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## Influence of involvement and motivation to correction on product evaluation: Asymmetry for strong and weak brands

**Abstract:** *In previous research, studies on motivated correction in the evaluation of branded products are rare. This experimental study with 246 participants examined how the motivation to correct the impact of brand knowledge influences the product evaluation of actual strong and weak brands in low and high involvement situations. As predicted, asymmetry between the strong and weak brands was observed. After the induction of the motivation to correction, the smaller brand effect occurred only in the cases of low involvement and the weak (negative) brand. The effect of motivated correction was smaller than the effect of high involvement; therefore, the overall results suggest that conscious explicit motivation to correction evokes correction only in cases of weak brands under certain circumstances. However, this impact is not as strong as the influence of high motivation or a strong brand, even though explicit instructions are given to avoid the negative influence of the brand.*

**Key words:** *involvement, motivation to correction, brand, product, evaluation*

### 1. Introduction

Previous research has shown that the brand image is an influential cue for consumer judgment (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Batra & Homer, 2004; Carlson, Meloy & Russo, 2006; Fichter & Jonas, 2008; Keller, 2001; Thompson & Sinha, 2008; Thomson, MacInnis & Whan Park, 2005). However, its influence depends on many circumstances that include motivational and situational factors, such as involvement (Maheswaran, Mackie & Chaiken, 1992) and the ambiguity of stimulus material (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000; Moorthy, Rotchford & Talukdar, 1997). Specifically, we asked if people may avoid the influence of brand knowledge on purpose. If awareness of the potential influence of certain factors on judgment may cause people to avoid the impact of those factors (Schwarz & Clore, 1983), individuals should also be able to avoid the influence of brand knowledge after an explicit induction of a motivation to correction. However, as literature on contrast effects (Martin & Achee, 1992) suggests, this may depend upon additional circumstances such as motivation and the perception of (in) appropriateness.

Examining such correction processes in consumer judgments is of interest for several reasons. First, researchers have focused on the effects of positive “strong” brands, not negative brands that are often considered to be equivalent with unknown brands (the inappropriateness of this will be discussed further). Second, although the social cognition literature widely describes the correction process (Chaiken & Trope, 1999), in the area of consumer judgment this process is rarely taken into consideration, with contrast effects in cases of context stimuli (Shapiro & Spence, 2005) as exceptions. Specifically, studies on the motivated correction of a brand impact on the evaluation of a product of the given brand were not found in the literature. Eventually, beyond theoretical interests, these results may help to plan concept evaluations during market research and ad-campaigns, and better understand underlying processes.

In this article, after a short introduction about the role of brand, involvement and motivation to correction in information processing, the findings of the empirical verification of their joint impact are presented. The article closes with a discussion about the theoretical and practical implications of the obtained results.

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### 1.1. Brand Effect

The brand notion includes many conceptualizations (Allen, Fournier & Miller, 2008). In this study, we treat the brand as a psychological construct: a knowledge structure existing in consumers' minds that is a complex construct and consists of both associations and expectations related to the brand representation (Aaker, 1996, 1997; Keller, 2001, 2003, 2008; Tietje & Brunel, 2005). According to Keller's customer-based brand equity model (CBBE, Keller, 2001, 2003, 2008) the brand knowledge structure contains notions that are related to different levels of abstraction and links of varying strength, including brand awareness (familiarity, knowledge about the product category), beliefs about its functional and emotional attributes and benefits, and judgments, feelings, emotions, sensory images, personal experiences, and personal attachment. By spreading the activation of nodes, the activation of the brand knowledge leads to the so-called "brand effect." This means that the consumers' judgments and behaviors are based on the activated contents and evaluations.

Carlson et al. (2006) argued that in a situation of choice between two similar products with different brand names, consumers will differentiate between them based on their brand knowledge, not on the products' actual attributes. Consistent with the heuristic-systematic model, Maheswaran et al. (1992) hypothesized and found that the brand effect occurs because brand knowledge operates as a heuristic cue. In general, relying on heuristics is considered to be an essential element of human functioning due to its adaptive role (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2003). In some circumstances, such as a medium level of knowledge, heuristics facilitate relatively fast and (mostly) accurate decisions (Kardes, 2006) because they are often correct, being based on an individual's own experiences (Slovic, Finucane, Peters & MacGregor, 2002). Brand as a heuristic cue also enables the protection of the ego by reducing the risk of uncertainty, difficulty in choosing and lowering of self-confidence (Allen et al., 2008). In this way, the usage of brand heuristics may be desirable for making everyday consumer decisions.

Most brand effect examples refer to well-known positive and salient brands that are liked and desired, and that have favorable and unique brand representations that are easily recalled and recognized. When the brand has such a salient and positive mental representation, customers may treat their brand knowledge as one of the strong arguments favoring a product. As research shows, the brand influence is more likely to occur when a customer has positive experiences with it, resulting in a more positive brand perception (Kim, Morris & Swait, 2008). According to the CBBE of Keller (2001, 2003, 2008), the development of brand representation is based on the consumers' direct and indirect experiences (what they felt, saw, believed, imagined, perceived or heard about that particular brand).

Keller mentions four main stages of building, such a strong, salient, and positive representation; two of them include two domains. In the first, the *brand identity/salience* step, deep and broad brand awareness (salience)

is developed: customers must properly identify the basic functions that the brand provides to the customer (product category and needs satisfied) in connection with awareness of the brand name. In the next, the *brand meaning* step, the network of associations is established by direct and indirect experiences: customers identify the brand points of parity and difference including the *brand performance* (functional attributes and benefits), e.g., the primary ingredients of the product, reliability, efficiency, design, price, and *brand imagery* (more abstract and intangible associations), e.g., user profiles, personality, values, and heritage. In the *brand response* stage, the *judgments* (personal opinions and evaluations) and *feelings* (emotional responses and reactions) about the brand are developed based on the brand meaning. In the final *brand relationship/resonance* step, the ultimate relationship and level of identification with a brand are established. Thus, the strong brand knowledge becomes a complex cognitive construct that is likely to influence consumer judgments.

### 1.2. Task Involvement as a Moderator of Brand Effect

Researchers have found that the brand effect is more likely to occur when the stimulating material confirms the brand-knowledge expectations (Maheswaran et al., 1992) or when it is ambiguous: refers to new unknown products (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000; Moorthy et al., 1997) or does not deliver satisfactory information in the product description (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2003). Task involvement as another limitation of brand usage needs to be emphasized.

There is little doubt that the level of involvement may impact the processing of information and response toward persuasive messages, as a great body of research has shown the important role of involvement in consumer judgments (Bosmans & Baumgartner, 2005; Chaudhuri, 2006; Haugtvedt & Kasmer, 2008; Kardes, 2006; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). Empirical studies have revealed that a high level of involvement facilitates systematic processing of an ad or information about the product: highly involved participants read questions and texts with more elaboration (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Maheswaran et al., 1992; Posavac, Sanbonmatsu, Kardes & Fitzsimons, 2004) and they tend to base their judgments on facts, therefore, cues such as temporary emotional state, brand personality, or previous judgments are depreciated (Bosmans & Baumgartner, 2005; Higgins, 1996; Maheswaran et al., 1992; Strack, Werth & Deutsch, 2006). Conversely, a low level of involvement favors heuristic processing that biases judgment towards the influence of irrelevant stimuli, and less involved participants put less effort into answering while relying on unproven and unjustified premises (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bosmans & Baumgartner, 2005; Kardes, 2006; Keller & Bless, 2005; Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Strack et al., 2006; Thomson et al., 2005).

Based on the heuristic-systematic model, Maheswaran et al. (1992) obtained the most relevant results in a series of research studies on brands as heuristic cues. According to this dual-process theory, people process information in two modes. The systematic mode is based

on the analytical and complete processing of information. It requires ability and cognitive resources that are essential with regard to cognitive effort for analytical processing. In the heuristic mode, the existing knowledge is activated and applied to make fast and relatively satisfactory judgments. This mode of processing is largely effortless and not deliberate, and requires only minimal cognitive resources. The likelihood of the activation of each mode depends on circumstances that include ability, accessibility of cognitive resources, and motivation.

Maheswaran et al. hypothesized and confirmed that judgments of less involved participants were biased only on brand name (positive vs. negative), whereas with high involvement the judgments were influenced by the importance of the arguments (when the arguments were incongruent with the brand name) or by both (when the arguments were congruent with brand name). Researchers argue that the obtained pattern of results is in line with the assumptions of the heuristic-systematic model. With low involvement, people use the brand name as a heuristic cue, and with high involvement, the level of the confirmation of expectations moderates the brand name utilization. In particular, when the brand name expectations are confirmed, an additivity effect occurs, and when the brand name expectations are disconfirmed, the attenuation of the brand effect is observed. This means that systematic processing minimizes the judgmental influence of the brand heuristic because the important judgment-relevant information dominates.

To summarize, customer-based brand equity and level of involvement are important factors influencing consumer judgments. Following this assumption, and the definition and procedure proposed by Maheswaran et al. (1992), one may expect that the brand effect occurs only or mainly under low motivation. Following the above reasoning, the influence of the explicitly induced motivation to correction may emerge only under low motivation.

According to the dual process models, one may suppose that motivation to correction should initiate systematic information processing (Chaiken, 1980) and reliance on concrete arguments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Therefore, the influence of heuristics should disappear (Higgins, 1996). Martin and Achee (1992) argue that accuracy motivation may initiate more deliberate processing and increase cognitive efforts to reveal and eliminate inappropriate information. Thus, the impact of the brand knowledge while judging a new product should be attenuated; however, the influence of the motivation to correction may also be determined by a belief in the appropriateness of the cue.

### 1.3. Correction Process - Underlying Mechanisms and Determinants

Since the 1980s, many psychologists have been interested in the awareness of certain cues as moderating factors of judgments in mood (Schwarz & Clore, 1983) or emotional states (Bosmans & Baumgartner, 2005), as well as stereotypes and traits (Bargh, 1996; Lombardi, Higgins

& Bargh, 1987; Newman & Uleman, 1990). In all of these cases, blatant exposure (e.g., question about the current weather as related to mood) made the participants adjust their judgment. An awareness of the presumed influence of the cue was considered to be an underlying mechanism, and research showed that this kind of adjustment may occur spontaneously or following experimental instruction (Martin & Achee, 1992; Schwarz & Clore, 1983).

Similar to the available work on priming, the correction process is defined as a readiness to involve additional cognitive resources to adjust an early judgment (Lambert, Khan, Lickel & Fricke, 1997), shown as a withdrawal of certain cues on which the judgment had been based (Martin & Achee, 1992). One may say that the research of Maheswaran et al. (1992) revealed that high involvement produced additivity or attenuation effects due to spontaneous correction: the brand knowledge as a heuristic cue was suspended and a shift to the systematic processing of incoming information was observed.

For the current goal, two models of correction are worth special attention. According to the set/reset model of Martin and Achee (1992), people select information to make judgments in accordance with their processing goals. With an accuracy goal, if they perceive cues as inappropriate for making an accurate judgment, they tend to reset the judgment. They eliminate distorting thoughts and make the judgment using other cues, which are perceived as an unbiased basis for making an accurate judgment. Therefore zero, or even contrasting (reversed) effects, may be observed. The cues which are perceived as appropriate will be incorporated in the final judgment with assimilation as a result (Bless & Waelenke, 2000).

According to the Inclusion/ Exclusion Model of Schwarz and Bless (1992), when asked to make a judgment, people begin with the initial cognitive representation of the issue (situation, object, etc.), which constitutes a standard for the comparison of incoming data. If the incoming data are perceived as fitting the existing cognitive representation of the stimuli material, they will be included and assimilation will occur. If the incoming data constitute different cognitive structures than the standards of comparison, they will be excluded and the contrast effect is likely to reveal.

Theories and research on contrasting effects and corrections as underlying mechanisms suggest different impacts of positive and negative units of knowledge (e.g., stereotypes) on judgments because of their perceived (in) appropriateness for evaluation (Lambert et al., 1997; Martin, Crelia & Seta, 1990) and their (in)congruency with the stimuli represented. A strong brand has a positive and distinctive representation in consumers' minds (Batra & Homer, 2004) and is based on positive experiences; therefore, it may be perceived as a well-grounded fact, fully credible and appropriate for use in judgment. The positive brand representation is also congruent with a positive persuasive message, so there is no reason to exclude it from the positive product representation. In the literature, the influence of a "strong brand" is compared with the influence of brands that are unknown, or known but disliked. These two kinds of brands are most often treated as a common category (Keller,

2003), although the counterbalances for a strong (positive, well-known) brand should be distinguished.

The representation in the mind may be important for predicting consumer judgments in a motivated correction situation, for instance, by analogy with a social stereotype domain. Compared to strong brands, unknown brands may be evaluated in a less positive manner due to less familiarity, less positive semantics and the evaluative connotation of the name. However, the unknown brand has no mental representation for its identity, performance, imagery response, feelings or relationships; therefore, when a positive known brand and unknown brand are compared, we may expect that brand effect is most often due to the positive impact of the first. In the present conceptualization of a weak brand, one proposes to treat it in direct opposition to strong brands, as defined by Keller (2001, 2008; Batra & Homer, 2004), thus the weak brand is conceptualized here as not salient in the category, not associated with distinctive functional and emotional brand beliefs, perceived as widely disregarded, not evoking positive reactions and perceived as having a weak position in the market (e.g., other brands are preferred in a buying situation). In this case, negative associations are more likely to be perceived as an inappropriate basis for judgment, and the positive persuasive message about the new product is more likely to be excluded from the weak brand representation.

In summary, we consider weak brands as having negative associations, evoking negative attitudes toward brand attributes (e.g., logo, ads, packaging) and rejection in a buying situation. Following the above reasoning, while manipulating the customer-based brand equity, we expect asymmetry in the correction of the judgments between strong (known, positive) and weak (known but negative) brands. There will be stronger adjustments in cases of the weak brands and in low motivational situations based on the expectation that the brand effect is heightened under this condition. While motivation to correction is not active, participants should evaluate the product of the strong brand more positively than the product of the weak brand (classic brand effect). When participants are highly involved, the blatant (overt) exposure of the brand-name (strong vs. weak brand as defined in Keller's model, 2001) should attenuate or at least decrease the influence of brand knowledge on the evaluation of the product, regardless of the presence of the motivation to correction. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that participants become aware of brand-influence on their opinion, due to high involvement they are motivated to process information systematically and thus they may spontaneously correct the unwanted influence of a weak brand. The research was exploratory, as any research on the direct role of the motivation to correction in the brand judgment area was found. However, the hypotheses were based on the theoretical assumptions and broad scope of research on the adjustment-mechanisms in social cognition. To make it clearer, the specific hypotheses which were tested in the research are following:

H1: When participants are low involved they will evaluate the product of the strong brand more positively than the product of the weak brand, however the brand equity will differentiate opinions depending on motivation to correction.

H1a: While motivation to correction is not active (control condition), participants will evaluate the product of strong brand more positively than the product of the weak brand.

H1b: Activation of motivation to correction will lead participants to more positive evaluation of the product of the weak brand (compared to no motivation to correction situation).

H1c: Activation of motivation to correction will not change the evaluation of the product of the strong brand (compared to no motivation to correction situation).

H2: When participants are highly involved, the brand influence on evaluation of the product will be attenuated or at least decreased regardless of presence or motivation to correction.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Design and Stimuli Material

To verify the hypotheses, the experimental design, with a 2 (involvement: high or low) x 2 (motivation to correction: present or absent) x 2 (brand equity: strong or weak) comparison between the subject variables, was applied. It followed two pilot studies, which were aimed at identifying strong and weak brands and testing the questionnaire for product evaluation.

In this study, the participants read one page-description of a new subbrand product named after a strong brand (Coca-cola Fizz) or a weak one (Polococta Fizz). The product was presented as having positive features referring to four elements of the *marketing mix*: product (taste, new technology, convenient and smart package, bottle caps; e.g., Greater number of bubbles changing our experience by giving the drink its unique taste), price (e.g., Double-packs will be available for sale, for which we will pay more favorable price than for the two bottles purchased separately. The discount can reach up to 15% of the retail price of two drinks, so no doubt it is a very profitable offer), promotion (e.g., Coca-cola (Polococta) Fizz is a drink for people who like to be on the move and who cannot stand boredom, so the new product promotion campaign will take place mainly during the open air events. Picnics, festivals and various sports events are the perfect occasions to highlight the exciting moments of the taste of the drink) and strategy of distribution (e.g., The drink will be sold in returnable bottles with a capacity of 0.5 l. It is a capacity which best satisfies the needs of consumers of Coca-cola (Polococta) Fizz, because this amount will fully satisfy the desire, as well as it will provide unusual sensations, without creating a sense of carbonated beverage satiety).

## 2.2. Independent Variables

To manipulate brand equity, the product was described with the brand names of carbonated soft drinks that evoked positive or negative associations in the sense of Keller's model of customer-based brand equity (Keller, 2001). Following Keller's model, the strong brand was defined as being perceived as easily accessible in people's minds, while thinking about the product category (Brand Identity); having a strong distinctive mental representation, activating positive associations (Brand Meaning); judged positively on both the functional and emotional level (Brand Responses) and eventually exerting a positive relationship with it (Brand Resonance). The weak brand was defined as being placed on the opposite end of that continuum. Based on Keller's model, the Customer-based Brand Equity Questionnaire (CBEQ) was developed. The structure of the questionnaire reflected the four dimensions of Brand Equity distinguished by this author: Brand Identity (e.g., This brand suits every situation of the usage of drinks, ideally.), Brand Meaning (e.g., This brand has distinctive features and personality that suits me very well.), Brand Responses (e.g., The products of this brand put me in a positive mood.) and Brand Relationships (e.g., I'm glad to recommend this brand to my friends.). Higher scores on the CBEQ indicated a strong brand, while lower scores indicated a weak brand. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale using the anchors of: 1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree.

The strong and the weak brands were chosen from the initial list of 11 brands in the pilot study conducted individually with 27 female and 22 male students whose ages were 19 to 31 years ( $M = 21.20$ ;  $SD = 2.13$ ,  $Mo = 20$ ). In this pilot study, an index of the overall brand equity was a mean of 34 item ratings in the preliminary version of CBEQ, and 8 item ratings in the shortened version, developed to check the effectiveness of the manipulation in the proper study. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$ s for each of the tested brands in the preliminary 32-item version of the CBEQ ranged from .92 to .95, with a mean  $\alpha$  of .93, and in the shortened (8-item) version it ranged from .69 to .80, with a mean  $\alpha$  of .76. The analysis revealed that among 11 brands the strongest brand was Coca-cola with  $M = 3.45$ ;  $SD = 0.68$  (in the shortened version of CBEQ  $M = 3.40$ ;  $SD = 0.78$ ), and the weakest one was Polococta with  $M = 1.87$ ;  $SD = 0.54$  (in the shortened version  $M = 1.89$ ;  $SD = 0.58$ ). The paired sample t-test confirmed that the means of the ratings for these brands differed significantly in both the preliminary version of the questionnaire ( $t(48) = 14.09$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and in the shortened one ( $t(48) = 13.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

In the proper study, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the shortened 8-item version of CBEQ was .96 and the factor analysis with the varimax rotation for the data confirmed the one-factorial structure of the scale (loadings  $> .76$  and percent of variance explained = 79.40). Thus, internal consistency of the final scale was (at the very least) acceptable.

The notion of involvement in the consumer research area had many different conceptualizations, with ad-involvement, product-involvement and buying

involvement as examples (Andrews & Durvasula, 1991; Bosmans & Baumgartner, 2005; Chaudhuri, 2006; Kardes, 2006; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000; Traylor & Joseph, 1984; Zaichkowsky 1985). In the present research study, the involvement was defined as task importance. It had been activated before the participants were exposed to the stimulus material by a procedure similar to that proposed by Maheswaran et al. (1992). To induce high involvement, the instructions presented information that each participant had been carefully selected as one of only a few to give an opinion about the new product entering the market in their town. To activate low involvement, the instructions communicated that all the answers would be averaged due to the large number of participants involved, and that the product may enter the market in a different location (low involvement condition). Following the assumptions of Maheswaran et al. (1992), the importance of personal opinion (only a few carefully selected) and subjective benefits (local market) should encourage the individual to process the information systematically, in contrast with a limited influence on the end result of the research (many questionnaires and averaged opinions). Additionally, the limited relevance of the place of the product's sale should facilitate heuristic processing.

After the subjects had responded to various measures, the effectiveness of the manipulation was checked with the translated Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) developed by Zaichkowsky (1985). It was modified to measure a subjective belief in task-involvement (it was shortened and the instructions were adapted). The questionnaire consisted of six pairs of bipolar adjectives describing the attitude toward the research (semantic differential), for example unimportant-important, relevant-irrelevant, valuable-worthless (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ , one-factorial structure of the scale with loadings  $> .80$  and percent of the variance explained = 85.03 in the factor analysis with varimax rotation). The answers were measured with 7-point scales. After the revision of the scores on three items, the ratings were averaged. Higher scores indicated a stronger belief in task-involvement.

In the condition with the presence of the motivation to correction, the participants were asked to avoid the influence of the brand name as one of the arguments for or against the product rating. In the control condition, this information was absent. The effectiveness of this manipulation was measured by asking the participants to answer one question: "Do you think that your rating of a new carbonated drink of Coca-cola (Polococta) Fizz could increase due to the preceding knowledge of the Coca-cola (Polococta) brand?" The answers were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the anchors of: 1 = not at all and 5 = to a very great extent. The belief about the perceived influence of the brand-knowledge on judgment was selected as an indirect measure of manipulation check, based on the assumptions that motivation to correction of unwanted stimulus impact on judgment is related with the increased consciousness of potential influence of this stimulus on judgment as set/reset model claims.

### 2.3. Evaluation of the Product as a Main Dependent Variable

The main dependent variable was the evaluation of the new product. It was measured by a questionnaire strictly adapted to the stimulus material. The evaluation of 4 features of the product based on the marketing mix was rated with six items (e.g., I am curious to taste Coca-cola (Polococta) Fizz.). The six items measured overall interest in the product (e.g., I would be glad to reach out for that new fizzy drink when it comes in.). The index of product evaluation was based on the mean for all 12 items that were rated on the 5-point scale with the anchors of: 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree. Higher scores indicated a more positive evaluation (after the reversion of the scores for 2 items).

The internal consistency of the scale was acceptable, both in a separate pilot study (with 19 female and 11 male students whose ages were 19-25 years) and in the study itself: Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$  and  $= .96$ , respectively. The factor analysis with varimax rotation for the data in the study confirmed the one-factorial structure of the scale (loadings  $> .72$  and percent of variance explained  $= 69.08$ ).

### 2.4. Participants

The participants were 248 students (of 18 different faculties of the University of Warsaw) whose ages were 19-26 years ( $M = 21.74$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ), including 138 women and 110 men. This was a relevant group for categorizing carbonated drinks. The students came from towns of  $> 5000$  inhabitants. Nineteen percent of the students declared themselves as drinkers of Coca-cola (as one of three or the one most preferred of all carbonated beverages), and none declared themselves as drinkers of Polococta. In each of the four conditions with the activation of Coca-cola as a strong brand, there were 10-14 users of Coca-cola ( $< 50\%$ ).

### 2.5. Procedure

First, the oral and written instructions of the high or low involvement were activated. Half of the participants also read instructions inducing the motivation to correction. Next, the participants were asked to read the text about the new product entering the market. In the text, half of the participants were presented with Coca-cola, and the others with Polococta as the name of the brand, while all the other pieces of information about the product were the same in both conditions. After that, the participants were asked to answer some questions about the evaluation of the product, then they completed the CBEQ, PII and responded to some personal information (sex, age, year of studies, field of study, three carbonated soft drinks consumed most preferably, the size of a place of origin). Eventually, the beliefs in the influences of brand-knowledge on product ratings were measured. Afterward, the participants were debriefed.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Check of Experimental Manipulation

To obtain complete pattern of results, that may be helpful to interpret the results for the main dependent variable, full factorial  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  ANOVA was implemented for the analyzed measures of manipulation effectiveness. The main effects and patterns of results showed that all the manipulations operated as intended. Additional analyses revealed the other main and interactional effects, however – as presented below – any patterns of significant interactions did not modify the direction of the main effects of manipulations. Thus, the effectiveness of manipulations was confirmed.

#### The Rating of Customer-based Brand Equity.

The ANOVA, with the ratings of customer-based brand equity as dependent variables and all 3 independent variables as factors, revealed two significant main effects. The main effect of customer-based brand equity ( $F(1, 240) = 2157.8$ ;  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .90$ ) confirmed that the participants who read about the product of the Polococta brand rated the brand significantly less positively in the CBEQ ( $M = 2.12$ ;  $SD = 0.34$ ) than participants who read about the product of the Coca-cola brand ( $M = 4.19$ ;  $SD = 0.37$ ). Thus, the name of Coca-cola activated more positive distinctive associations than the name of the Polococta brand.

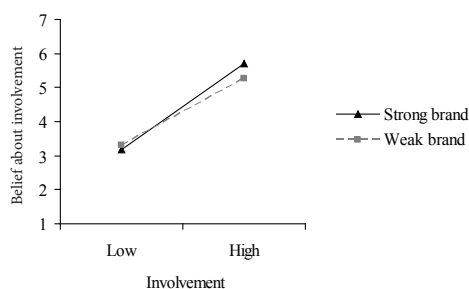
The additional significant main effect of involvement ( $F(1, 240) = 9.46$ ;  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ) showed that the brands were perceived, slightly although significantly, more positively in the high ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) rather than in the low ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) involvement condition. The directions of influence of both of these independent variables in the CBEQ were similar to the outcomes obtained for the evaluation of the new product, presented in the next section.

Overall, the obtained pattern of results and effect sizes confirm the manipulation effectiveness and suggest that the CBEQ was less sensitive on the manipulation of the context (especially of the motivation to correction) than the questionnaire developed to measure the specific reaction to the product.

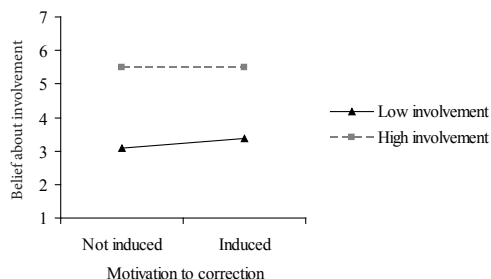
**Belief about involvement.** A  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  ANOVA on the belief about involvement as measured on the PII indicated that all three main effects and the two two-way interactions were significant. The main effect of involvement – key to check the effectiveness of involvement manipulation – revealed that the participants believed in their involvement more after the induction of the high ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) rather than low involvement ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ),  $F(1, 240) = 1097.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .82$ . The significant main effect of the customer-based brand equity  $F(1, 240) = 3.74$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$  and the main effect of the motivation to correction,  $F(1, 240) = 4.51$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$  were broken down by the involvement what significant interactions between induced involvement and customer-based brand equity,  $F(1, 240) = 23.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .09$

and between involvement and motivation to correction:  $F(1, 240) = 4.45; p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .02$  showed. Patterns of results for these interactions is presented on Figures 1a and 1b, respectively. These figures,  $\eta_p^2$  values and analyzes of the patterns of interactions with simple effect analysis reveal that the effect of involvement is the most salient despite interactional effects: within Coca-cola condition -  $F(1, 240) = 387.21; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .62$  and within Polococta condition -  $F(1, 240) = 745.53; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .76$ ; within motivation to correction condition -  $F(1, 240) = 481.11; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .67$  and within control condition -  $F(1, 240) = 620.94; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .72$ . Thus, it was confirmed that manipulation diversified the subjective belief about the involvement.

**Figure 1a. Belief about involvement as measured on the PII as a function of involvement and customer-based brand equity.**



**Figure 1b. Belief about involvement as measured on the PII as a function of involvement and the induction of the motivation to correction.**



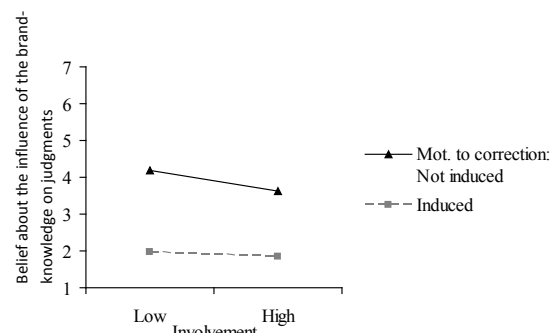
Nevertheless, simple effect analysis delivered interesting patterns of results for better understanding the mechanisms underlying the main expected outcomes for product evaluation. In case of the significant interaction between induced involvement and customer-based brand equity, simple effect analysis indicated additionally particularly interesting reversed patterns of brand effect in the low and high involvement conditions. In the high-involvement condition participants believed in their involvement significantly more when they read about the strong ( $M = 5.71, SD = 0.45$ ) rather than weak ( $M = 5.25, SD = 0.52$ ) brands,  $F(1, 240) = 23.06, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$ ; whereas in the low-involvement condition, the weak brand increased the belief about involvement ( $M = 3.32, SD = 0.58$ ) compared to the strong brand ( $M = 3.12, SD = 0.62$ ),  $F(1, 240) = 4.27, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , although both differences were small.

Simple effect analysis in case of the significant interaction of involvement and motivation to correction delivered one more completing pattern of results. In the low involvement condition, people believed in their involvement more after the induction of the motivation to correction ( $M = 3.36, SD = 0.57$ ) than in the control condition ( $M = 3.07, SD = 0.60$ ),  $F(1, 240) = 8.96, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .04$  while no significant differences were obtained in the high involvement condition,  $F(1, 240) = 0.00, p = .99, \eta_p^2 = .001$

**Belief about the influence of the brand-knowledge on judgment.** A  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  ANOVA on the belief about the influence of the brand knowledge on judgment revealed two significant main effects and one two-way interaction. The key to check the effectiveness of motivation to correction manipulation is the main effect of the motivation to correction, which indicated that the participants exposed to the instructions to avoid the brand-knowledge influence while evaluating the product indicated that they had taken it into consideration to a lesser extent ( $M = 1.92; SD = 0.63$ ) than the participants in the control group without those instructions ( $M = 3.91; SD = 0.73$ ),  $F(1, 240) = 561.81; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .70$ .

The additional main effect of involvement revealed that in the high-involvement condition, the participants believed less that they had taken the brand-knowledge into consideration ( $M = 2.75, SD = 1.10$ ) than in the low-involvement condition ( $M = 3.08, SD = 1.29$ ),  $F(1, 240) = 15.72; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$ . The significant interaction shows that the main effect of motivation to correction was qualified by the involvement,  $F(2, 240) = 5.78; p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .02$  that is presented in Figure 2. Namely, only in the condition of no induction of the motivation to correction did the highly involved participants reveal lower ratings on their beliefs about the influence of prior-brand knowledge on their judgments ( $M = 3.64, SD = 0.63$ ), compared with the low involved participants ( $M = 4.18, SD = 0.74$ ),  $F(1, 240) = 20.28; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$ . Similarly as in the case of other manipulations, the overall pattern of results and effect sizes confirm the effectiveness of experimental manipulation of motivation to correction.

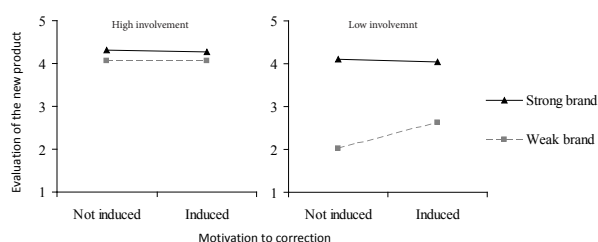
**Figure 2. Belief about the influence of prior brand-knowledge on judgments as a function of involvement and the induction of the motivation to correction.**



### 3.2. Evaluation of the New Product

A 2 x 2 x 2 ANOVA on the evaluation of the new product revealed the significance of all of the main and interactional effects: the main effect of involvement –  $F(1, 240) = 624.54; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .72$ ; the main effect of the customer-based brand equity –  $F(1, 240) = 644.85; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .73$ , the main effect of the motivation to correction –  $F(1, 240) = 10.07; p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .04$ , the interaction of involvement and customer-based brand equity –  $F(1, 240) = 370.27; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .61$ ; the interaction of involvement and motivation to correction –  $F(1, 240) = 14.24; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$ ; the interaction of the motivation to correction and customer-based brand equity,  $F(1, 240) = 18.23; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ . However, the most relevant for the hypotheses and the most complete pattern of results showed up in the three-way interaction of all of the independent variables,  $F(1, 240) = 13.99; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$  that is presented on the Figure 3.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 3.** Evaluation of the new product as a function of involvement, customer-based brand equity and the induction of the motivation to correction.



In the low-involvement condition, the pattern of the results confirmed the hypothesis 1, as the right part of Figure 3 shows. The 2x2 ANOVA within low-involvement condition revealed main effect of brand equity,  $F(1, 120) = 878.32; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .88$ , main effect of motivation to correction,  $F(1, 120) = 21.27; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$ , and that these main effects were qualified by interaction of these two variables,  $F(1, 120) = 28.29; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19$ . Simple effect analysis indicated that the participants evaluated the new product significantly less positively while they read about the product of the weak brand rather than of the strong brand, and that the differences were significant both after the induction of the motivation to correction ( $M_{\text{strong}} = 4.05, SD = 0.25; M_{\text{weak}} = 2.62, SD = 0.44; F(1, 120) = 295.68; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .71$ ) and – what was expected in the hypothesis H1a – in the control group ( $M_{\text{strong}} = 4.10, SD = 0.33; M_{\text{weak}} = 2.03, SD = 0.27; F(1, 120) = 610.92; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .84$ ). However, simple effect analysis also revealed that the motivation to correction differentiated the ratings of the new

product of the weak brand,  $F(1, 120) = 47.77; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .29$ . Specifically, the participants rated the new product of the weak brand more positively after the induction of the motivation to correction, rather than without this induction, what was stated in the hypothesis H1b. The influence of the motivation to correction was not observed when the name of the strong brand was present,  $F(1, 120) = 0.26; p = .61, \eta_p^2 = .002$ , what was predicted in the hypothesis H1c.

In turn, in the high-involvement condition, the significant main effect of brand equity revealed,  $F(1, 120) = 21.85, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$ . As the left part of Figure 3 shows, in the high-involvement condition the participants rated the new product of the strong brand more positively than the product of the weak brand, but the differences and the effect size were much smaller than in case of low involvement, both after the induction of the motivation to correction ( $M_{\text{strong}} = 4.28, SD = 0.05; M_{\text{weak}} = 4.06, SD = 0.05; F(1, 120) = 9.13; p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .07$ ) and in the control group ( $M_{\text{strong}} = 4.32, SD = 0.33; M_{\text{weak}} = 4.06, SD = 0.27; F(1, 120) = 12.86; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$ ). Neither the main effect of motivation to correction, nor interaction of both this variables were significant,  $F(1, 120) = 0.21, p = .65, \eta_p^2 = .002$  and  $F(1, 120) = 0.16, p = .69, \eta_p^2 = .001$  respectively.

Overall, the obtained pattern of results confirmed the hypotheses H3. According to it, in a highly involved situation small differences were likely between the ratings of the new product signed by the strong and by the weak brands, and we found that the high level of involvement suppressed the influence of other circumstances: the brand equity effect to much extent and the motivation to correction influence absolutely. Thus, the overall pattern of results confirmed the expectation of H1 about the influence of the motivation to correction on the ratings of the new product in the case of the weak brand in the low involved situation, exclusively.

## 4. Discussion

There is little doubt in marketing and psychological research that involvement and brand-knowledge are important determinants of consumer judgments. Prior research has also introduced the involvement as the moderator of the influence of the brand-knowledge on the product's evaluation. The aim of the current research was to explore the role of explicitly induced motivation to correction as an additional factor that may moderate the influence of brand-knowledge on new product evaluation. The results of the present study suggest that explicitly induced motivation to correction may play some role in the judgment of weak brands; however, it also reveals that the high involvement of consumers is more important in undermining the negative brand effect.

In the current study, all three manipulations were effective, including the induction of the motivation

<sup>1</sup> All the main and interactional effects were significant also while the participant being users of tested brands (in this case only of Coca-cola) were excluded from the analysis.

<sup>2</sup> The more conservative Scheffé's post-hoc test, conducted in Statistica software, revealed that these differences between strong and weak brand were not significant while the significance of others was similar as in case of simple effects analysis presented in this article.



to correction, next to involvement and customer-based brand equity. The differences and the effect sizes of these manipulations were much stronger for given measures of manipulation checks than of other analyzed independent variables alone or in interaction. That let us make reliable conclusions about their influence on the main dependent variable.

The results of the current study confirmed the findings of the prior research regarding the role of involvement and brand-knowledge on the assumptions of the heuristic-systematic model. Similar to the study of Maheswaran et al. (1992), the activation of the prior brand-knowledge influenced strongly the evaluation of the new product in the situation of low involvement. Specifically, despite participants reading the same information about the new product, after instructions encouraging low-involvement they rated the new product much less positively when it was signed by the name of the weak brand (that activated rich negative associations, judgments and reactions) rather than the strong positive brand. Thus one may suppose that the participants were less inclined to process the information systematically, but instead, read the information carefully and relied on heuristics, such as a brand image, with more impact from negative associations.

However, the brand effect was much weaker after the instructions encouraging the high-involvement. One may suppose that the participants were more motivated and processed the new information more systematically, and thus they were less inclined to base their evaluation of the new product on their prior brand-knowledge than on the positive description of the new beverage. This pattern of results and explanations is consistent with other results. The main effect of the manipulation of the involvement on the belief of involvement showed that the participants believed in their involvement more in the situation of high involvement. Additionally, the explicit opinion of the participants revealed the higher influence of brand-knowledge on their judgment in the control group without the induction of the motivation to correction and in the low involved rather than high involved situation while motivation to correction was absent.

The most important new result of the current study is the confirmation of the hypothesis claiming that the explicitly induced motivation to correction influences the ratings of the new product only in the weak (negatively perceived) brand, and only in the low involvement situation. Although we observed the general influence of the brand and involvement (main effects), the stronger brand effects in the case of the low involved participants, and stronger effect of involvement in the case of the weak brand (two-way interactions), the hypothesis was confirmed by the three-way interaction of the involvement, customer-based brand equity and motivation to correction and results of 2x2 ANOVAs separate for low and high involved participants. They show the influence of the explicit instructions to correct brand-based judgments only in the case of the weak brand and low involved participants, with no significant impact on the new product's evaluation in the high involvement situation. The low-involved participants rated the new product of the weak

brand more positively when asked to avoid the influence of prior brand-knowledge compared to the lack of these instructions. One may suppose that the participants based their judgments on the positive description of the product or that they only shifted their opinion in a slightly more positive direction (they reset the judgment in the terminology of the set/reset model of Martin and Achee (1992) or excluded it in terms of the inclusion/exclusion model of Schwarz and Bless (1992)). However, their evaluations were not as positive as in the cases of the positive brand or high-involvement, despite the induction of the motivation to correction. Additionally, the belief about involvement was much lower in the case of low involvement, even when the motivation to correction was induced. This suggests that low involved participants did not activate enough motivation to make precise and accurate judgments based on the information about the product. They (probably) did the task with minimal cognitive effort (compared to the high involvement situation) and when they were confronted with the blatant inconsistency between the negative brand-knowledge and positive information, they excluded the new information from the judgment because it was contradictory with the overall impression and expectations toward the quality of the product (Stangor & McMillan, 1992). In the high involvement situation, the participants were highly motivated to make accurate judgments so they processed the information carefully, and they couldn't easily exclude information from their judgments (Maheswaran et al., 1992); however, (probably spontaneously) they reset the influence of the brand heuristically based on their judgments (Martin & Achee, 1992).

The models of judgment corrections also explain the underlying mechanisms of the effect of motivation to correction only in the case of the weak brand. The Coca-cola brand is a strong brand in terms of Keller's customer-based brand equity model. This means that it has a strong distinctive and unique mental representation in the consumers' minds. This representation is likely to be supported by many positive facts and experiences, which may be perceived as well grounded and acceptable knowledge, and as a strong and positive argument rather than an easy short-cut in the decision process. When the positive information about the product of such a strong brand is incoming, it is consistent with the prior positive brand-knowledge and thus easily assimilated (Martin et al., 1990). However, in terms of the inclusion/exclusion model (Schwarz & Bless, 1992) the new representation is included in the prior representation. Therefore, the process of correction is difficult, even non-viable.

In the case of a weak brand, the divergence is increased between the expectations and positive incoming information about the product of a given brand, and therefore, people may form separate mental representations, and the second one is excluded from the first one. In this way the correction process emerges (Schwarz & Bless, 1992). In terms of the set/reset model (Martin & Achee, 1992) the divergence of representations is likely to make participants aware of which specific contents have inappropriate influences on judgment, and exert a reset process. According

to this model, after resetting, people may become involved in the processing of incoming information which is appropriate for judging the object. However, research shows that it requires increased cognitive capacities. The results of the present study indicate that the low-involved participants were slightly, but significantly, more involved after the induction of the motivation to correction as the results of the belief about involvement show (the interaction of the involvement and the motivation to correction). Thus, they made more cognitive effort as the set/reset model implies. However, their cognitive effort was directed (rather) into the resetting process itself.

Although low involved participants corrected their judgment, excluding the negative influences of the weak brand, their evaluations were still less positive than the ratings of the strong brand and the ratings of the weak brand in the situation of high involvement. This suggests that the explicit induction of the motivation to correction provokes minimal reflection, but this is not enough to process and include the incoming information into the current structure of knowledge. It is also likely that the participants "subtracted" the negative brand-knowledge and judgments only partially. Since the consumers' mental representations of the brands are complex and based on direct and indirect experiences (Keller, 2001, 2003, 2008), the associations activated by the weak brand could be treated as a major and accurate premise of judgment and not be easy to exclude.

The present study suggests that the high involvement facilitates the process of spontaneous (not induced by instruction) correction (Martin & Achee, 1992). The high involvement participants believed that the brand-name had less impact on the evaluation of a new product, without any instructions to avoid prior brand-knowledge, they perceived both brands more positively, and at the same time they evaluated the product of a weak brand more positively compared with the low involvement participants. One may suppose that they were more motivated to involve their cognitive resources to make an accurate judgment about the product itself, to process the incoming information systematically, and to avoid the undesirable negative influence of the weak-brand knowledge. As the most surprising result of the present study, one may find that the spontaneous correction evoked by high involvement was more effective than the explicit direct instruction to avoid the influence of brand on judgment. The more positive brand evaluation after high (compared to low) involvement may be explained by the positive impact of the product description, or by the direct influence of the involvement manipulation (Cialdini, 2001).

One may ask why the motivation to correction did not influence the brand equity evaluation. Customer-based brand equity refers to associations, judgment and emotions of the brand itself, and the stimuli descriptions focused on the product and did not mention the brand attributes. Additionally, the instructions emphasized avoiding the influence of the brand, not changing the brand image, and therefore, manipulation should not change it.

More ambiguous to explain is that the higher belief about involvement was found in the case of the strong brand

after the high involvement induction. One may suppose that the description of the new appealing beverage of the strong brand was more involved as a result of the more positive previous experiences. The contrary pattern in case of low involvement may result from discrepancy between negative brand knowledge and positive product description.

The current results extend the previous studies concerning the process of judgment correction on persuasive communication. Subsequent studies have shown the process of correction mainly in the impression formation area; however, the present study shows that the process of induced correction can also appear for weak brands under some circumstances. Its impact is not as strong as the influence of high motivation or a strong brand, even though people are explicitly instructed to avoid the negative influence of the brand. The strategy to emphasize the positive attributes and benefits of the new products, and at the same time to encourage the avoidance of the influence of the brand effect on judgments, may be effective for avoiding the negative impact of weak brands. This kind of strategy seems to be justified when we take into account that the FMCG products do not induce a high ad-involvement (Chaudhuri, 2006), and consumers are inclined to make economically biased selective processing based on heuristics (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Chaudhuri, 2006; Posavac et al., 2004). The results of this study suggest that building strong brands (as far as the involvement of consumers in processing information) needs to be, and surely is, a better strategy for reaching the positive evaluation of the new products, and in the case of involvement, evoking the influence of information coming from verbal advertising messages about the overall product evaluation.

The present study may also have interesting and important implications for the market researchers who test the written descriptions of the products' concepts with the brand name. First, the instructions preceding the survey may play a crucial role in determining the respondents' opinions. Typical (and ethically required) introductions underlying the anonymity of the survey may encourage low involvement and thus the brand effect, specifically decreasing the ratings of the weak brands without processing the incoming information about the rated product. Second, while respondents are low involved, explicit direct instructions to avoid the influence of brand-knowledge seems not to be an effective tool to encourage the systematic processing of information and to avoid the brand effect. On the other hand, emphasizing the importance of individual opinions (individual in-depth interviews, focus group discussions) may encourage the motivation toward more systematic processing of information and the spontaneous correction of judgment. In practice, a mixture of both kinds of instructions is used, and thus, the researchers should be extremely sensitive about the possible impacts on the research results.

The current study is concerned with the explicit manipulation of the motivation to correction. One may assume that it evokes a process similar to psychological reactance. A more subtle manipulation of the motivation to correction may trigger a stronger correction process which

should be further illuminated in future research. Furthermore, the current results focus on only one category of products: non-alcoholic drinks. For a complete understanding, future research should delve into other categories, such as durable goods, which may add to our confidence that the effect of motivated correction is a general mechanism.

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