

# Gift Receiving and Brand Attitude Change

*Nguyen Thi Phi Nga, Ph.D*  
*Vietnam National University, Hanoi*

## Abstract

There is a large number of research on gift giving and receiving behavior in psychology and sociology, and a growing literature in marketing as well. Surprisingly, there has been no systematic attempt to explore the change of recipient's attitude toward a brand or the giver-recipient relationship and it is the "gap" that the current research to investigate.

Drawing on balance theory, congruity theory, and involvement theory, we expect that recipients may change their attitude toward a brand and the giver-recipient relationship systematically to resolve any imbalances that may exist between brand attitude and the giver-recipient relationship. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The results of empirical study using critical incident technique and experimentation found that the predictions are largely confirmed. First, the giver-recipient relationship changes and attitudes toward the brand changes after receiving the gift when there is incongruity. Second, the recipient's attitude change is greatest after receiving a neutral brand from the giver who has a strong relationship when compared to other cases. Third, receiving a gift from a giver who has a strong relationship with the recipient has a greater impact than receiving a gift in a weak giver-recipient relationship. Fourth, recipients have different emotions after receiving the gift across different gift receiving situations. The change of emotions is strongest when a favorable brand is received.

Managerial and marketing implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** *gifting, balance theory, congruity theory, ambivalence, involvement theory, brand attitude, critical incident technique.*

## 1. Introduction

Gift giving/receiving behavior has been defined as the process of gift exchange that takes place between a giver and a recipient (Cohn and Schiffman, 1996). The giving and receiving of gift is a ritual that takes place in all societies, although in different forms to build and strengthen relationship between the giver and the receiver. Schieffelin (1980) views the giving of gift, as a rhetorical gesture in social communication. Belk (1976; 1979), Caplow (1982) consider gift giving is the instrumental in maintaining social ties and serves as a mean of symbolic communication in social relationship.

What makes the gift-giving and receiving ritual of great interest to marketers, especially in industrialized nations, is gift - giving behavior has enormous economic consequences. Occasions such as Christmas in USA have accounted for more than 30 percent of retail sales and more than 50 percent of retail profits (Rugimbana, Donahay, Neal, Polonsky, 2003). Ruth *et al* (1999), suggested that in the USA over US \$100bn is spent on gifts each year (p.385). McGrath (1995) confirmed that gift giving is a really big business.

To date, researchers have discovered many aspects of gift giving and receiving, but the impact of the interaction between consumers' prior brand attitudes and prior giver-

recipient relationship on consumer ambivalence/incongruity and on post attitudes toward a brand and post relationship realignment remains a somewhat gray area and should be exploited.

### ***Problem statement and objective***

Both academic and managerial needs for future research motivate this study to find out “which variables may affect consumer’ brand attitudes and giver recipient relationship in different gift giving-receiving situations?”. Until now, most research on gift giving/receiving focused on gift giver, only few studies focus on gift receiver, especially discovering the way to change consumer brand attitudes based on recipient’s incongruity/ambivalence or the conflict between the prior brand attitudes and prior giver-recipient relationship in gift receiving has not been done yet. Under the effects of different gift receiving situations, whether the gift recipient can change their attitude toward the gift’s brand and the relationship between the giver and recipient or not are the main problems which this study focuses on.

### ***Scope of the study***

The first scope concerns the relationship between the giver and the recipient. In this study, the negative relationship between the giver and recipient is not mentined.

Another scope deals with brand attitude dimensions. There are many attributions created brand attitudes, but attitudes toward a brand are mainly considered in relation with recipient’s emotional attribution in this research (favorable or not).

The third limitation deals with the choice of subjects to participate in the experiment. Only female undergraduate students (in the first year) are involved. A further scope is related to the giver’s attitude toward the gift giving. We assume the giver always likes the gift that he/she presents to the recipient and the giver’s motivation of gift giving is to express his/her emotion to the recipient only.

The final scope is the change of recipient’s attitude toward a brand as well as the giver in the experiment just be considered right after the gift giving (right after reading the scenario) while the long effective is mentioned in the in-dept interview process.

## **2. Literature review**

Gift giving/receiving has been of interest to consumer research since late 1970 (Belk 1979; Sherry 1983), and up to date, both Belk’s (1976,1979) and Sherry’s (1983) model of gift exchange remain the most comprehensive literature in general. Since Sherry (1983) provided a framework that divide and describe in details the stages of the whole gift-exchange processes into three stages: gift search and purchase (gestation), actual exchange (prestation) and gift disposition and realignment of the giver/recipient relationship (reformulation). Based on the suggestions made by Belk (1976, 1979) and Sherry (1983), aspects related to gift giving/receiving can be organized into two lines of research that have implications for the current study: (1) various aspects of gift giving behavior; (2) various aspects of gift-receiving behavior. In these processes, recipients’ intension or conflict in recipient’s psychology (*ambivalence*) is one of the ways to explain the research model. Unfortunately this variables has not been well researched so far, thus, the current research focuses on. Before reviewing two lines of the research mentioned above. We fist clarify this concept.

### **2.1. Consumer ambivalence**

Although ambivalence may be little explored in consumer research, it has a rich history in other disciplines - notably, psychology and sociology (Otnes, Lowery and Shrum 1997). Otnes and co-author (1997) synthesized the four interpretations of ambivalence: psychological ambivalence; sociological ambivalence; cultural ambivalence; and consumer ambivalence; as follows:

*Psychological ambivalence* is referred as the internal experience of mixed emotions toward an objective or a person. While psychological ambivalence focuses on internal force, *Sociological ambivalence* focuses on how external force, such as the existing social structure can be sources of mixed feelings. *Cultural ambivalence* pertains to conflict between cultural values. Because cultural values are often expressed through social norms, therefore, the boundaries between sociological and cultural ambivalence remain indistinct (Otnes, Lowery, Shrum, 1997), and should be explored in the future research. *Consumer ambivalence* is the simultaneous or sequential experience or multiple emotional states, as a result of the interaction between internal factor and external objectives, people, institutions and/or cultural phenomena in market-oriented contexts, that can have direct and/or indirect ramifications on pre-purchase, purchase or post-purchase attitudes and behavior.

## **2.2. Various aspects of gift-giving behavior**

While there many fragmented research on gift exchange, this study codifies gift exchange into two lines: *gift giving and receiving behavior*. For the gift giving behavior, this study focus on gift giving motivations, gift giving occasions, types of gift giving, gift giving situations and types of gift selection.

### ***Gift giving motivations***

Wolfenbarger (1990) analyses three motives: obligation, self interest, and altruism. *Self-interest* involves gift-giving to ultimately improve the situation of the giver. *Obligation* is defined as “something one is bound to do”. *Altruism* is defined as gift giving which is “not directed at gain...emitted voluntarily”. Belk and Coon (1993) focus on exchange theories and associated to motivations. These include the economic, social and agapic dimensions. Model of economic exchange also indirectly refers to self-interest and suggests that the dating expenditure can be viewed as an “investment” (p.398). Social exchange model is proposed the importance of social constrains and symbolism and therefore, associating to self interest. In agapic model, “altruism” is dominated.

Among three motivations mentioned above, altruism motivation in agapic dimension can make givers as well as recipients high mixed or high ambivalence. This point also confirm by Sherry (1983).

### ***Gift giving occasion***

Belk (1973) examined the frequency of all gift giving occasion in the US and found that the most popular occasion is birthday (35 percent) and the second one is Christmas (29 percent). The other occasions listed in his study are wedding, Mother’s day, Father’s day, wedding anniversaries and graduations. Bussey (1967), in a study in the U.K, found that the most popular occasion is Christmas, which is follow by birthday. This finding is just reverse of the finding of Belk (1973) (see Othman and Lee, p.3). Recently, Othman and Lee found that among urban Malaysian, the most popular gift giving occasion is birthday (99 percent) followed by is wedding (54 percent) if we do not calculate money as gift.

According to Ruth, Bruinel, Otnes (1999), giver and recipient have mixed emotions in high personalized occasion or in affirming farewell occasion, while in other occasions they just have pure positive or negative emotions.

### ***Type of gift - giving***

The popular aspect attracted researchers is the types of gifts people generally prefer to buy. Lutz (1979) mentioned the choice of gift is one of the most important decisions in the study of consumer in gift-giving behavior. Caplow (1982) considering that the “best” gifts are those most likely maximize the satisfaction of both giver and receiver. The gift is generalized by age, sex, and taste, and can be conspicuously consumed (Othman and Lee). Belk (1973) found that the most popular gift is clothing and the other favorite gifts are jewelry and sporting goods while McGrath Ann Mary (1995) in the British study found that personal gifts are the most popular gifts during Christmas, followed by is novelties and household items. Personal gifts are predominant on birthday, anniversaries (see Othman, Lee, p.4).

### ***Gift giving situation***

Gift situations might affect recipient's emotions in different way. By (Belk, 1975), the situational conditions of gift-giving may differ according to the characteristics of the gift giving occasions, whether the presentation on the gift is public, private, or anonymous. Belk (1975) synthetics “skeletal notion” of situational factors - physical surroundings, social surroundings, temporal perspective, task definition, and antecedent states - illustrate different impacted situations.

### ***Other important factors considered by the giver in gift selection***

Other aspects of interest in gift-giving literature are the factors in which people would consider when choosing a gift. Clark and Belk (1979) mentioned that product quality, appearance, brand name, and the store from which the gift purchased are the important factors to the prospective buyer.

By examine 7 factors considered important when choosing gifts, Othman and Lee explored the priority of these 7 factors by urban Malaysian's gift consumption behavior as follows: (1) relationship between the giver and the recipient; (2) gift that convey certain meaning/message; (3) product quality; (4) price change; (5) uniqueness of the product; (6) time spent; (7) the store from which the gift is purchased (p.21). These results were the same if comparing male and female behavior is the finding of Othman and Lee's study.

## **2.3. Various aspects of gift - receipt behavior**

As mentioned earlier, most of the existing literature related to the gift giving/receiving conducted before and after the appearance of Sherry (1983)'s model (the most comprehensive study on gift exchange in general up to now) could be described as “giver-centric” (Otnes, Lowery, Kim 1993). Surprisingly, little attention has been directed toward “recipient centric” although recipient play an important role in gift - giving/receiving. Even though, we can find some main aspects: recipient's characteristic; antecedents of gift - receipt related to the reformulation of interpersonal relationships to be discussed bellow.

### ***Recipients' characteristics***

Many findings of the research on this aspect should interest consumer behaviorists, marketers and consumers alike.

In the existing literature, the most popular characteristics of recipients mentioned are “easy” and “difficult” recipients. According to Otnes, Lowery, Kim (1993), “an easy recipient was one who had, in the past, correctly interpreted the message that a giver, in the guise of a specific role(s), wishes to convey”, and in contrast, “our interpretation of difficult recipient is that consciously or unconsciously, they thwart a giver’s attempt to express a particular role through gift exchange. They consider the difficult recipients including in-law, fathers, grandparents, elderly relatives, step-relatives, while the easy recipients include: children, friend (same gender). Based on this definition, this research suggests the different strategies used by different roles of giver to his/her easy and difficult recipient.

***Antecedents of gift receipt related to the reformulation of interpersonal relationship***

Ruth, Otnes, Brunel (1999) explored four antecedents: (1) the perception of the existing relationship; (2) the gift, (3) the ritual context; and (4) the recipient’s emotional reaction. The convergence of these antecedent affects six types of relationship realignment. Relating to *the first antecedent*, among different types of relationships, close relationship often creates strengthening outcome as it associated with feelings of connection, bonding, commitment, and/or intensified shared meaning. *The second antecedent* is the perceived focus of the gift. Only if the gift receipt focus on relational and recipient centered can strengthen the relationship outcome. *The third antecedent* is the ritual context where it is highly ritualized and personalized. Mixed emotions in same incident is *the final antecedent* which impact on this type of relationship outcomes (see p.389).

**3. Research model and hypotheses**

The literature pertaining to consumer ambivalence in gift giving/receiving as well as other aspects of gift exchange were presented above. It was concluded that no study have investigated the impact of prior attitude toward a brand, prior giver-recipient relationship on recipient ambivalence/incongruity and post gift receiving outcomes (recipient’s post brand attitudes and post giver-recipient relationship) in gift - exchange to explore the recipient’s attitude change toward a brand as well as toward giver-recipient relationship. This study is therefore an attempt to fill these gaps in research of gift giving/receiving and the research framework which is expresses by the following diagram (see the figure 1).

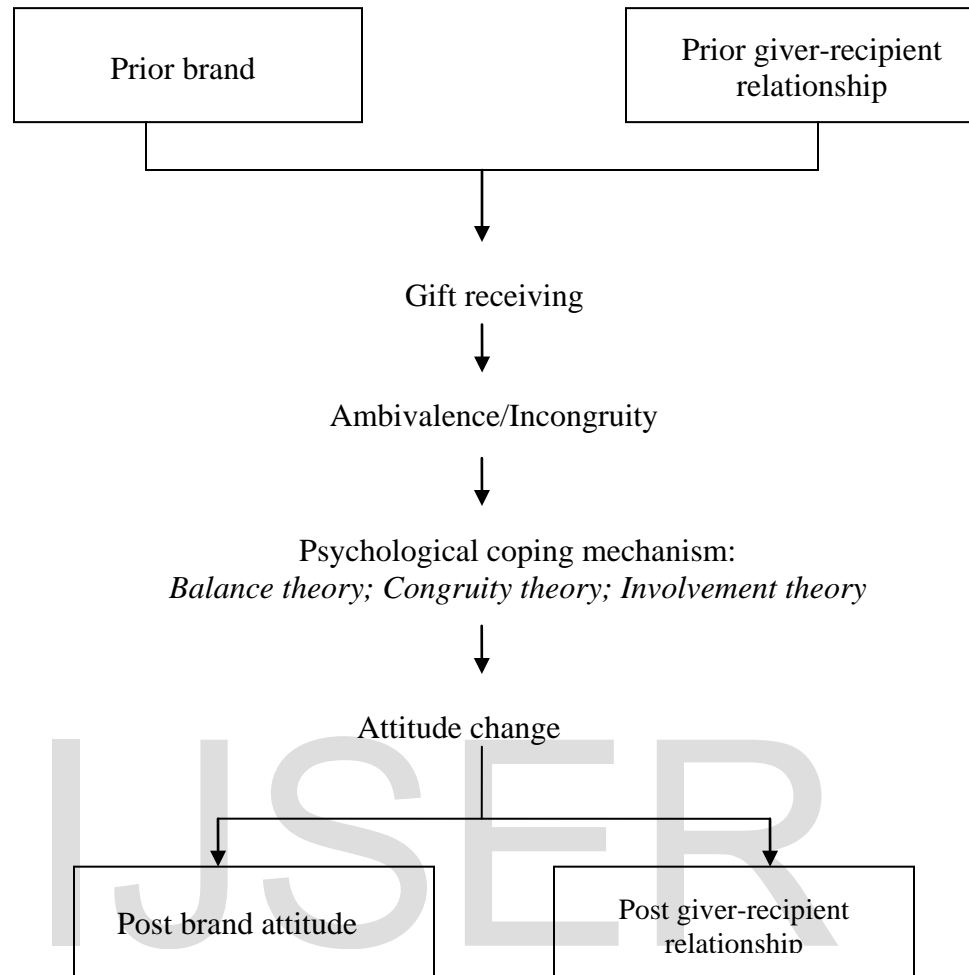


Figure 1: Research model

The above research model is presented to highlight the key variables and their relationship may be differ widely in the degree to which the recipient's perception of prior brand attitudes and prior giver - recipient relationship has disparity. And at the same time, the recipient's different perception on prior brand attitudes and prior giver-recipient relationship often make recipient become ambivalence, the mixed emotions occur after the gift receiving. While the amount of attitude change toward a brand and giver - recipient relationship may differ, resulted by several variables which are considered as components of the gift receiving situations, this study particularly choose the two main antecedents: recipient's perception of the prior brand attitude and prior giver-recipient relationship. Therefore, the research model encompasses the following components: (1) prior giver-recipient relationship; (2) prior brand attitude; (3) post brand attitude; and (4) giver-recipient relationship realignment.

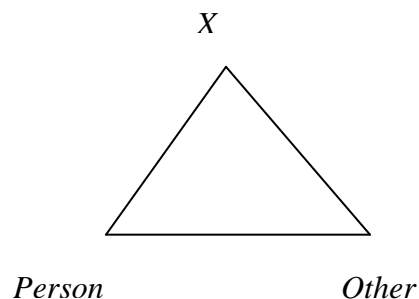
### 3.1. Psychological mechanism

To understand how determinants cause or influence other determinants in the above research model, this section describes in detail the psychological mechanism which

provide explanations of how the recipient reacts in different ways depending on his/her perception of the prior brand attitudes and prior giver-recipient relationship. Theories which can be used to explain this phenomenon are: balance theory, congruity theory, and involvement theory. Each theory is discussed below:

### ***Balance theory***

Balance theory, which was originally originated by Heider, a social psychologist (1958). According to Cartwright and Harary (1956); Anderson (1977); Solomon (2002), the basic elements in Heider's balance theory are P-O-X triad, whose elements are two people: person (P) and other (O), and the third object (X) about which they both had opinions. The third object (X) could be anything: a political party, an idea, a rock group, a country, an other person (see the follow figure):



*Figure 2*

Heider's main proposition is that a cognitive structure can be balanced or unbalanced depending on the configuration of relationships among elements. Furthermore, balanced structures are essentially stable and create no force or tension for cognitive, affective, or behavioral change. Unbalanced structures, on the other hand, are unstable and set up a force requiring some sort of change to regain balance. The theory specifies that people desire relations among elements in a triangle to be harmonious or balanced. If they are not, a state of tension will result until some perceptions are changed and balance is restored (David Aaker, John G. Myers (1982)).

### ***Congruity theory***

Another major consistency approach is Osgood and Tannenbaum's congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955). Its fundamental axiom is the individual tends to restore cognitive balance when two cognitions are in disagreement through a proportional change in each cognition. Or in other words, the congruity predicts that if there are two un-matched people, sets of information, or concepts on which a judgment must be made by a single observer, the observer will experience pressure to change his or her judgment on both of the sides. However, if the two sets of information are similar or congruent, then, there will be no problem, and the observer will not experience pressure of any form. Congruity theory takes an independent view of things, as things could change to each observer, depending on the way they view what is going on between two main parties involved. Unlike the original formulations of balance theory in which only the direction of the relation is considered, congruity theorists consider both the direction and magnitude of the relation. Therefore, it is considered that balance theory is one of the forms of the congruity theory.

### ***Consumer ambivalence theory***

Consumer ambivalence is the simultaneous or sequential experience or multiple emotional states, results of the conflict between the internal factor and external factor, leads to the attitude change (Otnes, Lowery and Shrum 1997).

Supporting this theory, Otnes, Lowery and Shrum (1997), conducted the research on wedding context and explored not only of what triggers ambivalence but also of how consumers resolve their mixed emotions (ambivalence) as they move through (or abandon entirely) the stage of the buying process to minimize the inherent tension resulting from mixed emotions. Ambivalence also happened when custom and value conflict.

***Involvement theory***

Involvement referred to “the level of perceived personal importance and/or interest evoked by a stimulus (or stimuli) within a specific situation” (John H Antil, 1984). Relating involvement, the cognitive response approach to attitude change can be criticized on the grounds that it emphasized a too thoughtful picture of persuasion. Petty and Cacioppo mapped two basic routes to persuasion – a *central route* which occurs when the person is motivated and able to think about the issue, and a *peripheral route* which occurs when either motivation or ability is low (Pety, Cacioppo, Schumann 1983). The central route emphasizes a thoughtful consideration of the attitude issue whereas the peripheral route emphasizes aspects of the persuasion situation that are clearly tangential; to the issue under consideration (e.g. the attractiveness of the message’s source...). The distinction between central and peripheral processing has much in common with the distinctions between deep versus shallow processing (Craik & Lockhart 1972).

This theory shows that it might actually be easier to change people’s attitudes when they relatively little interest in or knowledge about the object.

**3.2. Hypotheses generated and variables operationalization**

To build the concrete hypotheses, it is necessary to categorize the two independent variables into different levels based on the foundation of the balance theory, congruity theory and involvement theory. The prior giver-recipient relationship can be distinguished into strong and weak; while the prior brand attitudes can be differentiated into three levels: favorable, neutral and unfavorable. Therefore, there are six combinations between the two independent variables which are expressed in the table 1:

*Table 1: Gift receiving situations focus on recipient’s perception of prior brand attitudes and prior giver-recipient relationship.*

|   |             |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Prior brand<br>attitude<br><br>Prior relationship | Favorable   | Neutral     | Unfavorable |
| Strong  | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 |
| Weak  | Situation 4 | Situation 5 | Situation 6 |



The combinations of the two independent variables in each gift receiving situation generate the following hypotheses to be tested.

Table 2: The directions for generating hypotheses

| Prior brand attitude \<br>Prior relationship | Favorable                  | Neutral                    | Unfavorable                |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | Strong                     | $\Delta R1$<br>$\Delta B1$ | $\Delta R2$<br>$\Delta B2$ |
| Weak   | $\Delta R4$<br>$\Delta B4$ | $\Delta R5$<br>$\Delta B5$ | $\Delta R6$<br>$\Delta B6$ |

Note that:

$\Delta Ri$  indicates the degree of attitude change toward a giver-recipient relationship in each gift receiving situations ( $i = 1, \dots, 6$ ).

$\Delta Bi$  indicates the degree of attitude change toward a brand in each gift receiving situations ( $i = 1, \dots, 6$ ).

Thus, the statement of hypotheses as follows:

**1. Effect of incongruity on attitude change**

**Hypothesis 1:** After receiving the prior favorable brand from a giver who has prior strong relationship with recipient, the recipient's (a) post brand attitude will be more favorable and (b) post relationship will be stronger.

This hypothesis is created based on the congruity theory.

**Hypothesis 2:** After receiving the prior neutral brand from a giver who has prior strong relationship with recipient, the recipient's (a) post brand attitude will be more favorable and (b) post relationship will be stronger.

The above hypothesis is supported by the involvement theory.

**Hypothesis 3:** After receiving the prior unfavorable brand from a giver who has prior strong relationship with recipient, the recipient's (a) post brand attitude will be more favorable and (b) post relationship will be weaker.

**Hypothesis 4:** After receiving the prior favorable brand from a giver who has prior weak relationship with recipient, the recipient's (a) post brand attitude will be less favorable and (b) post relationship will be stronger.

Hypothesis 3 and 4 also generated based on the corollary 1 mentioned in the congruity theory.

**Hypothesis 5:** After receiving the prior neutral brand from a giver who has prior weak relationship with recipient, the recipient's (a) post brand attitude will be less favorable and (b) post relationship will be weaker.

The way of explanation hypothesis 5 is quite similar to hypothesis 2 which mentioned above.

**Hypothesis 6:** *After receiving the prior neutral brand from a giver who has prior weak relationship with recipient, the recipient's (a) post brand attitude will be less favorable and (b) post relationship will be weaker.*

This hypothesis is similar with hypothesis 1 in explanation.

### **2. Effect of prior brand attitude on brand attitude change**

**Hypothesis 7.1.a.** *Compared to receiving a prior favorable brand, the recipient's attitude change will be greater after receiving a neutral brand – in a case of a strong relationship between the giver and the receiver.*

**Hypothesis 7.1.b.** *Compared to receiving a prior unfavorable brand, the recipient's attitude change will be greater after receiving a neutral brand – in the case of a strong relationship between the giver and the receiver.*

**Hypothesis 7.2.a.** *Compared to receiving a prior favorable brand, the recipient's attitude change will be greater after receiving a neutral brand – in the case of a weak relationship between the giver and the receiver.*

**Hypothesis 7.2.b.** *Compared to receiving a prior unfavorable brand, the recipient's attitude change will be greater after receiving a neutral brand – in the case of a weak relationship between the giver and the receiver.*

The above hypothesis created based on the implication from the research of Tanenbaum (Osgood, Tannenbaum, 1955, p.52). These hypotheses also supported by involvement theory as neutral brand is determined as the low involvement and easily to be changed.

### **3. Effect of prior brand attitude on relationship change**

**Hypothesis 8.1.** *After receiving the prior favorable brand from a giver who has strong relationship with recipient, the change of recipient's perception on that brand will be greater than receiving from a giver who has weak relationship with the recipient.*

**Hypothesis 8.2.** *After receiving the prior neutral brand from a giver who has strong relationship with recipient, the change of recipient's perception on that brand will be greater than receiving from a giver who has weak relationship with the recipient.*

**Hypothesis 8.3.** *After receiving the prior unfavorable brand from a giver who has strong relationship with recipient, the change of recipient's perception on that brand will be greater than receiving from a giver who has weak relationship with the recipient.*

Those hypotheses are created based on the congruity theory.

### **3.3. Variables operationalization**

#### ***Giver-recipient relationship***

The variables were chosen as the components of the research model include: prior giver-recipient relationship prior attitude toward a brand, giver-recipient relationship realignment, and post brand attitude toward a brand.

With the expectation of the recipient's attitude change based on the effect of different types of social relationship clearly, this study follow Pieters, Robben (1998) approach by dividing the prior giver-recipient relationship into two types strong and weak. Subjects were asked how they evaluate the relationship with the giver “-3=very weak; +3=very strong” by the semantic different 7 points scales based on the manipulated prior giver-recipient relationship and ask respondents to evaluate before receiving the scenario; and the post relationship will be measured after one week when respondent receives and reads his/her scenario.

#### ***Attitude toward a brand***

Psychologists have developed at least 100 definitions and more than 500 measurements of attitudes. In this research, attitude toward a brand was measured by the semantic different 7 points scales (-3= quite unfavorable; +3=quite favorable) with the overall question on the perception of brand attitude “How much favorable brand do you evaluate” based on the list of different brands given before the experimental test (to get original/prior brand attitudes). The post brand attitudes scores were obtained one week later after subjects who participated the experiment answer the questions below the scenario after the readers imagine receiving the gift mentioned in the scenario.

#### **4. Research methodology**

##### ***Research design***

This research was designed to investigate the impacts of the interaction between the two antecedents: (1) gift recipient’s prior brand attitudes, and (2) gift recipient’s perception of prior giver-recipient relationship on recipient ambivalence and on gift receiving outcomes: post brand attitudes and post relationship through the gift - recipient’s perception. Different gift receiving situations were selected as the context for the study. Most of the concept in this study were generated and have applied, sometimes extensively. The pilot qualitative work, including both in-depth interview and group discussion were used to explore the impacts of the interaction between the two different variables and later to develop scenario for the experimental phase of the study.

##### ***Qualitative research***

The qualitative research phase of this study was conducted through face-to-face in person and internet interviews with students, adults. Twenty informants participated in the interview, and were conducted face to face directly by the researcher. Ten male and ten female were interviewed. Informants were acquaintances to the researcher and were recruited through the notice to the undergraduate classes of the Economic Department of Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

Following McCracken’s (1988) and Pham Van Quyet, Nguyen Quy Thanh (2001)’s guidelines, the list of questions and prompts for the interview. The researcher began with the grand-tour questions asking informants to “recall an occasion during which they received a gift and describe what kinds of emotions appeared at that moment”. The interviewer asked them to evaluate their relationship with the giver as well as their attitude toward the gift’s brand before reviewing the gift and tried to cover all six situational experiences mentioned above to find the different outcomes from different levels of interaction between prior brand attitude and prior giver-recipient relationship.

32 students participated group discussion. They were divided into four groups, two female groups and two male groups which include eight members per each. For group discussion working purpose, we focused on six types of mentioned gift receiving situations (six scenarios) and asked them to express their ideas under each situation to see the trend of their reacted emotions as well as post brand attitude change and giver-recipient relationship realignment.

##### ***Experiment***

The experiment employed a between subject factorial design to examine how recipients assess the relationship realignment and post attitude toward a brand which differs depending on the interaction between the prior giver-recipient relationship and prior

attitude toward a brand based on gift recipient’s perception before and after reading the scenario.

This current study selected the scenario technique to implement the between subjects factorial experiment design because it is not clear how to produce multiple emotions to see the change in post brand attitudes as well as giver-recipient relationship realignment in a lab setting, where it is also difficult to mimic actual, lived interpersonal relationships and could not find the real pairs of giver-recipient consisted with their strong and weak relationship in fact.

Each subject in the experimental groups, acting as a gift-recipient, imagined receiving a gift, which belongs to one among three types of brand attitudes (favorable, neutral and unfavorable brand attitudes), from one among two types of relationship with the giver (strong and weak relationship). The scenario is given to each subject in details. The experiment employed a mix design with the based design was 2x3 between subjects factorial, varying prior giver-recipient relationship (strong and weak), and prior brand attitudes (favorable, neutral, and unfavorable).

**Subjects**

All subjects were undergraduate female students (in the first year) of the University of Economics and Business of Vietnam National University-Hanoi, who participate the experiment in the year 2016. The reason to select female student is highly frequency of gift receiving than male students to avoid the errors in the experiments because of the confounding impact. Besides the 180 students, the author also interviewed some other people who has different jobs in Hanoi as well as in Seoul.

A total of one hundred eighty students with average age from 18 to 20 years old participated were randomly assigned to each of the six experimental groups which are categorized in the following table.

*Table 4: experimental groups structure*

| Prior brand \<br>Prior relationship | <i>Favorable</i>               | <i>Neutral</i>                 | <i>Unfavorable</i>             |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Strong</i>                       | 30 respondents<br>(scenario 1) | 30 respondents<br>(scenario 2) | 30 respondents<br>(scenario 3) |
| <i>Weak</i>                         | 30 respondents<br>(scenario 4) | 30 respondents<br>(scenario 5) | 30 respondents<br>(scenario 6) |

**Stimuli**

Based on the formal interviews with students and group discussions, shampoo was selected as the target brand because it is suitable with student’s life and high frequency of receiving than other types of gift. The different six scenarios were created to describe the real gift receiving situations for subjects easy to imagine and react by answering the questions below the scenarios.

The prior giver-recipient relationship was manipulated by asking subjects to evaluate their personal relationship with a partner whom she feel trustworthy, likability and well understand her (for strong relationship) and also ask them to evaluate the relationship with the people whom she did not meet for a long time and almost do not understand each other (for the weak relationship).

The prior brand attitudes were manipulated by asking subjects to evaluate their brand attitudes based on the list of different brands of the gift.

The prior giver-recipient relationship (strong and weak) were fixed in the scenario design while brand attitude were changed depending on each subject's evaluation. The combination of the six situations of gift receiving help the author create six scenarios for the experiment.

**Procedure**

The experiment began with the first task of pre-testing to explore which product is suitable for the experiment and which product's brand can be categorized into "favorable", "neutral", and "unfavorable" associated with subjects' attitudes toward the product's brands as mentioned above.

The second task of the experimental stage is to create scenarios for the six experimental groups and then deliver to each appropriate subject to assess the post giver-recipient relationship and post attitude toward that brand. The experimental factors were incorporated into gift receiving scenarios that were delivered to the participants.

Original attitudes toward each independent variables (prior brand attitudes and prior giver-recipient relationship) were determined from the before-test scored. Each subjects should determined the score for her original attitude toward strong relationship and weak relationship before receiving the scenario.

To get the post attitude score, subject were divided randomly into six groups with 30 respondents per each, depending on what kind of scenario which they will receive. The six groups were divided based on the six types of scenarios which are created based on the combination of different levels of prior attitude and prior relationship as mentioned in the table 3.

**5. Research results**

The main research results are expressed in the following table 5, 6 and 7.

*Table 5: One-sample test for attitude change (toward a band and toward giver-recipient relationship)*

| Scenario   | Attitude change        | Test value = 0 |    |                |                  |                                       |        |  |
|--|------------------------|----------------|----|----------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|--|
|  |                        | T              | Df | Sig. (2-tails) | Mean differenc t | 95% confidence interval of difference |        |  |
|  |                        |                |    |                |                  | Lower                                 | Uper   |  |
| (1) Strong relationship & favorable attitude     | Change in brand        | 5.113          | 29 | .000           | .5333            | .3200                                 | .7467  |  |
|  | Change in relationship | 2.192          | 29 | 0.37           | .3000            | .0201                                 | .5799  |  |
| (2) Strong relationship & neutral attitude       | Change in brand        | 2.193          | 29 | .000           | 1.8667           | 1.6122                                | 2.1211 |  |
|  | Change in relationship | 15.004         | 29 | .012           | .2000            | .0481                                 | .3519  |  |
| (3) Strong relationship and unfavorable attitude | Change in brand        | 4.252          | 29 | .000           | .9667            | .5017                                 | 1.4316 |  |
|  | Change in relationship | -1.989         | 29 | .056*          | -.2000           | -.4057                                | .0057  |  |
| (4) Weak relationship & favorable attitude       | Change in brand        | -2.536         | 29 | .017           | -2.333           | -.4215                                | -.0451 |  |
|  | Change in relationship | 5.356          | 29 | .000           | 1.1000           | .6799                                 | 1.5201 |  |

|              |  |                                       |        |    |       |        |        |        |
|--------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------|----|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| attitude (5) | Weak relationship & neutral attitude     | relationship Change in brand attitude | -4.349 | 29 | .000  | -5.000 | -.7351 | -.2649 |
| attitude (6) | Weak relationship & unfavorable attitude | Change in brand relationship in       | 2.644  | 29 | .013  | -.4333 | .0982  | .7685  |
|              |  | Change in brand attitude              | -2.408 | 29 | .023  | -.1667 | -.3082 | -.0251 |
|              |  | Change in brand relationship          | -.1072 | 29 | .293* | -.1333 | -.3878 | .1211  |

*Table 6: Recipient's emotions appearing in each gift receiving situation*

| Scenario           |       | Emotions           |                      |                        |                          |                       | Total |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
|                    |       | Satisfied-expected | Satisfied-unexpected | Not satisfied-expected | Not satisfied-unexpected | No particular Emotion |       |
| Strong favorable   | count | 14                 | 12                   | 1                      | 0                        | 3                     | 30    |
|                    | %     | 46.7               | 40                   | 3.3                    | 0                        | 10                    | 100   |
| Strong-neutral     | count | 5                  | 20                   | 1                      | 1                        | 3                     | 30    |
|                    | %     | 16.7               | 66.7                 | 3.3                    | 3.3                      | 10                    | 100   |
| Strong-unfavorable | count | 2                  | 7                    | 4                      | 11                       | 6                     | 30    |
|                    | %     | 6.7                | 23.3                 | 13.3                   | 36.7                     | 20                    | 100   |
| Weak-favorable     | count | 17                 | 8                    | 0                      | 0                        | 5                     | 30    |
|                    | %     | 56.7               | 26.7                 | 0                      | 0                        | 16.7                  | 100   |
| Weak-neutral       | count | 0                  | 10                   | 1                      | 6                        | 12                    | 30    |
|                    | %     | 0                  | 33.3                 | 3.3                    | 20                       | 40                    | 100   |
| Weak-unfavorable   | count | 4                  | 4                    | 6                      | 1                        | 15                    | 30    |
|                    | %     | 13.3               | 13.3                 | 20                     | 3.3                      | 50                    | 100   |

Table7: Summary of results and hypotheses testing

| Hypothesis  | Hypothesis                      | Mean of change | P value | Hypotheses testing |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------|---------|--------------------|
| <i>Effect of incongruity on attitude change</i>                 | H1.a. $\Delta B > 0$            | .5333          | .000    | Supported          |
|   | H1.b. $\Delta R > 0$            | .3000          | .037    | supported          |
|   | H2.a. $\Delta B > 0$            | 1.8667         | .000    | supported          |
|   | H2.b. $\Delta R > 0$            | .2000          | .012    | supported          |
|   | H3.a. $\Delta B > 0$            | 0.9667         | .000    | supported          |
|   | H3.b. $\Delta R < 0$            | -.2000         | .056*   | reject             |
|   | H4.a. $\Delta B < 0$            | -.02333        | .017    | supported          |
|   | H4.b. $\Delta R > 0$            | -1.1000        | .000    | supported          |
|   | H5.a. $\Delta B < 0$            | -.5000         | .000    | supported          |
|   | H5.b. $\Delta R < 0$            | .4333          | .013*   | reject             |
|   | H6.a. $\Delta B < 0$            | -.1667         | .023    | supported          |
|   | H6.b. $\Delta R < 0$            | -.1333         | .0293   | reject             |
| <i>Effect of prior brand attitude on brand attitude change</i>  | H7.1.a. $\Delta B1 < \Delta B2$ | -1.333         | .000    | Supported          |
|   | H7.1.b. $\Delta B2 > \Delta B3$ | .9000          | .001    | Supported          |
|   | H7.2.a. $\Delta B5 > \Delta B4$ | 0.2667         | 0.75*   | Reject             |
|   | H7.2.b. $\Delta B5 > \Delta B6$ | 0.3333         | .016    | Supported          |
| <i>Effect of relationship strength on brand attitude change</i> | H.8.1. $\Delta B1 > \Delta B4$  | .088           | .23333* | Reject             |
|   | H.8.2. $\Delta B2 > \Delta B5$  | 1.3000         | .000    | Supported          |
|   | H.8.3. $\Delta B3 > \Delta B6$  | 1.000          | .000    | Supported          |

Note: \* indicates not significance at 0.05

The hypotheses are rejected as the  $p$  value  $> 0.05$ .

Most of the hypotheses of the research are supported at the statistical significance of 0.05 (or 95%), except H3b, H7.2, H8.1 because the  $p$  value is greater than 0.05. Hypothesis H5.b is rejected because  $\Delta R > 0$ .

Among the six gift receiving situations, the main research results showed that: *First*, the giver-recipient relationship changes and attitudes toward the brand changes after receiving the gift when there is incongruity; *Second*, the recipient's attitude change is greatest after receiving a neural brand from the giver who has a strong relationship comparing to other cases ( $p=0.00$ ;  $\Delta B=1.8667$ ); *Third*, receiving a gift from a giver who has a strong relationship with the recipient has a greater impact than receiving a gift in a weak giver-recipient relationship (see table 7); *Fourth*, recipients have different emotions after receiving the gift across different gift receiving situations. The change of emotions is strongest when a favorable brand is received; *Fifth*, an interesting result in the research is the relationship between a giver and the recipient after receiving the gift is not decreased in almost the gift recipient situations (except for the situation of receiving unfavorable gift from the strong relationship). The recipient's emotions are quite different across the gift receiving situations.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

Until now, research has focused on gift giving and gift receiving but the research was fragmentary. This study differs if comparing to previous research: (1) investigates systematically the recipient's attitude change toward both brand and giver-recipient relationship after the gift receipt, considering the incongruity between the recipient's perception on prior brand attitude and prior giver-recipient relationship; (2) this study is the first attempt to explain the change of the recipients' attitude systematically based on the psychological mechanism of balance theory, congruity theory and involvement theory; (3) this research covers three important fields of life through the gift giving/receiving: psychology, sociology and marketing. Therefore, the current research provides unique insights which will be mentioned in the following recommendations:

*The first* implication related to brand advertising is by depicting the focal brand as a gift in a positive relationship setting (father and son, teacher and student, best friends...) we can enhance the consumer's favorable attitude towards the brand. *The second* is promotion of the focal brand in a positive gift giving situation which can increase its brand value. The company may promote heavily during gift giving seasons. It may be more effective to promote benefits of the product as enhancing the giver's social relationship, rather than the functional benefit of the product. The use of such psychological benefits have been used previously in advertising, but not fully explored in a gift giving situations. *The third*, the results of the experiment show that under the strong giver/receiver relationship, receiving the neutral brand, recipients have greatest change in brand attitude as well as positive feelings, which that the best situation for marketers to influence recipients' brand attitude in gift receiving context.

Eventhough the current research has some limitations and the suggestions for the future research should be made: In this study we discovered ambivalence only through in-depth interviews so to measure it more systematically should be the good topic in the future. We have not considered the negative relationships, just weak and strong relationships, thus, formal study of gift-giving/receiving between people with negative relationships can be studied in the future also. Our in-depth interview methodology required respondents to recall and retell their past gift receiving experiences, some of which occurred a long time ago. Some might argue that the use of recall data to explore gift receipt and relational effects as well as brand attitude create a distorted picture of these experiences. The current study examines the attitude change of female undergraduate students, future research should examine both male and female subjects in different sectors of population to see if there are differences between each group's perception of brand attitude as well as giver-recipient relationship realignment. Cross-cultural studies may reveal the role that culture plays in the gift giving/receiving and should be the good topic for doing the research so far.

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