Self-Gifting and Consumer Perceived Values: Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Consumer Perceived Values in Self-Gifting and Applied to Consumer Satisfaction

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Significance and Conceptual Background: Buying a gift for oneself, also known as self-gifting, has been a growing trend in the market, with 70 percent of consumers reporting they splurge on purchases for themselves (Rippé et al., 2019). Self-gifts are a form of symbolic self-communication through self-focused consumer decision-making behavior and are characterized as pre-meditated and highly context-dependent (Mick & Demoss, 1990). Self-gifts can take various forms, such as products, services, or experiences, and provide special meanings in certain contexts. Therefore, self-gifts are considered distinct from other types of purchases (Heath et al., 2011).

Consumers' desire for the psycho-social functions of self-gifting can be fulfilled by the values embodied in a self-gift, which may help to explain why consumer perceived values (CPVs) have been frequently detected in self-gifting behavior. Consumers perceive emotional, social, or functional values associated with a product or service, and these CPVs influence their choice behavior in various consumption circumstances and for different product/service types (Chi & Kilduff, 2011). Such decisions may extend to consumer satisfaction (Demirgüneş, 2015; Tam, 2004). Therefore, providing a product/service with these CPVs can enhance a brand's success (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In this sense, understanding CPVs in self-gifting (whether product or service) can be considered a strategic imperative by brands.

Despite the important role of CPVs in self-gifting, a valid measurement of self-gifting behavior informed by CPVs is lacking in the literature. Furthermore, existing studies have focused on the antecedents of self-gifting behavior, paying little attention to consumer satisfaction at the post-purchase stage. Given the research gaps, the purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) to develop a scale to investigate CPVs in self-gifting and (2) to apply the developed scale to investigate relationships between CPVs in self-gifting and consumer satisfaction. In this study, Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) framed satisfaction as the result of a psychological comparison between expectations and outcomes of CPVs in self-gifting (Liao et al., 2011). Drawing on EDT, the conceptual framework was used to examine how CPVs in self-gifting influence consumer satisfaction.

Method: To address the first part of the purpose, Churchill's (1979) paradigm was adopted, including *scale item generation, scale purification,* and *scale validation*. Scale item generation involved an extensive literature review and in-depth interviews to identify and define the dimensions of CPVs in self-gifting and generate the initial item pool. Content validity of the items was confirmed through expert reviews and a pilot test. Scale purification and scale validation were

then conducted through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), item analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). To address the second part of the purpose, the developed scale was then used to investigate the relationships between CPVs in self-gifting and consumer satisfaction using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Survey data for the purification and validation steps and for hypothesis testing were collected in the U.S. via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A two-step approach (i.e., measurement and structural models) was adopted to test the proposed hypotheses.

Results: The scale item generation stage resulted in a total of nine CPV themes that consumers perceive in self-gifting behavior: (1) price, (2) quality, (3) happiness, (4) social connection and social identity, (5) new knowledge, (6) new experiences, (7) security through resale, (8) work/life balance, and (9) sustainability, resulting in a pool of 84 items. While some of the CPVs had been identified in prior research on self-gifting (i.e., price, quality, happiness, social connection and social identity, gaining new knowledge, and gaining new experiences), three CPVs emerged in this stage not previously found (work-life balance, security through resale, and sustainability).

In the scale purification stage, a sample of 355 respondents consisting of more males (56.90%) than females (41.69%) and most between 22-35 years old completed the 84-item survey. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A series of statistical tests, including EFA, item analysis, and CFA were performed. In the EFA, items with low factor loadings and high cross-loadings were removed, which led to the deletion of a total of 26 items. Item analysis was then performed, resulting in the deletion of 11 more items. After a series of EFA and item analysis, the price dimension was removed from the scale. CFA was then conducted with the remaining 8 factors and 47 items using M-plus 8.0. The model was found to fit the data very well: χ^2= 1,805.80, df =1,006, p = .00, χ^2/df = 1.80; CFI = .97, TLI = .97; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .05. Reliability (Cronbach's α above .85) and evidence of convergent validity were confirmed by all factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance estimates (AVEs) exceeding the recommended cut-off criteria. Discriminant validity was established, as AVEs were greater than all the squared inter-construct correlations.

In the scale validation stage, a sample consisting of 355 respondents (males 54.65%, females 45.35%) completed the 47-item survey. The majority were between 22 and 35 years old. Results of the CFA indicated that the model fit the data very well: χ^2 = 1,954.042, df = 1,006, p = .00, χ^2/df = 1.94; CFI = .97, TLI = .97; SRMR = .04; RMSEA =.05, meeting all cutoff criteria. Further tests confirmed the scale to be reliable (Cronbach's α above .75) and discriminant validity was established through the validation process. The validation process confirmed the factor structure of the final scale measuring CPVs in self-gifting (CPVS-G), which was comprised of eight CPVs and 47 items: 4 items for satisfying quality (SQ), 7 items for social connection and social identity (SI), 7 items for sustainability (ST), 7 items for new knowledge (NK), 6 items for work/life balance (WL), 6 items for security through resale (RS), 6 items for new experiences (EX), and 4 items for mood diversion (MD).

To address the second purpose, the CPVS-G scale was then used to test relationships between CPVs and consumer satisfaction (SF). A sample comprised of 355 respondents (53.5% females, 46.2% males) with the majority between 22 and 35 years completed

a survey that included the final CPVS-G items as well as existing satisfaction measures (Casidy & Wymer, 2016; Mohlmann, 2015; Wu et al., 2018). Results of the SEM indicated significant relationships between SQ ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$), WL ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .05$), RS ($\beta = .60$, $p < .05$), MD ($\beta = .69$, $p < .01$) and SF. Relationships between remaining CPVs (SI, ST, NK, and EX) and SF were insignificant.

Conclusions and Implications: The primary contribution of this study is the development of a reliable and valid scale to examine CPVs in self-gifting (CPVS-G). The CPVS-G scale expands upon existing shopping motivation scales (i.e., Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Kang & Johnson, 2011) to focus specifically on self-gifting behavior. In addition to previously defined CPVs, new CPVs emerged during item generation (security through resale, work/life balance, and sustainability) that reflect the diversification of self-gifting as a growing consumption phenomenon. The CPVS-G scale can be used in studies on self-gifting across categories of products, services, and experiences in various disciplines and industries. Likewise, the scale can assist in the implementation of targeted marketing by investigating the primary values relative to self-gifting. Last, findings offer theoretical insight into the EDT and particularly within value-oriented self-gifting, in that consumer satisfaction was determined by comparing expectations with outcomes of CPVs relative to the self-gifts purchased. Future studies can continue to update the CPVS-G scale to identify currently unknown CPV constructs and to apply the scale to other constructs, such as brand loyalty.

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