were asked to imagine themselves in the situation described, and then to answer the questions that followed. Care was taken to ensure that the two conditions primed only the type of relationship, and did not manipulate the perception of quality of the brand. The descriptions are given below.

#### *Priming of Exchange Relationship Norms:*

You have been banking with Grove Bank for the last five years. You have used the bank quite extensively and have been very happy with their efficiency and the quality of their services. You have taken a loan from the bank and in fact they were able to get the paperwork done quite quickly. Their interest rates are also among the best in the city. You also use their credit card because they offer a large credit limit and very good interest rates. Grove Bank also periodically makes some offers to you that appear to be of great value. In the past, whenever you have gone to the branch you have gotten your work done very fast – they respect your time, and get the job done fast.

Their executives seem to be quite well trained and smart. Overall your experience with Grove Bank has been excellent.

*Priming of Communal Relationship Norms:*

You have been banking with Grove Bank for the last five years. You have used the bank quite extensively and have been very happy with the quality of their services. When you first joined school, you had opened an account with them. You still remember how thrilled you were when you got your first credit card from them. You have always associated the bank with positive feelings since you often visit the bank whenever you receive money from home. The bank has always treated you well. Over the past few years, whenever you have visited the bank you have had a very pleasant and warm interaction. They seem to be taking a personal interest in you, and have often taken the initiative to suggest ways to better manage your idle funds in the bank. Overall your experience with Grove Bank has been memorable.

After reading the description, the participants were asked several questions designed to measure the effectiveness of the relationship priming. Participants were then presented the request for help and the response from the bank in terms of (no) charges for it, as shown below with the fee charged condition in brackets and the no charge condition in parenthesis.

Recently, you faced a problem. You had written a check to ComEd for \$35.47. You later received a letter from ComEd saying that the money was never received by them. As soon as you got this letter, you called up Grove Bank, and asked the clerk to find out what had happened. The clerk told you that the money was sent to ComEd on the specified date. You requested the clerk to write to ComEd and let them know about it. [One week later you received a letter in the mail from Grove Bank that the problem was resolved at a charge of \$20.00]. (One week later you received a letter in the mail from Grove Bank that the problem was resolved at no charge to you).

**Design:**

The experiment was a 2 x 2 between-participants design on Relationship Type (communal, exchange) and Marketing Action (fee charged, no fee charged).

**Dependent Variables:**

Participants were first asked to respond to questions intended to check the effectiveness of the relationship priming. The first 'communality' measure consisted of two questions aimed at capturing the feelings associated with communal norms (have warm feelings for brand, feel a special bond). Participants were then asked to imagine the brand coming alive and becoming a person. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which the brand was like each of four people (a business partner, a close friend, a merchant, or a family member). High (low) ratings on the 'communality' measure, high (low) ratings on the brand as a friend or family member, and low (high) ratings of the brand as business partner or merchant would be consistent with

priming of communal (exchange) norms. In addition, participants responded to a five-item measure of perceived quality (is the brand a good buy, likelihood to try another brand of equal quality, importance of price, quality of products, and quality of services). This measure was included as a control to ensure that priming of relationship norms did not also affect perceptions of quality.

After answering the questions aimed at measuring the effectiveness of priming, participants were shown the 'request for help' scenario and were then asked questions about it. Participants responded to three questions about the brand's marketing action to charge (or not charge) for the extra service rendered in response to the special request (appropriateness of charges/no charges, extent to which it was a good business practice, willingness to make the payment – all aimed to test Hypothesis 1). Next, brand evaluation and attitudinal measures were taken on nine items (good-bad, poor quality-high quality, poor service-great service, commonplace-unique, not for me-just for me, will never buy again-continue buying it, dislike-like, dissatisfied-satisfied, and unfavorable-favorable – aimed at testing Hypothesis 2). All the items were measured on a 7-point scale.

## **Results:**

*Effectiveness of Priming:* Results indicate that the descriptions effectively primed different relationship norms. See Table 1, which shows participants' ratings on different questions asked to measure the effectiveness of priming for Experiment 1. Specifically, communal participants provided higher ratings of communality than those in the exchange condition,  $F(1, 39) = 12.03, p < 0.001$ . Results also showed that participants in the communal condition were more likely than participants in the exchange condition to see the brand as a friend or family member,  $F(1, 37) = 2.83, p < 0.10$ , and less likely to see it as a businessperson or a merchant,  $F(1, 37) = 3.09, p < 0.10$ . An analysis of the five-item measure of perceived

quality also revealed no difference across the two relationship conditions,  $F(1, 39) = 0.00$ ,  $p > 0.95$ .

*Reactions to Marketing Actions:* The participants' evaluation of the marketing action was examined first on three different items. These three items were combined to create one measure termed 'Reaction to Marketing Actions' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.81). Table 2 shows the participants' ratings on the combined measure. ANOVA on this measure revealed a main effect of Relationship Type,  $F(1, 38) = 5.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$  with participants exposed to the communal priming giving lower overall ratings than participants exposed to the exchange priming (Means: Communal = 2.39, Exchange = 2.99). In addition, the main effect for the Marketing Action was also significant,  $F(1, 38) = 40.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with the ratings being higher when no fee was charged than when fee was charged (Means: Fee Charged = 1.97, Fee Not Charged = 3.47). As predicted by Hypothesis 1, these effects were qualified by a significant Relationship Type X Marketing Action interaction,  $F(1, 38) = 7.30$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Specific contrasts revealed that when charged, communal participants provided lower ratings of the action than exchange participants,  $F(1, 38) = 13.09$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . By contrast, communal and exchange participants did not differ in their ratings of the action when not charged a fee,  $F(1, 38) = 0.06$ ,  $p > 0.80$ . I also looked at the other pair of contrasts and found that communal participants' ratings of the marketing action was lower when charged a fee than when not charged,  $F(1, 38) = 39.86$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , as was also the ratings of the exchange participants,  $F(1, 38) = 6.83$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

*Brand Evaluation:* Participants' responses to nine questions giving their ratings about Grove Bank were taken next. These nine questions were collapsed into one factor termed 'Overall Evaluation' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.95). As predicted by Hypothesis 2, the brand's decision to charge a fee resulted in a different evaluation of the brand by the participants depending upon the type of relationship. Thus, there was a significant Relationship Type X

Marketing Action interaction on 'Overall Evaluation',  $F(1,38) = 11.28, p < 0.01$ . The main effect of Relationship Type was not significant,  $F(1, 37) = 1.78, p < 0.20$  but the main effect of the Marketing Action was significant,  $F(1,37) = 26.45, p < 0.001$ , with the overall evaluation being lower when fee was charged than when no fee was charged (Means: Fee Charged = 4.11, Fee Not Charged = 5.63). Specific contrasts revealed that when charged, participants in communal condition evaluated the brand significantly lower than those in the exchange condition,  $F(1, 37) = 11.01, p < 0.01$ . By contrast, communal and exchange participants did not differ in their brand evaluation when no fee was charged,  $F(1, 37) = 2.05, p < 0.20$ . Considered alternately, communal participants' brand evaluation was lower when charged than when they were not charged,  $F(1,37) = 34.33, p < 0.001$ , but exchange participants' evaluation was not significantly different whether charged or not,  $F(1, 37) = 1.68, p > 0.20$ .

### **Discussion:**

Experiment 1 was designed to test if different relationship norms lead to different evaluations of a brand and the specific marketing actions taken by the brand. While the findings were consistent with the hypotheses when norms of communal relationship were violated, the results were only directionally supportive when the norms of exchange relationship were violated. Thus, results showed that while communal participants evaluated the brand and its actions poorly relative to exchange participants when charged a fee (a violation of communal norms), there was no significant difference in the participants' evaluation when no fee was charged (a violation of exchange norms). Charging a communal partner for help is a clear violation of communal norms and as a result communal consumers reacted negatively to being charged a fee relative to exchange participants. On the other hand, even though not being charged a fee for special service would be a violation of exchange norms, the results did not show significant differences in the evaluations made by communal and exchange participants.

One possible explanation for why the hypothesis was not supported when exchange norms were violated is that when no fee was charged, even though the norms of exchange relationship were violated, the brand's action also resulted in some monetary benefit for the consumer (from no fee being charged). In a brand context consumers are frequently exposed to free offers and promotions, and even tend to expect 'free' things from brands. Hence, when consumers were not charged for the service, even though it was a violation of exchange relationship norms, the violation may not have been perceived as such or it may have been seen as a mild violation – leading to the muted results seen in the experiment. In fact, this specific example might be an example of a situation where the effects of norm violation in a consumer-brand context are different from what one might expect in a person-to-person relationship.

The other possible reason for why the violation of exchange norms resulted in muted effects may be that the amount of fee charged was a bit too high even for the exchange participants (\$20 for sending a letter for a bill that was \$35.47 in the first place). This is supported by the fact that there was a main effect of the Charge. Thus even though being charged a fee would normally be in keeping with the norms of exchange norms, in this case the amount of fee being relatively high made the response of communal and exchange participants comparable. It is possible that if the amount of the fee was made lower, then communal participants might still have seen the charge as negative while the exchange participants might have reacted positively to it as a 'good deal'.

However, neither of the above two explanations can fully account for all the results. The main effect of receiving a monetary benefit cannot fully explain why there was a significant difference in the responses of communal and exchange participants in one condition (when they were charged a fee) but not in the other condition (when they were not charged a fee). There is an interaction effect of monetary benefit with norm violation i.e. the effect of norm violation

works differently depending upon whether or not the participants receive monetary benefit or not. Clearly, monetary benefit does not simply boost the evaluations for all participants the same way – since if it were so then the difference between the evaluations of exchange participants (who experienced norm violation when no fee was charged) and the communal participants (who did not experience norm violation) when no fee was charged should also have been significant. One possible explanation for this is that there is something unique about communal norms that resulted in the findings that were observed. Thus, Experiment 2 was designed to test if the muted results observed when exchange norms were violated were due to something unique about communal norms or if it was the interaction effect of the accompanying benefits that led to these results.

## **EXPERIMENT 2: EXPLORING FURTHER – REPAYMENT FOR HELP RENDERED**

To test whether the results found in Experiment 1 were due to something unique about communal relationship norms per se, in Experiment 2 a scenario was created that attempted to reverse the pattern of norm violation. Thus, in Experiment 2 the scenario results in norm violation being felt more keenly by exchange participants without any mitigating effect of a compensating benefit. Conversely, norm violation experienced by communal participants was accompanied with some compensating monetary benefits. If monetary benefit and norm violation have an interaction effect as was observed in Experiment 1, then this compensating benefit would mitigate the negative response of the communal participants. Hence, it was expected that when the brand's action violated norms of communal relationship but not exchange relationship, the communal participants would not judge the brand more harshly than exchange participants since the violation of norms is also accompanied with a compensating benefit for the communal participants and we would expect an interaction effect between norm

violation and compensating benefit. On the other hand, if the findings of Experiment 1 were to be generally applicable, then it was expected that when a marketing action taken by the brand violated norms of exchange relationship but not of communal relationship, the exchange participants would judge the brand more harshly than communal participants would.

In addition, the scenario was developed such that the direction of help was reversed – instead of the help being sought by the consumer, in Experiment 2, the help was sought by the brand. Participants were presented a situation in which a brand of chocolate needed urgent help with a tedious market research task. The brand offered the customers either cash compensation for their time or an inexpensive gift as a token of appreciation.

Prior work on gift giving (Belk and Coon 1993) has shown that gifts are seen as symbolic gestures of love and commitment. An offer of a symbolic but inexpensive gift is likely to be in keeping with communal norms since it is a good indicator of appreciation and gratitude. However, an inexpensive token is likely to be perceived as a violation of exchange norms since it is unlikely to compensate for the time and effort that people put in. And a repayment in kind in the form of a gift or some such thing is often seen as not a good way to pay back for specific benefits received. So it was expected that compared to communal participants, exchange participants would evaluate the offer of a gift more negatively. On the other hand, offers of monetary payments are often seen as a good way to compensate others for services rendered. It was therefore hypothesized that cash payment for time and effort is a clear indicator of quid pro quo, and hence would be in keeping with exchange norms. Conversely, cash payment for rendering help to a partner would violate communal norms, since people in such a relationship help each other because they care for each other and not to get cash compensation. However, cash receipt from a brand is also an extra benefit for individuals, and especially in a consumer-brand context, it was expected to reduce the negative effect of norm

violation. So very little difference was expected in the evaluation of the brand's action made by the communal and exchange participants when cash compensation was given to them. As before, it was expected that the reactions from participants would differ across the different conditions not just for the marketing actions, but also on their overall evaluation of the brand.

The following are the specific hypotheses are being tested in this experiment:

Hypothesis 3: Participants' evaluation of a marketing action (being offered cash or a gift for helping) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, when offered a cheap gift for providing help, exchange participants will rate this action lower than communal participants. When cash payment is offered, exchange participants will rate the action equal or higher than communal participants.

Hypothesis 4: Participants' overall brand evaluation in response to marketing action (being offered cash or a gift for helping) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, when offered a cheap gift providing help, exchange participants will evaluate the brand lower than communal participants. When offered cash payment, exchange participants will evaluate the brand equal or higher than communal participants.

### **Participants:**

Participants were thirty-seven students at a mid-sized university in mid-western USA, who were recruited in the same manner as participants in Experiment 1. Participants were screened to ensure that they had not participated in a similar study earlier.

### **Stimuli and Procedure:**

As in Experiment 1, participants were presented with a brief description of their relationship with a fictitious brand of chocolate designed to prime relationship norms. Participants were randomly assigned to one of exchange or communal descriptions, asked to imagine themselves in the situation described, and then to answer the questions that followed. Again, care was taken to ensure that the two conditions primed only the type of relationship, and did not manipulate the perception of brand quality. The descriptions are given below.

#### Priming of Exchange Relationship Norms:

*Imagine that your favorite brand of chocolate is Buon Chocolate. In your many years of using the product, Buon Chocolate has been consistent in providing you with high quality product, great taste and attractive packaging at a reasonable price. You have tried other chocolate brands over the years. Many are decent but none of them are nearly as good. Buon Chocolate is not only made with high quality ingredients, it also has a deliciously creamy*

*flavor and a large variety of assortments. In a bid to remain competitive, the brand has been improved over the years with new technology, product forms, packaging, and flavors. Prices, however, have remained competitive to this day, and this product is to your way of thinking one of the best values in the grocery store. You wish other products offered such a favorable exchange. You've also been pleased to notice that Buon Chocolate is easily available almost everywhere. Recent consumer reports about the quality of Buon Chocolate have been quite favorable giving it 4.5 (out of 5.0).*

**Priming of Communal Relationship Norms:**

*Imagine that your favorite brand of chocolate is Buon Chocolate. Buon Chocolate has been your favorite ever since you were a kid. Your parents knew that you loved this brand, its deliciously creamy taste and brightly colored package. They used to buy it for you as a treat on those special occasions. Some of your fondest childhood memories involve your parents buying Buon Chocolate for you, and then you sitting down to enjoy it, and treasuring every minute of it. You would frequently take it to school and steal small bites during class, trying to make it last the entire day. Buon Chocolate seemed to take great pains to make the whole experience fun – great package, a wide assortment and those special holiday treats. Each time you opened the pack, you would feel a sense of excitement and anticipation. To this day, whenever you buy a pack you feel as if you are with an old friend. Recent consumer reports about the quality of Buon Chocolate have been quite favorable giving it 4.5 (out of 5.0).*

As in Experiment 1, the participants were then asked questions designed to measure the effectiveness of the relationship priming after they had read the description. Participants were then shown the request for help from the chocolate brand with an offer of a cash payment or a gift with the cash offer condition in brackets and offer of gift in parenthesis, as shown below.

*You recently saw an ad from Buon Chocolate informing their customers how one of their competitors has launched a false attack on them in a foreign market. Buon Chocolate would like to take immediate corrective action and needs some information from their long time customers. They need their customers to send true stories, experiences and anecdotes that involved Buon Chocolates. This would give them the ammunition to counter the false claims of the competition. [Buon Chocolate would be willing to compensate you for your time by making a payment of \$5.00]. (Buon Chocolate would be grateful to you for your help and would send you a 'Buon key chain' as a token of their appreciation).*

**Design:**

The experiment was a 2 x 2 between-participants design on Relationship Type (communal, exchange) and Marketing Action (gift, cash).

**Dependent Variables:**

Measures of the effectiveness of priming were the same as those in Experiment 1.

Control measures to assess participants' quality perception were also the same five items, the only exception being that the question about the perception of service quality was replaced with a question about the perception of product taste. Participants were then shown the 'request for help' scenario and were then asked questions about it. Participants responded to four questions

about the brand's request for help accompanied with an offer of cash compensation or an offer of a gift (likelihood to help, time likely to spend, amount of details likely to provide, personal information likely to reveal – all aimed to test Hypothesis 3). Finally, brand evaluation and attitudinal measures were taken on similar nine items as in Experiment 1 (good-bad, poor quality-high quality, poor taste-great taste, commonplace-unique, not for me-just for me, will never buy again-continue buying it, dislike-like, dissatisfied-satisfied, and unfavorable-favorable – aimed at testing Hypothesis 4).

### **Results:**

*Effectiveness of Priming:* Table 3 displays results for the questions asked to measure the effectiveness of the priming, and perceptions of quality. As in Experiment 1, participants' average ratings of 'communality' were compared across relationship conditions. ANOVA showed that the participants in the communal condition had a higher communality score than those in the exchange condition,  $F(1, 36) = 15.59, p < 0.001$ . Results also showed that participants in the communal condition perceived the brand significantly more as a friend or family member than those in the exchange condition,  $F(1, 36) = 6.89, p < 0.05$ ; but not significantly differently in terms of being a businessperson or a merchant,  $F(1, 36) = 0.94, p > 0.30$ . Hence, these findings suggest that the relationship conditions differed in perceived type of relationship, although the lack of a significant difference for the businessperson/merchant measure suggests that the priming may have been somewhat weaker in Experiment 2 compared to Experiment 1. An analysis of the five-item measure of perceived quality did not show any difference across the two relationship conditions,  $F(1, 36) = 1.35, p > 0.25$ .

*Reactions to Marketing Actions:* As in Experiment 1, the participants' responses to marketing actions were examined first (See Table 4). The four questions that measured consumers' responses to the request for help were combined into one measure called 'Reactions

to Marketing Actions' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.84). Contrary to Hypothesis 3, ANOVA revealed no significant effects for the Relationship Type X Marketing Action interaction,  $F(1, 36) = 1.36, p > 0.25$ ; for the Relationship Type main effect,  $F(1, 36) = 0.99, p > 0.30$ , or for the Marketing Action main effect,  $F(1, 36) = 0.03, p > 0.85$ . Even though the interaction was not significant, the pattern of results was consistent with the predictions.

*Brand Evaluation:* I then examined differences in participants' attitudes and brand evaluations. The nine items were collapsed into one factor termed 'Overall Evaluation' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.96). As predicted by Hypothesis 4, the type of compensation for help elicited different evaluations from the participants depending upon the type of the relationship. ANOVA revealed a significant Relationship Type X Marketing Action interaction on 'Overall Evaluation',  $F(1, 36) = 4.37, p < 0.05$ . The main effect of Relationship Type was not significant,  $F(1, 36) = 2.47, p > 0.15$ , nor was the main effect for Marketing Action,  $F(1, 36) = 0.25, p > 0.60$ . Specific contrast showed that when offered a gift, exchange participants evaluated the brand lower than communal participants,  $F(1, 36) = 6.88, p < 0.05$ , but no different when offered cash,  $F(1, 36) = 0.13, p > 0.70$ . Considered alternately, exchange participants' brand evaluation was marginally lower when offered a gift than when offered cash,  $F(1, 36) = 3.44, p < 0.10$ , but the communal participants' brand evaluation was not significantly different whether offered a gift or offered cash,  $F(1, 36) = 1.24, p > 0.25$ .

### **Discussion:**

Experiment 2 was designed to provide additional test for the hypothesis that relationship norms influence consumers' response to marketing actions and their overall evaluation of the brand. Unlike in Experiment 1, different offers of compensation did not elicit significantly different reactions to the brand's action of requesting for help depending upon the type of relationship, even though the pattern of results was consistent with the theoretical predictions.

It is possible that the null response was due to the relatively weaker priming of relationship types, as evidenced by the ratings given by participants on their perception of the brand as a businessperson/merchant. The other possibility is that the scenario in Experiment 1 might have been framed by the participants as a loss (having to pay a charge for a service), while the scenario in Experiment 2 might have been framed more as a gain (getting some cash or key-chain). And because people tend to respond more to losses than to gains, it is possible that this led to the lack of significant results that were observed in Experiment 2. Further work would be necessary to explore this hypothesis and test if the strength of consumers' reactions depend upon whether the brand's action is perceived as a gain or as a loss. It is interesting to note that even though the results were not strong enough to capture the effects on all measures, the consumers did experience some violation of the norms and formed an evaluation of the brand that differed significantly across different conditions. This has some important implications for practitioners as will be discussed in a later section.

The results of Experiment 2, however, lend support to the hypothesis that the type of compensation elicits different evaluation of the brand depending upon what relationship norms are salient. Specifically, the results show that exchange consumers evaluated the brand lower when offered a cheap gift as compensation for helping a brand than communal consumers. The norms of relationship suggest that in an exchange relationship partners understand that the benefits are given to each other with an expectation of getting comparable benefits in return, and an offer to pay cash is in keeping with exchange norms. However, a cheap key chain as a payment is seen as an unfair compensation for the time and effort spent on it, violating the norms of exchange relationship. But in a communal relationship what is important is that partners appreciate the help that is provided by others and a gift as a gesture of appreciation is considered appropriate. Thus, there were significant differences in participants' evaluation.

On the other hand, results showed that the evaluation of exchange and communal participants did not differ significantly when cash payment was made for providing help. While cash compensation is in keeping with the norms of exchange relationship, it is possible that even though cash payment violates communal norms, participants did respond negatively to norm violation when they receive a monetary benefit (to the tune of the cash amount received) since, as indicated earlier, in a commercial setting consumers are often exposed to offers of cash discounts from marketers. As a result, this norm violation did not elicit a strong reaction from them unlike in personal relationships where a cash offer for providing help to a partner would be considered quite offensive.

Thus, the results of Experiment 2 replicate the findings of Experiment 1 whereby participants in the two relationship conditions respond significantly differently in their evaluation of the brand depending upon whether or not the norms of that relationship were violated when there is no accompanying monetary benefit. In addition, the results also show that the participants in the two relationships types do not show any significant differences in their responses to brand's actions if these actions are accompanied with a monetary benefit irrespective of the fact that these actions violate the norms of relationship or not. Thus, the results of Experiment 2 show that clearly there was nothing unique about communal norms that led to the results that we observed in Experiment 1, and that there is a seemingly an interaction effect of monetary benefit with norm violation on the responses of the participants.

### **EXPERIMENT 3: EXPLORING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF NORMS – INFLUENCE OF TIMING OF REQUEST ON CONSUMER RESPONSES**

The objectives of this experiment were twofold: 1) to provide additional support for the hypothesis that the degree of consistency between brand's actions and relationship norms

influenced consumers' responses, and 2) to provide a more direct evidence of the role of norms of relationships on consumers' evaluation of brands and the specific actions taken by marketers. To get a more direct evidence of the effects of norm violation, specific questions were asked to assess the degree of norm violation and norm conformity experienced by the participants in response to a marketing action. In addition, more items were included to more directly measure the effectiveness of priming of the relationship norms.

The third experiment described a situation in which some help is sought by a brand in response to the request for help from the consumer either immediately afterwards or after some time gap. This experiment, thus, examined if a longer time gap between help given and help sought caused participants to respond differently depending upon the relationship type. The thinking behind this approach follows from the norms of the two relationship types. If a request for help by a partner is countered with a return request but with a delay of some time, it is likely to be seen as a genuine need expressed by the partner and would be in keeping with norms of communal relationship. Carrying the debt may even be seen as a bonding experience. However, a delayed request for return favor, being distanced in time, is more likely to be perceived as a way to get 'free' help, and would be seen as a violation of the norms of exchange relationship. Thus, it was expected that communal participants would react more positively to a request for help made with a time delay than would exchange participants. On the other hand, if the request for help by a consumer is immediately countered with a return request, it is more likely to be seen as quid pro quo and hence in keeping with the norms of exchange relationship. Conversely, if the request for help by a communal partner is immediately countered with a request for a return favor then the motivation for providing the help is more likely to be attributed to getting something back in return – violating the norms of communal relationship. However, since communal partners are more likely to be willing to help each other (Williamson

and Clark 1989), it was expected that the negative response by the participants might be muted.

Hence the specific hypotheses are as below:

**Hypothesis 5:** Participants' evaluation of a marketing action (timing of the request for help) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, if a brand seeks return help with a delay after having helped a consumer, exchange participants will rate this action lower than communal participants. When the return request is immediate, exchange participants will rate the action equal or higher than communal participants.

As in the earlier experiments, it was also hypothesized that the response of the participants would not be limited to just how they react to the action per se but would also manifest itself in their overall perception of the brand. Hence the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 6:** Participants' overall brand evaluation in response to marketing action (timing of the request for help) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, if a brand seeks return help with a delay, exchange participants will evaluate the brand lower than communal participants. When the return request is immediate, exchange participants will evaluate the brand equal or higher than communal participants.

### **Role of Norm Violation:**

One of the additional objectives of Experiment 3 was to more directly evaluate the extent to which the consumers' reactions and evaluations are caused by the violation of the relationship norms using mediation analysis. Thus, the experimental materials included specific questions being asked of the participants to judge the amount of norm violation and norm conformity that they perceived due to the marketing action. Hypotheses 7a below predicts that consumers' perception of the violation of the norms of relationship as a result of the marketing action taken by the brand (timing of the request for help) would differ depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, if the return request made by the brand is delayed then exchange participants would perceive a greater violation of norms relative to communal participants, but when the return request is immediate then the violation of norms would be same or higher for communal participants as compared to exchange participants.

In addition, another question was asked to augment the participants' evaluation of the brand. In Experiments 1 and 2, the effect of the brand's marketing action on participants' evaluation of the action as well as the overall evaluation of the brand were measured. One other important measure of participants' evaluation of the brand is their perception of the relationship with the brand. Hence, it was predicted that when a return request by the brand is delayed, relative to communal participants, exchange participants would perceive their relationship with the brand to be worse than before. Conversely the perception of the relationship would be perceived to be the same or worse for communal participants as compared to exchange participants when the return request was immediate. Hypothesis 7b details this prediction.

Hypothesis 7a: Participants' perception of the degree of norm violation in response to a marketing action (timing of the request for help sought) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, if a brand seeks help with a delay, exchange participants will perceive greater norm violation than communal participants. When the return request is immediate, exchange participants would perceive less or same degree of norm violation as communal participants.

Hypothesis 7b: Participants' perception of their relationship with the brand in response to a marketing action (timing of the request for help sought) differs depending upon the relationship type. Specifically, if a brand seeks return help with a delay, exchange participants are more likely than communal participants to perceive the relationship to get worse. When the return request is immediate, exchange participants are less or as likely as communal participants to perceive the relationship to get worse.

### **Participants:**

Participants were ninety-six students from a mid-sized university in mid-western USA who were recruited on campus to do a 8-10 minute study. They were paid \$5.00 for their participation.

### **Stimuli and Procedure:**

As in the first two experiments, participants were presented with a brief description of their relationship with a fictitious brand – in this case a coffee shop. These descriptions were designed to prime norms of exchange or communal relationships and the participants were

randomly assigned to one of these two conditions. The participants were asked to imagine themselves in the situation described, and then to answer the questions that followed. The descriptions are given below.

*Priming of Exchange Relationship Norms:*

Mike's Coffee Shop is located a few blocks from where you live. You go there regularly both on weekdays as well as weekends. You really enjoy going there – the coffee is great, the place is nice and the people are efficient. You go there a lot and it is worth every penny spent. In fact, the place provides you more than a fair value for your money. They know that it makes for good business to treat their customers well. The people there are polite and provide very good service to you. Since you like it best to keep things as even as possible, you generally leave some tip for them in the jar on the counter. You tend to think of Mike's Coffee Shop as a good business partner – well-trained people, good service and a reasonable price. Of course, the combination of hot coffee and a convenient location makes the place quite unbeatable. Their prices are a bit above the average, but then they always give you an even exchange for your money. Each time you visit Mike's Coffee Shop you appreciate them even more.

*Priming of Communal Relationship Norms:*

Mike's Coffee Shop is located a few blocks from where you live. You go there regularly both on weekdays as well as weekends. You really enjoy going there – the coffee is great, the place is cozy and the people are fun. You feel special there, not just any regular customer. They understand what you need and make extra effort to fulfill it. Sometimes when you don't go there for a while, you start to miss them. And the feeling must be mutual since they also give you a big welcome back. You like them and care about them as much as seem to care about you. It would be a sad day if they were ever to close the place up. You have been going there for so long that they feel like family to you – someone who is there for you. Of course, the combination of hot coffee and a warm place makes it quite unbeatable. Their prices are a bit above the average, but their interaction with you is beyond just money. Each time you visit Mike's Coffee Shop you appreciate them even more.

After reading the description, the participants were asked several questions designed to measure the effectiveness of the relationship priming. Participants were then presented with the request for help from the coffee shop made after they helped the participant either in the immediate condition as shown below in brackets, or in the delayed condition in parenthesis:

One afternoon when you went to the Coffee Shop you were keen to get your favorite blend but unfortunately it was not the one that was available that day. You went to the counter and asked them if they could make a pot specially for you. They were happy to oblige.

[As soon as they agreed to make your favorite coffee they asked you for a favor] (Four weeks later when you were at the restaurant, they asked you for a favor). The restaurant was doing a winter special promotion for the coming weekend and had made some posters for it. They gave you about 5 of those posters and asked if you could put them up at some key places on campus for them. Of course you could always refuse.

**Design:**

The experiment was a 2 x 2 between- participants Relationship Type (Communal, Exchange) and Marketing Action (Immediate request, Delayed request) design.

**Dependent Variables:**

*Effectiveness of Priming:* The measures of the effectiveness of priming in Experiment 3 were an expanded set of questions compared to the ones used in Experiments 1 and 2. Specifically, additional questions were asked to supplement the ‘communality’ scale to ensure that the questions were tapping into norm-related differences and not some other general affect-based dimensions. Therefore, in addition to the two questions used in Experiments 1 and 2 designed to tap into the communal aspect of the relationship (warm feelings, and treat you special), there were seven other questions asked to tap into specific communal and exchange norms (extent to which you would miss the brand, to what extent do they care about you as a person, extent to which you personally care about the brand, to what extent would they help you even if it is not good for business, extent to which they give you good service because they like you, extent to which they give you good service to get something back, and extent to which you go there because it is good value for money paid). It was expected that when communal norms are primed participants would give a higher rating than exchange participants for questions like ‘would help you even if it is not good for business’ since this is more consistent with a communal orientation and less with an exchange orientation. On the other hand, communal participants were expected to give a lower rating than exchange participants for ‘give good service to get something back’ since this question tapped more into an exchange orientation than a communal one. All these additional questions designed to tap into the specific relationship norms are as outlined in prior work by Clark (1986). In conjunction with the other two items, these seven items are a stronger measure of the effectiveness of the priming of the relationship norms in the two conditions. The last two of these seven new items were reverse scored, and together these seven items were combined and are called ‘Communal Norm Score’.

As in earlier experiments, participants were also asked to imagine the brand coming alive and becoming a person and then rate the extent to which the brand was like each of the five different people listed (a business partner, a close friend, a merchant, and a family member). Again, as in the previous experiments, control measures were taken by asking questions that tapped into two different aspects of quality perceptions (quality of products, and quality of service). In addition, it was felt that an additional control measure be taken to ensure that the priming of relationship type was not confounded with the degree of positive affect that participants felt towards the brand. Hence another question was asked intended to be able to distinguish the positive affect felt for the brand from the ‘warm’ feelings from it (the extent to which you have positive (but not warm) feelings towards the brand).

*Reactions to Marketing Action:* Participants’ reactions to the request for help from the brand were measured to test the different hypotheses outlined earlier. To evaluate participants’ reaction to the request per se, they were asked to respond the degree to which they were likely to agree to the request. This question was aimed at testing Hypothesis 5.

*Brand Evaluations:* To test their overall evaluation of the brand the same nine items were asked as in Experiments 1 and 2. These nine items were combined to test Hypothesis 6.

*Norms and Relationship Evaluation:* Three questions were asked to evaluate the extent to which the participants differed in their perception of the violation of the norms of the relationship (felt cornered, felt irritated with the request, and felt exploited) and three other questions were asked to measure their perception of conformity with the norms (cared about the brand’s needs, felt happy to help, felt the request was appropriate). These last three were reverse scored and combined with the first three and called ‘Norm Violation’ – aimed at testing Hypothesis 7a. Additionally, participants were also asked to indicate the degree to which they

perceived the relationship with the brand had been weakened/strengthened after the interaction. This measure tested Hypothesis 7b.

### **Results:**

*Effectiveness of Priming:* Table 5 displays results for the questions asked to measure the effectiveness of priming and the perception of quality. As in Experiments 1 and 2, participants' average ratings of 'communality score' were compared across relationship conditions. ANOVA showed that the participants in the communal condition had a higher communality score (on the same two items as were used in the first two experiments) than those in the exchange condition,  $F(1, 94) = 13.80, p < 0.001$ . Next, the seven questions asked to check the priming of norms more directly were combined to form the 'Communal Norm Score' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.76), and compared across the two conditions. ANOVA showed that the participants in the communal condition had a significantly higher 'Communal Norm Score' than those in the exchange condition,  $F(1, 91) = 28.14, p < 0.001$ . Combining all nine items, results show that communal participants show a much higher score on the composite score compared to exchange participants,  $F(1, 91) = 28.74, p < 0.001$ .

Results also showed that participants in the communal condition perceived the brand significantly more as a friend or family member than those in exchange condition,  $F(1, 93) = 8.88, p < 0.01$ ; and significantly less as a businessperson or a merchant,  $F(1, 92) = 12.04, p < 0.001$ . Hence these findings suggest that the two conditions differed in perceived type of relationship, and the priming of the relationship norms was successful. The two questions on product quality and service quality were combined to get an overall perception of quality. An analysis of this combined measure showed that perceived quality did not differ across relationship conditions,  $F(1, 93) = 0.41, p > 0.50$ . A separate analysis of the question asked to tap into positive affect felt for the brand was also done. ANOVA showed that the positive

affect perceived by the participants did not differ significantly across the two manipulations,  $F(1,95) = 1.63, p > 0.20$ .

*Reactions to Marketing Action:* The participants' reaction to brand's request for help was examined first (see Table 6). Participants' ratings on the one question that measured their responses to the specific request (likelihood to agree) were compared across the different conditions. Consistent with Hypothesis 5, timing of the request elicited different responses from participants depending on relationship type. ANOVA revealed a significant effect of Relationship Type X Marketing Action on the likelihood to agree to help the brand,  $F(1, 94) = 3.79, p = 0.05$ . The main effect of Relationship Type was not significant,  $F(1, 94) = 1.77, p > 0.15$ , nor was the main effect for Marketing Action,  $F(1, 94) = 1.40, p > 0.20$ . Specific contrasts revealed that when the return request was delayed, exchange participants provided lower ratings of the action than communal participants,  $F(1, 94) = 5.44, p < 0.05$ . By contrast, communal and exchange participants did not differ in their ratings of the action when the return request was immediate,  $F(1, 94) = 0.19, p > 0.65$ . The other pair of contrasts were also looked at and it was found that exchange participants' ratings of the marketing action was lower when the return request was delayed compared to when it was immediate,  $F(1,94) = 4.95, p < 0.05$ . However, the ratings of the action by communal participants did not differ when the return request was delayed from when it was immediate,  $F(1, 94) = 0.29, p > 0.55$ . This result also showed that asymmetries exist in how participants respond to norm violation even without one violation producing a monetary benefit.

*Brand Evaluation:* The differences in participants' attitudes and brand evaluations were then examined on the same nine items as in Experiments 1 and 2. The nine items were collapsed into one factor termed 'Overall Evaluation' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.89). Results show a marginally significant Relationship Type X Marketing Action on 'Overall Evaluation',  $F(1,93)$

= 2.69,  $p=0.10$ . The main effect of Relationship Type was not significant,  $F(1, 94)=1.40$ ,  $p>0.20$ , nor was the main effect for Marketing Action,  $F(1, 94) = 0.91$ ,  $p>0.30$ . Although the Relationship Type X Marketing Action interaction was only marginally significant, specific comparisons are legitimate if there are theoretical basis for doing so (Winer 1971). Consistent with Hypothesis 6, contrast analyses revealed that when the return request was delayed exchange participants evaluated the brand lower than communal participants,  $F(1, 93) =4.17$ ,  $p<0.05$ . In contrast, when the request was immediate, exchange participants evaluated the brand no lower than communal participants,  $F(1,94) = 0.10$ ,  $p>0.75$ . Considered alternately, exchange participants evaluated the brand marginally lower when the request was delayed than when it was immediate,  $F(1, 93) = 3.52$ ,  $p<0.10$ , but the communal participants evaluated the brand no different when the request was delayed or when the request was immediate,  $F(1, 93) = 0.23$ ,  $p>0.65$ .

*Norm Violation and Perception of Relationship:* Finally, the six questions asked to measure the extent of norm violation were analyzed after combining them into one factor called 'Norm Violation' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.76). Consistent with Hypothesis 7a, ANOVA revealed a significant Relationship Type X Marketing Action interaction,  $F(1, 95) = 7.33$ ,  $p<0.01$ . The main effect of Relationship Type was not significant,  $F(1, 95)=0.21$ ,  $p>0.60$ , nor was the main effect for Marketing Action,  $F(1, 95) = 0.01$ ,  $p>0.90$ . Specific contrast showed that when the return request was delayed, exchange participants perceived a greater violation of the norms than communal participants,  $F(1, 95) = 5.11$ ,  $p<0.05$ , but when the return request was immediate the perception of exchange and communal participants was not significantly different even though it was directionally indicative of norm violation,  $F(1, 95) = 2.48$ ,  $p>0.10$ . Considered alternately, exchange participants perceived a greater norm violation when the return request was delayed than when it was immediate,  $F(1, 95) =4.07$ ,  $p<0.05$ , and communal

participants perceived marginally greater violation of norms when the return request was immediate than when delayed,  $F(1,95) = 3.29, p < 0.10$ . This latter finding is consistent with the assertion that norm violation perceived by communal participants when the return request was immediate would be somewhat muted – possibly due to the genuine concern that partners are expected to have for each other and provide help whenever needed.

Finally, the last question was asked to test the participants' perception of their relationship with the brand. Consistent with Hypothesis 7b, ANOVA revealed a significant effect of Relationship Type X Marketing Action,  $F(1, 95) = 5.15, p < 0.05$ . The main effect of Relationship Type was not significant,  $F(1, 95) = 0.00, p > 0.99$ , nor was the main effect for Marketing Action,  $F(1, 95) = 0.00, p > 0.99$ . Contrast analyses revealed that when the return request was delayed, the perception of the relationship of the exchange participants was not significantly different from that of the communal participants,  $F(1, 95) = 2.65, p = 0.11$ . Further, when the return request was immediate, the perception of the relationship of the exchange participants was not significantly different than communal participants,  $F(1, 95) = 2.51, p = 0.11$ . Considered alternately, exchange participants did not perceive the relationship to be significantly different when the request was delayed from when it was immediate,  $F(1, 95) = 2.65, p = 0.11$ , nor was there a significant difference in the perception of the relationship by communal participants when the request was delayed from when the request was immediate,  $F(1, 95) = 2.51, p = 0.11$ . While none of the contrasts were significant, all of them were directional, suggesting that all the differences contributed to the significant interaction that was observed. These results were consistent with the results found in the questions about norm violation.

*Mediation Analysis:* Our conceptualization of how consumer-brand relationships influence consumer evaluations of marketing actions suggests that norm violations serve as

mediators. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a variable can be classified as a mediator when it meets three conditions: 1) independent variables significantly account for variation in the hypothesized mediator, 2) variations in the mediator account for variation in the dependent variable, and 3) when the variance in 1 and 2 above are controlled, the previously significant relation between the independent and dependent variables should no longer be significant. To test whether the degree of norm violation mediated the consumer responses, I did two sets of mediation analysis – one for ‘Overall Evaluation’ and the other ‘Perception of Relationship’.

To test the mediational role of norm violation I estimated the regression model with ‘Overall Evaluation’ as the dependent variable, and Relationship Type, Marketing Action, Relationship Type X Marketing Action interaction and Norm Violation as the independent variables. The results of the analysis show that the variance accounted for by the previously significant interaction between Relationship Type and Marketing Action disappears ( $T=-0.09$ ,  $p=0.92$ ) when Norm Violation is included in the regression (see Table 7). Additionally, to test the mediational role of norm violation on ‘Perception of Relationship’ I estimated the regression model with ‘Perception of Relationship’ as the dependent variable, and Relationship Type, Marketing Action, Relationship Type X Marketing Action interaction and Norm Violation as the independent variables. The results of the analysis show that the variance accounted for by the previously significant interaction between Relationship Type and Marketing Action disappears ( $T=-0.87$ ,  $p=0.38$ ) when Norm Violation is included in the regression (see Table 7). Both these results provide strong evidence for the mediating role of norm violation in how consumers react to marketing actions under different relationship types.

### **Discussion:**

The results of Experiment 3 replicate the findings of the first two experiments that people evaluate a brand differently depending on what relationship norms are salient.

Specifically, the results of the experiment showed that a delay in the request for a return favor led to a poorer evaluation by exchange participants relative to communal participants since the delay in the request was seen as a violation of exchange norms – being more likely to be seen as an attempt to get something ‘free’ from the partner. Results also showed that when the request for a return favor was immediate, the evaluation was not significantly different for communal and exchange participants. While an immediate request for return favor was in keeping with the norms of exchange relationship and in violation of communal norms, the effect of the violation of communal norms was muted. It is likely that an immediate request for help was seen as a genuine need of the partner – something that would reduce the impact of norm violation.

One important objective of Experiment 3 was to investigate more directly the role of norms and to find out if the results that we observe were guided by the violation of and conformity to these norms. The findings of the experiment provide strong evidence about the role of norms in participants’ responses to the brand’s actions. The expanded list of items measuring the effectiveness of priming (‘Norm Salience’) showed that the experimental scenario successfully primed the norms of the two relationships. Further, the dependent measures of ‘Norm Violation’ showed that there were differences in participants’ perception of norm violation as a result of the brand’s marketing action. The results show that the participants’ evaluation of the brand and the brand’s actions were much lower when they also perceived greater norm violation, and their evaluation was higher when no norm violation was perceived. In addition there was evidence that participants’ perception of the relationship strength was influenced by norm violation – it was perceived to be weaker when the brand’s actions violated the norms but stronger if the actions conformed to the norms. Further support for the role of norm violation in participants’ evaluation was provided by the results of the mediation analysis. These results showed that participants’ evaluation of the brand, and their

perception of relationship strength, was influenced by whether or not the norms of that relationship were violated by the marketing action taken by the brand.

Finally, an additional aspect of this experiment is that like the previous two experiments, the results were stronger for one relationship type than for the other. This pattern of results in Experiment 3 was found not just for the evaluations of the brand's actions, its overall evaluation and the strength of the relationship but also for the perception of norm violation. As mentioned before it is possible that communal participants are more likely to help their relationship partners, and as a result they perceived a weaker violation of norms even when the request for a return favor was immediate – something that otherwise is in violation of the communal norms.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The objective of this research was to test the hypothesis that consumers' reactions to actions taken by a brand differ depending upon the type of relationship norms that are salient at the time. Three experiments were carried out to test this hypothesis and successfully primed the relationship norms by using scenario descriptions of different hypothetical consumer-brand interactions without simultaneously changing consumers' perceptions of brand quality. In Experiment 1 consumer reactions were measured when they were charged (or not charged) for a special service provided by the brand. In Experiment 2 consumer reactions to different forms of compensation (gift or cash) for filling out a questionnaire for the brand were assessed. Finally in Experiment 3, consumer responses to the timing (immediate or delayed) of a request made by the brand were assessed. Results of all three experiments showed that consumer responses depended upon whether or not the brand's actions were in violation of or in conformity with the norms of that relationship. It was also found that when the norm violation was muted or accompanied with a monetary benefit, the participants' negative responses were also muted. An

important finding of the research is that the participants' responses were not limited to evaluation of the marketing actions per se but extended to their overall evaluation of the brand. Findings of Experiment 3 also provided further evidence of the mediating role of norms in consumers' evaluation of the brand, and also on their perception of the relationship. Thus results of all three experiments support the overall hypothesis that consumers apply relationship norms in interactions with brands and use these norms to guide their behavior and to make overall brand evaluations.

More generally speaking the results of the three experiments give us confidence that communal and exchange relationships, and more specifically the norms of behavior that guide these relationships, are a legitimate way to think of consumer-brand interactions. These experiments have tested one very specific behavioral and attitudinal predictions based on the binary distinction between communal and exchange relationships. Given the very rich field of inter-personal relationships, we should be able to enrich our knowledge of consumer-brand relationships by studying more complex multi-faceted relationships over time.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The results of the three experiments have some interesting implications for managers. As highlighted by Experiment 1, establishing a communal relationship with consumers is not 'free' and has some clear cost implications. The customer may feel closer to the brand but the accompanying relationship norms may constrain the marketer's actions. In particular, our findings suggest that the ability for communally perceived brands to charge incrementally for extra services might be severely limited, and an insistence on doing so may even risk weakening the entire relationship. Managers would be well advised to keep this in mind before they start pursuing consumers as communal partners. Experiment 2 highlighted an interesting instance where even though no overt negative reactions to marketing action were apparent, the brand was

still being re-evaluated – something that would have serious implications for the long-term well being of the brand. Thus, for the long-term welfare of their brand strength, managers need to keep track of consumer evaluations of their brands and judge the health of the relationship based on that. Finally, Experiment 3 demonstrated the subtlety of relationship norms and how highly sensitive people’s perceptions are to minor changes in timing, even when the eventual action is exactly the same. If managers can better understand the relationship that consumers perceive with their brands and the norms of these relationships, they would be better equipped to take the right actions rather than merely guessing and be surprised by consumers’ reactions.

The findings of the three experiments show that priming of the relationships in a paper and pencil study over a five-minute period was successful. This supports the assertion that even when participants do not have an actual relationship with brand but when the relationship norms are somehow salient, people start behaving as if they were actually in the relationship. Clearly, if managers can effectively use the marketing tools available to them, then it is reasonable to expect that some of these relationship norms could be made chronically salient in consumers’ minds when they interact with brands. It is no wonder then that we observe consumers who behave as if they have an ongoing ‘relationship’ with the brands that they use.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

While there is abundant anecdotal evidence available about brands and we intuitively attribute the effect to differences in the type of relationship that consumers have with the brand, it would be interesting to supplement these laboratory experiments with field studies conducted on some existing brands. In addition, it has been found by prior work (Clark 1986) that there are individual differences in their communal and exchange scores. Future work might find it useful

to explore if these individual differences are a good predictor of the brand preferences. Future work may also extend these findings to norms of relationship other than helping norms.

The results of Experiment 2 also open up another interesting area of research that would link back to research in gift-giving on the one hand, and to understanding the symbolic role of money on the other. The significance of money goes beyond what it can buy – there is a clear signaling aspect to cash. Future research could try and explore the symbolic value of money and study the moderating role of relationship type on these perceptions.

Finally, a theoretically rich area would be to explore if the two relationship frames lead not only differences in how the same marketing action is perceived by the customers, but also to see if these different customers use different ways to process the same information. Thus, future work may explore the processing strategies adopted by different consumers and how the strategies adopted by communal consumers differ from those adopted by exchange consumers.

Clearly there is a vast spectrum of possibilities that can be explored using the relationship metaphor. As we gather greater knowledge about the how consumers relate to brands we would begin comprehend what one owner of Volkswagen Beetle had in mind when she said this about her car: “Beetle is a member of the family who just happens to live in the garage” .

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> VW Beetle has sold over 20 million cars – more than any other single car model in history.

<sup>2</sup> With some practitioners (King, 1992) arguing for companies to actively focus on advertising the strengths of the company brand rather than the specific product brands, over time it is likely that the brand becomes a stronger symbol of the organization itself.

**TABLE 1**

Experiment 1 – Effectiveness of Priming

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	<u>Communal Prime</u>	<u>Exchange Prime</u>	<u>p-value</u>
Communality Score	5.52	4.20	0.001
Friend/Family	3.87	2.81	0.10
Businessman/Merchant	4.58	5.22	0.08
Average for 5 quality items	5.00	5.01	0.96
N	20	20	

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**TABLE 2**

Experiment 1 – Dependent Variables

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	Charged		Not Charged		Interaction
	<u>Communal</u>	<u>Exchange</u>	<u>Communal</u>	<u>Exchange</u>	<u>p-value</u>
Reaction to Marketing Action	1.37	2.57	3.52	3.43	0.0106
Overall Evaluation	3.36	4.79	5.95	5.33	0.0019
N	10	10	10	10	

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**TABLE 3**

Experiment 2 – Effectiveness of Priming

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	<u>Communal Prime</u>	<u>Exchange Prime</u>	<u>p-value</u>
Communality Score	6.33	5.21	0.000
Friend/Family	6.11	4.79	0.01
Businessman/Merchant	2.69	3.18	0.34
Average for 5 quality items	5.43	5.14	0.25
N	18	19	

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**TABLE 4**

Experiment 2 – Dependent Variables

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	Cash		Gift		Interaction
	<u>Communal</u>	<u>Exchange</u>	<u>Communal</u>	<u>Exchange</u>	<u>p-value</u>
Reaction to Marketing Action	4.19	4.28	4.67	3.63	0.25
Overall Evaluation	5.70	5.89	6.27	4.97	0.04
N	9	9	9	10	

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**TABLE 5**

## Experiment 3 – Effectiveness of Priming

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	<u>Communal Prime</u>	<u>Exchange Prime</u>	<u>p-value</u>
Communality Score (2-items)	4.68	3.78	0.000
Communal Norm Score (7-items)	5.55	3.35	0.000
Composite Score (9-items)			
Friend/Family	4.78	3.81	0.004
Businessman/Merchant	3.55	4.63	0.001
Control items:			
Quality (2-items)	5.97	6.07	0.522
Positive Affect	6.34	6.12	0.205
N	47	49	

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**TABLE 6**

Experiment 3 – Dependent Variables

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	Immediate		Delayed		Interaction <u>p-value</u>
	<u>Communal</u>	<u>Exchange</u>	<u>Communal</u>	<u>Exchange</u>	
Likely to Agree	5.87	6.04	6.08	5.16	0.054
Overall Evaluation (9 items)	5.89	6.00	5.97	5.55	0.104
Norm Violation (6 items)	3.53	3.07	3.01	3.65	0.008
Perception of Relationship	4.04	4.58	4.58	4.04	0.025
N	23	24	24	25	

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**TABLE 7**

## Experiment 3 – Mediation Analysis and Regression Results

*Overall Evaluation:*


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<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variables (T-statistic; p-values)</u>
1. Overall Evaluation	Manipulation (1.17; 0.24), Timing (1.24; 0.22), Interaction (-1.64; 0.10)
2. Overall Evaluation	Norm Violation (6.78; 0.000)
3. Norm Violation	Manipulation (2.41; 0.02), Timing (2.52; 0.01), Interaction (-2.71; 0.01)
4. Overall Evaluation	Manipulation (-0.28, 0.78) Timing (-0.26; 0.79), Norm Violation (6.40; 0.000) Interaction (-0.09; 0.93)

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*Perception of Relationship:*


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<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variables (T-statistic; p-values)</u>
1. Perception of Relationship	Manipulation (2.14; 0.03), Timing (2.14; 0.03), Interaction (-2.71; 0.02)
2. Perception of Relationship	Norm Violation (7.04; 0.000)
3. Norm Violation	Manipulation (2.41; 0.02), Timing (2.52; 0.01), Interaction (-2.71; 0.01)
4. Relationship Strength	Manipulation (0.92; 0.36) Timing (0.84; 0.40), Norm Violation (6.47; 0.000) Interaction (-0.87; 0.39)

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