소비자의 독특함에 대한 욕구가 제품의 경험적 및 탐색적 특징에 대한 태도 형성에 미치는 영향에 관한 연구

The Effect of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness (CNFU) on Attitude Formation toward Experience versus Search Attributes of Products

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요약

　타인의 선호에 대한 정보가 개인의 태도 형성에 미치는 영향은, 소비자의 독특함에 대한 욕구와 제품 특징에 따라 달라질 수 있다. 독특함에 대한 욕구가 강한 사람의 경우, 경험적 특징에 대한 타인의 선호에 대한 정보를 접하면 정체성의 독특함과 관련된 측면이 환기되면서, 타인에게 동조하는 것이 독특함 관련 자존감을 위협한다는 우려 때문에 타인의 선호와 매우 다르게 태도를 형성한다. 탐색적 특징은 독특함 관련 측면을 환기시키지 않기 때문에, 이들은 타인의 선호와 관계없이 태도를 형성한다. 반면, 독특함에 대한 욕구가 낮은 소비자는 타인의 선호에 대한 정보가 정체성의 독특함 관련 측면을 환기시키지 않기 때문에, 제품 특징에 관계없이 타인의 선호에 동조하는 경향을 보였다. 본 연구는 경험적, 탐색적 특징을 구분하는 기준으로서 개인의 정체성을 표시하는지의 여부를 제안하였고, 독특함 욕구가 강한 소비자를 대상으로는 대중적이지 않은 제품 특징을 개발하는 것이 효과적일 수 있다는 실무적 시사점을 제공한다.

■ 중심어 : │경험적 특징│탐색적 특징│소비자의 독특함에 대한 욕구│자아정체성│

Abstract

　The influence of information on other's preference on one's attitude formation can vary with consumer's uniqueness motive and product attributes. When high-CNFU individuals are given the information on the preference of others toward an experience attribute, the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity is aroused. As conforming to others' preference causes concern that their uniqueness-related self-esteem is threatened, they contrast away from the majority. On the other hand, they form their attitude toward search attributes regardless of the preference of others. In contrast, for low-CNFU individuals, knowing the majority's choice of experience attributes does not arouse the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity and not threaten their self-esteem. Thus, they tend to conform to the majority regardless of the type of product attributes. This study suggests whether or not the attribute signals the identity of a person as another criterion that distinguishes experience and search attributes. The results imply that when targeting a consumer with a strong desire for uniqueness, it would be more effective for a company to develop features that are not popular.

■ keyword : │Experience Attribute│Search Attribute│Consumer's Need for Uniqueness(CNFU)│Self-Identity│

I. Introduction

Imagine that you are shopping for a shirt with various colors and then a salesperson approaches you and says, "This color of this shirt is the most popular and every customer loves it." Would you also want to choose the most popular color of the shirt or does the attractiveness of the shirt of that color suddenly drop for you? Most of the previous studies on consumers' attitude formation affected by the preference or choice of others have been conducted in the context of product level choice[1] or new product adoption[2]. However, consumers can form preference or attitude differently even for the same product, depending on their valued motive or aspects of the product. The current study argues that being fond of certain attributes of products can be a meaningful way of signaling one's desirable identity.

In this research, it is posited that consumers' uniqueness motive is more related to experience, rather than search attributes. The present research examines whether or not consumers perceive experience attributes to be more diagnostic in expressing uniqueness aspect of their identity than search attributes. Further, it is investigated whether the influence of the uniqueness motive and preference of others on the individual's attitude differs according to the types of product attributes.

II. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

1. Experience Attributes and Search Attributes

According to Nelson's distinction between search and experience attributes, search attributes can be gained from secondhand sources such as advertising and word of mouth, without having to buy or try the product[3][4]. On the other hand, experience attributes can be verified only by (limited) use of the product, because they are a matter of subjective experience[3][4]. While a table's color or the number of calories per serving, ingredients, and price of a chocolate could be examples of search attributes, user friendliness of a laptop or the exact taste and softness of a chocolate could be examples of experience attributes.

Qualities of a product that consumers can determine prior to purchase are search attributes, whereas qualities that cannot be determined prior to purchase are experience qualities[4]. It is argued that for search attributes, consumers believe that before product use, they possess a subjectively reliable inferential rule[5] that links an observable aspect of the product with a desired attribute, benefit, or outcome[6]. For experience attributes, consumers perceive a far less reliable link between the information available before use and the benefits or outcomes experienced later. Consumers feel that advertising claims about search attributes are reasonably reliable before actual use of the product, and they are more skeptical of advertising claims about experience attributes[4].

2. Attributes Signaling Consumers' Self-identity

Unlike search attributes, experience attributes are perceived and verified only through personal trial of products[4][6][7]. Usually search attributes perform utilitarian functions based on relatively objective features, whereas experience attributes include symbolic meanings of more subjective characteristics[8]. Experience is interpreted from the subjective view of individuals. Compared to information provided from advertising, direct experience leads to more strongly held belief as well as attitudes[6]. Direct product experience strengthens consumers' product belief and confidence[6][9].

People perceive themselves based on their past

behavior[10][11]. In other words, self-identity reflects past performance of behavior[11]. Since preferences or attitudes toward subjects are formed based on a collection of individuals' past experiences, they are closely related to the individual's self. Therefore, attitude toward attributes which are verified only by direct experience is likely to signal individuals' identity.

In sum, self-identity consists of accumulation of personal experiences. Thus, preference for experience attributes (vs. search attributes) which can be determined by subjective experience will be more diagnostic for signaling one's self-identity. In this light, the basic proposition on which the present research proceeds is that unlike search attributes, experience attributes play a greater role in expressing the consumer's self-identity or uniqueness motive. This proposition leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals perceive experience attributes to be more diagnostic in signaling one's identity than search attributes.

3. Consumers' Need for Uniqueness (CNFU)

The human need for distinctiveness and conformity are addressed by the need for uniqueness (NFU) theory[12]. Uniqueness motive is an individual's disposition to embrace new things, resist convention, and pursue rare and unusual things and experiences[13-15].

High-NFU individuals conventionally monitor whether they are seen as similar to others and are likely to exhibit behaviors that establish a sense of distinctiveness[16][17]. In the consumer behavior domain, it has been demonstrated that high-NFU individuals have stronger preferences for acquiring rare and uncommon products relative to low-NFU individuals[13][18][19]. Following from Snyder and Fromkin's theory of uniqueness[12], consumers' need for uniqueness (CNFU) reflects individual differences in consumer counter-conformity motivation[19]. Compared with the general need for uniqueness, CNFU is defined as "the trait of pursuing differentness relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's self-image and social image"[19](pp.52). In other words, the concept of CNFU encompasses one's desire to improve self-image and social image.

Tian et al.[19] conceptualize CNFU as having three dimensions: creative choice counter-conformity, unpopular choice counter-conformity, and avoidance of similarity. Creative choice counter-conformity indicates that consumers not only pursue social differentness from others, but also long for acknowledgment that their own choice is a good one[19]. On the other hand, unpopular choice counter-conformity refers to the selection or use of products that go against group norms and consequently risk social disapproval[19][20]. Avoidance of similarity refers to the loss of interest in consumer goods that become commonly used or adopted by majority of the consumers[19][21].

High-CNFU individuals would like to be regarded as having an unusual taste in their consumption. Thus, they still pursue differentness even if their choice may deviate from widespread and popular consumer choice. High-CNFU individuals also desire to form a negative attitude towards products preferred by the majority. Hence, it can be said that high-CNFU individuals value distinctiveness, whereas low-CNFU individuals value conformity.

4. Restoring Uniqueness-Related Self-Esteem

Research on uniqueness motive suggest that the uniqueness motives of people are activated by their

perception of similarity to others[12], and that high levels of similarity or dissimilarity are perceived as unpleasant and reduce one's self-esteem[22][23]. Some information indicating similarity to others enhances uniqueness-related self-esteem for those with a low need for uniqueness[2]. In contrast, the same information diminishes uniqueness-related self-esteem for those with a high need for uniqueness, triggering self-esteem-restoring thoughts and behaviors[2]. In other words, when high-CNFU individuals perceive themselves as highly similar to others, their identities are threatened[12]. Thus, they seek an unusual product to alleviate the threat to identity and restore their self-view as someone who is different from others[19].

When consumers articulate their own preferences toward a product, they are often given information on the preferences of others as well. Under those situations, being informed of the preference of others poses a threat to the identity or self-perception of uniqueness for high-CNFU consumers[2]. Thus, to restore their uniqueness-related self-esteem, high-CNFU consumers differ from or, at least, choose to ignore the preference of others in formulating their own preferences[2]. On the contrary, given that low-CNFU consumers value conformity, being informed of the preference of others is not a threat to them; thus, they do not use any means to protect their identity or restore self-esteem.

According to Snyder and Fromkin's theory of uniqueness[12], the need to see oneself as being different from the rest is aroused in situations, in which self-perception of uniqueness aspect of the self is threatened. Individuals attempt to perform self-distinguishing behaviors in order to restore their self-esteem and reduce negative affect[19]. Irmak et al.[2] provide evidence showing that uniqueness motive is not limited to liking unique objects but

rather includes the formation of one's own preference, depending on information about others. Thus, forming negative attitude against the choice of the majority would be a means of communicating one's identity or protecting one's uniqueness-related self-esteem.

Drawing on the above reasoning, it is hypothesized that when high-CNFU individuals are given the information on the preference of others toward an experience attribute which is diagnostic for identity signaling, the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity is aroused. Conforming to others' preference causes concern that their uniqueness-related self-esteem would be threatened. Consequently, they tend to choose the opposite of the majority's choice in order to restore their threatened self-esteem. In contrast, for low-CNFU individuals who value conformity, knowing the majority's choice of experience attributes does not arouse the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity and not threaten their self-esteem; thus, there is no need to restore it.

Given that search attributes are not indicative of identity signaling, being informed of others' preference for a search attribute does not arouse the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity and not threaten high-CNFU individuals' uniqueness-related self-esteem. Even if high-CNFU individuals are concerned to some extent with knowing the preference of others towards search attributes, contrasting away from the preference of others to form their own preference may not be helpful in enhancing their uniqueness-related self-esteem. For low-CNFU individuals, in the same manner as experience attributes, knowing the preference of others for a search attribute does not arouse the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity and is not considered as a threat to self-esteem; thus there is no need to restore it. The following hypotheses are suggested:

Hypothesis 2: For experience attribute, low-CNFU individuals conform to the preferences of others, whereas high-CNFU individuals contrast away from the preferences of others.

Hypothesis 2a: The attitude of low-CNFU individuals towards an experience attribute is lower when the preference of others for such an attribute is low than when the preference is high.

Hypothesis 2b: The attitude of high-CNFU individuals towards an experience attribute is higher when the preference of others for such an attribute is low than when the preference is high.

Hypothesis 3: For search attribute, low-CNFU individuals conform to the preferences of others, whereas high-CNFU individuals do not vary with the preferences of others.

Hypothesis 3a: The attitude of low-CNFU individuals towards a search attribute is lower when the preference of others for such an attribute is low than when the preference is high.

Hypothesis 3b: The attitude of high-CNFU individuals towards a search attribute does not vary whether the preference of others for such an attribute is high or low.

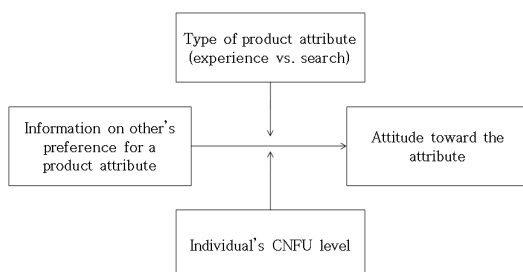[Figure 1] illustrates conceptual model of this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Ⅲ. Method

1. Pretest

To select product category for the experiment, a pretest was conducted with twenty participants recruited from the same pool as the one used in the succeeding experiment. The main focus of this research is to determine the difference in the degree of diagnosticity for identity signaling for both experience and search attributes. Thus, the experimental product itself should not express the individuals' identity either too much or too little. Considering the purpose of this research, a list of product categories including both experience and search attributes was presented to the participants (e.g., soap, jam, chocolate, fabric softener, and drinking yogurt).

To measure the perception of the degree of identity-signaling for each product category, participants were questioned on two domains: self-expression and identity inference making[1]. Two items (i.e., "How much this product contributes to your self-expression?" and "Do you think you know a lot about people based on their choice in this product category?") were measured using a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely).

Based on the results, a juice drink (M = 4.2) was chosen as a product category for the experiment since its mean value was the closest to the median value (median = 3.9) of the list.

2. Sample and Design

A total of 257 undergraduate students (147 females) participated in the study in exchange for compensation. The study consisted of a 2 (CNFU: high vs. low) x 2 (preference of others: high vs. low) x 2 (attribute type: experience vs. search) between-subjects design.

In the experience attribute condition, participants were provided with information on the flavors of a juice drink[4][24]. In the search attribute condition, participants were provided with the nutritional information of a juice drink[4][24]. Others′ preference was manipulated as the proportion of the consumers who liked the juice with the new flavor or the new nutrient. The CNFU level of the participants was divided into high and low groups according to the mean value (MCNFU = 3.98). The number of participants in each group is provided in [Table 1].

Table 1. The number of participants

	Experience attribute		Search attribute	
	Other-high	Other-low	Other-high	Other-low
High-CNFU	31	32	29	32
Low-CNFU	33	33	36	31

3. Procedure and Measurement

Participants were told that they were participating in a study conducted by a food company to investigate consumer reactions to a newly launched product.

Specifically, in the experience attribute condition, participants were informed that the company launched a juice drink with a new flavor, grapefruit, in addition to existing flavors (i.e., orange, apple, and grape). Participants then were provided with information on consumer reactions to this new product. They were told that this information was obtained from previous consumer surveys. In the low [high]-others′ preference condition, participants were informed that approximately 9% [87%] of the consumers had shown favorable attitude towards the new flavor. The percentage figures were obtained from past studies (e.g., [2]) and adjusted to strengthen the manipulation.

In the search attribute condition, participants were informed that the company launched a juice drink containing a new nutrient, protein, in addition to existing added nutrients (i.e., vitamin C, calcium, and dietary fiber). They were provided with information on low (9%) or high (87%) level of consumer preference to the new product containing the new nutrient. Similarly, they were told that this information was obtained from previous consumer surveys.

Next, they reported their attitude towards the new product by answering four items (i.e., likeable, favorable, positive, and attractive; Crobach′s α = .96) on a 7-point scale, anchored by 1 (not at all) and 7 (extremely). To ensure that the information on others′ preference was perceived as intended, the following three items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely): ″I expect to see a number of individuals using this new product,″ ″I would classify this new product as popular,″ and ″Market share for this new product would be high″[2].

Afterwards, participants were asked to respond to questions on CNFU with a few filler items. Filler questions on personality (e.g., ″I am often able to read people′s true emotions correctly through their eyes″) were used to conceal the main purpose of asking these questions, which was to identify the CNFU of the respondents. Based on the CNFU scales developed by Tian et al.[19], nine items were chosen including the three top-loading items from each of the three dimensions of CNFU scale. The scores were averaged to form a CNFU index (Crobach′s α = .81). Examples of CNFU items include ″I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original,″ ″I enjoy challenging the prevailing taste of people I know by buying something they wouldn′t seem to accept,″ and ″I often try to avoid products or brands that I know are bought by the general population.″ All of the CNFU items were measured on a 7-point scale,

anchored by 1 (not at all) and 7 (extremely).

Participants were then asked to answer six questions on identity signaling. There were four questions about how the experience attribute signals one's identity(i.e., "The [scent/taste/music/color] I like expresses my identity"), and two questions about how much the search attribute signals one's identity(i.e., "The [product form/nutrient content] I like expresses my identity")[1]. All of the items were measured on a 7-point scale, anchored by 1 (not at all) and 7 (extremely). Finally, participants responded to demographic questions, after which they were debriefed and thanked.

Ⅳ. Results

1. Manipulation Check

To ensure that the level of others' preference for the new products was manipulated as intended, a t-test was employed. Three items measuring participants' perception of others' preference were averaged to form a composite measure (Crobach's α = .91). The result revealed that the high-preference condition (M = 4.10) was perceived as higher than the low-preference condition (M = 3.61; $t(255)$ = 2.95, $p <$ 0.005), indicating that the manipulation was successful.

2. Hypotheses Testing

2.1 Experience versus search attribute in signaling one's identity

The basic proposition of the current study is that experience attributes are more diagnostic for signaling one's identity than search attributes. To indicate how much experience attributes signal one's identity, four items on scent, taste, music, and color were averaged and used as a dependent variable

(Crobach's α = .74). Likewise, two items on product form and nutrient content were averaged to indicate how much search attributes signal one's identity, and used as a dependent variable (Crobach's α = .71).

To test the hypothesis, a t-test was conducted. Results showed that experience attributes were more diagnostic in signaling one's identity than search attributes ($M_{experience}$ = 5.18, $SD_{experience}$ = 5.18, M_{search} = 3.76, SD_{search} = 3.76; $t(256)$ = 17.88, $p <$ 0.001), supporting Hypothesis 1.

2.2 Interaction of CNFU and others' preference for different types of attributes

The level of others' preference was coded as 0(1) if participants were provided with low(high) level of preference of others for the new product. To analyze specific patterns of interactions, data were divided by attribute type (i.e., experience or search attributes).

In the case of experience attribute, a 2 (CNFU) x 2 (others' preference) ANOVA run on the participants' attitude revealed the predicted two-way interaction ($F(1, 125)$ = 9.71, $p <$ 0.005), indicating that participants formed their attitude toward the given experience attribute depending on their own CNFU and the level of others' preference. No other effects were significant. Specifically, low-CNFU respondents' attitude toward the new flavor of a juice drink was significantly lower in the low-preference condition than in the high-preference condition (M_{low} = 3.96, M_{high} = 4.70; $p <$ 0.05), supporting Hypothesis 2a. On the contrary, high-CNFU respondents' attitude toward the new flavor was significantly higher in the low-preference condition than in the high-preference condition (M_{low} = 4.85, M_{high} = 4.08; $p <$ 0.05), supporting Hypothesis 2b. The results are shown in [Table 2] and [Figure 2a].

In the case of search attribute, a 2(CNFU) x 2(others' preference) ANOVA performed on the

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, F-values, and p-values for Hypotheses 2 and 3

	Experience attribute				Search attribute			
	Other's preference		F	p	Other's preference		F	p
	Low	High			Low	High		
Low-CNFU	3.96 (1.50)	4.70 (1.55)	4.80	0.030	3.39 (1.49)	4.22 (1.74)	4.69	0.032
High-CNFU	4.85 (1.24)	4.08 (1.09)	4.96	0.028	4.48 (1.44)	4.40 (1.56)	0.04	0.842

attitude of the participants did not reveal a significant two-way interaction ($F(1, 124) = 2.73$, $p > 0.10$), indicating that the influence of others' preference on the attitudes of high-CNFU respondents was eliminated. [Table 2] and [Figure 2b] indicates that low-CNFU respondents conform to the preference of others for the product containing the new nutrient, whereas the attitude of those with high-CNFU was not different across the levels of preference of others. Specifically, the result showed that low-CNFU respondents' attitude toward the new nutrient was significantly lower in low-preference condition than in high-preference condition ($M_{low} = 3.39$, $M_{high} = 4.22$; $p < 0.05$), supporting Hypothesis 3a. On the other hand, high-CNFU respondents' attitude toward the new nutrient did not differ between low-preference condition and high-preference condition ($M_{low} = 4.48$, $M_{high} = 4.40$; $p > 0.80$), supporting Hypothesis 3b.
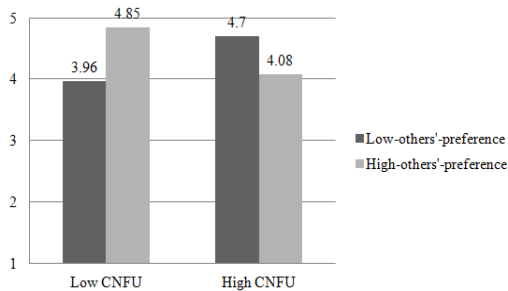

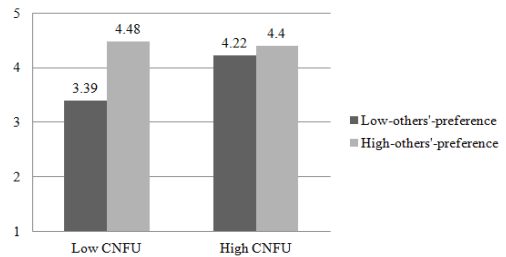Figure 2a. Attribute type: experience attribute (flavor)

Figure 2b. Attribute type: search attribute (nutrient)

Figure 2. Attitude as a function of CNFU, preference of others, and attribute type

3. Discussion

Attitude towards attributes which are verified only by personal experience is likely to signal individuals' identity. It is posited here that the uniqueness motive of a consumer is more closely related to experience attributes (e.g., flavor, scent, sound) than search attributes (e.g., nutrient content, product form) of a product. The current study demonstrated that consumers perceive experience attributes to be more diagnostic for expressing their identity than search attributes.

Based on the above finding, the present research investigated whether or not the influence of others' preference and individuals' CNFU level on attitude formation differed across product attribute types. The results showed that in the case of experience attribute, high-CNFU participants contrasted from the preference of others, whereas low-CNFU participants conformed to the preference of others. High-CNFU

individuals value distinctiveness. Thus, their attitude toward an experience attribute, which is indicative for identity signaling, is an important means to express self-identity. Knowing of others' preference towards an experience attribute could threaten the uniqueness-related self-esteem of high-CNFU individuals. Therefore, they formulate a favorable attitude towards the product with a new experience attribute when the level of others' preference for the product is low.

On the contrary, given that low-CNFU individuals value conformity, expressing self-identity or uniqueness is regarded as insecure and negative. Knowing the preference of others towards an experience attribute does not pose a threat to their uniqueness-related self-esteem and does not cause the need to restore their self-esteem. Hence, low-CNFU individuals construct a negative attitude toward the product with a new experience attribute when the level of others' preference for the product is low.

In the case of search attribute, findings showed that low-CNFU individuals tend to conform to the preference of others, whereas the preference of high-CNFU individuals do not vary significantly with that of others. Even though high-CNFU individuals had higher levels of uniqueness motive, their attitude formation for search attributes is not affected by others' preference. This is because search attributes are not diagnostic for identity-signaling or self-expression. Hence, their attitude toward a product with a new search attribute does not vary with the preference of others. In contrast, low-CNFU individuals, in the same way as for experience attribute, conform to the preference of others for a product with a new search attribute.

V. Conclusion

Preference to experience attributes (vs. search attributes) tends to represent one's identity. When high-CNFU individuals are given the information on the preference of others toward an experience attribute, the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity is aroused. As conforming to others' preference causes concern that their uniqueness-related self-esteem is threatened, they contrast away from the majority. On the other hand, since search attributes do not arouse the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity and not threaten high-CNFU individuals' uniqueness-related self-esteem, they form their attitude regardless of the preference of others.

In contrast, for low-CNFU individuals, knowing the majority's choice of experience attributes does not arouse the uniqueness aspect of their self-identity and not threaten their self-esteem. Thus, they tend to conform to the majority regardless of the type of product attributes. [Table 3] summarizes key findings of the present study.

Table 3. Summary of findings

	Experience attribute: diagnostic for signaling self-identity	Search attribute: non-diagnostic for signaling self-identity
Low-CNFU	Conform to other's preference	Conform to other's preference
High-CNFU	Contrasting away from other's preference	No significant difference according to other's preference

1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Previous studies have investigated individuals diverging from a majority at product domain level (e.g., [1]). The present research narrowed down the choice level into product attribute level. The findings demonstrated that experience (vs. search) attributes

are more diagnostic in signaling one's identity. Based on the above finding, this research revealed that when the information on others' preference for a certain attribute is given, consumers formulate their attitude toward the attribute differently depending on their own uniqueness motivation and attribute types. Although previous studies (e.g., [2]) using others' preference and participants' CNFU level have been conducted in the context of new product adoption, the present study divided attributes of one product into experience and search attributes.

Previous studies that divide product features into experience and search have used the ability to know in advance about the characteristics of the product before purchasing or using it as a criterion that distinguishes these two features[3-6]. This study suggests whether or not it signals the identity of a person as another criterion. In other words, an individual's preference for a product attribute can play a role in expressing the individual's identity or taste. According to the results of this study, as self-identity consists of accumulation of personal experience, preference for experience attributes (vs. search attribute) which can be determined by subjective experience is more diagnostic for signaling one's identity.

Exploring consumer's attitude formation towards different types of product attribute provides tips for marketing managers in the planning and developing of new product offerings. Companies need to adopt different strategies when launching a new offering, which features either experience or search attributes. When launching a product with a new experience attribute, if a company's major target segment is people who seek unusual and unique things, exposing them to information on the favorable responses of other consumers to the new attribute should be prevented. For example, advertising the uniqueness of the product's attributes or distinct user images would be more effective than emphasizing the favorable reactions of other consumers.

On the other hand, because consumers with low uniqueness motive tend to conform to the preference of others, emphasizing the favorable reactions of others would be helpful in creating a positive attitude towards the product, whether the new attribute is experience attribute or search attribute. For instance, an advertisement including information on the favorable responses of majority of consumers is an effective way to raise their attitude positively towards the product.

If the results of this study are extended from the product attribute level to the product level, practical implications can be considered in the area of consumer goods as well as experiential goods. For example, Li and Peng[25] revealed that experience factors have significant positive effects on customer commitment, and customer commitment had a positive effect on revisit intention and WOM. When developing local cultural contents, it is necessary to develop contents unique to the region that is not available in other regions[26]. As such, introducing content that enhances a unique experience factor that can only be experienced at a specific place or event can be more effective in allowing the consumer to form a positive attitude toward the place or event.

2. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The current research did not specifically assess the underlying process involved when high-CNFU individuals know of the preference of others. Thus, investigating whether or not they are being threatened and trying to restore their uniqueness-related self-esteem, in formulating their own attitude would enrich the understanding of the

underlying process. Future studies should also test whether our findings are applicable to other types of experience or search attributes (e.g., haptic, scent). Examining the underlying process and varying the experimental context would be helpful to improve the theoretical background of the logic of the present study.

When choosing a fabric softener, some people decide on a product form (e.g., liquid or powder) first, then on scent, whereas others decide on the scent first, then on the product form. In other words, the decision hierarchy on the attribute level differs depending on the circumstances or individual differences. For example, an individual who has a higher priority on distinctiveness than conformity may choose experience attribute first, then search attribute. This study looked to the general need for uniqueness of an individual. Future studies can be extended to distinguish the dimensions of uniqueness (e.g., functional uniqueness, visual uniqueness, etc.).

Irmak et al.[2] have shown that the preference of high-CNFU consumers does not vary with that of others, especially when the source of the information on such preference is their own estimate. In the current study, participants were provided information on others' preference rather than making the estimate by themselves. Considering the credibility of the source of the information on others' preference would be an interesting extension.

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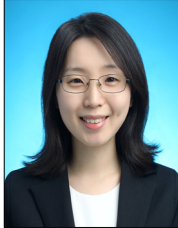
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