

SUSPICION AND CHANGE-OF-MEANING IN PERSUASION:
A CO-CREATION APPLICATION

by

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Abstract

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This research addresses the question of when and how consumers get suspicious that co-creation agents they are interacting with have ulterior motives for their behavior. The theoretical basis for this research comes from literature on suspicion (e.g., Fein, Hilton, and Miller 1990; Fein, 1996). When suspicious, an individual entertains multiple, plausibly rival hypotheses about the motives of another person's behavior (Hilton, Fein, and Miller, 1993).

Most of the traditional social psychology research characterizes suspicion as a psychological state, with an individual either being in or out of a state of suspicion (Fein, Hilton, and Miller, 1990). More recent research has entertained the notion that suspicion is a *dynamic* process that develops over time and follows certain patterns (Marchand and Vonk, 2005). The current research therefore applies the notion of a suspicion *process* to a value co-creation context. Value co-creation holds the idea that "value is defined by and co-created with the consumer rather than embedded in output" (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, p. 6). From a consumer behavior perspective, not much is known yet about how consumers perceive interactions with co-creation agents, in particular, their motives for their recommendations.

This dissertation investigates under which circumstances consumers become suspicious that a co-creation agent may have ulterior motives for his/her behavior. In addition, the research examines how suspicion impacts consumers' cognitive responses during the interaction, and how and when suspicion is ultimately resolved.

Study 1 of this dissertation focuses on exploring the process of suspicion in co-creation. To this effect, the study draws on previous research on the social-psychological nature of the suspicion process (Marchand and Vonk, 2005) and assesses suspicion in an unfolding co-creation interaction. Studies 2 and 3 were designed in order to find explanations for triggers of suspicion in a co-creation encounter. Study 2 focuses on situational causes of suspicion and also addresses the role of an individual's general propensity to become suspicious. Study 3, lastly, investigates goal-related factors of suspicion. In particular, the study focuses on how consumers' goal-related mind-sets can influence suspicion, and how these effects can be mitigated when consumers' cognitive resources are constrained.

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Suspicion and Change-of-Meaning in Persuasion: A Co-Creation Application

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Suspicion and Change-of-Meaning in Persuasion: A Co-Creation Application

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

In recent years, the notion of value co-creation has received much interest from marketing researchers and practitioners alike. At the heart of the value co-creation concept is the proposition that “value is defined by and co-created with the consumer rather than embedded in output” (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, p. 6). Value co-creation is part of a new marketing paradigm that is consumer centric instead of company centric, and calls for a focus on relationships instead of a focus on economic exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Value co-creation can be defined as the “joint efforts of the consumer and the firm...that are co-creating value through personalized experiences that are unique to each consumer” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a, p. x).

From a consumer behavior perspective, not much is known so far about how consumers engage in co-creation and how they perceive interactions with co-creation agents. In particular, it is unknown how consumers process the information they receive from co-creation agents, and how they ultimately evaluate both the agent and the outcome of the co-creation interaction.

When a consumer interacts with a co-creation agent for the purpose of creating a unique product or service, the nature of the interaction might differ significantly from that of a regular sales situation. Consumers may have different, if any, expectations of the co-creation agent, as well as the outcome of the interaction. They might also see the co-creation agent as more of a facilitator whose expertise and input is valued.

Thus far, not much research has been conducted on how consumers evaluate the recommendations they are given by co-creation agents. It is also unknown how consumers evaluate co-creation agents in terms of their motives for recommending certain options over others. Does it matter to consumers to understand the motives behind a co-creation agent's recommendations? If yes, what are the implications for the remaining co-creation interaction and outcomes?

This dissertation therefore examines the question of consumer suspicion in co-creation: When do consumers become suspicious that the co-creation agent they are interacting with has ulterior motives for his/her behavior? Does suspicion impact the co-creation interaction and outcomes?

Consider an example where an engaged couple is looking to custom design an engagement ring. The couple goes to a jewelry store that specializes in one-of-a-kind jewelry creations, where they meet with a jewelry designer to discuss their ideas and preferences. The designer has the expertise and the creative design ideas necessary to translate a "rough" idea of a ring into a feasible design. Based on the couple's ideas, the designer provides them with relevant information, advice, and suggestions on how to fashion their unique diamond engagement ring. Together with the designer, the couple will ultimately decide on the ring's precious metal, type of setting, style, and diamonds to be incorporated.

How would the couple feel if the designer recommended certain options that are more expensive than others? For example, what if the designer suggested choosing a platinum setting rather than a white gold or yellow gold setting, arguing that platinum is

the purest and most durable precious metal? Even though platinum is the most expensive precious metal of these three, the couple might trust the designer's advice and agree with her recommendation. Alternatively, the couple might perceive the designer's advice as a sales tactic that is intended to persuade them to select the most expensive precious metal for the engagement ring.

What if the designer suggested that a diamond of a certain shape (e.g., an Emerald shaped, or so-called "ice cube") looked better in a larger carat? Will the couple take this advice at face value? The couple might start to wonder whether the designer's recommendations are sincere (e.g., she truly wants to help create the "perfect" diamond ring for the couple), or whether she might have an ulterior motive (e.g., she wants to make more money or higher commission from the sale).

Related research on the nature of persuasion has examined factors that influence how consumers perceive persuasion attempts by salespeople. The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright, 1994) suggests that consumers develop *persuasion knowledge* over time that helps them deal with salespeople's persuasion attempts. Persuasion knowledge also helps consumers form attitudes about products and persuasion agents, and therefore represents an important part of a consumer's knowledge structure that is activated whenever needed (Friestad and Wright, 1994).

Since the Persuasion Knowledge Model was first postulated, continued research has provided empirical support for the idea that consumers possess persuasion knowledge, and that they use it to make inferences about marketers' motives (e.g., Friestad and Wright, 1995, 1999, Wright, Friestad, and Boush, 2005). Additional

research has also focused on finding out under which circumstances consumers use persuasion knowledge.

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) have examined variables that might inhibit or encourage the use of persuasion knowledge in an interpersonal persuasion setting such as a retail store. In a standard sales encounter, consumers are frequently exposed to salespeople's persuasion attempts. In most cases consumers are well aware that the salespeople they are interacting with ultimately have a motive to sell. Campbell and Kirmani (2000) suggest that the accessibility of a salesperson's ulterior motive, as well as cognitive busyness of the consumer determine whether persuasion knowledge is activated. Once persuasion knowledge is activated, consumers might use strategies to counter persuasion attempts, e.g., resist the salesperson actively or withdraw from the store (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004).

Related sales research has also found that consumers frequently make attributions regarding the motives for a salesperson's behavior. DeCarlo (2005) has found that depending on the type of sales message a salesperson uses (e.g., "hard sell" versus "soft sell") and the salience of a possible ulterior motive, a consumer may attribute the salesperson's behavior to either the goal of trying to make a sale, or the goal of trying to meet the customer's needs. These attributions, in turn, can affect the consumer's attitude towards the salesperson negatively or positively.

Little is known, however, about how a consumer develops and uses persuasion knowledge in settings other than a sales encounter in a retail store. More specifically, it is unknown how consumers evaluate an agent's motives in those cases where the focus is

on co-creation rather than selling. In particular, it is unclear whether a co-creation agent such as a designer or consultant is perceived differently from a salesperson. A key question here is whether the product or service related recommendations are perceived differently when they come from a co-creation agent rather than a salesperson. In particular, when does a consumer start to doubt that the co-creation agent's motives for particular recommendations are sincere? When does a consumer become suspicious that the agent may have an ulterior motive for his or her recommendation?

This dissertation will extend some of the existing research in this area (e.g., Campbell and Kirmani, 2000, DeCarlo, 2005) to the context of co-creation in order to start addressing these questions.

Studying suspicion of ulterior motives in a co-creation context is important because a co-creation interaction may significantly differ from a standard sales encounter in a retail store. In a sales interaction, the motives of persuasion are usually known upfront. Consumers are typically aware that salespeople use certain sales tactics in order to help sell their ware. In co-creation, however, the agent's persuasion motives (if there are any) may be more ambiguous. Ideally, a co-creation interaction is characterized by a constructive and cooperative interaction process. The goal of the co-creation interaction is to create personalized experiences of unique value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004b). In order for this process to be productive, both agents and consumers have to exchange ideas, discuss advantages and disadvantages of certain options, and make decisions together.

A co-creation interaction, therefore, is often quite complex. It might also require significant cognitive resources of the consumer. Any persuasion motives may be less accessible in this case because of the consumer's cognitive busyness during the co-creation interaction. If a persuasion motive is accessible in the co-creation encounter, however, the process of suspicion may unfold in a pattern that may differ from that in a sales context.

The broad goal of this research is to examine when and how consumers' perceptions of a co-creation agent's persuasion motives influence the process of the co-creation interaction. In particular, the research will investigate under which circumstances a consumer becomes suspicious that a co-creation agent has an ulterior motive for his/her behavior, how suspicion impacts a consumer's cognitive responses to the interaction, and how suspicion will be resolved.

Chapter 2 will present the conceptual background of this research. In particular, I will discuss existing research on persuasion, persuasion knowledge, and suspicion and show how they relate to the particular research questions of this dissertation. Chapter 3 will provide the rationale for the current research, and will present hypotheses. In particular, this chapter will present an overview of the process of suspicion in co-creation, as well as the cognitive responses to becoming suspicious. I will also offer two possible explanations from two separate streams of research in order to further understand the triggers of suspicion in this context. Chapter 4 will present the details of the design, procedure, and results of three different studies that were developed to test the

hypotheses. Lastly, Chapter 5 will present conclusions of this research in the form of contributions, implications, limitations, and thoughts on future research.

CHAPTER 2: Conceptual Background

In this chapter, background literature related to the current research is reviewed. First, the theoretical background on the notion of value co-creation is provided. In particular, co-creation is contrasted with other types of customization and sales interactions. Next, related persuasion literature will be examined. A particular emphasis will be put on the concept of persuasion knowledge. Further, important elements of the suspicion research in the social psychology and marketing literature will be introduced and the relevance for the current research will be discussed.

Value Co-Creation

Today's consumers are increasingly involved in customizing the products and services they purchase. Their roles are more and more shifting from those of passive consumers to active "co-creators of value" (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000, p. 80). Increasingly, firms create opportunities that enable customers to be co-creators of products and services. Ultimately, co-creation of products and services can help meet consumers' unique needs.

This tendency for customization and personalization goes hand in hand with a marketing paradigm that is newly emerging. Vargo and Lusch (2004) have posited that the traditional marketing paradigm, with its focus on economic exchange theory, is no longer reflective of current market dynamics. They propose, instead, a new marketing paradigm that is customer centric instead of company centric, and focuses on relationships instead of exchanges. At the heart of this new paradigm is the involvement of the customer in the value creation process.

Value co-creation results from the “joint efforts of the consumer and the firm... that are co-creating value through personalized experiences that are unique to each consumer” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a, p. x). Value co-creation goes beyond customization in that the customer is not restricted to options that can be chosen from a menu, but instead participates in creating a personally meaningful product or service.

In a practical sense, co-creation can have many facets. In its simplest form, co-creation refers to a practice where the customer is responsible for part of the production of a product, for example, assembling certain types of IKEA furniture (Kambil, Friesen, and Sundaram, 1999). In this example, the firm provides the material parts of the product (e.g., pieces of unfinished wood for a shelving system), while the customer adds the elements of labor (e.g., assembly, set-up). This basic type of co-creation, however, is not the focus of this research. In this example, the process and the outcome of co-creation are not customized. Even though this product has the possibility for customization (e.g., when the unfinished wood is painted by the customer according to his/her preferences), the core process (the assembly) and the core product (shelving system) are standardized. Likewise, the scope of the present research does not extend to customization processes that are enabled by websites or other Internet interfaces, because these processes are driven by technology rather than facilitated by sales agents.

The present research focuses on a more complex form of value co-creation where a consumer engages in an *interpersonal interaction* with a co-creation agent in order to customize a unique product or service. Typically, a co-creation agent is an expert in his or her professional field, such as a designer, consultant, etc. The agent’s expertise is considered a necessary element for the successful process and outcome of the interaction.

For the purpose of the present research, the following definition of value co-creation is offered (see Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a): Value co-creation has both a unique *process* (the interpersonal interaction between a co-creation agent and a consumer), and a unique *outcome* (the unique, customized product or service that is the result of co-creation).

In practice, there are a variety of unique products and services that can be co-created. Examples range from products such as custom designed bridal gowns, customized bicycles, or customized golf clubs to services such as interior design, event planning, or personal training. As previously discussed, an important element of the present research is the *interpersonal interaction* that is underlying the co-creation process for the purpose of creating a unique product or service. For this reason, only those types of value co-creation domains will be examined that have underlying interpersonal interactions.

In the context of co-creation, the agent who is interacting with the consumer is likely to be a consultant or a designer rather than a salesperson. Consumers may perceive agents such as designers or consultants in a manner different from salespeople; in particular, when it comes to the agents' goals and the motives for their behavior. It is likely that there is more ambiguity underlying a co-creation situation as compared to a sales situation, because consumers may be unsure as to whether the co-creation agent has persuasion motives or simply the motive to help.

Not much is known thus far about consumers' perceptions of the co-creation agent and the co-creation process. In particular, it is unknown what kinds of expectations, if any, consumers form regarding the co-creation encounter, how they

evaluate the agent's behavior, and if and how they make inferences regarding possible motives for the behavior. In order to investigate these questions further, existing research on persuasion and persuasion knowledge will be consulted.

Persuasion Knowledge and Change-of-Meaning in Persuasion

Wright (1986) first introduced the notion of a consumer's awareness of marketers' influence attempts by using the term "schemer schema." The schemer schema describes an intuitive theory about tactics that marketers use in interactions with consumers. This theory was then formally advanced into the conceptualization of the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM; Friestad and Wright, 1994). The Persuasion Knowledge Model suggests that individuals learn, over time, how to interpret and cope with marketers' persuasion attempts. In particular, the Persuasion Knowledge Model then outlines how consumers' general knowledge of marketers' persuasion tactics can influence their information processing as well as their behavior during a specific persuasion attempt.

As part of the Persuasion Knowledge Model, Friestad and Wright (1994, p. 12) describe a "change-of-meaning" that takes place in the interpersonal interaction between a persuasion agent (e.g., a salesperson), and a persuasion target (consumer). Change-of-meaning refers to a consumer's realization that a salesperson is using a persuasion *tactic*. It is also the point in time when the consumer perceives that the salesperson's ultimate motive for the behavior is a *persuasion motive*, regardless of the salesperson's intentions at that particular moment. Change-of-meaning therefore describes an important moment

in the interaction; this moment can have important implications for the remainder of the interaction.

Friestad and Wright (1994) point out that the “change-of-meaning” in the persuasion process is not yet well understood. In particular, it is unclear when and how this change-of-meaning occurs. It is also unclear whether there is any difference between a change-of-meaning that occurs early in the persuasion attempt, and one that occurs towards the end of the persuasion attempt. If change-of-meaning takes place, there is a disruption in the persuasion attempt. In other words, the consumer initially might not have perceived the salesperson as persuasive, but then “caught on” and concludes that the intention was all along to persuade.

Friestad and Wright (1994) suggest that there might be differences between early and late occurrences of change-of-meaning in terms of how the overall message is perceived. They surmise that when change-of-meaning happens earlier in the interaction, it might undermine the overall coherence of the argument. In contrast, when the change-of-meaning occurs later on in the interaction, it might instead impair the consumer’s understanding of the conclusion of the argument. In either case, change-of-meaning is likely to result in less effective persuasion.

Suspicion and Change-of-Meaning

The present research seeks to explain the change-of-meaning process from a social psychological perspective. This perspective focuses on the interpersonal interaction between the persuasion agent (here: the co-creation agent) and the persuasion target (here: the consumer). The theoretical underpinnings for this research come from

the literature on *suspicion* (e.g., Fein, Hilton, and Miller, 1990; Fein, 1996; Hilton, Fein, and Miller, 1993). Suspicion can be defined as questioning the motives that underlie a person's behavior (Hilton, Fein, and Miller, 1993). It is also described as a "state of suspended judgment" or "dynamic state" in which the individual entertains multiple, plausibly rival hypotheses about the motives of a behavior (Hilton, Fein, and Miller, 1993, p. 502). Suspicion is considered a "frequently experienced mental state" (Fein, 1996, p. 1165).

Central to suspicion is the element of *ambiguity*. Suspicion causes a perceiver in an interaction to hesitate and not take behavior at face value (Fein, 1996). When suspicion is initiated, the persuasion target will entertain several possible motives for the persuasion agent's behavior. Sophisticated attributional thinking will then be used in order to resolve the ambiguity (Fein, 1996). Once the ambiguity is resolved, the person is no longer suspicious, but rather certain that there are (or are *no*) ulterior motives underlying the other person's behavior.

The current research will examine change-of-meaning in terms of a suspicion process. If a co-creation agent's motives are perceived as ambiguous, suspicion may occur. Ultimately, suspicion may be resolved in the direction of ulterior motives, and change-of-meaning is likely to occur.

Suspicion Research in Marketing

Presently, there is scant research on the role of suspicion in persuasion in the marketing literature. Campbell and Kirmani (2000) have begun to examine the relationship between suspicion and the Persuasion Knowledge Model. They propose that

“accessing persuasion knowledge in a sales interaction can be thought of as raising suspicion that the salesperson’s behavior is motivated by the intent to persuade”

(Campbell and Kirmani, 2000, p. 70).

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) find that a consumer’s *cognitive busyness* as well as the *accessibility* of ulterior motives determine if an inference of persuasion motive is made, and that this inference in turn affects the perception of the persuasion agent (salesperson). In line with Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull (1988), Campbell and Kirmani (2000) argue that the process of making inferences about possible situational constraints (such as ulterior motives) requires significant cognitive resources. They conclude that persuasion knowledge is less likely to be used when forming an impression about a salesperson in those cases where the consumer has competing cognitive demands.

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) also find that in addition to a consumer’s cognitive capacity, the accessibility of ulterior motives is crucial in determining when persuasion knowledge will be used. Accessibility refers to how a construct is coded and activated (Higgins, 1989; Higgins and King, 1981). In a sales context, the motive of selling is intrinsically tied to salespeople (Thompson, 1972). Therefore, in this context, the motive of selling is probably the most accessible one, whereas other motives such as building a good relationship with the customer might be less accessible (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000).

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) manipulate cognitive capacity in line with previous research (Gilbert, Jones, and Pelham, 1987; Gilbert, Pelham and Krull, 1988) by contrasting targets of the persuasion attempt with observers of the persuasion attempt (study 1). A target of a persuasion attempt has been found to be cognitively busy because

cognitive effort is devoted to coping with the demands of the interaction. An observer of a persuasion attempt, however, is considered less cognitively busy, because the observer is not directly involved in the interaction and therefore does not need to spend cognitive efforts coping with the interaction (Gilbert et al., 1987, 1988). Campbell and Kirmani (2000) found that both cognitively busy targets as well as cognitively unbusy observers use persuasion knowledge when the ulterior motive is highly accessible, but only cognitively unbusy targets activate persuasion knowledge when the ulterior motive is less accessible.

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) also use a second manipulation of cognitive capacity (consistent with the definition of cognitive busyness, Gilbert and Osborne, 1989) to provide additional support for their proposition that a cognitively busy person may be less likely to use persuasion knowledge compared to a person who is not cognitively busy. In order to increase cognitive load, cognitively busy observers were asked to perform a second task (here: memorizing a sequence of numbers in the scenario) in addition to forming an impression of the salesperson.

In order to assess whether persuasion knowledge was activated, Campbell and Kirmani (2000) included two separate measures of the use of persuasion knowledge. One measure was obtained after coding participants' thoughts regarding their impression of the salesperson. To this effect, the researchers examined the proportion of "suspicious" thoughts in relation to the entirety of cognitive thoughts. The second persuasion knowledge measure that was created consisted of an item that assessed the extent to which a participant inferred a persuasion motive from the salesperson's use of flattery. Both persuasion knowledge measures were shown to mediate the effects of cognitive

capacity and accessibility of ulterior motives on perceptions of the salesperson's sincerity.

In related research that addresses the role of suspicion in persuasion, DeCarlo (2005) examines how salesperson tactics and consumer perception of ulterior motives affect the attitude towards the salesperson and purchase intentions. In particular, DeCarlo (2005) examines whether sales tactics used by salespeople can influence consumers' attribution processes, and whether these attributions can sway evaluations of the salesperson. Two types of causal attributions are identified by DeCarlo (2005) in the sales context: suspicion attribution and customer oriented attribution. DeCarlo (2005, p. 239) defines suspicion attribution as a "causal inference that characterizes the salesperson as having a self-seeking motive (e.g., to make a commission; does not really care about the customer)." Customer oriented attribution, in contrast, is defined as a "causal inference that characterizes the salesperson with an altruistic motive (e.g., looks out for the best interests of the customer," DeCarlo, 2005, p. 239). Both types of attributions are obtained by coding participants' thoughts after reading a sales scenario.

The study suggests that when a salesperson's ulterior motive is highly salient and the salesperson uses a strong sales message, consumers will generate more suspicion-oriented attributions that in turn will impact their attitude towards the salesperson negatively. Here, consumers seem to "punish" salespeople who use stronger sales messages when ulterior motives are highly salient; consequently, consumers generate attributions that would correspond with a more stereotypical, pushy salesperson. Conversely, DeCarlo (2005) finds that when ulterior motives are less salient and a

salesperson uses a stronger sales message, more customer oriented attributions will be generated by the consumer. Customer oriented attributions, in turn, are likely to influence the consumer's attitude towards the salesperson and purchase intentions in a positive way. DeCarlo (2005) argues that in this case, the salesperson's selling motive may be "discounted" via the attribution process if the salesperson behavior disconfirms what is termed the "selling expectation."

Suspicion as a Process

Most of the existing research in social psychology characterizes suspicion as a psychological *state* (similar to the notion of mistrust). Perceivers are either in a state of suspicion, or out of that state (e.g., Fein, Hilton, and Miller, 1990). Recent research, however, has shown that perceivers are unlikely to become suspicious instantly, or to instantly abandon suspicion. Instead, suspicion is proposed to be a gradual process that is undergone by perceivers (Marchand and Vonk, 2005).

Marchand and Vonk (2005) have elaborated on the more traditional concept of suspicion and define it more holistically as a *process* rather than a state. The researchers demonstrate that suspicion is a "dynamic process that unfolds over time as people grapple with the possibility that an actor has ulterior motives, and then become convinced" (Marchand and Vonk, 2005, p. 251).

Marchand and Vonk (2005) show that when an individual becomes suspicious of another person's behavior, s/he first weighs several possible explanations for said behavior. Then, gradually, the individual makes up his or her mind and then becomes certain that the other person either had an ulterior or a genuine motive for the behavior.

Marchand and Vonk (2005) have examined this process in various contexts. Participants were instructed to read a scenario, consisting of ten different pieces of information that were presented in succession. After each statement, participants were asked to voice their thoughts. Two examples are shown below (only the first of the ten statements in each context is presented).

Example 1: “John takes a colleague with car trouble to the repair shop.”

Participants became suspicious of John’s motives once they learned that the colleague was female, and that John was single at the moment.

Example 2: “John responds enthusiastically to another person’s idea during a meeting.”

Participants became suspicious when they learned that the other person was someone higher in rank, and that John would soon have a performance review.

Marchand and Vonk (2005) selected statements for each scenario that were pre-tested to be moderately informative. Nevertheless, the results show a clear process of suspicion with three separate phases: First, the initiation phase, where suspicion levels are high. Second, the attribution phase is evident. Here, the suspicion levels are lower, but still moderate. Third, in the resolution phase, suspicion levels are lowest and level off at then end. This pattern is found in two different scenario contexts. The findings support the notion that suspicion is a gradual process that develops over time, and is also likely to be resolved as more information becomes available.

It is important to note that Marchand and Vonk's (2005) process-oriented view of suspicion is at odds with the definition of suspicion that DeCarlo (2005) used. In his research, DeCarlo (2005) manipulates ulterior motives upfront by varying how the salesperson is compensated. In the ulterior motives condition, the scenario states that the salesperson works on commission. In the genuine motives condition, the scenario states that the salesperson works fully on salary. DeCarlo's (2005) research suggests that if salience of ulterior motives is high, participants draw the inference that the salesperson has an ulterior motive. Here, there is no uncertainty about the salesperson's motives; instead, the salesperson's goals are clearly stated and obvious from the beginning. Therefore, DeCarlo's (2005) definition of suspicion assumes that a *negative inference* has already been made.

Marchand and Vonk's (2005) definition of suspicion, in contrast, stresses that when a person becomes suspicious, s/he feels *ambiguous* about the motives underlying the other person's behavior. No inference, whether positive or negative, is made yet at that point. In a next step, the persuasion target will attempt to resolve the ambiguity by weighing the positive and negative information, and will then either make a positive or a negative inference regarding the other person's motives for the behavior.

Building on Marchand and Vonk's (2005) research on the process of suspicion, this dissertation will apply the process-oriented view of suspicion to a value co-creation context. The current research will extend Marchand and Vonk's (2005) research in that it will (1) examine suspicion in the context of an interpersonal interaction, and (2), study suspicion in a persuasion context. Viewing suspicion as a process instead of a state can

contribute to new insights on the nuances of interpersonal persuasion. In particular, obtaining step-by-step "snapshots" of consumers' agent perceptions can help understand to what extent agents' motives are interpreted and taken into consideration, and how impressions of the agents are ultimately formed.

In the current research, therefore, change-of-meaning will be examined in terms of the outcome of a suspicion process: Change-of-meaning, then, can be conceptualized as the outcome of becoming suspicious of the co-creation agent's motives, and subsequently resolving suspicion in the direction of ulterior motives. The current research seeks to examine the suspicion process—from becoming suspicious to entertaining several rival motives to finally resolving suspicion—in the context of customer co-creation. In line with Marchand and Vonk (2005), the current research proposes that a process of suspicion can be captured in a three-step sequence, as follows:

1. Initiation: The consumer infers from the co-creation agent's behavior that there might be a possible persuasion motive. (The agent's behavior in itself might be positive, e.g., an ingratiating remark, but the consumer starts to wonder whether the motive is genuine or whether there is an ulterior motive for the behavior.)
2. Attribution: The consumer feels ambiguous and is actively entertaining several rival motives for the co-creation agent's behavior. The consumer will use sophisticated attributional thinking during this stage in order to find out the reasons for the agent's behavior.
3. Resolution: The consumer becomes certain that the co-creation agent's motive is either ulterior or genuine. Once there is certainty, suspicion is said to be resolved. If the motive is found to be ulterior, *change-of-meaning* takes place.

In conclusion, Chapter 2 has presented an overview of several streams of research that might help explain why and how consumers become suspicious that a co-creation agent they are interacting with has ulterior motives for his/her behavior. In Chapter 3, I will build on the existing research to provide a rationale for a suspicion process in the context of a co-creation interaction. Chapter 3 will also develop specific hypotheses that help predict how the process of suspicion unfolds and how suspicion is triggered in co-creation.

CHAPTER 3: Rationale and Overview of Research

Chapter 3 will build on prior research on persuasion knowledge and suspicion in order to develop a framework for suspicion processes in the co-creation context. In this chapter, hypotheses will be developed and an overview of the research studies of this dissertation will be presented.

Specifically, prior research by Campbell and Kirmani (2000) and DeCarlo (2005) on suspicion of ulterior motives in the sales context will be applied to a co-creation context. In contrast to Campbell and Kirmani (2000) and DeCarlo (2005), the current research will focus on an *unfolding* interaction in a scenario, and will elicit cognitive responses during the process of the interaction, rather than at the end of the scenario.

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) found that accessibility of persuasion knowledge differed depending on whether subjects were put in the role of the observer or the participant in the interaction. In Marchand and Vonk's (2005) research, subjects were asked to assume the role of observers. In the current research, however, subjects will play the role of participants in the co-creation interaction.

Marchand and Vonk's (2005) research was carried out in the context of a narrative, not an interaction. Their findings may therefore not translate to a situation where the subject is interacting with an agent. Existing literature suggests that consumers process dialogues differently than narratives. In particular, processing information from a dialogue requires greater cognitive capacity than processing information from a one-way narrative (Thomas, 1992). In order to examine whether the basic process of suspicion would also hold in the context of a dialogue, the current research will build on

the process approach of suspicion conceptualized by Marchand and Vonk's (2005) prior research.

The research will contribute to existing literature by examining a process of suspicion in a persuasive context. In this process-oriented view, suspicion *may* be the result of perceptions of ambiguous agent behavior during the co-creation interaction. Specifically, the research will address how the process of suspicion is triggered in a co-creation context, how suspicion unfolds as the interaction is progressing, and how suspicion is ultimately resolved.

Taking a process-oriented approach to suspicion in this context will ensure that the focus is on the interaction rather than the outcome. Co-creation in itself is a process; during the interaction, decisions are made about specific product and service attributes. In contrast, in the sales encounter, the focus is on the outcome (for example, a decision about whether or not to buy).

In addition, the research will also contribute to existing literature in the area of attributions in a sales context. Previous research suggests that if consumers are cognitively busy, they may be less likely to use persuasion knowledge (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000). I will argue that in a co-creation interaction, even if there is cognitive busyness, the consumer will attend to the agent's behavior and might become suspicious of the agent's motives. In line with Fein (1996), I will propose that the ambiguity of the co-creation situation in itself might trigger suspicion, which in turn will direct the consumer's effort toward attributing motives to the agent.

This research will also elicit and evaluate participants' cognitive responses to a co-creation agent's behavior in a scenario. In prior research (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000 and DeCarlo, 2005) cognitive responses to sales interactions were obtained at the conclusion of the scenarios. In line with Marchand and Vonk (2005), the current research will elicit cognitive responses to a series of agent statements as the co-creation interaction is progressing.

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) evaluated the polarity of participants' thoughts (positive versus negative), but did not content analyze the cognitive responses. DeCarlo (2005) examined cognitive responses to sales interactions in terms of suspicion attributions versus consumer attributions. A consumer attribution was inferred if the motive for the salesperson's behavior was likely to serve the consumer's interest, whereas a suspicion attribution was inferred when the motive was likely self-serving. DeCarlo (2005) did not content analyze the cognitive responses involving suspicion attributions any further.

The present research will build on prior work by Marchand and Vonk (2005), who showed that suspicion follows a certain process. In line with their research, consumers' cognitive responses in terms of level of suspicion and evaluation of the agent will be examined. This research will also assess consumers' thoughts for their target dimensions (whether a thought is directed towards the agent or directed towards the product/service). It is expected that as the suspicion process unfolds, the target of consumers' cognitive thoughts will change. Whereas the consumer may initially focus on the product or service to be co-created, the cognitive thoughts are expected to shift to the co-creation

agent as the consumer tries to form an impression of the agent and tries to determine motives for the agent's behavior.

In the current research, an analysis of consumers' cognitive responses in the unfolding interaction should shed further light on the circumstances under which suspicion will be triggered, when it will be triggered, how the process of suspicion evolves, and how suspicion will finally be resolved.

The goals of this research are therefore fourfold: (1) Show that there is a naturally occurring *process* of suspicion in a co-creation context, (2) find out how suspicion impacts consumers' cognitive responses to the interaction, (3) examine which factors might trigger suspicion, and (4), evaluate how suspicion, once triggered, might impact the outcomes of the co-creation interaction.

Hypotheses Development

In the following sections, hypotheses will be developed to test the proposed suspicion process, antecedents, and outcomes. First, predictions regarding the process of suspicion in the co-creation interaction will be made. Second, hypotheses regarding the consumers' cognitive responses in the interaction are developed. Third, predictions regarding prior expectations and agent behavior as possible triggers of suspicion will be made. And lastly, hypotheses related to the consumer's motivational structure (goals), as well as the effects of cognitive load on suspicion will be presented.

Process of Suspicion

The suspicion process can be demonstrated empirically by eliciting participants' cognitive responses to cues in a scenario, and subsequently analyzing and coding participants' thoughts. Marchand and Vonk (2005) presented participants with various scenarios that included ten different cues that could be perceived as ambiguous. After each cue, respondents were prompted to articulate their thoughts. The cognitive responses were transcribed and coded according to a coding scheme. The researchers assessed both "degree" of suspicion and evaluation of the actor as the scenario progressed. Marchand and Vonk (2005) found that participants became suspicious gradually, as they started to question the actor's motives, and then resolved suspicion gradually as more information about the actor became available.

In line with Marchand and Vonk's (2005) research it will be posited that a process of suspicion can be demonstrated in a co-creation context. The suspicion process is expected to follow the sequence of initiation, attribution, and resolution. In each of the three phases of suspicion, levels of suspicion are expected to follow predetermined patterns. In the initiation phase, the consumer perceives ambiguity about the agent's behavior and suspicion is expected to be highest. In the attribution phase, as the consumer is weighing several motives for the agent's behavior, suspicion levels are expected to decrease. Finally, in the resolution phase, the consumer reaches a conclusion as to whether or not an ulterior motive was believed to be present, and suspicion will level off.

In their research, Marchand and Vonk (2005) only focus on suspicion that is resolved in the direction of ulterior motives. However, it is also possible that a persuasion target becomes suspicious that the agent may have ulterior motives, but ultimately concludes that the agent's motives are genuine rather than ulterior. The present research will take both possible outcomes for the resolution of suspicion into account.

Marchand and Vonk (2005) also investigated how the actor is evaluated when suspicion occurs. In line with this prior research, the evaluation of the co-creation agent will be assessed. Impression of the co-creation agent is expected to follow a linear trend. It is predicted that evaluation of the agent will be positive at first, but then decline when the consumer becomes suspicious and makes attributions regarding possible motives for the agent's behavior.

In the current research, process of suspicion and evaluation of the agent will be assessed using participants' cognitive responses to individual lines of agent dialogue as the co-creation scenario is unfolding. Following Marchand and Vonk's (2005) coding scheme, degree of suspicion and agent evaluation will be obtained for each line of dialogue separately in order to demonstrate underlying processes.

The following hypotheses are derived for the suspicion process in value co-creation:

- H_{1a}: The suspicion process in co-creation encompasses initiation, attribution, and resolution phases.
- H_{1b}: When suspicion is initiated, degree of suspicion will first increase and then decrease as the interaction progresses.
- H_{1c}: When suspicion is initiated, evaluation of the co-creation agent will decrease.

Cognitive Responses to Suspicion

This research will investigate the content of consumers' cognitive responses to the interaction with a co-creation agent. In the context of the current research, cognitive responses include all the thoughts that a consumer has as a result of interacting with an agent for the purpose of co-creation. Of particular interest is the nature of the cognitive responses when consumers become suspicious. For the purpose of this research, cognitive responses to each scenario statement will be coded for their target dimension. The target dimension distinguishes whether a thought relates to the message *topic* (here: the product that is being co-created) or the message *source* (here: the co-creation agent) (Cacioppo, Harkins, and Petty, 1981; Cacioppo and Petty, 1981).

I expect that when suspicion is triggered during the interaction, it will be reflected in consumers' thoughts related to the co-creation agent as well as the product or service that is being co-created. An analysis of the number and types of cognitive responses can provide additional information in order to understand how suspicion potentially changes the nature of the interaction.

I will propose in line with Fein (1996) that once a person has become suspicious, cognitive resources will be shifted. Specifically, Fein (1996) has found that when suspicion is triggered, a person engages in attributional thinking in order to judge the

other person's motives for his or her behavior. This, in turn, suggests that an individual's cognitive resources will be shifted from thinking about the content of the message (or the issue at hand) to thinking about the genuineness of the other person's motives.

Specifically, the current research proposes that when a consumer becomes suspicious in a co-creation encounter, s/he will shift cognitive resources from thinking about the product to thinking about the co-creation agent and his/her motives. Therefore, it is expected that once suspicion is triggered, over the course of the dialogue, the consumer will show an increase in thoughts related to the message source and a decrease in thoughts related to the message topic. Overall, the shift in cognitive resources is also expected to result in more thoughts related to the message source compared to thoughts related to the message topic.

Therefore I propose:

- H_{2a}: When suspicion is triggered, the number of thoughts related to the message source will increase.
- H_{2b}: When suspicion is triggered, the number of thoughts related to the message topic will decrease.
- H_{2c}: When suspicion is triggered, more source related than message topic related thoughts will be generated.

Triggers of Suspicion

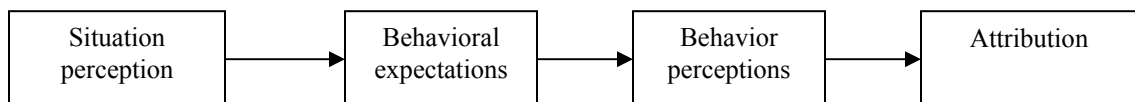
So far not much is known about factors that might trigger a person to become suspicious. This dissertation will draw upon two separate streams of research to investigate the main causes of suspicion: Situational and goal-related triggers.

First, possible triggers that are related to situational factors will be examined, namely, prior expectations of the agent and actual agent behavior. Second, possible triggers from a goal-related point of view will be examined. In this perspective, consumer's goals (in terms of a focus on the outcome versus the process of the co-creation interaction) will be investigated as possible triggers of suspicion. The triggers of suspicion will be presented and discussed subsequently, and relevant hypotheses will be derived.

Situational Triggers

Research on attribution examines how individuals make inferences in interpersonal interactions. Gilbert and Malone (1995) demonstrate that interpersonal inference making follows a predetermined sequence of events (see Figure 1). Gilbert and Malone (1995) suggest that a perceiver first forms perceptions of a situation that is encountered with an actor. Next, expectations of the actor's behavior are formed. These expectations are then compared with the behavior that is actually perceived. Lastly, attributions are made in regards to the motives that would prompt the actor to behave as perceived.

Figure 1: Sequence of Events in Attribution



Accordingly, in line with Gilbert and Malone (1995), it will be proposed that two attribution-related factors would be expected to trigger suspicion in the current context: The consumer's behavioral expectations of the co-creation agent, as well as the co-creation agent's actual behavior. The current research will use the term "prior expectations" to denote the consumer's expectations of the co-creation agent, and the term "agent behavior" to reflect how the co-creation agent is perceived. In the following, hypotheses for prior expectations and agent behavior as suspicion triggers will be developed.

Prior Expectations

In a sales interaction, consumers will likely have certain expectations of the sales agent with respect to the behavior he or she will demonstrate. Based on prior experience in related circumstances, a consumer might expect to find a "stereotypical" (most likely "aggressive") salesperson (Thompson, 1972), or conversely, s/he might expect that the sales agent will be helpful and give valuable advice.

Previous research on expectations of salespeople has shown that a consumer's overall expectation of a salesperson can impact how information regarding the sales encounter is processed (Sujan, Bettman, and Sujan, 1986). When a salesperson's performance is consistent with the consumer's prior expectation, product information relayed during the encounter is processed differently as compared to a situation with a salesperson whose performance is inconsistent with prior expectation. Sujan et al. (1986, p. 347) argue that when the salesperson "matches" prior expectation (e.g., when a salesperson is expected to be "pushy" and is also perceived as such), "information is not

processed beyond the initial stage of forming impressions of the salesperson.” When a salesperson does not match prior expectations, however, (for example, a salesperson displays cooperative instead of aggressive behavior) a consumer is more likely to process specific product information (Sujan et al., 1986).

DeCarlo (2005) has found evidence that when a salesperson’s ulterior motives are highly salient, consumers are likely to expect that the salesperson will try to close the sale by using a stronger sales message. This result is in line with the negative “selling” schema discussed by Sujan et al. (1986). If these negative expectations are disconfirmed, however, and the salesperson uses a weaker sales message, customer oriented attributions are likely to be triggered, which in turn can result in a positive attitude towards the salesperson (DeCarlo, 2005).

In co-creation, the situation may not be as clear-cut. It is therefore important to take a closer look at consumers’ prior expectations of a co-creation interaction. When engaging in co-creation, consumers may not be sure what to expect, since every co-creation encounter is unique. Consumers might have little experience with a particular category of products or services, and limited experience in co-creation altogether. From this point of view, it is plausible to assume that a consumer might expect the co-creation agent to demonstrate behavior that is similar to that of a sales agent, and therefore the prior expectation would be more sales oriented than customer oriented.

In an ideal case, however, a co-creation agent is a valuable co-creator and co-developer in the co-creation process (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000). If a firm and/or the agent manage to communicate to customers what they will be able to expect from the

co-creation interaction, prior expectations might indeed be more customer oriented than sales oriented.

In any case, suspicion is more likely if there is ambiguity in the co-creation situation itself. It is proposed that suspicion is more likely to be triggered in this case if the consumer has sales oriented expectations as opposed to customer oriented expectations, since the sales oriented expectations do not match with the customer oriented nature of the co-creation situation. In the present research, sales oriented expectations are operationalized by providing the information that the designer/consultant works fully on commission. This information may not match with how the co-creation situation in itself is framed: An encounter where the designer/consultant's goal is to find the "perfect" product or service for the couple. With sales oriented expectations, the customer is also more likely to make attributions in regards to the agent's motives, since s/he may already expect that motives will be salient. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

H_{3a}: Suspicion will be higher when a consumer's prior expectations are sales oriented rather than customer oriented.

Agent Behavior

Literature on adaptive selling suggests that salespeople may be most effective if they match their influence tactics with the characteristics of the customer (McFarland, Challagalla, and Shervani, 2006). A skilled salesperson can easily adapt his or her sales approach depending on the consumer's goals (for example, Spiro and Weitz, 1990; Sujana,

1986). At times it can therefore be difficult for consumers to discern whether an agent's behavior is genuine, or whether the agent's behavior may have underlying ulterior motives.

In general, any behavior by a sales agent could potentially raise suspicion if the customer is lead in a direction that might be unexpected or novel (e.g., when something is recommended that is more elaborate or more costly than originally thought). It is often difficult for consumer to evaluate whether recommendations that are made by sales agents are objective or are instead motivated by other factors. In value co-creation, consumers may be unsure of what to expect at all, and therefore it might be even more difficult for them to discern whether agents' motives for their behavior are ulterior or genuine.

In the example with the customized diamond engagement ring the couple might be happy to take the designer's advice to choose a diamond in a very good cut and color, along with a platinum setting. However, higher quality also comes with a higher price, and more often than not consumers have to make compromises in order to stay within a budgeted price range. On the one hand it might be difficult for the couple to properly evaluate nuances in diamond quality, and therefore they might be more likely to rely on the expertise of the designer. On the other hand, they might infer that the designer ultimately wants to make as much money as possible on the sale, and for that reason will recommend more expensive options over others.

It is posited that consumers will form perceptions of the agents they are interacting with regardless of whether the agents are presented as co-creation agents or sales agents. I will propose that consumers will evaluate an agent's *actual* behavior,

which could be perceived as more sales oriented or more customer oriented. In the present research, more sales oriented behavior is operationalized as presenting options that are higher in price, or alluding to the idea that the couple “only deserves the best.” I will also propose that the perception of sales oriented behavior is likely to lead to more suspicion, since there is greater ambiguity in terms of whether the recommendation is truly in the customer’s best interest, or instead in the co-creation agent’s own interest. Thus, the following hypothesis:

H_{3b}: Suspicion will be higher when a consumer’s perception of actual agent behavior is sales oriented rather than customer oriented.

Match/Mismatch Between Expectations and Agent Behavior

For the purpose of the current research, the consumer’s prior expectations and agent behavior will also be examined from a match/mismatch perspective. A “match” refers to a condition where the consumer’s prior expectations are in line with actual agent behavior. For example, the consumer may expect the co-creation agent to be helpful and oriented towards the customer’s needs, and the agent may in fact behave accordingly. In contrast, a “mismatch” refers to a condition where the consumer’s prior expectations are discrepant from the actual agent behavior. For example, the consumer may expect the co-creation agent to be customer oriented, but in reality the agent is rather pushy and oriented towards making a sale. Or, on the other hand the consumer may expect the agent to be like a “stereotypical” salesperson, but instead, the agent’s actual behavior is customer oriented.

The match/mismatch perspective potentially has important implications for suspicion. If an agent's behavior is a match with prior expectations, the consumer may not spend as much effort evaluating the agent's motives. In turn, the consumer may be less likely to become suspicious in this case. If the agent's behavior is a mismatch with prior expectations, however, ambiguity about the agent's motives may arise and suspicion may be triggered.

Two mismatch conditions can be distinguished in the context of the current research: (1) customer oriented prior expectations and sales oriented agent behavior, and (2) sales oriented prior expectations and customer oriented agent behavior. Suspicion is expected to be higher in either of the two mismatch conditions as compared to the match conditions. The following hypothesis is proposed in regards to suspicion:

H_{3c}: Suspicion will be higher when there is a mismatch between prior expectations and agent behavior.

Goal-Related Triggers

In addition to possible situational triggers of suspicion, this research will draw upon a second stream of research in order to provide an alternative explanation for the mechanisms of suspicion in co-creation. Chandran and Morwitz (2005) have suggested that consumer participation in product choice and consumption can be explained using a goal-theoretic perspective. In this research, the example of participation in pricing decisions is used to illustrate how outcomes such as attitudes, intention, or satisfaction can be affected when a consumer is a participant in the process. Chandran and Morwitz

(2005) draw upon the literature of goal-related mind-sets (Gollwitzer, 1990; Heckhausen and Gollwitzer, 1987; Taylor and Gollwitzer, 1995) to predict how an implemental mind-set can influence decision outcomes.

An additional important factor in this context is the availability of cognitive resources. Research on goal-related mind-sets frequently examines process versus outcome goals under consideration of cognitive capacity. Brandstätter, Lengfelder, and Gollwitzer (2001), for example, have found that the effect of cognitive load is mitigated when a person has an implemental mind-set.

Kirmani and Campbell (2000), however, have found that cognitive resources play an important role in the activation of persuasion knowledge. Consumers are less likely to activate persuasion knowledge if they have high cognitive load. Similarly, suspicion may be less likely to be triggered if a consumer does not have sufficient cognitive resources for attributional thinking.

In the following, specific hypotheses will be developed in order to address how goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load may influence suspicion in the co-creation context.

Goal-Related Mind-Sets

The theory of goal-related mind-sets (Gollwitzer, 1987; Heckhausen and Gollwitzer, 1987) postulates that there are two distinct “states of mind” that describe pre-decisional and post-decisional phases. According to the mind-set theory, when individuals are faced with a choice decision, they first deliberate whether or not they should act. Once a decision to act has been made, individuals then think about where,

when, and how to act (Gollwitzer, 1990). The first of these phases is referred to as the “deliberative” mind-set, whereas the second phase is the “implemental” mind-set (Gollwitzer, 1990).

The distinction between deliberative and implemental mind-sets has important implications for how information pertaining to the decision at hand is perceived. According to this research, individuals in the deliberative mind-set can be characterized by a general “open-mindedness” towards new information. Any information that could be useful to determine a decision’s desirability or feasibility will be considered. In this stage, there is also a focus on accurate and impartial processing of information, since many options may be considered (Gollwitzer, 1990).

In the implemental mind-set, in contrast, the focus is on planning when, where, and how the decision can be carried out. This stage can also be characterized by a general “closed-mindedness” towards new information, since the decision to act has already been made. Instead, the person will concentrate on any information that should help promote the chosen goal. As such, the information that is being considered is most likely partial and optimistic in regards to the completion of the chosen goal (Gollwitzer, 1990).

In related research Gollwitzer, Heckhausen, and Steller (1990) show that deliberative and implemental mind-sets are powerful tools in influencing an individual’s cognition. The research has shown that manipulations of deliberative versus implemental mind-sets can direct individuals in their thought processes, especially the manner in which information is processed. In addition, when primed with an implemental mind-set, individuals seem better able to accomplish difficult tasks (Gollwitzer and Brandstätter,

1997), and they also show an increased sense of control over the decision task itself (Gollwitzer and Kinney, 1989).

In the case of participative pricing, Chandran and Morwitz (2005) found that when an implemental mind-set is induced, consumers will focus more on the process of making the purchase rather than whether or not the purchase has merit. Using the example of online auctions (e.g., eBay), Chandran and Morwitz (2005) show that participants in an implemental mind-set have a higher intent to purchase and a higher anticipated satisfaction with the outcome.

Likewise, in the co-creation context of the current research, it is expected that consumers with an implemental mind-set will seek information that will further goal attainment and ignore information that might be negative. Consequently, this suggests that a consumer in an implemental mind-set would be less apt to question the motives of the agent. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed for this research:

H_{4a}: Suspicion levels will be lower for consumers in an implemental mind-set as opposed to a deliberative mind-set.

Cognitive Load

Previous research on persuasion in a sales context (e.g., Campbell and Kirmani, 2000) has shown that persuasion knowledge is less likely to be activated if an individuals' cognitive capacity is constrained. Campbell and Kirmani's (2000) rationale for the importance of availability of cognitive resources stems from the aforementioned research on inference making (Gilbert and Malone, 1995; Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull,

1988). When an individual draws an initial inference about another person, the first stage involves characterization. Here, an inference is based mostly on the other person's behavior, and the inference making process is fairly automatic. Next, the initial inference is adjusted in the correction stage. Here, the perceiver takes additional information (such as situational constraints) into account. According to this research (Gilbert and Malone, 1995; Gilbert et al., 1988), correcting the initial inference takes more cognitive resources, since this type of correction involves higher-order thinking. Therefore, research suggests that making inferences about possible situation constraints such as a judgment whether the other person has ulterior motives requires significant cognitive capacity (Fein, 1996; Gilbert et al., 1988).

Similarly, in the scope of the present research, limited cognitive resources may influence whether suspicion is triggered in a co-creation interaction. In particular, since the process of co-creation is a fairly complex process, suspicion levels may be lower when cognitive resources are limited.

The following hypothesis is therefore developed:

H_{4b}: Suspicion levels will be lower for consumers with high cognitive load as compared to those with low cognitive load.

Interactions between Goal-Related Mind-Set and Cognitive Load

For the purposes of the current research, it will also be insightful to examine possible interaction effects between the goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load.

Brandstätter, Lengfelder, and Gollwitzer (2001) have found that if a person forms

implementation intentions (after an implemental mind-set was induced), the effect on subsequent actions is very robust, even under conditions of high cognitive load.

Therefore, in the current research, I might expect to see that when an implemental mind-set is induced, level of suspicion is not significantly different in individuals with low versus high cognitive capacity.

Additionally, as discussed previously, I expect suspicion to be higher in a deliberative mind-set as compared to an implemental mind-set. When cognitive resources are low, however, and individuals are not able to process contextual information as readily, suspicion levels may not differ in the deliberative and implemental mind-set conditions. Thus, the following hypotheses for the proposed interaction effects of goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load:

- H_{4c}: When an implemental mind-set is induced, suspicion levels will not differ in the low and high cognitive load conditions.
- H_{4d}: When cognitive load is high, suspicion levels will not differ in the deliberative and the implemental mind-set conditions.

Overview of Studies

The current research focuses on the suspicion process in a *persuasion* context as the interpersonal interaction between the agent and the consumer is unfolding. Three studies were developed to address various research questions, and to test the proposed hypotheses.

Study 1: Suspicion Process and Cognitive Responses

Study 1 is a qualitative study designed to establish basic properties of the process of suspicion in co-creation. In line with Marchand and Vonk's (2005) research on suspicion, the key goal of study 1 is to demonstrate a process of suspicion in the context of a co-creation interaction. A secondary goal of study 1 is to find evidence for the three phases of the suspicion process, namely initiation, attribution, and resolution. Level of suspicion and evaluation of the co-creation agent are examined in these three phases. In addition, study 1 examines the content of participants' cognitive responses to the interaction. The goal is to find out whether cognitive responses change once suspicion is initiated. An analysis of the cognitive responses can also help better understand the process as well as the outcomes of suspicion.

Study 1 uses a co-creation scenario involving the customization of a diamond engagement ring with a jewelry designer.

Study 2: Consumer Expectations and Agent Behavior

Study 2 focuses on possible situational causes of suspicion in co-creation. To this effect, study 2 employs an experimental design that examines two factors as potential triggers of suspicion: consumers' prior expectations of the co-creation agent and the agent's actual behavior. In addition, study 2 examines the role of a person's general propensity to become suspicious in the context of suspicion in a co-creation interaction. Study 2 replicates the procedure and co-creation context of study 1 (the diamond engagement ring scenario).

Study 3: Consumer Goals and Cognitive Resources

Study 3 examines an alternative explanation for possible triggers of suspicion. Instead of looking at situational triggers of suspicion, study 3 analyzes possible goal-related triggers. The study examines how a consumer's own motivational structure (in terms of goal-related mind-sets), as well as the availability of cognitive resources impact suspicion levels. To this effect, an experimental design is developed. In addition, study 3 uses a new scenario context that is designed to replicate the basic results of studies 1 and 2 in a different co-creation situation. By using a new context involving the domain of bespoke travel, in particular the customization of a unique honeymoon with the help of a travel consultant, study 3 also extends the co-creation context from the product domain to the service domain.

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

Study 1

Overview

The main goal for study 1 was to establish that a *process* of suspicion could be demonstrated in the context of value co-creation. Marchand and Vonk's (2005) research design on the suspicion process was extended in order to get better insight into the suspicion process in the case of the persuasion context of a co-creation interaction.

Study 1 therefore built on Marchand and Vonk's (2005) existing suspicion research to explore the process of suspicion *as the co-creation interaction is unfolding*. In addition, study 1 was designed to investigate how consumers' general impressions of co-creation agents are impacted if suspicion occurs, and if and how suspicious consumers' cognitive responses to the interaction change as the interaction progresses.

This study introduced a scenario that described an interaction between consumers and a co-creation agent (here: a jewelry designer). Participants had to imagine that they were about to get engaged, and that they would visit a Custom Jewelry Store with their significant other in order to customize a diamond engagement ring. Custom diamond engagement rings have become increasingly popular in recent years as brides and grooms seek to personalize their weddings (Heebner, 2005). In addition, the purchase of an engagement ring is no longer an occasion for the grooms-to-be only. Today's brides are increasingly involved in purchasing their engagement rings. It is estimated that more than 50% of brides participate in selecting and purchasing their engagement rings (Heebner, 2005).

Following Marchand and Vonk's (2005) prior research, ten statements were developed for the diamond engagement ring scenario. In the current study, the cues represented the designer's part of a dialogue between the consumers and herself. Participants' cognitive responses to each statement were elicited in a written format. The cognitive responses were then transcribed, coded, and analyzed to assess the degree of suspicion and evaluation of the designer after each line of dialogue. In addition, the cognitive responses were content analyzed to reveal whether suspicion would bring about changes in consumers' thoughts. In particular, the study sought to find out whether there would be changes in the number of thoughts relating to the agent (designer) as opposed to thoughts relating to the details of the product (the engagement ring).

Pretests

Pretests for study 1 were conducted with two goals in mind. First, a suitable context for the co-creation situation needed to be created, and appropriate behavioral cues (i.e., the statements that made up the scenario) needed to be developed. Second, the study sought to employ a modified procedure (a written procedure as opposed to Marchand and Vonk's [2005] oral procedure), and therefore needed to pretest specific elements of the written procedure.

Pretest of Contexts: Three different co-creation contexts were developed and pretested for this study: Interior design, personal training, and diamond engagement ring. All three contexts described an interaction of a consumer with a co-creation agent (in this case, an interior designer, a personal trainer, and a jewelry designer) for the purpose of creating a unique, customized product or service. The interior design scenario described

a situation where a young adult was looking for an interior designer to help decorate his/her first apartment. The designer would come to the apartment to help with design ideas and furniture suggestions for the apartment. The personal training scenario described the case of a young adult who was interested in exercising with a personal trainer in a gym. The client would go to a gym to meet with a personal trainer for a consultation; the trainer then helped design a customized training and fitness plan that would fit the client's needs. The diamond engagement ring scenario described a situation where a young couple (about to be engaged) would go to a jewelry store to design a unique diamond engagement ring with the help of a jewelry designer.

In the pretest, participants' levels of interest and familiarity with the various co-creation contexts were assessed to determine the most appropriate context for the study. In terms of *familiarity* with the scenario contexts, personal training was rated with a mean of $M = 5.0$, interior design with $M = 4.0$, and the diamond ring scenario with $M = 3.50$ (the scale ranged from 1 = "not familiar at all" to 7 = "very familiar" with the particular contexts). The mean for participants' *interest* was $M = 5.46$ for fitness and exercising, $M = 3.20$ for design/decorating and $M = 3.94$ for jewelry (the scale ranged from 1 = "not interested at all" to 7 = "very interested").

Pretest results for the context suggested that the interior design and personal training scenarios were not as suitable as the engagement ring scenario. Students' cognitive responses to the interior design scenario were not as meaningful and informative as expected, perhaps due to students' lack of interest in this topic. When the personal training scenario was presented, most participants provided thoughts in regards

to their personal experiences with exercising and gyms in general, rather than in response to the particular information presented in the scenario.

The engagement ring scenario was found to be the most suitable context. This scenario had a low level of familiarity, but medium level of interest. The pretest suggested that the relatively low level of knowledge on jewelry and diamonds proved advantageous in that students focused on the information provided in the scenario, and imagined themselves in the interaction with the jewelry designer. Consequently, the diamond engagement ring context was chosen for study 1.

The ten cues that were selected for the diamond engagement scenario were further pretested in terms of their level of informativeness. In line with Marchand and Vonk (2005), the participants were asked the following question for each cue: “How helpful is this statement when forming an impression of Susan, the designer?” The ten cues of the diamond ring scenario were found to be moderately informative ($M = 4.11$), with little variation in informativeness among the statements.

Pretest of Procedure: The pretest employed a procedure that was modified from that of Marchand and Vonk (2005). In Marchand and Vonk (2005), participants took part in individual sessions with an experimenter. They sat down in front of a computer and read instructions aloud from the computer screen. Participants were instructed to form an impression of the person they were reading about. They read a brief scenario and were then given ten cues relating to the scenario. After each cue, participants had to express their thoughts aloud. The experimenter, who sat alongside, recorded participants’ responses to each cue with the help of a tape recorder.

In contrast, this study used a paper-and-pencil method. Using this written method over a one-on-one oral method offered advantages since more than half of the students who were part of the subject pool had a native language other than English. Students might have found it more difficult or intimidating to take part in individual sessions and voice their thoughts.

The procedure for this research involved small group sessions. Participants were given booklets that contained the scenario with instructions and background information, the behavioral cues, and additional measures. Following Marchand and Vonk (2005), participants were instructed in the pretest to (1) rate how helpful each statement was in forming an impression of the designer (on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 being not at all informative and 7 being very informative), and (2) to write down their thoughts on each statement.

The pretest showed that the paper-and-pencil method served as a good alternative to the method employed by Marchand and Vonk (2005). Overall, participants seemed comfortable sharing their thoughts in written form, and provided meaningful and informative cognitive responses.

Participants

64 undergraduate students participated in study 1. 58% of the sample was male. Participants' mean age was 22 years. Subjects for this study were recruited from a subject pool in a large urban university. Students received partial course credit in exchange for their participation in the study.

Design

The basic design and procedure used by Marchand and Vonk (2005) was employed in study 1 in order to capture a process of suspicion in the co-creation context. The above mentioned engagement ring scenario was used as the co-creation scenario for study 1 (for details on the background information, instructions, and scenario statements, please see Appendix 1).

The use of scenarios has been well established in marketing and consumer research. Scenarios enable consumer researchers to efficiently operationalize complex decision-making situations (Bitner, 1990). They are also frequently used when situations are studied that are typically time-consuming and involve great expenses (Smith, Bolton, and Wagner, 1999).

As part of the diamond engagement ring scenario, participants had to imagine that they were interacting with a jewelry designer to customize a diamond engagement ring. Based on Marchand and Vonk's (2005) prior research, the designer's part of the dialogue was presented to participants in ten different statements. The statements for the diamond engagement ring scenario were developed with the natural progression of a realistic co-creation situation in mind. For example, the designer asked more general questions at the beginning of the interaction, and then moved on to conveying more specific information related to various product attributes. Throughout the interaction, the designer made recommendations of what she thought the customers might like. At the conclusion of the scenario, the designer summarized the choices that were made, and the interaction came to an end.

Procedure

Participants were given booklets containing the background information for the diamond engagement ring scenario, instructions, and the scenario itself (broken into ten different statements, each on a separate page in the booklet). The task was to imagine oneself in an interaction with the jewelry designer and to form an impression of the situation. Participants were then asked to write down their thoughts for each statement, for two minutes each. (After each statement, ample space was provided for participants to write down as much as they could.) The experimenter timed the participants in this task. Once time was up, participants were prompted by the experimenter to move on to the next statement. Using a 2-minute timeframe ensured that participants across different study sessions spent equal amounts of time to provide their responses. It also motivated participants to provide their in-depth cognitive responses instead of brief first impressions.

Following the scenario, participants were asked to provide answers to related measures that assessed their perceptions of the designer (e.g., attitude towards the designer, and evaluation of her expertise), as well as their purchase intentions, anticipated satisfaction, and demographics. Participants took about 30 minutes in total to complete the study. Please see Appendix 2 for details on the additional measures that were used in study 1.

Coding

Marchand and Vonk's (2005) coding scheme was applied to the cognitive responses in order to assess participants' general impression of the agent (designer) as well as the degree of suspicion for each statement. Evaluation of the agent ranged from -2 = negative to $+2$ = positive for each statement. Degree of suspicion was coded with a suspicion score of 3 for maximum suspicion, 2 for moderate suspicion, and a score of 1 when the participant was not suspicious. In line with Marchand and Vonk's (2005) previous research, maximum suspicion was inferred when at least two possible motives for the behavior were considered, but the participant was unable to decide. Moderate suspicion was inferred when two possible motives were considered, but the participant was leaning strongly towards one of the two. When the participant was certain that the agent had either ulterior motives or genuine motives, it was concluded that s/he was not suspicious.

Two judges coded the cognitive responses of all participants independently of each other. This coding procedure resulted in 10 suspicion scores and 10 evaluation scores for each participant. The level of agreement between the two coders was 86% for suspicion and 74% for evaluation of the designer. These inter-coder reliabilities were comparable to those reported by Marchand and Vonk (2005)—79% for suspicion and 81% for evaluation. Discrepancies in coding were resolved through subsequent discussion.

In addition, the cognitive responses were coded in terms of their target dimensions. Cognitive responses to each statement typically consisted of several thoughts (sentences). Each thought was coded as either relating to the designer or

relating to the product. For each statement separately, the numbers of designer thoughts and product thoughts were then tallied.

Results

64 participants completed study 1. Participants' cognitive responses to the scenario statements were subsequently transcribed and coded for suspicion, evaluation and target dimension (source related thoughts versus product related thoughts). Participants averaged 2.6 thoughts per statement. The total word count for each participant was an average of 323 words.

Suspicion

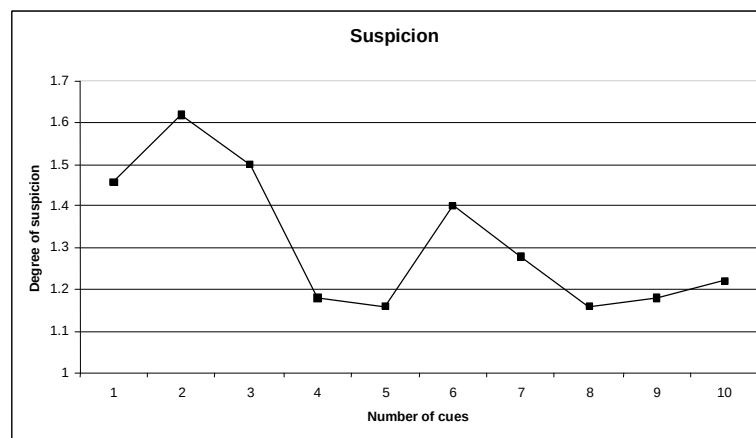
In regards to *suspicion*, a participant was considered "not suspicious" if s/he was either certain that the designer had ulterior motives, or if s/he was certain that the agent had genuine motives. Out of the 64 participants in study 1, 14 participants (22%) did not become suspicious. (Their mean for suspicion was $M = 1.00$, since, by definition, all of their cognitive responses were coded as "1.")

The remaining 50 participants who became suspicious (reflected in at least one thought that suggested "moderate" or "maximum" suspicion, and therefore a suspicion mean of $M > 1.00$) were subject to further analysis. The goals of study 1 were to demonstrate the process for suspicion and agent evaluation, as well as to show the three phases of the suspicion process (initiation, attribution, and resolution).

A repeated measures ANOVA with suspicion levels for the ten cues (1 – 10) as within-subjects factor was performed. Please see Figure 2 for details on the suspicion means and process of suspicion for the ten cues.

As expected, level of suspicion first increased (cues 1 through 3). This was consistent with the “initiation” phase of suspicion. Suspicion then dropped (cues 4 and 5), before increasing somewhat for cues 6 and 7 (“attribution” phase). Suspicion then leveled off for cues 8 through 10, as expected (“resolution”).

Figure 2: Process of Suspicion in Diamond Ring Scenario



More formally, the repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant linear trend for level of suspicion ($F(1, 49) = 15.98, p = .000$). Further regression analysis on the linear model showed that as the interaction progressed (cues 1 through 10), suspicion decreased (coefficients: $\alpha = 1.533, \beta = -.39$.) The linear model produced an R^2 of .52 ($F(1, 8) = 8.52, p = .019$).

The findings above support the general predictions in H_{1a} and H_{1b} . However, the results differ somewhat from Marchand and Vonk (2005), who predicted a quadratic

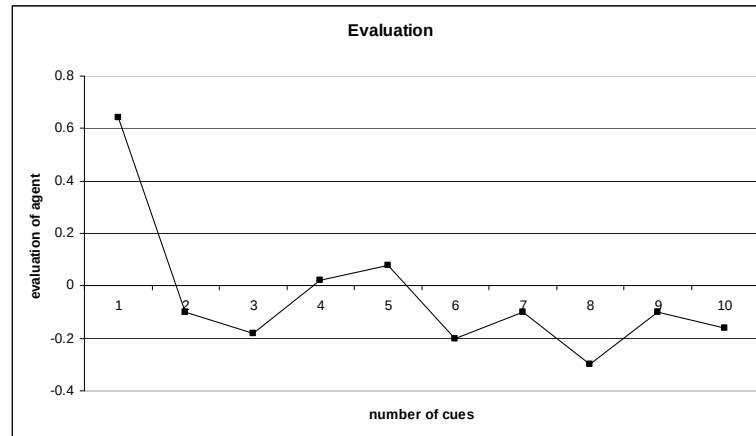
trend for suspicion. The difference may be explained by the higher starting point for suspicion in the current research context. Whereas Marchand and Vonk (2005) asked participants to form impressions of a person in a situation that was not a persuasion situation, the persuasion context of the current research may be perceived as more ambiguous at first and thus results at higher suspicion levels at the beginning of the interaction.

Agent Evaluation

The cognitive responses of the suspicious participants ($n = 50$) were also analyzed to reveal a pattern regarding the designer's impression on participants. For evaluation of the designer, codes ranged from negative -2 to positive +2 in accordance with Marchand and Vonk's (2005) coding scheme. For agent evaluation, a repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant linear trend, as predicted in H_{1c} ($F(1, 49) = 5.18, p = .027$).

Further regression analysis on the linear model showed that as the interaction progressed (cues 1 through 10), the evaluation of the designer decreased (coefficients: $\alpha = .241, \beta = -.051$.) The linear model resulted in an R^2 of .35 ($F(1, 8) = 4.29, p = .072$), which was not statistically significant. Please see Figure 3 for details on the agent evaluation means as well as the evaluation process.

Figure 3: Evaluation of the Co-Creation Agent (Designer)



Cognitive Responses

Cognitive responses were coded as either source thoughts or message topic thoughts. For each statement, the number of sentences containing source thoughts and message topic thoughts was tallied. A cognitive response was coded as a source thought when a comment related to Susan (the designer) was made. For example, participants commented on her presumed expertise or her possible intentions. Positive and negative comments were both counted and not differentiated for the purposes of this study. A cognitive response was coded as a message topic thought when the sentence addressed specific attributes of the diamond engagement ring (for example, the setting, the four Cs as quality measures of the diamond, the type of precious metal, etc.).

There were also cognitive responses that contained neither source related nor message topic related thoughts (e.g., thoughts about the participant's own reflections, such as "I am really looking forward to this wedding"). These cognitive responses were not counted, and were not taken into consideration for the study 1 analyses. Please see

Table 1 for examples of participants' source thoughts and message topic thoughts that were obtained in study 1.

Table 1: Examples of Source Thoughts and Message Topic Thoughts in Study 1

<i>Source thoughts:</i>	<i>Message topic thoughts:</i>
"Susan is helpful and considerate of my ideas."	"The side-stone setting is probably less expensive than the three stone setting."
"Susan seems to have a step by step process to helping customers."	"I would rather have smaller diamonds that are really well cut and sparkle a lot."
"Susan is being seemingly unobtrusive but very sly."	"If there's already a particular setting and cut, it can't really be one of a kind."
"She seems to be imposing her own taste and she's obviously imposing or insisting on the most expensive metal."	"Why would she offer me an E through G rating if she promised me the "perfect" ring?"
"I can tell she wants to make a sale. She probably works on commission."	"I know she [fiancée] is going to pick the princess cut, she thinks she is one."

Predictions were made in regards to how cognitive responses might change if participants become suspicious of the designer's motives. In general, it was posited (in line with Fein, 1996) that when a consumer becomes suspicious, cognitive resources would be shifted from thinking about the product to thinking about the agent and his or her motives.

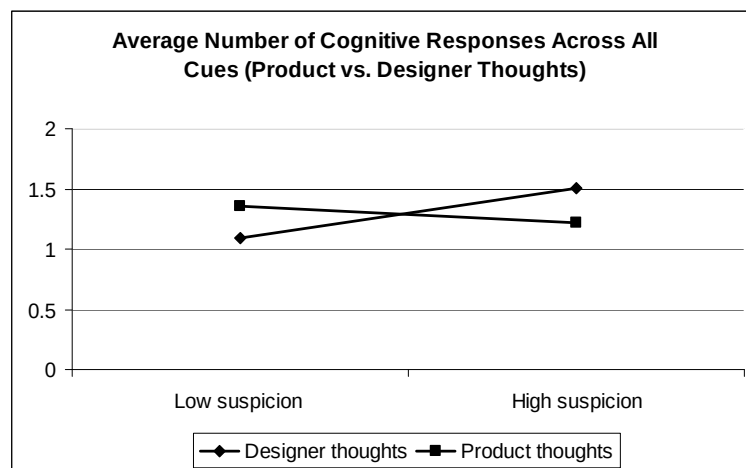
The research predicted (in hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b}) that when suspicion is triggered, the number of source thoughts would increase and the number of message-topic thoughts would decrease. In other words, it was expected that when a consumer

becomes suspicious, there would be more thoughts generated that relate to the agent and less thoughts generated that related to the specific attributes that are key to the product.

For the purposes of this analysis, a median split was performed on suspicion levels. The median level of suspicion in study 1 was $Mdn. = 1.20$. As a result of the median split, a group of participants with low level of suspicion (denoted with “LS,” $n = 32$) was contrasted with a group of participants with high level of suspicion (denoted with “HS,” $n = 32$). The suspicion levels for these two groups of participants were significantly different, as expected ($M_{LS} = 1.08$; $M_{HS} = 1.41$, $t(62) = -7.43$, $p = .000$). ANOVA was used to test for mean differences in the number of designer thoughts versus product thoughts for the low suspicion and high suspicion participants.

Please see Figure 4 for a graphic representation of the product related and designer related cognitive responses to suspicion in study 1. The means represent the average number of source thoughts as well as message topic thoughts across all ten statements.

Figure 4: Cognitive Responses to Suspicion



Results showed a significant difference between low and high suspicion participants for the number of designer thoughts that were generated ($F(1, 63) = 5.02$, $p = .029$). More designer related thoughts were generated by those participants who were highly suspicious ($M_{HS} = 1.51$) as opposed to those participants who showed low levels of suspicion ($M_{LS} = 1.09$). Therefore, H_{2a} was supported.

In addition, as predicted, study 1 found that *fewer* product related thoughts were generated by the high suspicion participants compared with the low suspicion participants ($M_{HS} = 1.22$ versus $M_{LS} = 1.36$). However, the mean difference was not statistically significant ($F(1, 63) = .58$, $p = .45$, *n.s.*), and therefore hypothesis H_{2b} could not be supported.

For the high suspicion participants, the number of source thoughts was also compared to the number of message-topic thoughts. It was expected that the high suspicion participants would generate more source thoughts as compared to message topic thoughts. Overall, the results showed that the highly suspicious participants indeed generated more thoughts relating to the designer ($M = 1.51$) as opposed to thoughts relating to the product ($M = 1.22$; $t(31) = 1.936$, $p = .185$, *n.s.*). While these results were in the expected direction, the mean difference was not significant. Hypothesis H_{2c} could therefore not be supported.

In addition to these main effects, an ANOVA was performed to test for an interaction between suspicion and dimension of thought (designer related thought versus product related thought). Figure 4 suggests that there might be an interaction effect for type of thought under low and high suspicion conditions. For the purpose of this analysis, an additional variable was created as a composite of both designer and product

thoughts. The number of product thoughts was added to the number of designer thoughts. Results showed a mean for high suspicion participants of $M_{HS} = 2.44$ and a mean of $M_{LS} = 2.73$ for low suspicion participants. The mean differences were not significant at the .05 significant level ($F(1, 63) = 3.35, p = .072, n.s.$). Therefore, an interaction effect could not be demonstrated.

Overall, the results pertaining to the cognitive responses in study 1 were nevertheless promising. Even though the results only supported hypothesis H_{2a} , the study suggested that there seems to be a pattern for changes in product thoughts versus agent thoughts that might be caused when suspicion is triggered.

Additional Measures

The analysis of the additional dependent measures and items used in study 1 provided further insights into participants' perceptions of the designer, as well as their overall impressions with the scenario context. Please see Appendix 2 for an overview of the measures and items used, and see Table 2 for details on the mean differences. For this analysis, as in the previous section, a group of participants with low level of suspicion ($n = 32$) was contrasted with a group of participants with high level of suspicion ($n = 32$). The two groups were determined after performing a median split for suspicion. In the following, the means for the two groups of participants, respectively, are denoted with "LS" for low suspicion and "HS" for high suspicion.

Low suspicion participants rated the designer's goal of satisfying the customer as significantly higher than the high suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 5.88, M_{HS} = 4.78$). Likewise, the goal of building a good relationship with the customer was rated

significantly higher by the low suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 5.47$, $M_{HS} = 4.19$).

Interestingly, though, both low and high suspicion participants largely agreed with the statement that Susan's goal is "to make a sale" ($M_{LS} = 5.50$, $M_{HS} = 6.09$). This result suggests that consumers may not perceive the sales goal in itself in a negative way (after all, the couple who was depicted in the scenario went to the jewelry store with the intention to purchase a diamond engagement ring). Participants in study 1 seemed to focus more on the manner in which the designer conveyed information and suggestions about the diamond ring.

As was expected, the group of high suspicion participants perceived the designer as more "pushy" compared to the low suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 3.53$, $M_{HS} = 4.72$). However, there were no significant differences between the two groups of participants when it came to perceiving the designer as "manipulative." The two groups, however, rated that designer significantly different in terms of her perceived sincerity and honesty. Low suspicion participants perceived the designer as significantly more sincere ($M_{LS} = 5.16$, $M_{HS} = 4.41$) as well as more honest ($M_{LS} = 5.28$, $M_{HS} = 4.19$). These results are interesting in that both low and high suspicion participants seemed to accept the fact that the designer had a dual role: helping in the customization process while ultimately trying to sell the product.

In terms of participants' attitude towards the designer, the high suspicion participants showed a significantly less favorable attitude ($M_{LS} = 5.34$, $M_{HS} = 3.98$). There was also a difference in terms of rating the anticipated satisfaction with the purchase overall. When asked how satisfied they would be if they made a purchase from this store, the group of high suspicion participants rated their anticipated satisfaction as

significantly lower ($M_{LS} = 5.25$, $M_{HS} = 4.53$). Both groups of participants rated the designer's expertise as fairly high ($M_{LS} = 5.75$, $M_{HS} = 5.00$); there was no significant difference.

Another important finding was the fact that there was a significant difference between groups in terms of purchase intention. The low suspicion participants were found to be much more likely to purchase from this store compared to the high suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 5.29$, $M_{HS} = 4.19$). The difference in purchase intention is an interesting result of study 1, particularly in light of possible managerial implications that can be gained from this research.

While purchase likelihood was a significant factor, the specific areas of customization and subsequent decisions on product attributes (e.g., type of ring setting, type of precious metal, shape of diamond, carat size, clarity, or color) did not show significant differences between the groups. For more details on means for attribute choices, please refer to Table 2.

Additionally, there was no significant gender difference in study 1. The suspicion mean was $M = 1.27$ for males and $M = 1.21$ for females ($t(62) = .953$, $p = .34$, *n.s.*). This result is important, since it suggests that the conclusions regarding suspicion and the suspicion process in study 1 are independent of the context, and applicable to both males and females.

Table 2: Overview of Means for Additional Measures used in Study 1

	<i>Low suspicion participants (n = 32)</i>	<i>High suspicion participants (n = 32)</i>	
Measure	Mean	Mean	Sig.
Job: Help with customization	5.53	4.19	.000*
Job: Sell jewelry	5.38	5.94	.163
Goal: Make a sale	5.50	6.09	.088
Goal: Satisfy customer	5.88	4.78	.001*
Goal: Build a good relationship	5.47	4.19	.001*
Designer is sincere	5.16	4.41	.032*
Designer is honest	5.28	4.19	.003*
Designer is manipulative	3.84	4.69	.059
Designer is pushy	3.53	4.72	.008*
Attitude towards designer	5.34	3.97	.000*
Choice: Platinum setting	5.28	4.59	.118
Choice: Side stone setting	4.09	3.88	.661
Choice: Emerald shape	3.28	3.09	.683
Choice: Carat size	4.59	4.56	.953
Choice: Clarity	5.78	5.59	.438
Choice: Color	5.03	4.78	.560
Expertise	5.75	5.00	.011*
Purchase intent	5.29	4.19	.003*
Satisfaction	5.25	4.53	.038*
Interest in jewelry	4.38	3.50	.106
Interest in fashion	5.19	4.78	.420
Previous purchase (1 = yes, 2 = no)	1.97	1.91	.736
Familiarity	3.41	3.59	.699

*denotes significance at .05 level

Items rated on a scale from 1 to 7 (e.g., 1 = completely disagree and 7 = completely agree; see Appendix 2 for use of other anchors), unless otherwise noted.

Additional Conclusions

The cognitive responses obtained in study 1 provided an opportunity to gain additional insights into how suspicion was triggered, how attributions were made, and how suspicion was ultimately resolved. When no suspicion is triggered, by Marchand and Vonk's (2005) definition, the individual is certain of the other person's motives. Alternatively, suspicion may be triggered during the interaction, but later on resolved. According to Marchand and Vonk's (2005), an individual ceases to be suspicious when s/he develops certainty about the other person's motives. The individual is either certain that the other person has an ulterior motive, or is certain that there is a genuine motive.

The cognitive responses in study 1 were analyzed further with the direction of the resolution of suspicion in mind. Two key questions emerged further from the study 1 results: (1) How did the group of unsuspicious participants perceive the agent? Were the unsuspicious participants certain from the beginning that the designer had *ulterior* motives, or in turn, were they certain from the beginning that she had *genuine* motives? (2) How was suspicion resolved by the group of suspicious participants? Did suspicious participants conclude that the designer had ulterior motives, or that she had genuine motives?

For the purpose of this analysis, a distinction among suspicious and unsuspicious participants in study 1 was made. Out of the 64 participants in study 1, 50 participants became suspicious (that is, by definition, they had suspicion means of > 1.00). 14 participants in study 1 did not become suspicious (suspicion means = 1.00). The cognitive responses were further examined for the suspicious and unsuspicious participants separately.

Unsuspecting Participants--A closer examination of the unsuspecting participants' (n = 14) cognitive thoughts showed that all of them had a very favorable perception of the designer. They also seemed certain, throughout the course of the interaction, that Susan had genuine motives. Consider, for example, some of the comments of the following participant (female, 21):

“She seems to be interested in your needs and what you’re looking for... She is ready and willing to work with you and your budget...I am impressed with her because she makes shopping very easy...Susan is giving me more choices which make me feel in control hence I like her more...I think she’s an excellent sales associate so far...I appreciate the fact that she is not being pushy, but working with me and my budget.”

Suspicious Participants--Suspicious participants' cognitive responses were further examined in terms of how suspicion was ultimately resolved. For this part of the analysis, all of the suspicious participants in study 1 were taken into consideration (n = 50). Suspicious participants showed mixed results when it came to the resolution of suspicion: 30 out of the 50 suspicious participants (60%) resolved suspicion in the direction of ulterior motives. The rest, 20 out of 50 suspicious participants (40%), concluded that the agent probably had genuine motives. Consider the following thoughts of a participant who became suspicious and resolved suspicion in the direction of ulterior motives (male, 23):

“Great first question. Of course we have a basic idea in mind, that’s why we came...This lady is really worried about how much money I have...Oh boy, I didn’t know that these rings had so much meaning...Now in order for me to satisfy my wife, at this point do I really have a choice? ... I’ve noticed how quickly Susan is to point out the best first. Susan – natural born saleswoman. ... I’m guessing, 2 carat it is ... Wow, Susan, you have the easiest job.”

This particular participant became suspicious after reading the second statement, once the question of budget arose. He also felt torn between choosing “the best” for his future wife (who was present at the store), and not giving in to Susan’s pressure to select options that were perceived as overly expensive.

In contrast, consider the following suspicious participant (male, 22), who became suspicious after reading the third statement when the types of precious metal were presented, and the designer suggested platinum as the most desirable option:

“She is helpful, not pushy or boastful... She is perhaps biased on the platinum, even though she tried to seem unbiased at first. And not surprised, since it is the most expensive... She is an excellent salesperson, who obviously has spent a lot of time practicing her sales pitch to consumers... She is willing to offer something of quality without it being of the highest price range... I think she listened well to the consumer... Willing to be flexible price wise and offer pricing options.”

At the end, this participant concluded that the designer, overall, seemed to listen well and made good recommendations. Even though this participant described the designer as a “salesperson,” his evaluation at the end was fairly positive. The participant concluded that Susan was an “excellent” salesperson, and seemed to be willing to work with him.

This generally favorable perception of the unsuspicious group of participants and the more critical perception of the suspicious group of participants were also evident in the formal evaluation of the designer. Cognitive responses were coded for agent evaluation, ranging from a negative evaluation of -2 to a positive evaluation of $+2$. It is noteworthy that the group of unsuspicious participants did not have a single negative

agent evaluation rating. The unsuspicious group's mean value for agent evaluation (across the 10 statements) was $M = .54$ (min. = 0.00, max. = 2.00). The group of suspicious participants, in contrast, evaluated the agent more negatively. This group's mean value for evaluation (across the 10 statements) was $M = -.04$ (min. = -2.00, max. = 1.40). There was a significant difference in agent evaluation between the suspicious and unsuspicious groups ($F(1, 62) = 6.43, p = .014$).

Overall, an important conclusion of the examination of cognitive thoughts in study 1 is the fact that once suspicion is initiated, it is not necessarily resolved in the direction of ulterior motives. Suspicion, by itself, is therefore not automatically a negative inference. There are cases where suspicion is triggered, but ultimately resolved in the direction of genuine motives. These results are in contrast to Campbell and Kirmani (2000) and DeCarlo (2005), who concluded that once suspicion is triggered, a negative inference is made.

Discussion

The analysis of the process of suspicion and cognitive responses obtained in study 1 provided several insights into how suspicion may operate in a co-creation context. The broad goal of study 1 was to gain an understanding of when and how individuals become suspicious that a co-creation agent may have an ulterior motive. To this effect, study 1 extended prior research by Marchand and Vonk (2005) and applied it to the context of a value co-creation situation involving the case of a customized diamond engagement ring. The scenario stressed the interactive nature of typical value co-creation situations.

Study 1 showed evidence for a process of suspicion in the value co-creation context. 78% of participants in study 1 became suspicious that the designer may have had an ulterior motive for her behavior. It was demonstrated that there was a process of suspicion in the engagement ring scenario, similar to the process that was found in prior research by Marchand and Vonk (2005). Results suggested that the suspicion process is comprised of the three separate phases of initiation, attribution, and resolution. Suspicion was first found to be high in the initiation phase, then leveled off in the middle of the interaction (attribution phase) and decreased towards the end of the interaction as suspicion was resolved.

A significant linear trend emerged as a pattern for the suspicion process, with suspicion decreasing as the interaction progressed. Evaluation of the jewelry designer showed a linear trend as well. As the interaction went on, participants judged the designer increasingly negatively.

Study 1 examined the contents of participants' cognitive responses as well. Cognitive responses were transcribed and coded for suspicion, evaluation, and target dimensions (source thoughts versus message topic thoughts). It was found that participants with high (as opposed to low) levels of suspicion generated significantly more source thoughts (i.e., thoughts related to the designer). They also generated fewer product related thoughts (though not statistically significant). Overall, the high suspicion participants also seemed to generate more source thoughts than message topic thoughts, although not at statistically significant levels. Nevertheless, these results are promising in that they suggest that once the consumers become suspicious, they are likely to shift their

cognitive resources from thinking about the product to thinking about the agent and the agent's motives.

Further analysis of the cognitive responses in study 1 suggested that the unsuspicious participants were in agreement in their positive perception of the designer. In unison, this group of participants attributed the designer's behavior to genuine motives. Overall, the designer was also evaluated more favorably when participants did not become suspicious.

The cognitive responses were further evaluated for the group of participants who became suspicious. An important finding was the fact that when suspicion was triggered, it was not necessarily resolved in the direction of ulterior motives. In some cases, participants became suspicious as they were reading the dialog statements, but ultimately concluded that the designer likely had genuine motives. Most often, however, when participants became suspicious, they concluded that the designer probably had ulterior motives for her behavior.

Study 1 also showed that high (as opposed to low) suspicion participants had a lower attitude towards the designer, lower purchase intent, as well as lower anticipated levels of satisfaction with the purchase. These results are important in that they provide additional support for the idea that when suspicion is triggered during the co-creation interaction, the outcomes of the interaction can be affected significantly.

Overall, study 1 demonstrated a wide range of responses to suspicion without explicit manipulation of factors that might cause suspicion. Studies 2 and 3 address potential triggers of suspicion. To this effect, experimental designs are developed in

order to examine the roles of situational factors and personality (study 2), as well as goals and cognitive busyness (study 3).

Study 2

Overview

The main goal for study 2 was to examine situational factors that may trigger suspicion in the co-creation context. In particular, this study was designed to investigate the role of consumers' prior expectations of the interaction, as well as the impact of the co-creation agent's actual behavior. In addition, study 2 sought to find out whether individual differences in a general "propensity for suspicion" might play a role in triggering suspicion in the co-creation context. Do individuals who have a higher general propensity to become suspicious have an increased likelihood of becoming suspicious in the persuasion context of a value co-creation situation? Or, in contrast, does suspicion depend more on contextual factors such as prior expectations and agent behavior, and less on suspicion propensity? Study 2 was designed to investigate possible situational triggers, while taking the personal difference variable of suspicion propensity into account. The context for the scenario in study 2 was replicated from study 1 (diamond engagement ring).

Pretests

Pretests for study 2 addressed three areas. First, specific elements in the background information of the scenario needed to be developed to manipulate participants' prior expectations as either sales oriented or customer oriented. Second, elements in the scenario statements needed to be varied in order to manipulate the co-creation agent's behavior (more sales oriented versus more customer oriented). Third, the Generalized Communicative Suspicion scale (Levine and McCornack, 1991) needed

to be pretested for its reliability with the particular study sample. 56 participants took part in this stage of the research.

Pretest of Prior Expectations—The scenario used in study 1 was replicated for study 2. It was modified to incorporate wording that contained the manipulated elements. Specifically, in order to manipulate the participant's prior expectations of the interaction, the designer's form of compensation was varied in the background information of the scenario. The designer (named "Dana" in study 2) was described as either working "fully on commission" (sales oriented expectation) or "not on commission" (customer oriented expectation). This manipulation was modeled on DeCarlo (2005, p. 241), who described the salesperson as either working 100% on salary, or striving for "one more sale to make it into the Top Gun Summer Intern Club."

Several versions of the expectations manipulation were pretested to ensure that participants would in fact perceive differences in the given information (salary versus commission based compensation), and to create the expectation that the designer would be either sales oriented or customer oriented in the subsequent interaction described in the scenario.

In order to highlight this important piece of information in the background information of the scenario, the sentence containing the expectations manipulation was presented in bold face. On the cover page of the study booklet, participants were explicitly instructed to read all the information carefully before proceeding. The pretest showed that participants, overall, perceived the prior expectations manipulation as

intended. For details on the wording of the prior expectations manipulation, please refer to Appendix 3.

Pretest of Agent Behavior—In order to manipulate the actual behavior of the designer in the scenario, the behavioral cues used in study 1 were re-evaluated in terms of the level of suspicion that each statement triggered. From the ten statements used in study 1, four statements with the highest levels of suspicion (statements # 1, 2, 3, and 6, showing significantly higher suspicion levels as compared to the rest) were selected and modified to serve the manipulation purpose for study 2. After re-evaluating the cognitive responses to these four statements in study 1, the wording of these four statements was changed in a more customer oriented (less “pushy”) direction by leaving out some of the phrases that seemed to trigger suspicion in study 1. For example, statement 1 was changed from “I will help design the *perfect* engagement ring for you” to “I will help design a *unique* engagement ring for you.” In study 1, some participants thought that the use of the word “perfect” was indicative of a typical sales tactic.

To create the more sales oriented (more “pushy”) version of the behavior, the wording of the four statements was changed to include additional pointers that might be perceived as persuasive. For example, when the designer asked about the preference in terms of the type of precious metal (statement 6: platinum, yellow gold, or white gold), she indicated in the sales oriented version: “...personally, platinum is my favorite. It is the strongest and purest metal that will last a lifetime.” In the customer oriented version of the same statement, by comparison, the designer simply said: “The choice is yours. Any of these look great for engagement rings.”

Several versions of the statements containing the agent behavior manipulation were pretested to ensure that participants would in fact perceive the designer's behavior in the customer oriented version differently from the sales oriented version. The goal was to create the impression that the designer was either more motivated to make a sale, or was more motivated to help with the co-creation process, without explicitly spelling out these motives.

Pretest of Suspicion Scale—In order to investigate possible individual differences in the tendency to become suspicious, the “Generalized Communicative Suspicion” scale (GCS, Levine and McCornack, 1991) was used. In a pretest with 56 participants, the scale showed a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .80$, which is considered an acceptable level of reliability for a scale at this stage of the research (Nunnally, 1978, p. 245).

Participants

In total, 144 students participated in study 2. 58 % of the sample was male. Participants' mean age was 23 years. Participants for this study were recruited from a subject pool at a large urban university. Students received partial course credit in exchange for their participation.

Design

Study 2 used a 2 (prior expectations: customer oriented versus sales oriented) x 2 (agent behavior: customer oriented versus sales oriented) experimental design with suspicion propensity (low versus high) as a covariate. Prior expectations and agent

behavior were between-subjects factors. The two levels of suspicion propensity were determined by median split after the study was administered.

A scenario similar to the one in study 1 was presented to participants. Participants' prior expectation of the co-creation agent was manipulated in the background information of the scenario. In the customer oriented expectations manipulation, participants were given the following information:

“Dana is a jewelry designer who is employed by the store to assist customers with custom designs. She receives a salary from the jewelry store; her job is not based on commission.”

In the sales oriented expectations manipulation, participants received the following information:

“Dana is an independent jewelry designer who works fully on commission. She does not receive a salary from the store. Instead, she receives commission based on the sales price of every piece of jewelry that she helps design.”

The co-creation agent's actual behavior was manipulated in the scenario statements (please see the section on *Pretests* for details). Statements 1, 2, 3, and 6 from study 1 were altered to create the customer oriented and sales oriented agent behavior manipulations. For the sales oriented manipulations, the statements were made “stronger” to include additional elements that might be associated with a salesperson and a selling motive. For the customer oriented manipulation, the statements were made more neutral and included phrases that might be associated more with a designer who has a motive to help. To this effect, anything that seemed to trigger suspicion in study 1 (for example, “the *perfect* engagement ring”) was changed or left out from the statement (in this example, instead of “your perfect engagement ring,” the statement simply read “your

engagement ring”). For details on the wording of the scenario statements and agent behavior manipulation in study 2, please see Appendix 4.

In addition, the Generalized Communicative Suspicion scale (GCS, Levine and McCornack, 1991) was administered in study 2. The 11-item scale was included in the study booklet after participants read the scenario and provided their written cognitive thoughts. In the subsequent analysis of the data, a median split was performed to divide the sample into a “low GCS” group and a “high GCS” group. These groups were then used to assess whether a general propensity for becoming suspicious would influence whether a person would be more likely to become suspicious when interacting with an agent for the purpose of value co-creation. Please see Appendix 5 for all the items contained in the Levine and McCornack’s (1991) Generalized Communicative Suspicion scale.

The study design resulted in four different experimental conditions, denoted with the following abbreviations:

- (1) Customer oriented expectations (CE)/customer oriented behavior (CB),
- (2) Sales oriented expectations (SE)/customer oriented behavior (CB),
- (3) Sales oriented expectations (SE)/sales oriented behavior (SB), and
- (4) Customer oriented expectations (CE)/sales oriented behavior (SB).

Procedure

The basic procedure for study 2 was similar to the one previously used in study 1. Study sessions were administered in a small group setting. In a typical session, 4 to 6 students participated in the study. Once all participants had entered the room and were seated, they were given a study booklet. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four study versions (four different questionnaire versions were administered in study 2). Participants were unaware of any differences among the booklets that were handed out.

The booklets contained the background information, instructions, the diamond engagement ring scenario statements, manipulation check questions, and additional measures (similar to the ones in study 1). Participants were first asked to read the background information and instructions. The instructions informed them about the upcoming timed task in the first part of the study. The experimenter subsequently guided participants through the scenario, giving participants two minutes to write down their thoughts in response to each of the ten scenario statements.

After the written responses to each statement were completed, participants proceeded to the other parts that were related to the scenario (manipulation check questions, perceptions and attitudes of the designer, perceived level of designer's expertise, purchase likelihood, anticipated satisfaction, etc.) Participants then answered the questions contained in the Generalized Communicative Suspicion scale (Levine and McCornack, 1991). Participants concluded with the same demographic questions (age, gender, etc.) that were previously used in study 1. Completion of the study took

approximately 30 minutes in total. For details of all the measures included in study 2, please see Appendix 6.

Coding

As in study 1, levels of suspicion and evaluation of the agent were assessed by coding participants' cognitive responses according to Marchand and Vonk's (2005) coding scheme. Coding for degree of suspicion was replicated from study 1. When the participant seemed certain of the motives (whether they were perceived as genuine or ulterior), he or she was not considered suspicious (Marchand and Vonk, 2005). In this case, a score of 1 was given. When there seemed to be an ambiguity about the agent's motive, and the participant seemed to weigh different possible motives, he or she was considered suspicious. A suspicion score of 2 was given for moderate suspicion (two or more motives considered, but the participant was leaning towards one of the two motives), and a score of 3 was given for maximum suspicion (two or more motives were considered, but the participant was unable to decide between the two). Level of suspicion was coded for each of the ten statements separately, resulting in ten suspicion codes for each participant. As in study 1, participants' evaluation of the agent was coded from negative -2 to positive +2 (Marchand and Vonk, 2005), again for each statement separately.

Two judges coded all of the cognitive responses in study 2 independently from each other. The coding procedure resulted in 10 suspicion codes and 10 evaluation codes for each participant. The level of agreement between the two coders was 82% for suspicion and 72% for evaluation of the agent. Marchand and Vonk (2005) had reported

79% agreement for suspicion and 81% for evaluation. Discrepancies between the two coders were noted and resolved through discussion.

Results

144 participants completed study 2. Their written cognitive responses were transcribed and coded for suspicion. Participants averaged 2.4 thoughts per cue. The total word count, on average, was 336 words per participant.

Four participants were removed from the original data set because their responses on the expectations manipulation check and behavior manipulation check were more than two standard deviations away from the means. Once these outliers were removed from the data set, the final sample size for study 2 was $n = 140$.

Manipulation Checks

Manipulation check questions were incorporated in each of the four versions of the questionnaire to assess whether the manipulations for prior expectations and perceived agent behavior worked as intended.

Prior Expectations—The following manipulation check question was included on a separate page, after the scenario: “Based on the background information at the beginning of the task, before the interaction with Dana started, what was your expectation of Dana? Did you expect her to be more motivated to help with the design, or more motivated to make a sale?” Participants had to circle their answer on a 7-point bipolar scale ranging from 1 = “expected her to be more motivated to help with design” to 7 = “expected her to be more motivated to make a sale.”

When examining the means for the customer oriented versus the sales oriented expectation version, the difference was significant and in the expected direction: The mean for the customer oriented expectations was $M_{CE} = 3.19$, whereas for the sales oriented expectations it was $M_{SE} = 4.91$ ($t(138) = -5.74, p = .000$). Thus, the manipulation of prior expectations was successful.

Agent Behavior—The manipulation check for the actual agent behavior used an item similar to the one in the expectations manipulation check. The item read: “After reading about the interaction with Dana, what was your impression of her? Did she want to help customize a ring, or did she want to sell a ring?” Again, participants had to circle their answer on a 7-point bipolar scale anchored with 1 = “wanted to help” and 7 = “wanted to sell.” The means for the customer oriented and sales oriented behavior manipulations were found to be in the expected direction and significantly different from each other. The mean for the customer oriented behavior was $M_{CB} = 3.64$, whereas it was $M_{SB} = 4.41$ for the sales oriented behavior ($t(138) = -2.35, p = .020$). Therefore, the manipulation of the agent behavior was successful.

Suspicion

In order to investigate the impact of prior expectations and agent behavior on suspicion further, two approaches were taken in the following analyses. First, suspicion levels were examined in an aggregate format (i.e., in this case, means of each participant’s ten suspicion scores were obtained and used for further analysis, contrasting the results for the different experimental conditions). These results can be found in the

section titled “Suspicion Levels,” see below. Second, suspicion levels were analyzed with a focus on the process of suspicion, similarly to study 1. For these analyses, the ten original suspicion scores were retained for each participant and the resulting processes were subjected to further examination. Results are discussed in the section titled “Phases of Suspicion.”

Suspicion Levels

In order to analyze the levels of suspicion given the experimental conditions of study 2, the main effects of prior expectations and perceived agent behavior were examined first. Please see Figure 5 for details on the suspicion levels. An examination of interaction effects follows.

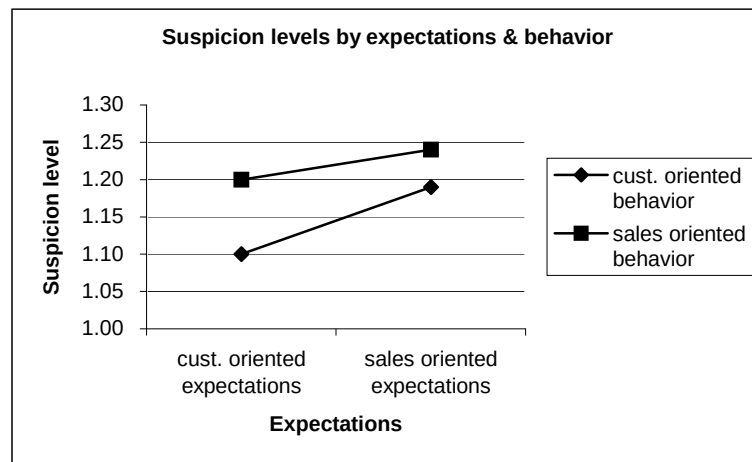
Main effects—Results showed significant main effects for levels of suspicion in the sales oriented versus customer oriented expectations versions, and the sales oriented versus customer oriented agent behavior versions. Overall suspicion levels were higher in the sales expectations condition ($M_{SE} = 1.21$) as opposed to the customer oriented expectations condition ($M_{CE} = 1.15$; $t(138) = -1.992$, $p = .048$). Hypothesis H_{3a} was therefore supported.

When it came to differences in the customer oriented versus sales oriented agent behavior conditions, there was also a significant difference: $M_{SB} = 1.22$ for the sales oriented agent behavior and $M_{CB} = 1.15$ for customer oriented agent behavior ($t(138) = -2.377$, $p = .019$). Hypothesis H_{3b} was supported.

Interaction Effect—There was also a significant interaction effect for suspicion levels between prior expectations and perceived agent behavior, as manifested in the four different study conditions. An ANOVA showed significant differences between groups ($F(3, 139) = 3.498, p = .017$). Post hoc (Tukey HSD) comparison showed a significant difference in suspicion levels between the CE/CB condition ($M_{CE/CB} = 1.10$) and the SE/SB condition ($M_{SE/SB} = 1.24$; $p = .011$).

Figure 5: Suspicion Levels by Prior Expectations and Agent Behavior

	<i>Customer oriented behavior (CB)</i>	<i>Sales oriented behavior (SB)</i>
<i>Customer oriented expectations (CE)</i>	1.10	1.20
<i>Sales oriented expectations (SE)</i>	1.19	1.24



However, the results were not as expected when it came to the analysis of match versus mismatch conditions. As hypothesized in H_{3c} , suspicion levels were expected to

be significantly higher in a mismatch condition (in this case, either the CE/SB condition or the SE/CB condition). ANOVA showed that the SE/SB (match) condition had the highest suspicion level. While the two mismatch conditions showed somewhat higher suspicion levels than the CE/CB match condition, the differences were not significant. Hypothesis H_{3c} could therefore not be supported.

These results suggest that consumers' expectations may not have a large impact when the agent behaves in a sales oriented manner; suspicion levels were not significantly different when comparing customer oriented expectations and sales oriented expectations. However, consumers' prior expectations seemed to play a larger role when the agent displayed customer oriented behavior. If the agent's behavior is perceived as customer oriented and the consumer had customer oriented expectations, suspicion levels were low.

Phases of Suspicion

In study 1, three phases of the suspicion process were identified: Initiation, Attribution, and Resolution. Each phase consisted of several scenario statements. Statements 1 – 3 made up the initiation phase, statements 4 – 7 represented the attribution phase, and statements 8 – 10 made up the resolution phase.

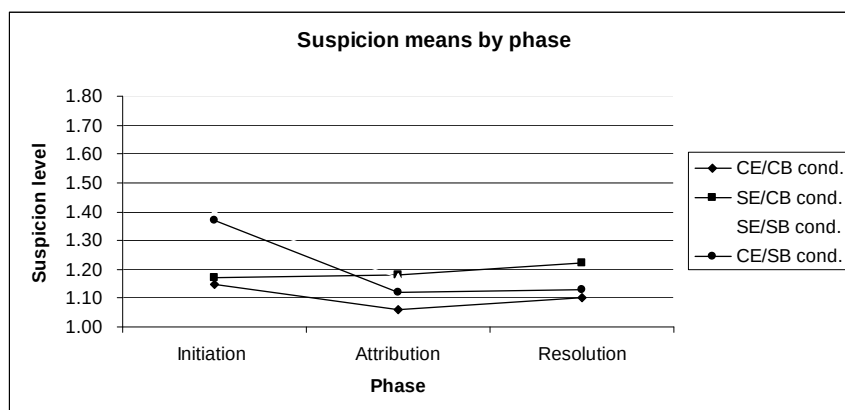
Using these three phases of suspicion, further analyses of the study 2 suspicion levels were carried out. An ANOVA was performed using prior expectations and agent behavior as between-subjects factors, and the three phases of suspicion as within-subjects factors. Results showed highly significant differences between conditions in the initiation phase ($F(3, 136) = 6.104, p = .001$). Post Hoc (Tukey) tests further showed

significant differences between the CE/CB and SE/SB conditions ($p = .006$), between the CE/CB and CE/SB conditions ($p = .020$), between the SE/CB and SE/SB conditions ($p = .014$), and the SE/CB and CE/SB conditions ($p = .040$).

No significant differences were found among the four study conditions in the attribution phase ($F(3, 136) = 2.267, p = .084, n.s.$) and the resolution phase ($F(3, 136) = 1.235, p = .299, n.s.$).

The two sales oriented behavior conditions showed significantly higher suspicion levels in the initiation phase than the customer oriented behavior conditions. This finding underlines previous results in regards to overall higher suspicion levels in the sales oriented condition (as opposed to the customer oriented behavior condition). No significant differences in the suspicion phases were found when it came to the sales oriented versus customer oriented prior expectations. Please see Figure 6 for details on the suspicion phases and suspicion levels for each phase.

Figure 6: Suspicion Means by Phase



Resolution of Suspicion

Study 1 showed that once suspicion was triggered, it was not necessarily resolved in the direction of ulterior motives. In general, it was observed that individuals who become suspicious early on in an interaction can still conclude that the agent probably had genuine motives all along. Study 2 provided an opportunity for testing whether prior expectations and agent behavior impact how suspicion will ultimately be resolved.

To investigate the circumstances of resolution of suspicion further, the cognitive responses of the suspicious participants in study 2 ($n = 101$) were coded for the direction of the resolution of suspicion. They were coded for either “genuine motives” or “ulterior motives.” Overall, 58% of suspicious participants concluded that the designer most likely had ulterior motives for her recommendations.

When taking the four study conditions into account, the breakdown was as follows for ulterior motives: 45% for the CE/CB condition, 57% for the SE/CB condition, 64% for the SE/SB condition, and 63% for the CE/SB condition. While these results were in the expected direction, with the participants in the CE/CB condition demonstrating the lowest percentage of ulterior motives, and the SE/SB condition participants showing the highest percentage of ulterior motives, the differences between conditions were statistically not significant ($F(3, 97) = .724, p = .540, n.s.$).

These results suggest that prior expectations and actual agent behavior are not conclusive predictors for the resolution of suspicion.

Evaluation of the Co-Creation Agent

As in study 1, the perception of the designer was assessed by coding the participants' cognitive responses according to Marchand & Vonk's (2005) coding scheme: from a negative evaluation of -2 to a positive evaluation of +2. Overall, the mean for agent evaluation was $M = .22$ in study 2.

For evaluation of the designer, a repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant linear trend ($F(1, 137) = 24.56, p = .000$). Further regression analysis on this linear model showed that as the interaction with the designer progressed, participants evaluated her more negatively (coefficients: $\alpha = .407, \beta = -.035$). The model resulted in an R^2 of .38 and was marginally significant ($F(1, 8) = 4.93, p = .057$).

When performing the repeated measures ANOVA for each of the experimental conditions separately, linear models could only be fitted for the customer oriented behavior conditions (CE/CB condition: $F(1, 34) = 10.873, p = .002$; SE/CB condition: $F(1, 33) = 13.012, p = .001$). Models for the sales oriented behavior conditions could not be fitted.

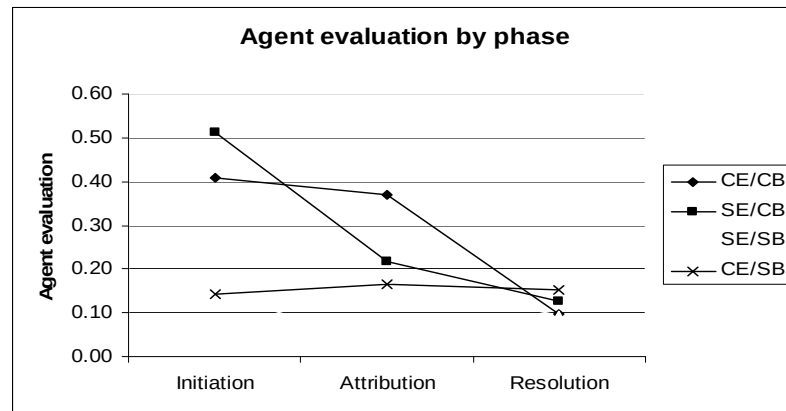
Evaluation by Prior Expectations/Agent Behavior--To assess whether participants in the four experimental conditions evaluated the designer differently, an ANOVA was performed (using prior expectations and agent behavior as between-subjects factors). The results showed that evaluation of the designer was highest for conditions the customer oriented behavior conditions ($M_{CE/CB} = .30; M_{SE/CB} = .29$), and lowest for the sales oriented behavior conditions ($M_{SE/SB} = .12; M_{CE/SB} = .16$). While these means are in line with the suspicion levels discussed earlier, the ANOVA results show that the

differences between the conditions are not statistically different ($F(3, 134) = 1.098, p = .352, n.s.$).

Evaluation by Suspicion Phase--Using the three phases of suspicion (initiation, attribution, and resolution), further analyses of the agent evaluation scores were performed. An ANOVA was performed using prior expectations and agent behavior as between-subjects factors, and the three phases of suspicion as within-subjects factors. Results showed highly significant differences between conditions in the initiation phase ($F(3, 136) = 4.783, p = .003$). Post Hoc (Tukey) tests further show significant differences between the SE/CB and SE/SB conditions ($p = .007$), and the SE/CB and CE/SB conditions ($p = .043$). No significant differences were found among the four study conditions in the attribution phase ($F(3, 136) = .809, p = .491, n.s.$) and the resolution phase ($F(3, 136) = .070, p = .976, n.s.$).

These results mirror the ones from the overall analysis of suspicion level: Suspicion levels and evaluation of the agent were significantly different in the initiation phase, but then there were no significant differences found in the attribution and resolution phases. Please see Figure 7 for the evaluation means by phase.

Figure 7: Evaluation Means by Phase



Individual Differences in the Propensity to Become Suspicious

Study 2 administered the “Generalized Communicative Suspicion” scale (GCS, Levine and McCornack, 1991) in order to test whether possible individual differences in one’s general propensity to become suspicious would affect whether a consumer would become suspicious in a co-creation interaction. The GCS scale was found to be reliable when administered to the student sample. Chronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = .77$, which is an acceptable reliability level for this type of research (Nunnally, 1978, p. 245).

The GCS scale consisted of an 11-item, 7-point Likert scale, with “1” denoting “strongly disagree” and “7” denoting “strongly agree.” (For details of scale items, please see Appendix 5). Participants’ mean for this scale was $M = 3.90$ ($n = 140$), the median was $Mdn = 3.91$. A median split was subsequently performed to distinguish the low versus high GCS participants in further analyses.

Overall, suspicion levels were found to be correlated with an individual’s general propensity to become suspicious as measured by the GCS scale. For an alpha level of

.05, the correlation between suspicion levels and GCS was $r(138) = .183$, $p = .031$. This indicates that an individual's general propensity to become suspicious may be positively related to the level of suspicion in the co-creation context of this research.

Overall suspicion levels were found to be significantly different for those participants in the low GCS group ($M = 1.15$) versus the high GCS group ($M = 1.22$), $p = .031$. However, when the four study conditions were taken into account, suspicion propensity did not seem to make a difference.

An additional ANCOVA was performed with suspicion propensity as a covariate, the four study conditions as a between-subjects factor, and suspicion level as the dependent variable. Suspicion propensity was found to be an insignificant covariate in this analysis ($F(1, 135) = 1.699$, $p = .195$, *ns*).

These results suggest that, in general, a higher suspicion propensity as expressed in the Generalized Communicative Suspicion scale (Levine and McCornack, 1991) may increase a person's likelihood to become suspicious in a co-creation interaction. However, when prior expectations and actual agent behavior are taken into account, these situational factors seem to be better predictors of suspicion likelihood and suspicion levels than suspicion propensity.

Additional Measures

Study 2 contained additional measures related to the participants' perceptions of the designer and the scenario overall. Table 3 provides an overview of the means of these additional measures. Please refer to Appendix 6 for details on the measures and items that were used.

As in study 1, for the purpose of this analysis, a median split was used in order to distinguish the group of low suspicion participants from the group of high suspicion participants. The median level of suspicion in study 2 was $Mdn. = 1.10$. It was confirmed that the groups showed significant differences in their levels of suspicion: Low suspicion group ($n = 70$): $M_{LS} = 1.04$; high suspicion group ($n = 70$): $M_{HS} = 1.32$ ($t(138) = -12.99, p = .000$).

In study 2, the designer's sincerity was rated as significantly higher by the group of low suspicion participants as opposed to the group of high suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 5.43$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.35$). The designer was also rated as more honest by the low suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 5.63$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.52$). In line with these results, the designer was evaluated as more manipulative and more pushy by the high suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 3.51$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.28$ for manipulative, and $M_{LS} = 3.16$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.40$ for pushy).

In line with study 1 results, the high suspicion participants' overall attitude towards the designer was significantly lower ($M_{LS} = 5.21$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.55$). Most importantly, the high suspicion participants also rated their intent to purchase much lower ($M_{LS} = 5.09$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.25$). The high suspicion participants also indicated that their anticipated satisfaction with the purchase would be much lower ($M_{LS} = 5.17$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.49$). There were no significant difference when it came to the evaluation of the designer's expertise ($M_{LS} = 5.60, M_{HS} = 5.27$), or the participant's own knowledge level of the subject matter ($M_{LS} = 3.21, M_{HS} = 3.11$).

Table 3: Overview of Means for Additional Measures used in Study 2

	<i>Low suspicion participants (n = 70)</i>	<i>High suspicion participants (n = 70)</i>	
Measure	Mean	Mean	Sig.
Designer is sincere	5.43	4.35	.000*
Designer is honest	5.63	4.52	.000*
Designer is manipulative	3.51	4.28	.010*
Designer is pushy	3.16	4.40	.000*
Attitude towards designer	5.21	4.14	.007*
Designer's expertise	5.62	4.55	.120
Purchase intent	5.09	4.25	.001*
Satisfaction	5.17	4.49	.008*
Own knowledge/expertise	3.21	3.11	.736

*denotes significance at .05 level

Items rated on a scale from 1 to 7 (e.g., 1 = completely disagree and 7 = completely agree; see Appendix 6 for use of other anchors), unless otherwise noted.

These results have important implications when considering the influence of suspicion on both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the co-creation interaction. In particular, study 2 demonstrates that the high suspicious participants have a significantly lower attitude towards the agent, significantly lower purchase intent, as well as significantly lower anticipated satisfaction.

Impact of Suspicion on Recall

In addition to assessing the roles of situational triggers of suspicion, study 2 explored possible consequences of becoming suspicious. In particular, the study included questions that addressed consumers' ability to recall information that was presented by the agent during the co-creation interaction. This part of study 2 was purely exploratory

in nature—the goal was to find out whether there might be any differences in recall, given the four different study conditions.

Two types of recall measures were used to assess whether suspicion influences a consumer's ability to recall some of the information that was provided during the co-creation interaction. After completing the cognitive response task and the additional measures, participants read that it was important for the research to learn how much of the information that the designer presented during the interaction was remembered. Two fill-in-the-blanks questions were used. First, participants were asked to write down the 4 Cs of diamond quality (cut, color, clarity, and carat). Second, participants were asked to list as many diamond shapes as they remembered (out of the nine shapes presented).

Responses to each of the two recall items were tallied. Only those diamond shapes that were presented in the scenario were taken into account (e.g., the “pear” shape was not among the ones listed, and therefore was not counted if listed). Other descriptions were counted if they referred to the same shape (e.g., “circle” instead of “round,” “square” instead of “princess”). Other shapes listed that were irrelevant were not counted (e.g., “triangle,” “diamond”).

Overall, the mean for recalling the 4 Cs was $M = 3.16$ and the mean for recalling the nine diamond shapes was 3.77. There were significant differences between low and high suspicion participants. (In line with prior analyses, low and high suspicion participants were obtained by using a median split on suspicion levels, resulting in two groups, labeled “low suspicion” ($n = 70$) and “high suspicion.”) The group of low suspicion participants recalled a mean of $M_{LS} = 2.91$ of the 4 Cs, whereas the group of high suspicion participants recalled $M_{HS} = 3.40$ of the 4 Cs ($F(1, 138) = 6.25, p = .014$).

While this difference is significant, it is not in the direction that was expected. I would have expected the suspicious participants to recall less information instead of more, since it was argued that when an individual becomes suspicious, available cognitive resources would decrease. In terms of recalling the various diamond shapes, there was no statistically significant difference between low and high suspicion groups ($M_{LS} = 3.84$ versus $M_{HS} = 3.70$), but the results reflected the direction that was expected—better recall for the low suspicion participants as compared to the high suspicion participants.

Due to the fact that the results regarding the recall of information were inconclusive, this particular aspect of the co-creation interaction was not pursued further in this dissertation.

Discussion

Study 2 was designed to examine situational factors that might trigger suspicion in a co-creation situation. An experimental design was used to manipulate the roles of consumers' prior expectations as well as the actual behavior of the co-creation agent. In addition, a general suspicion propensity measure (based on the GCS scale, Levine and McCornack, 1991) was used in order to test whether individuals that are generally more suspicious might also be more likely to become suspicious in the co-creation context of this study.

Study 2 found that both prior expectations and actual agent behavior were good predictors of suspicion. When prior expectations were sales oriented rather than customer oriented, participants showed a higher level of suspicion overall. Similarly, when the agent behavior was perceived as sales oriented, rather than customer oriented,

participants in study 2 showed a higher level of suspicion. However, when looking at conditions where prior expectations and agent behavior were a match (as opposed to a mismatch), suspicion levels were not significantly lower. The highest level of suspicion was found for the condition that employed both sales oriented expectations and sales oriented agent behavior. These results suggest that matching consumer expectations and agent behavior may not play as large a role in suspicion as previously thought. Rather, both sales oriented consumer expectations as well as sales oriented agent behavior seem to be stronger indicators for levels of suspicion.

Suspicion propensity was measured in study 2 using the Generalized Communicative Suspicion scale by Levine and McCornack (1991). A median split was performed to distinguish low versus high suspicion propensity participants. While suspicion propensity overall was correlated with participants' tendency to become suspicious in study 2, it did not affect outcomes when prior expectations and perceived agent behavior were considered. An ANCOVA was performed using suspicion propensity as a covariate in the analysis of suspicion levels. Suspicion propensity, as measured by the GCS scale, was found to be an insignificant covariate for suspicion when the experimental conditions were considered.

An analysis of additional measures related to participants' perceptions of the designer showed support for the notion that once suspicion was triggered, perception of the agent and other behavioral outcomes changed in a negative direction. In particular, when comparing participants with the higher levels of suspicion with those with lower levels of suspicion, higher purchase intent and higher anticipated satisfaction with the purchase were found. Overall, the high suspicion participants showed a lower attitude

towards the agent; they also felt that she was less sincere and less honest. As was expected, the high suspicion group of participants also rated the agent as more manipulative and pushy.

Study 2 also included two exploratory items that were intended to measure whether suspicion would impact a person's ability to recall information that was provided during the co-creation interaction. It was expected that highly suspicious participants would not be able to recall as much information as participants with lower levels of suspicion. However, quite the opposite was found for recall of the four Cs. High suspicion participants recalled significantly *more* information than the low suspicion participants. No difference between the two groups was found for recall of the diamond shapes. While the findings on suspicion and recall were intriguing, they were also inconclusive, and therefore were not pursued any further in the current research.

Study 3

Overview

The primary objective of study 3 was to examine how consumers' goal-related mind-sets (Heckhausen and Gollwitzer, 1987) affect suspicion. By taking into account a consumer's motivational structure (in terms of an outcome orientation versus a process orientation), this study further investigated when and how suspicion would be activated in a co-creation interaction.

A related question was whether a consumer's cognitive capacity would influence the level of suspicion. If a consumer has low cognitive capacity, his/her impression of a persuasion agent may be impacted. As a result, suspicion levels may be lower if cognitive capacity is low. In addition, study 3 sought to examine how goal-related mind-sets would influence the level of consumer suspicion under low versus high levels of cognitive load.

A secondary objective of study 3 was to replicate the basic findings from studies 1 and 2 in a different co-creation context. The first two studies used a diamond engagement ring scenario as the setting for the consumer-agent interaction. Study 3 was developed in order to investigate whether the basic findings regarding the process of suspicion, as well as the resolution of suspicion, would hold in a different context. Therefore, a new scenario involving "bespoke travel" (customized, high-end leisure travel) was conceived for study 3. This scenario also allowed extending the co-creation context from the product domain to the service domain.

Pretests

Several elements of the scenario used in study 3 were addressed in a pretest. In particular, a suitable new context as well as specific scenario statements for the co-creation interaction had to be developed and pretested. As in study 1, the suitability of the new scenario context needed to be ascertained. Additionally, as noted by previous suspicion research (Marchand and Vonk, 2005), the individual statements had to be pretested to ensure that they were moderately informative (as opposed to highly informative), and did not show a large variation in the level of informativeness.

Scenario Context—For study 3, a co-creation context involving travel services was conceived. From a co-creation point of view, the area of decision making related to travel and leisure offers two interesting aspects: (1), decisions related to vacations are relatively complex and typically follow certain patterns, and (2) decisions related to vacations typically involve joint decision-making (by groups such as couples, families, or friends). Previous research has focused, for example, on the interpersonal dimensions of vacation decisions as they relate to friends (Decrop, 2005), spouses (Kirchler, 1993; Mottiar and Quinn, 2004), and families with children (Fodness, 1992; Nichols and Snepenger, 1988). Since the current research used the example of an engaged couple for the first scenario in study 1 and 2, the second scenario was also developed with an engaged couple as the customers in mind. The chosen context was planning a unique honeymoon together with a travel agent.

Consumers increasingly take advantage of the opportunity to customize travel related means and activities according to their preferences. Due to the availability of

travel related information on the Internet, as well as wider access to travel reservation systems, traditional travel agencies have seen a decline in business in recent years. However, high-end, customized leisure travel packages have become a growing trend in the travel industry. These highly customized forms of vacation are referred to in the travel industry as “*bespoke travel*” (e.g., Beyette, 2007; Cortese, 2006; Gerszberg, 2005). “Bespoke travel” allows consumers to fulfill a desire for more meaningful vacations that include discovering new and unique places, meeting local people, eating local food, etc. These highly customized forms of travel are particularly gaining in popularity for the so-called *celebration travel* segment (for occasions such as birthdays, weddings, or anniversaries; Beyette, 2007).

For the bespoke travel scenario in study 3, the travel consultant (named “Sophia”) makes recommendations for travel destinations and activities in Africa. Africa has been chosen as the broad geographic location for this scenario, because African destinations are among the most popular ones in bespoke travel, especially for safaris (Beyette, 2007). Morocco, South Africa, and Kenya have been selected as recommended destinations for the honeymoon. These three countries all have well established reputations as attractive tourist destinations. Within each country, specific references to cities, mountains, beaches, etc. are made. In the scenario, all references to names of geographic locations are factual, whereas references to specific hotels are fictitious.

Familiarity and Interest—In the pretest, participants showed moderate familiarity with this travel scenario ($M = 3.96$ on a 7-point scale, with 7 being “very familiar”), as well as a moderate level of interest with this context ($M = 4.60$; 7-point scale, with 7

being “very interested.”). As in the pretest for the first scenario, moderate levels of familiarity and interest were desired.

Level of informativeness—Several different versions of the scenario statements were presented to participants, using more or less informative cues. Some of the information in the scenario was too specific and elicited reactions that were undesirable. For example, the initial description of the vacation in Morocco included biking and hiking. Some participants said that they did not like biking, or did not how to ride a bike. These negative attitudes towards biking tended to carry over to the evaluation of the experience in itself, as well as to the evaluation of the travel agent. Any information that was found to elicit reactions that were too specific or too strong was eliminated from subsequent wording of the statements.

The final versions of the ten scenario statements (see Appendix 8) were rated as moderately informative in the pretest ($M = 4.36$ on a 7-point scale, with 7 being “very informative”). The ten statements were fairly uniform in their levels of informativeness, and therefore satisfied the requirements set forth by Marchand and Vonk (2005). In total, 45 students participated in the pretest phase of study 3.

Participants

80 undergraduate students completed study 3. 49% of the participants were male; students’ mean age was 22 years. Participants for the study were recruited from a subject pool at a large urban university. Students received partial course credit in exchange for their participation.

Design

Study 3 used an experimental design in which goal-related mind-set and cognitive load were manipulated. A 2 x 2 between-subjects experimental design was developed, including the two types of goal related mind-set (deliberative mind-set versus implemental mind-set) and two levels of cognitive load (low versus high).

Mind-Set Manipulation—Goal-related mind-set was induced by using a thought exercise that was presented to participants as a short unrelated study just before the main study was conducted. This manipulation was adopted from Freitas, Gollwitzer, and Trope (2004), who developed two thought exercises to prime the “why” and “how” mind-sets of a decision task. The “why” manipulation served as the operationalization of a more abstract goal (in the current context, conceived with the focus on the outcome of the co-creation interaction), whereas the “how” manipulation served as the operationalization of a more concrete goal (here, conceived with a focus on the process of the co-creation interaction).

In this mind-set manipulation, participants were randomly presented with one of two thought exercises that they were asked to complete. In the deliberative mind-set manipulation, participants had to read a paragraph that involved finding increasingly abstract reasons for why they would like to reach a particular goal. Following the paragraph, participants had to complete a similar thought exercise on the topic of “maintaining and improving one’s health.” Participants were instructed to think about a particular activity that could relate to this topic, and to write down in increasingly

abstract terms *why* they would like to engage in it. The design, context, and procedure of this thought exercise followed Freitas et al. (2004).

The health-related context of this thought exercise was unrelated to the scenario presented in the main study (bespoke travel). According to the goal-related mind-set theory, once a particular mind-set is primed, it will then be transferred to subsequent decision tasks.

Similarly, the implemental mind-set manipulation was adopted from Freitas et al. (2004). A paragraph on how to reach a particular goal was presented to participants. Participants then had to complete an analogous thought exercise that prompted them to think increasingly concretely about a health related activity. The task was to think in more and more detail about *how* they would go about reaching the goal, and then to write down their thoughts.

Once again, in line with the goal-related mind-set literature, this mind-set prime was then expected to transfer to decision tasks in the subsequent scenario of the main study. For details on the deliberative and implemental mind-set manipulation, please see Appendix 7.

Cognitive Load Manipulation—In psychological research, the manipulation of an individual's cognitive capacity typically involves the “dual task paradigm.” By instructing participants to complete an additional task while being involved in the main task of a study (e.g., by having them memorize numbers beforehand that will be recalled later), the available cognitive resources for the main task are reduced (e.g., Gilbert et al., 1988, Gilbert et al., 1995, Shiv and Fedorikhin, 1999, Trope and Alfieri, 1997).

For study 3, the cognitive load manipulation followed Campbell and Kirmani's (2000) approach. Rather than giving participants a set of numbers to memorize before the main study, Campbell and Kirmani (2000) included eight numerals in the text of the scenario. This manipulation applied the concept of cognitive busyness as defined by Gilbert and Osborne (1989). It was designed so that participants were not distracted from the scenario, but instead focused their attention on the information presented in the scenario.

In the high cognitive load condition, participants were instructed (before reading the scenario) that they would have to memorize eight numbers that were to appear in the text of the scenario, and that they would have to memorize the sequence of numbers as they went along. Participants in the low cognitive load condition were not given these instructions.

In both conditions, after participants had read the scenario statements and had written down their thoughts, they were asked to recall and write down the numbers that appeared in the scenario, in the correct sequence. Following this task, a self-rating was included as a manipulation check measure (adapted from Campbell and Kirmani, 2000): On a 9-point bipolar scale, participants had to indicate whether they were concentrating more on memorizing the numbers (1) or forming an impression of the agent (9). In addition, each participant was rated on whether s/he was able to recall the correct sequence of numbers, as well as on how many numbers s/he was able to recall correctly (six different numerals were included in the scenario). Please see Appendix 8 for details on the numerals that were included in the scenario statements.

Procedure

The basic procedure for study 3 was replicated from the previous two studies. Study sessions were administered in small groups with typically 4 – 6 students participating in each session. Once the participants had entered the room and were seated, they were given a brief overview of what to expect in the session. They were told that they would be asked to complete two unrelated questionnaires. The first one, a very short one, would take no longer than 5 – 6 minutes. After that, they would receive the second questionnaire, a longer one, which would take about 30 minutes to complete.

The participants in the study sessions were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions. They first received either the deliberative mind-set or the implemental mind-set questionnaire. They were instructed to read the paragraph with the example of the exercise, and then were asked to complete the thought exercise using the guidelines that were provided. When all participants were finished with the exercise, the questionnaires were collected by the experimenter and set aside.

Following this first task, participants were given the booklet for the main study. The booklets contained the background information, instructions, scenario statements, additional measures (similar to those previously used in studies 1 and 2), instructions to recall the numbers from the cognitive load task, as well as the self-rating cognitive load manipulation check item.

Participants were asked to read the background information and instructions, and were informed that they would be timed on writing down their thoughts in response to the scenario statements. Participants were instructed to write as much as they could during the 2-minute timeframe. The experimenter then guided the students through the

cognitive response elicitation task, giving participants two minutes for each of the ten statements.

After the written responses to the scenario statements were obtained, participants proceeded to complete the remaining questions in the booklet (attitude towards the agent, rating of her professional expertise, purchase intent, anticipated satisfaction, etc., as well as the number recall, manipulation check question, and demographic questions). Once participants were finished, the booklets were collected and set aside separately from the thought exercise questionnaire.

Once participants had left the room, the mind-set questionnaires were matched with the corresponding booklets containing the honeymoon scenario (matched on the basis of participant's hand-writing and/or the color of the pen they were using) and stapled together. Given the small group sessions, this task was quickly and easily accomplished. Matching the questionnaires was necessary in order to ensure that the mind-set thought exercise was completed as instructed, and the each participant's responses for the main study could be used. In total, participants spent about 35 to 40 minutes to complete study 3.

Coding

The cognitive responses in study 3 were transcribed and coded following Marchand and Vonk's (2005) coding scheme. As in studies 1 and 2, responses to each of the ten scenario statements were coded separately for suspicion and evaluation of the agent. A score of "1" was given if there was no suspicion. A "2" was given if moderate suspicion was evident, defined as weighing two or more possible motives for the agent's

behavior, but leaning towards one of the two motives. Lastly, a score of “3” was assigned if there was maximum suspicion, when there were 2 or more possible motives that were considered, but the individual was unable to decide between the motives. Evaluation of the agent was coded from negative (−2) to positive (+2), again for each statement separately.

Two judges coded all of the cognitive responses obtained in study 3 independently of each other. The coding procedure resulted in two separate sets of codes with 10 suspicion codes and 10 evaluation codes for each participant. Inter-coder reliability in this study was 87% for suspicion and 77% for agent evaluation. (Marchand and Vonk, 2005, had reported 79% and 81%, respectively.) Any disagreements between the coders were resolved through discussion.

Results

80 participants completed study 3. All of the mind-set questionnaires were completed as instructed; therefore all of the questionnaires for the main study could be retained for further analysis. Participants’ cognitive responses were subsequently transcribed and coded. The total word count for each participant’s cognitive responses was an average of 322 words, with an average of 2.9 thoughts per cue.

Manipulation Checks

Goal-Related Mind-Sets—Freitas et al. (2004) did not include manipulation checks for the mind-set exercises in order to preserve the carry-over effect of the mind-set prime. Therefore, to ensure that the mind-set task was completed as instructed, the

questionnaires were manually inspected in regards to the appropriateness of the answers, and the completion of the entire thought exercise (see also Taylor and Gollwitzer [1995] for using this procedure in lieu of manipulation check questions). All 80 mind-set questionnaires in study 3 were found to be completed satisfactorily.

However, in order to gain a better understanding of how the mind-set prime may have affected the subsequent perception of the honeymoon scenario, two questions were included after participants provided answers to all of the other measures of the study. In particular, the objective was to understand to what extent the “why” versus the “how” aspects of the honeymoon decision may have been influenced by the mind-set prime. The two questions were as follows: (1) I think Sophia helped me decide whether or not to go on this honeymoon, and (2) I think Sophia helped me decide how we should spend our honeymoon.

Participants’ answers to the first question (whether or not to go on the honeymoon) did not differ significantly in the two mind-set conditions. On a 7-point scale, (with 1 = completely disagree and 7 = completely agree), the mean for the deliberative mind-set (DM) participants was $M_{DM} = 4.45$, and for the implemental mind-set (IM) participants $M_{IM} = 3.81$ ($t(78) = 1.518$, $p = .13$, *n.s.*). Perhaps some participants implied from the scenario that the couple had already decided to go on a honeymoon, even though the task was described in the background information as “considering going on a honeymoon.”

In contrast, participants in the two mind-set conditions showed significant differences when it came to the second question on *how* to spend the honeymoon. Using the same 7-point scale, participants in the deliberative mind-set condition had a mean of

$M_{DM} = 4.00$, whereas those in the implemental mind-set condition had a mean of $M_{IM} = 5.10$ ($t(78) = 2.735$, $p = .008$). The results show that participants in the implemental mind-set condition indeed perceived the agent as more helpful in terms of advising them how to spend their honeymoon, even though the honeymoon scenario was exactly the same for both mind-set conditions. Overall, the mind-set manipulation seemed to be successful in focusing participants' goals on either the decision task itself or the implementation of the decision.

Cognitive Load—Three measures were used as manipulation checks for cognitive load (adapted from Campbell and Kirmani, 2000). First, the ability to recall the entire number sequence in its correct sequence was assessed. None of the participants in the low cognitive load (LCL) condition were able to recall the sequence correctly, whereas 28% of those in the high cognitive load (HCL) condition recalled the 8-number sequence in the correct order ($t(78) = -3.85$, $p = .000$).

Second, the number of numerals that were correctly recalled was assessed. A mean of $M_{LCL} = 1.85$ numbers was recalled by low cognitive load participants, whereas $M_{HCL} = 5.25$ numbers were recalled by high cognitive load participants (out of the maximum of 6 different numbers; $t(78) = -11.75$, $p = .000$).

Thirdly, when participants were asked to rate themselves on how much they concentrated on forming an impression of the agent versus on memorizing the numbers, there was also a significant difference between conditions. On a 9-point bipolar scale, with 1 being the focus on the numbers, and 9 being the focus on the agent, low cognitive load participants showed a mean of $M_{LCL} = 7.93$, whereas high cognitive load

participants showed a mean of $M_{HCL} = 6.50$ ($t(78) = 4.36$, $p = .000$). Therefore, the cognitive load manipulation was successful.

Suspicion Levels

By coding participants' cognitive responses, suspicion levels were obtained for each of the ten statements for each participant separately. Levels of suspicion were further examined for each of the four experimental conditions to analyze the impact of the goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load on suspicion.

Main Effects—A significant main effect was observed for the impact of the goal-related mind-sets on suspicion. As predicted, participants in the deliberative mind-set (DM) condition showed significantly higher levels of suspicion as compared to those in the implemental mind-set (IM) condition ($M_{DM} = 1.19$ and $M_{IM} = 1.11$; $t(78) = 2.11$, $p = .038$). Hypothesis H_{4a} was supported.

There was also a significant main effect for cognitive load. It was predicted that suspicion levels would be higher in the low cognitive load condition as compared to the high cognitive load condition. Indeed, low cognitive load participants showed a suspicion level mean of $M_{LCL} = 1.19$, whereas the high cognitive load participants showed a suspicion mean of $M_{HCL} = 1.10$ ($t(2.39)$, $p = .019$). Hypothesis H_{4b} was therefore supported. Please see Figure 8 for details of the suspicion means for the different experimental conditions.

Interaction Effects—When taking into account both goal-related mind-set and cognitive load, it was predicted that suspicion levels would be highest in the deliberative mind-set/low cognitive load condition, and lowest in the implemental mind-set/high cognitive load condition. I also predicted that there would be no significant difference in the implemental mind-set between low and high cognitive load conditions. Additionally, it was predicted that there is no significant difference in suspicion level for the deliberative and implemental mind-set when cognitive load is high.

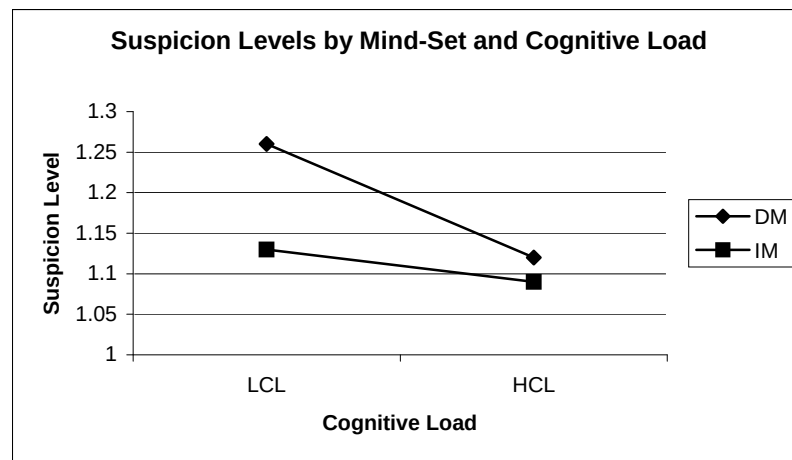
An ANOVA confirmed significant between-group differences ($F(3, 79) = 4.23, p = .008$). Further Post hoc tests (Tukey HSD) showed significant differences in suspicion levels between the DM/LCL and IM/HCL conditions (DM/LCL: $M = 1.26$ and IM/HCL: $M = 1.09$; $p = .008$), as well as between the DM/LCL and DM/HCL conditions (DM/LCL: $M = 1.26$ and DM/HCL: $M = 1.12$, $p = .041$).

As predicted, suspicion levels were highest in the DM/LCL condition, and lowest in the IM/HCL condition. It was also predicted that when cognitive load is high (the HCL condition), suspicion levels would not differ significantly between the two mind-set conditions. ANOVA and the Tukey HSD post hoc test showed an outcome to that effect: The mean for the DM/HCL condition was $M = 1.12$, and the mean for the IM/HCL condition was $M = 1.09$ ($p = .94, n.s.$). It was also predicted that there are no significant differences in the low and high cognitive load conditions in an implemental mind-set. The Post-hoc test in ANOVA lent support for this prediction: The mean differences were $M = 1.13$ for IM/LCL and $M = 1.09$ for IM/HCL ($p = .87, n.s.$). Therefore, hypotheses H_{4c} and H_{4d} were supported.

Figure 8 gives an overview of the suspicion levels of the four experimental conditions in study 3:

Figure 8: Suspicion Levels by Goal-Related Mind-Set and Cognitive Load

	<i>Deliberative mind-set</i>	<i>Implemental mind-set</i>
<i>Low cognitive load</i>	1.26	1.13
<i>High cognitive load</i>	1.12	1.09



Suspicion Phases

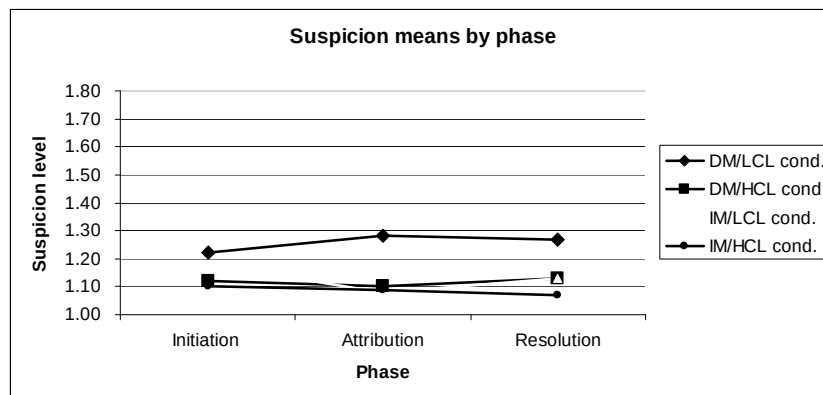
In study 1, three phases of suspicion were identified: Initiation, resolution, and suspicion. The initiation phase was made up of statements 1 – 3, attribution consisted of statements 4 – 7, and resolution was made up of statements 8 – 10. Further analyses on these three phases were conducted to evaluate whether there were any significant differences in suspicion level, given the four study conditions.

Results from an ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences in suspicion among the different experimental conditions when it came to the initiation phase of the interaction ($F(3, 79) = .937, p = .43, n.s.$). However, there were significant differences among conditions in the attribution phase ($F(3, 79) = 4.05, p = .010$). Post Hoc (Tukey HSD) tests showed significant differences between the DM/LCL and DM/HCL conditions ($p = .048$), the DM/LCL and IM/LCL conditions ($p = .018$), as well as the DM/LCL and IM/HCL conditions ($p = .030$).

There were also differences in suspicion levels in the resolution phase ($F(3, 79) = 2.83, p = .044$). Further Post Hoc (Tukey HSD) tests showed a significant difference between the DM/LCL and IM/HCL conditions ($p = .029$).

These differences underline the finding that participants in all conditions tended to perceive the travel agent similarly at the beginning of the interaction. However, suspicion levels rose for the DM/LCL condition participants in the attribution and resolution phases. Suspicion levels stayed about the same for participants in the other three conditions. Please see Figure 9 for details.

Figure 9: Suspicion Means by Phase (study 3)



Evaluation of the Co-Creation Agent

As in studies 1 and 2, evaluation of the co-creation agent was assessed by coding participants' cognitive responses according to Marchand and Vonk's (2005) coding scheme (from negative -2 to positive +2). Overall, the mean for agent evaluation in study 3 was $M = .30$.

A repeated measures ANOVA on the full data set showed a significant linear trend for the evaluation of the travel consultant ($F(1, 79) = 39.97, p = .00$). Further regression analysis on the linear model confirmed a negative linear trend; the travel consultant was evaluated increasingly negatively as the interaction progressed (regression coefficients: $\alpha = .873, \beta = -.103$). The model resulted in an R^2 of .45 and was significant ($F(1, 8) = 6.59, p = .033$). When performing the repeated measures ANOVA for each of the experimental conditions separately, linear models could be fitted for each of the four conditions, underlining the negative linear trend for each of the four experimental conditions.

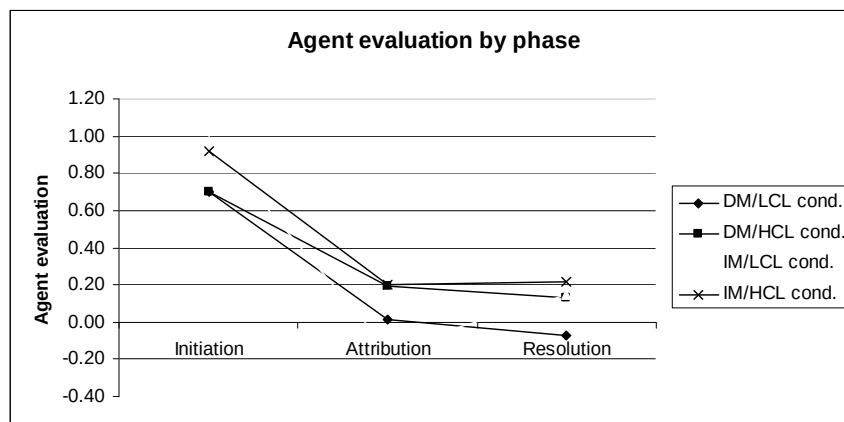
Agent Evaluation by Goal-Related Mind-Set and Cognitive Load—Additional analyses were conducted to assess whether participants evaluated the travel consultant differently, depending on the experimental condition. ANOVA was performed, using goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load as between-subjects factors. The results showed that evaluation was highest in the IM/HCL condition ($M = .42$) and lowest in the DM/LCL condition ($M = .20$), with the other two conditions in-between (IM/LCL: $M =$

.28 and DM/HCL: $M = .33$). However, the differences between the experimental conditions were not statistically significant ($F(3, 79) = .22, p = .88, n.s.$).

Evaluation by Suspicion Phase—Further analyses of agent evaluation were performed in order to evaluate whether there were any differences among the three suspicion phases (initiation, attribution, and resolution). An ANOVA was performed, using goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load as between-subjects factor, and the three phases of suspicion as within-subject factors.

Results showed that there were no significant differences in agent evaluation among conditions for the three phases of suspicion. Evaluation was highest in the initiation phase, for all conditions, and then leveled off in the attribution and resolution phases.

Figure 10: Agent Evaluation by Phase (study 3)



Additional Measures

Study 3 contained additional dependent variables that assessed participants' perceptions of the travel agent, as well as participants' purchase intention, anticipated satisfaction, and subject knowledge. Please refer to Appendix 9 for details on all the additional measures that were used in study 3.

For the purpose of this particular analysis, a median split on level of suspicion was performed in order to obtain a group of low suspicion participants and a group of high suspicion participants. The median level of suspicion in study 3 was $Mdn. = 1.10$ (same as the median for study 2). It was confirmed that the groups showed significant differences in their levels of suspicion: Low suspicion group ($n = 40$): $M_{LS} = 1.02$; high suspicion group ($n = 40$): $M_{HS} = 1.27$ ($t(78) = -8.92, p = .000$).

As in studies 1 and 2, these two groups were then contrasted to get insights into some of the attitudinal and behavioral consequences that found. Please see Table 4 for details on the means for these additional measures.

As in study 2, results from study 3 showed that high suspicion participants seemed to perceive the agent significantly more negatively. High suspicion participants rated the designer as significantly less sincere and less honest ($M_{LS} = 5.35$ versus $M_{HS} = 3.75$ for sincerity, and $M_{LS} = 5.10$ versus $M_{HS} = 3.68$ for honesty). The high suspicion participants also felt that the designer was significantly more manipulative and more pushy ($M_{LS} = 4.13$ versus $M_{HS} = 5.20$ for manipulative, and $M_{LS} = 4.55$ versus $M_{HS} = 5.40$ for pushy).

Table 4: Overview of Means for Additional Measures used in Study 3

	<i>Low suspicion participants (n = 40)</i>	<i>High suspicion participants (n = 40)</i>	
Measure	Mean	Mean	Sig.
Agent is sincere	5.35	3.75	.000*
Agent is honest	5.10	3.68	.000*
Agent is manipulative	4.13	5.20	.001*
Agent is pushy	4.55	5.40	.024*
Attitude towards agent	5.15	4.12	.000*
Agent's expertise	5.73	5.18	.082
Purchase intent	4.89	3.74	.001*
Satisfaction	5.17	4.20	.003*
Own knowledge/expertise	3.00	2.45	.158

*denotes significance at .05 level

Items rated on a scale from 1 to 7 (e.g., 1 = completely disagree and 7 = completely agree; see Appendix 9 for use of other anchors), unless otherwise noted.

Attitude towards the agent was also significantly lower for the high suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 5.15$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.12$). Most importantly, perhaps, participants' intent to make the purchase in this scenario differed significantly when contrasting the two groups, with the high suspicion group showing significantly lower purchase intent ($M_{LS} = 4.89$ versus $M_{HS} = 3.74$). As in studies 1 and 2, the agent's professional expertise was rated about the same by the low and high suspicion participants. There was also no difference in the two groups' knowledge on the subject matter (here: travel in Africa/Africa as a vacation destination). There was a significant difference between groups, though, when participants were asked how satisfied they would be if they made a purchase in this situation. High suspicion participants rated their anticipated satisfaction

as much lower compared to the low suspicion participants ($M_{LS} = 5.18$ versus $M_{HS} = 4.20$).

These results further underline the vital role of suspicion in a co-creation interaction, not only in terms of perceptions of the agent as the interaction progresses, but also in terms of how suspicion can affect both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the interaction.

Discussion

Study 3 built on results from study 1 and study 2 in order to further analyze variables that might trigger suspicion. Whereas study 2 looked into situational triggers of suspicion, study 3 examined goal-related underpinnings of suspicion. In particular, literature from a goal theoretic perspective was applied to the current context of a co-creation interaction. Additionally, conditions of constrained cognitive resources were taken into account.

Study 3 also used a different co-creation context. A new scenario involving an interaction for the purpose of bespoke travel (here: a customized honeymoon) was developed in order to replicate the pattern and process from study 1 and 2 in a different co-creation context. The travel related scenario also allowed for an extension of the first co-creation situation (used in studies 1 and 2, involving a product) to the co-creation interaction in the services domain.

The study sought to find out whether a consumer's goal of focusing on the process of the co-creation interaction versus the outcome of the co-creation interaction would affect suspicion. In addition, study 3 looked into the role of an individual's

cognitive capacity when taking part in co-creation. The objective was to determine whether conditions of cognitive constraint might inhibit suspicion and/or affect cognitive and behavioral outcomes of the co-creation interaction.

Study 3 found strong support for goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load as triggers of suspicion. As expected, suspicion levels were higher when participants were primed with a deliberative mind-set (as opposed to an implemental mind-set). When participants were primed with the focus on whether or not the decision should be made, rather than how the decision should be implemented, they demonstrated much higher suspicion levels.

In addition, participants in the low cognitive load condition showed higher levels of suspicion than those in the high cognitive load condition. This result further adds to the idea that if a person is cognitively busy, s/he will be less likely to become suspicious. As discussed by Campbell and Kirmani (2000), consumers who are cognitively busy are also less likely to activate persuasion knowledge.

Study 3 also found an interaction effect between goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load when it comes to suspicion. In particular, in the high cognitive load condition, deliberative and implemental mind-set participants did not demonstrate significantly different suspicion levels. Overall, the hypotheses for the goal-related triggers (related to the main effects of goal-related mind-sets and cognitive load, as well as the interaction effect) were supported.

An analysis of suspicion levels in the three separate phases of suspicion showed further interesting results. In the initiation phases, suspicion levels were comparable for all four experimental conditions. However, suspicion levels then differed in the attribution

phase. As expected, only participants in the deliberative mind-set/low cognitive load condition seemed to engage in attributional thinking, which resulted in significantly higher suspicion levels in this condition.

In this study, the results relating to the evaluation of the co-creation agent (travel agent) mirrored those of study 2. The travel consultant was initially evaluated favorably, but then the evaluation of her became increasingly negative as the interaction progressed. No significant differences in evaluation were found among the four experimental conditions.

Additionally, study 3 obtained additional measures related to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the interaction. The results supported those obtained in study 2. The high suspicion participants evaluated the travel agent less favorably (in terms of labeling her as less sincere and less honest, but also as more manipulative and more pushy). High suspicion participants also had a lower attitude towards the travel agent. More importantly, the high suspicion participants had a significantly lower intent to make a purchase in this situation, and they also rated their anticipated satisfaction with the purchase as significantly lower.

Overall, study 3 provided support for the idea that suspicion may not only be triggered by situational factors (as discussed in study 2). When goal-related factors were examined as an alternative explanation, they were found to have a strong impact. It was shown that goal-related mind-set, taken into consideration together with cognitive load, can influence how the interaction is perceived, and when suspicion is triggered. It is therefore important to understand consumers' goals for the co-creation interaction, as well as any factors that might reduce cognitive resources.

The new scenario context in study was found to be suitable. The basic patterns of the co-creation interaction, as well as the suspicion process could be replicated in this bespoke travel scenario.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusions

Contributions

This research contributes to existing literature on persuasion and persuasion knowledge by examining the notion of suspicion in a co-creation context. In particular, study 1 demonstrated that a naturally occurring process of suspicion could be observed in consumers. This is particularly meaningful in light of the fact that the purpose of value co-creation is to offer consumers guidance in customizing products or services, rather than to simply sell a product or service. Therefore, a consumer may initially not expect the co-creation agent to have a persuasion motive. However, when the motive is perceived as such, it may trigger suspicion. Once suspicion is initiated, it will likely follow a certain pattern or process before it is ultimately resolved. Whether or not suspicion is triggered, and the direction of its resolution at the end can have important implications for attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the co-creation interaction, such as attitude towards the agent, purchase intent, and anticipated satisfaction with the product or service.

Study 1 presented ten cues as part of a dialogue in a diamond engagement ring scenario. Participants had to imagine that they were customizing a diamond engagement ring together with a jewelry designer. The cues (or statements) represented the designer's part of the dialogue. In a pretest, the ten cues were rated as moderately informative with comparable informativeness ratings. In line with previous research by Marchand and Vonk (2005), study 1 demonstrated that for those participants who became suspicious, level of suspicion was first high and then decreased. A process of suspicion, similar to the one shown by Marchand and Vonk (2005) could be demonstrated in the co-creation

context of this research. Additionally, study 1 found that the three phases of suspicion (initiation, attribution, and resolution), as posited by Marchand and Vonk (2005) could be identified within the context of a co-creation interaction. In terms of agent evaluation, the designer was evaluated positively in the beginning of the interaction, but then the evaluation dropped sharply as the interaction progressed. Again, this finding was in line with the prior research on suspicion processes and related evaluation of the agent.

Study 1 also examined participants' cognitive responses during the encounter with the jewelry designer. It was found, as expected, that participants with higher (as opposed to lower) levels of suspicion generated more thoughts that related to the designer as opposed to thoughts related to the product. Study 1 also found that certain outcomes of the interaction were impacted when suspicion was triggered. For example, study 1 demonstrated that the high suspicion participants had a lower attitude towards the agent, a lower likelihood to make a purchase, and a lower level of anticipated satisfaction with the purchase.

Overall, study 1 provided an important theoretical contribution in that the suspicion process by Marchand and Vonk (2005) was successfully applied to the persuasive context of a co-creation interaction. The study therefore aided in understanding how suspicion is initiated in a co-creation context, how the process of suspicion evolves, and how suspicion is ultimately resolved. Study 1 also provided support for the idea that a suspicious consumer will evaluate the co-creation agent more negatively, which in turn can have an important impact on outcomes of the interaction such as purchase intent and anticipated satisfaction.

Study 2 was conceived in order to investigate possible situational triggers of suspicion. Using an experimental design, suspicion was induced by manipulating participants' prior expectations of the agent (more sales oriented versus more customer oriented), as well as the agent's actual behavior (again, more sales oriented versus more customer oriented). In addition, study 2 used suspicion propensity as an individual difference variable in order to find out whether suspicion may be more likely in individuals that are naturally more prone to becoming suspicious. Suspicion propensity was measured using an existing scale (Levine and McCornack, 1991). A median split method was used (low versus high suspicion propensity) to use suspicion propensity as a covariate in further analyses.

Study 2 found that both prior expectations and agent behavior were good indicators of suspicion levels. There were significant main effects in the four experimental conditions for both prior expectations and agent behavior. There was also a significant interaction effect between prior expectations and agent behavior. Suspicion levels were highest in the sales oriented expectations/sales oriented behavior condition, and lowest in the customer oriented expectations/customer oriented behavior condition.

The cognitive responses obtained in study 2 were also coded for agent evaluation. Evaluation of the jewelry designer was highest in the two customer oriented conditions, and lowest in the two sales oriented behavior conditions. However, when an ANOVA was performed, the differences among the study conditions were not significant.

Suspicion propensity was found to be correlated with participants' tendency to become suspicious in the co-creation situation. However, when suspicion propensity was used as a covariate in the ANOVA, it was found to be insignificant. These results

suggest that any potential difference in one's propensity to become suspicious are less important in predicting suspicion than situational factors such as prior expectations and agent behavior.

In line with the study 1 results, study 2 provided strong support for the impact of suspicion on attitudinal and behavior outcomes of the interaction. The high (versus low) suspicion participants showed a lower attitude towards the agent, as well as a lower intent to make a purchase. Additionally, they also reported lower anticipated satisfaction with the purchase.

Overall, study 2 demonstrated that suspicion was triggered by consumers' prior expectations of the agent, as well as actual agent behavior. The basic results of study 1 in terms of the suspicion process, agent evaluation, and outcomes of suspicion were replicated. A person's individual tendency to become suspicious was found to be a weaker predictor of suspicion compared to the situational factors that were examined in study 2.

Study 3 sought to provide an alternative explanation for triggers of suspicion in the context of value co-creation. Here, it was posited that goal-related factors can play a role in triggering suspicion. In an experimental design, a consumer's goal related mind-set (in terms of the focus on the outcome of the interaction versus the focus on the process of the interaction) was manipulated in conjunction with his/her cognitive resources.

Results showed that suspicion levels were highest when participants were primed with a deliberative mind-set (in effect, being primed to think about the "why" aspect of a decision) as opposed to an implemental mind-set (where they were primed to think about

the “how” aspect of a decision). Suspicion was also higher in the low cognitive load condition as opposed to the high cognitive load condition. This result underlines the notion that individuals may be less likely to activate persuasion knowledge if they have competing cognitive demands (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000).

There was also an interaction effect between mind-set and cognitive load: Participants in the high cognitive load condition showed equal levels of suspicion, regardless of the type of goal-related mind-set they were primed with.

The basic pattern of agent evaluation was replicated from studies 1 and 2. The agent was initially evaluated favorably, but then evaluation ratings became increasingly negative as the interaction progressed.

Similar to study 2, the additional measures on the outcomes of suspicion were also found to be significant. Study 3 provided further support for the impact of suspicion on important attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the interaction. In particular, attitude towards the agent, purchase intent, and anticipated satisfaction with the purchase were significantly lower for the high (versus low) participants.

Study 3 results further contributed to the theoretical understanding of a process of suspicion in co-creation. In particular, the study provided an alternative explanation for possible triggers of suspicion, and showed that suspicion can be induced using goal-related factors, while also taking conditions of cognitive constraints into account.

Overall, the current research offered several contributions to existing literature in interpersonal persuasion in marketing. The research offered additional insights to existing research on ulterior motives in a sales context (e.g., Campbell and Kirmani,

2000; DeCarlo, 2005). Particularly interesting is the extension of the social psychological literature on suspicion (e.g., Marchand and Vonk, 2005) to the consumer behavior context of co-creation. An important finding is the fact that once suspicion is triggered in the interaction, it will not always be resolved in the direction of ulterior motives. Therefore, suspicion in itself is not necessarily a negative inference.

By using a scenario context that used a thought elicitation procedure while the interaction was unfolding (rather than at the end of the scenario), I was able to gain detailed insights into the process of suspicion. The current research found that suspicion levels varied throughout the interaction with the co-creation agent. Separate analyses by suspicion phases further underline the finding that suspicion changes as the dialogue progresses. In this context, therefore, the process approach could yield more meaningful information than previous approaches that took measures only after the scenario was completed (e.g., Campbell and Kirmani, 2000; DeCarlo, 2005).

This process oriented view of the interpersonal interaction is an important contribution of the research. This perspective and procedure could potentially also be applied to related research contexts.

Implications

In addition to its theoretical contributions, this research carries important managerial implications. To date, not much is known about how consumers deal with co-creation situations. In particular, it is not known yet what expectations (if any) consumers have of the interaction, how consumers perceive information they are given during the encounter, and how this information is evaluated. The current research offers

important insights into how consumers may perceive co-creation agents in both the product and service domains. In order to be effective co-creators, agents need to be sensitive to how consumers perceive pieces of information they are given during the process of co-creation. Co-creation agents need to be aware of their actions and recommendations, because they are likely subject to scrutiny for any underlying motives. The current research suggests that consumers focus strongly on the actual behavior of an agent. Consumers may not have different expectations of a co-creation agent (e.g., a designer or a consultant) as opposed to a sales agent (e.g., salesperson in a retail store). Once a consumer becomes suspicious that the agent may have an ulterior motive, it may be difficult to convince him or her otherwise. When a consumer becomes certain that an agent has in fact ulterior motives, s/he may withdraw from the interaction and decide not to make a purchase.

It is important that managers be aware of these processes and provide their front line personnel with tools they can use to be effective co-creation agents. Agents need to be trained, perhaps with the help of role play or similar tools, in how to provide information to customers, how to elicit information from the customers, and how to present recommendations for certain customization options. Most importantly, co-creation agents need to be sensitive to when their behaviors might raise suspicion. A key goal for co-creation agents is to provide information and assistance to customers without raising suspicion. Once suspicion is raised, however, co-creation agents need to be able to recognize it and make every attempt to solve the consumer's suspicion in the direction of genuine motives. In other words, they need to convince their customers that the advice they give is in their best interest. From a practical point of view, it is also important to

recognize that suspicion that is resolved in the direction of ulterior motives can have a negative impact on both attitudinal outcomes (e.g., attitudes towards the agent or perhaps also attitude towards the store or service firm), as well behavioral outcomes (e.g., purchase intent).

The current research also suggests that consumers in an implemental mind-set are less likely to become suspicious. Co-creation agents could be trained to recognize consumers' implementation intentions, or alternatively induce an implemental mind-set by focusing consumers' attention on the process of co-creation, rather than the outcome of co-creation. Potential ethical implications of inducing an implemental mind-set in a consumer may have to be considered.

Limitations and Future Research

The area of value co-creation is a relatively new area of study. As such, this area of research offers many avenues for future research, particularly with the objective to understand the consumer's perceptions of the interpersonal interaction that is underlying co-creation.

The present research was conceived in order to understand the process, triggers, and outcomes of the notion of suspicion in value co-creation. Potential situational and motivational causes of suspicion were taken into account. These factors were drawn from separate streams of literature, and contribute to understanding different aspects of the current research. The research also has its limitations in that the various factors that contribute to suspicion are not analyzed in one comprehensive framework. Future

research could potentially extend the current research by developing a more comprehensive framework of suspicion in this context.

Beyond the scope of the current research are research questions that deal with how suspicion may impact more specific outcomes of the co-creation interaction. For example, questions pertaining to the preferences for certain product options may be addressed in future research. While choices of specific product attributes were addressed in study 1 (by assessing how likely the consumer would be to choose the specific options recommended by the jewelry designer), the results were inconclusive. Future research could address in more detail how various recommendations for product and service options are perceived by the consumer, and how suspicion may impact which specific options are ultimately chosen.

Given the student sample of the current research, results may be somewhat skewed due to potentially limited experience of many younger consumers. Even though the mean ages of the student sample were between 22 and 23 years, the results may be more representative if research is conducted with a more realistic sample of adult consumers. Along these lines, future research could also investigate whether novices and experts in a certain product category perceive co-creation agents differently. In particular, research could address whether novices perceive co-creation agents as more cooperative than experts, and whether this judgment matters in terms of suspicion.

In conclusion, the present research offers many interesting avenues for future research in order to understand the growing area of value co-creation better.

Appendix 1

Co-creation scenario used in study 1 (diamond engagement ring)

Background information:

Imagine that you and your significant other are about to be engaged. You have decided to create a customized engagement ring together. You make an appointment with a ring designer named Susan at a nearby place called “**Custom Jewelers.**” At the appointed day and time you go there together and see that Susan is already waiting for you. She wears a nametag that says “**Susan B. – Jewelry Designer.**”

Susan introduces herself to you. She congratulates you on your decision to get married and welcomes you to Custom Jewelers.

Instructions:

1. Imagine yourself in an interaction with Susan, the designer. A conversation between you and Susan will take place. However, you will only read Susan’s part of the conversation, one statement at a time. Some illustrations are provided so you can better imagine the interaction.
2. Your task is to form an impression of Susan. What comes to your mind when you hear Susan’s recommendations? Please do not formulate replies to her statements, but rather focus on some of the thoughts that come to your mind while you are listening to Susan.
3. After each of Susan’s statements, please **write down your thoughts** regarding your impression of Susan. You have 2 minutes to list your thoughts after each statement. Please use a separate line for each thought.

(over)

Appendix 1 (cont.)

Statements 1 – 10 used in study 1:

1. *Susan*: “Here at Custom Jewelers we will help you design a “perfect” engagement ring for you that’s one of a kind. Do you have a basic idea in mind in terms of how you would like the ring to look like?”
2. *Susan*: “Have you given some thought to how much you’d like to spend? Of course, the cost will vary depending on the type of setting and the diamonds you will ultimately choose.”
3. *Susan*: “Would you be interested in yellow gold, white gold, or platinum for the ring? They are all really nice. Of the three, platinum is the strongest and purest metal that will last a lifetime. Here, take a look at a few samples of the different metals....”
4. *Susan*: “Yes, platinum would make a great choice. Do you prefer a setting with a solitaire, a three-stone setting, or a setting with side stones? The solitaire setting is the most popular one because it positions one diamond prominently in the center. The three-stone setting is also beautiful as it symbolizes your past, present, and future with one diamond for each. A setting with side stones adds additional sparkle or color if you like. Take a look at these rings here, these are good examples. Which setting are you leaning towards?”



Solitaire

Side stone setting

Three-stone setting

5. *Susan*: “A setting with side stones will really be beautiful. Do you already have a shape in mind for the diamond? There are a lot of shapes to choose from: round, oval, princess cut (which means square), emerald cut (rectangular), heart shaped, and so on. It really depends on your personal preference. The most popular shape is probably the round one, but if you want a truly unique ring, you might decide to go with a different shape. What do you think?”



Round

Oval

Princess

Emerald

Heart

Asscher

Marquise

Radiant

Cushion

Appendix 1 (cont.)

6. *Susan*: “That’s great, I like the Emerald shape. Are you familiar with the “4 Cs” of diamond quality? They are the cut, color, clarity, and carat weight of the diamond. OK, let me explain each of these. First, the cut of the diamond really has the biggest effect on its sparkle, or brilliance. There are ideal, very good, good, and fair cuts. You would probably want to choose a very good or good cut so your ring really sparkles. ”

7. *Susan*: “Second, the diamond’s color. “Colorless” diamonds are the most highly valued, and they are very rare. They are rated a D. Nearly colorless diamonds are rated E, F, G, H, I, or J, in descending color quality. You might want to look for a color rating in the E through G range for your engagement ring, those will look very nice.”

8. *Susan*: “When it comes to clarity, it is important to look for a diamond that has few internal flaws, or inclusions. Diamonds that are completely free from inclusions are extremely rare. Most diamonds have very small inclusions that are only detectable through a microscope. The ones you might want to consider for an Emerald shaped diamond are perhaps those labeled as very, very slightly included (VVS), or very slightly included (VS).”

9. *Susan*: “You might be familiar with the last of the 4 Cs, carat, which measures the diamond’s weight. Much of the decision on carat depends on your budget, but also the size of the setting and your personal style.”

10. *Susan*: “OK, from what you are telling me, it sounds like you are leaning towards a platinum setting with an emerald shaped diamond and a side setting. Emerald cuts look best in a higher carat size, perhaps 1.5 carat or so, and a higher clarity (VVS). You should be able to get a very good cut in an F or G color rating. What do you think? Let me see what kinds of diamonds are available and I’ll price out different options for you.”

Appendix 2

Additional Measures for Study 1

When you think further about the scenario you just read, please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements (circle your answer):

1. Susan's job is mainly to...

	Completely disagree			Completely agree			
• Help with the design of customized jewelry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Sell jewelry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Susan's goals are...

	Completely disagree			Completely agree			
• to make a sale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• to satisfy the customer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• to build a good relationship with the customer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Adapted from Campbell & Kirmani, 2000)

3. I perceived Susan as...

	Completely disagree			Completely agree			
• sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• manipulative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• pushy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Adapted from Campbell & Kirmani, 2000)

4. Overall, my attitude toward Susan is...

a)	Unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favorable
b)	Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
c)	Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive

(Adapted from DeCarlo, 2005)

Appendix 2 (cont.)

5. Based on this scenario, how likely would you be to do the following?

	Not at all likely				Very likely		
• Choose a platinum setting for the ring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Choose a setting with side stones	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Choose an emerald (rectangular) shaped diamond	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Choose a higher carat size (1.5 carat or so)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Choose a good clarity for the diamond	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Choose an F or G color rating for the diamond	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I would rate Susan's professional expertise as...

Very low				Very high		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. If I were in this situation (looking to customize an engagement ring)....

	Very low				Very high		
... the likelihood of buying from Custom Jewelers is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... the probability that I would consider buying from Custom Jewelers is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... my willingness to buy from Custom Jewelers is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Adapted from DeCarlo, 2005)

8. I think if I bought the ring from this store, I would be happy with the decision.

Completely disagree				Completely agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 2 (cont.)

9. To what extent are you <i>interested</i> in ...	Not at all interested				Very interested		
• jewelry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Have you ever been involved in buying a diamond engagement ring? Please check:

____ yes

____ no

11. To what extent are you *familiar* with the situation described in the scenario with the diamond engagement ring?

Not familiar at all					Very familiar	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Demographic questions used in study 1

Lastly, please answer the following questions about yourself:

1. I am ____ male
____ female

2. My age: ____ years

3. My *country* of birth:

4. (If applicable:)

If not born in the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.?

____ years

Appendix 3

Co-Creation Scenario Used in Study 2 – Prior Expectations Manipulation

Background information:

Imagine that you and your significant other are about to be engaged. You have decided to create a customized engagement ring together. You make an appointment with a jewelry designer named **Dana** at a nearby place called “**Custom Jewelers.**”

Custom Jewelers is known for its free design service—that is, you can customize a ring with a designer without paying extra for this service.

Customer oriented expectations manipulation:

Dana is a jewelry designer who is employed by the store to assist customers with custom designs. She receives a salary from the jewelry store; her job is not based on commission.

Sales oriented expectations manipulation:

Dana is an independent jewelry designer who works fully on commission. She does not receive a salary from the store. Instead, she receives commission based on the sales price of every piece of jewelry that she helps design.

At the appointed day and time you go to Custom Jewelers together and see that Dana is already waiting for you. She wears a nametag that says “**Dana B. – Jewelry Designer.**” Dana introduces herself to you. She congratulates you on your decision to get married and welcomes you to Custom Jewelers.

Appendix 4

Co-Creation Scenario Used in Study 2 – Agent Behavior Manipulation

Statement 1:

(Sales oriented)

Dana: “I will help you design the “perfect” engagement ring that’s one of a kind. It will be spectacular. Do you have a basic idea in mind in terms of how you would like the ring to look like?”

(Customer oriented)

Dana: “I will help you design an engagement ring that’s one of a kind. Do you have a basic idea in mind in terms of how you would like the ring to look like?”

Statement 2:

(Sales oriented)

Susan: “Have you given some thought to how much you’d like to spend? Of course, the cost will vary greatly depending on the design of the setting and the quality of the diamonds you will ultimately choose.”

(Customer oriented)

Dana: “Have you given some thought to how much you’d like to spend? If I know your approximate budget I can narrow down the options a bit.”

Statement 3:

(Sales oriented)

Dana: “Would you be interested in yellow gold, white gold, or platinum for the ring? They are all really nice. Of the three, platinum is the strongest and purest metal that will last a lifetime. Personally, it’s my favorite. Here, take a look at a few samples of the different metals...”

(Customer oriented)

Dana: “Would you be interested in yellow gold, white gold, or platinum for the ring? They are all really nice. Here, take a look at a few samples of the different metals...”

Statement 6:

(Sales oriented)

Dana: “That’s great, I like the Emerald shape. Are you familiar with the “4 Cs” of diamond quality? They are the cut, color, clarity, and carat weight of the diamond. OK, let me explain each of these. First, the cut of the diamond really has the biggest effect on its sparkle, or brilliance. There are ideal, very good, good, and fair cuts. You’d probably want to choose a very good or good cut so your ring has that special sparkle that every woman wants. Here, take a look...”

Appendix 4 (cont.)

(Customer oriented)

Dana: “That’s great, I like the Emerald shape. Are you familiar with the “4 Cs” of diamond quality? They are the cut, color, clarity, and carat weight of the diamond. OK, let me explain each of these. First, the **cut** of the diamond really has the biggest effect on its sparkle, or brilliance. There are ideal, very good, good, and fair cuts. Here, take a look....”

Appendix 5**Generalized Communicative Suspicion Scale (Levine & McCornack, 1991)**

1. I often feel as if people aren't completely truthful with me.
2. Most people only tell you what they think you want to hear.
3. When I am in a conversation with someone, I frequently wonder whether they are really telling me the truth.
4. People rarely tell you what they're really thinking.
5. When I first meet someone, I assume that they are probably lying to me about some things.
6. Most people are basically honest.*
7. Anyone who completely trusts someone else is asking for trouble.
8. When I ask a stranger for directions, I frequently wonder whether they are being truthful.
9. When I am talking to others, I tend to believe what they say.*
10. People seldom lie to me.*
11. Most people follow the saying "honesty is the best policy.*"

(7-point Likert scale, from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)

*Items # 6, 9, 10, and 11 are reversed.

Appendix 6

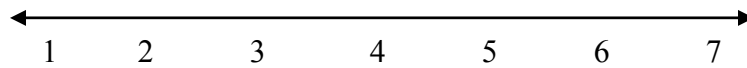
Additional Measures for Study 2

Manipulation Check questions (prior expectations; agent behavior) – presented on separate pages

1. Based on the **background information** at the beginning of the task, before the interaction with Dana started, what was your **expectation** of Dana? Did you **expect** her to be more motivated to help with the design, or more motivated to make a sale? (*Please circle.*)

Expected her to be more motivated
to help with **design**

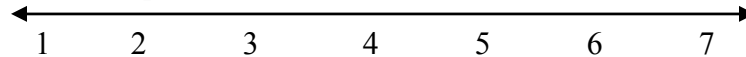
Expected her to be more motivated
to make a **sale**



2. After reading about the interaction with Dana, what is your actual **impression** of Dana? Did she want to help customize a ring, or did she want to sell a ring? (*Please circle.*)

She wanted to help

She wanted to sell



Appendix 6 (cont.)*Other Measures*

3. I perceived Dana as...	Completely disagree			Completely agree			
• sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• manipulative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• pushy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Overall, my attitude toward Dana is... (answer all 3 questions--a, b, and c)

a)	<i>Unfavorable</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Favorable</i>
b)	<i>Bad</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Good</i>
c)	<i>Negative</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Positive</i>

5. I would rate Dana's professional expertise as...

Very low			Very high			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. If I were in this situation (looking to customize an engagement ring)....

	Very low					Very high	
... the likelihood of buying from Custom Jewelers is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... the probability that I would consider buying from Custom Jewelers is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... my willingness to buy from Custom Jewelers is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. I think if I bought the ring from this store, I would be happy with the decision.

Completely disagree			Completely agree			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. How knowledgeable are you when it comes to diamonds?

Not knowledgeable at all			Very knowledgeable			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 7

Deliberative Mind-Set Manipulation (Study 3) – Freitas, Gollwitzer, & Trope (2004)

PLEASE READ THE PASSAGE BELOW CAREFULLY

For everything we do, there always is a reason **why** we do it. Moreover, we often can trace the causes of our behavior back to broad life goals that we have. For example, you currently are participating in a marketing experiment. Why are you doing this? Perhaps to satisfy a course requirement. Why are you satisfying the course requirement? Perhaps to do well in a course in marketing. Why are you taking the course? Because you want to earn a college degree. Why earn a college degree? Maybe because you want to find a good job, or because you want to educate yourself. And perhaps you wish to educate yourself or find a good job because you feel that doing so can bring you happiness in your life.

Research suggests that engaging in thought exercises like the one above, in which one thinks about how one's actions relate to one's ultimate life goals, can improve people's life satisfaction.

In this experiment, we are testing such a technique. This thought exercise is intended to focus your attention on **why** you do the things you do. For this thought exercise, please consider the following activity: "Improving and maintaining one's physical health."

Please complete the diagram below, writing down why improving and maintaining your physical health could help you meet an important life goal.

↑ Why?
↑ Why?
↑ Why?
↑ Why?
Improve and Maintain My Physical Health

Appendix 7 (cont.)**Implemental Mind-Set Manipulation (Study 3) - Freitas, Gollwitzer, & Trope (2004)****PLEASE READ THE PASSAGE BELOW CAREFULLY**

For everything we do, there always is a process of **how** we do it. Moreover, we often can follow our broad life goals down to our very specific behaviors. For example, like most people, you probably hope to find happiness in life. How can you do this? Perhaps finding a good job, or being educated, can help. How can you do these things? Perhaps by earning a college degree. How do you earn a college degree? By satisfying course requirements. How do you satisfy course requirements? In some cases, such as today, you participate in a marketing experiment.

Research suggests that engaging in a thought exercise like the one above, in which one thinks about how one's ultimate life goals can be expressed through specific actions, can improve people's life satisfaction.

In this experiment, we are testing such a technique. This thought exercise is intended to focus your attention on **how** you do the things you do. For this thought exercise, please consider the following activity: "Improving and maintaining one's physical health."

Please complete the diagram below, writing down how you can improve and maintain your physical health.

Improve and Maintain My Physical Health
↓ How?
↓ How?
↓ How?
↓ How?

Appendix 8

Bespoke Travel Scenario in Study 3

Background Information:

Imagine that you are about to get married. You and your future spouse are considering going on a honeymoon right after the wedding. There is a travel agency called “*Custom Travels*” in town. *Custom Travels* is known for its personalized service—it specializes in creating highly customized vacation packages.

You set up an appointment with a travel agent named Sophia. When you go to the travel agency Sophia is already waiting for you. She wears a nametag that says “*Sophia P. –Certified Travel Counselor.*” Sophia introduces herself to you and welcomes you. She congratulates you on your upcoming wedding.

Instructions:

1. Imagine yourself in an interaction with Sophia, the travel agent. A conversation between you and Sophia will take place. However, you will only read Sophia’s part of the conversation, one statement at a time.
2. **Your main task is to form an *impression* of Sophia.** What comes to your mind when you hear Sophia’s recommendations? Please do not formulate replies to her statements, but rather focus on some of the thoughts that come to your mind while you are listening to Sophia.
3. After each statement, please **write down your thoughts** regarding your impression of Sophia. You have 2 minutes to list your thoughts after each statement. Please use a new paragraph for each new thought.

Additional instruction for high cognitive load condition (presented as the third of four instructions):

4. In addition, as you are reading the scenario statements, please pay attention to the numbers that appear in the text (e.g., “3 hours”). These numbers represent important information. There are 8 numbers in total. Please memorize these numbers as you go along, in the correct sequence.

Appendix 8 (cont.)

Scenario Statements

1. I am delighted to help you plan a honeymoon that's simply amazing. I am sure it will be very special for you. Do you already have some ideas in mind in terms of where you would like to go?
2. OK. I can definitely find something that is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Have you given some thought to your budget? There are so many great honeymoon destinations. If I know your approximate budget I can narrow down the options a bit.
3. Would you be more interested in a leisurely vacation, or a more active and adventurous trip? It all depends on what your interests are... Personally, I think an activity filled trip is very memorable. And this is your special time together.
4. OK. Let's think about some possible destinations. How about Asia, Australia, or Africa? These 3 destinations are becoming very popular, especially for honeymoons.
5. OK, if you are looking for something really exotic, how about Africa? You could fly to Morocco and spend 1 week in the Atlas Mountains near Marrakech. I know a great guide who organizes tours through the mountains. Everything is taken care of. After that, you could spend some time relaxing at a luxurious resort in Agadir, which is a great beach destination at the Atlantic Ocean.
6. You could also fly to South Africa and go on a 2-week trek with a private tour guide. You fly to Johannesburg first and start from there. If you like hiking and climbing, this is for you. You will never forget this experience! The sights are incredible, and the wildlife in South Africa is simply amazing. How does that sound?
7. If you like wildlife, I can also suggest a trip to Kenya. Kenya offers some of the most exciting safaris to their National Parks. You will be able to see animals in the wild, while staying in luxurious lodges in the midst of the parks. Imagine waking up to the sounds of elephants and lions, and seeing giraffes walking by.
8. Yes, you would fly to Nairobi and meet with a private safari guide, who will take you on a jeep safari for 7 days. After that, you can fly to Mombassa and stay at one of the beaches there—my personal favorite is Diani Beach. You can then relax in an all-inclusive luxury resort. What do you think?
9. Yes, you would want to book a private safari rather than a group safari, because the experience will be much more personal that way... The safari guides are fantastic. And I would recommend a nice suite at the Calari Beach Resort, which is a top notch, 4-star resort. 1 week minimum, I would say. You only deserve the best for your honeymoon. Make this trip a special memory!
10. OK, from what you are telling me, you are thinking about trip to Kenya that will include a 7-day safari and a 9-day stay at a beach resort. That sounds like an amazing trip for a honeymoon. Isn't it exciting? Let me take a look at the flights, as well as options for the safari and the resort, and I'll give you price details...

Appendix 9

Additional Measures in Study 3

1. I perceived Sophia as...	Completely disagree				Completely agree			
• sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
• honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
• manipulative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
• pushy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Overall, my attitude toward Sophia is... (answer all 3 questions--a, b, and c)

a)	<i>Unfavorable</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Favorable</i>
b)	<i>Bad</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Good</i>
c)	<i>Negative</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Positive</i>

3. How would you rate Sophia's professional expertise?

Not experienced at all				Very experienced			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

4. If I were in this situation (looking to book a honeymoon)....

Very low				Very high			
... the likelihood of booking from Custom Travels is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... the probability that I would consider booking from Custom Travels is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... my willingness to book from Custom Travels is ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. I think if I booked the honeymoon from Custom Travels, I would be happy with the decision.

Completely disagree				Completely agree			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Appendix 9 (cont.)

6. I think Sophia helped me decide whether or not to go on this honeymoon.

Completely disagree

Completely agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. I think Sophia helped me decide how we should spend our honeymoon.

Completely disagree

Completely agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. In general, how knowledgeable are you when it comes to Africa as a travel destination?

Not knowledgeable at all

Very knowledgeable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix 9 (cont.)**Number Recall**

1. The scenario statements included 8 numbers that referred to details of the honeymoon packages that were presented. Prior to reading the scenario, you were asked to memorize these numbers.

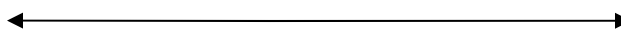
Please list these eight numbers below, in the sequence they appeared.

Do not go back to part 2 for this task.

2. When you were reading the scenario, would you say that you were concentrating more on memorizing the numbers, or more on forming an impression of Sophia? *(Please circle.)*

Memorizing numbers

Forming impression of Sophia



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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